Capital:
A Contemporary Opera
in Two Acts

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of

The Australian National University

December 2015

Declaration

I, Fiona Averil Fraser, hereby declare that, except where otherwise acknowledged in the customary manner, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, this work is my own, and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Fiona Averil Fraser

December 2015

Abstract

Capital is a two act opera which incorporates a range of different stylistic elements as a means of communicating with a broad audience and promoting discourse about the future of the city of Canberra. This dissertation encompasses a detailed exegesis of my research as well as the final score of the opera. Together they are designed to support the proposition that opera can retain a socially relevant role today.

Such a proposition sits in stark contrast to statistics that demonstrate a serious decline in interest in all classical music genres in the last few decades. Opera has been reinvigorated at different historical points by embracing heterogeneous elements, engaging interactively with audiences, and addressing socially relevant concerns. Many commentators, particularly Theodor Adorno, have looked to Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute* as the ideal model for an opera that both entertains and edifies the audience. This thesis examines the strategies Mozart employed in his iconic opera. It also explores different compositional approaches taken by composers such as Kurt Weill, Leonard Bernstein, Larry Sitsky, John Adams, and Louis Andriessen, designed to achieve similar ends.

The defining feature of such works is a willingness to incorporate culturally meaningful musical allusions that represent different perspectives and, through a process of recontextualisation, invite a reappraisal, revealing previously hidden facets of the original material. This approach is consistent with the practice of parody, as described by literary scholar, Linda Hutcheon. Parody was a common feature of the traditional *opera buffa* genre. It harks back to an earlier era, when music was valued for its functional utility rather than its structural unity or commercial success. Such operas have historically come to be overshadowed by a Wagnerian quest for an organically unified form of art, which, in accord with nineteenth-century aesthetic standards, should ideally eliminate all extraneous material and aspire to express a transcendent spiritual aura. In response to this, many twentieth- and twenty-first-century composers have been seeking to find an alternate role for opera by reclaiming it as an essentially heterogeneous art form that excels at parody.

Capital is an opera that sits firmly within the parodic tradition. Like other works examined in this thesis, it embraces opera as a heterogeneous mix of art forms ultimately grounded in the hopes and aspirations of contemporary life. It is a work that favours diversity and debate rather than conformity and unity. It challenges the long-standing paradigm that separates classical and popular music on a hierarchical basis, accepting that both might be legitimate sources for music which seeks to play a functional role in contemporary discourses. By engaging with local issues, and incorporating a unique mix of heterogeneous elements, *Capital* makes an original contribution to opera in Australia.

For my mother, Rita Fraser

(1923–2015)

Yes – it is finished now!

Acknowledgements

Of course, the opera in and of itself could not have come into being without the dedicated support of Caroline Stacey, the Artistic Director of the Canberra Street Theatre, who amazed me by taking my initial vague thoughts and dreams for an opera quite seriously and supporting me through several grant application processes. Through Ms Stacey, I met the Australian dramaturge Peter Matheson, who helped me draw together a plot that surprised even me. Ms Stacey also brought in the indomitable Dr Kram, who pulled together the team to workshop and present a semi-staged performance of the first version of *Capital* at the Canberra Street Theatre in September 2009. His inspiring, never-give-up attitude ensured a week that allowed a glimpse of wonderful possibilities for the work that I hope to be able to bring to full fruition at some point in the future.

ArtsACT provided grants for the 2009 workshop and again in 2010 to engage the wonderful poet and novelist Alan Gould to provide the libretto for the latest version of *Capital.* The three weeks Alan and I spent collaborating on this project was one of the most rewarding partnerships in my creative career. It was incredibly exciting to see the ideas for the opera come to life with his facility for words and rhymes that were ideally suited to a musical setting.

I am also indebted to the wonderful Tobias Cole (counter-tenor), Katy Cole (soprano), Norman Meader (tenor), Benn Sutcliffe (clarinet and saxophone), and Colin Forbes (pianist) for taking time to learn and record some excerpts from the latest version of *Capital.* These excerpts have been used to support grant applications and are appended to the score of *Capital 2.* Fleur Miller (soprano), who played Caroline in the semi-staged production of *Capital 1*, recorded the *Bitch Song* on the CD appended to the *Capital* 1 score.

There is no doubt that someone who has been vital to completing this thesis has inadvertently been left out of this thanks list. If you are that person, please accept my humble apologies and know that I will be heartily embarrassed when I realise that I have forgotten you. This omission reflects only my exceedingly appalling memory and indicates no lack of gratitude for your assistance.

Friends and family have been very patient with my anti-social proclivities during the process of completing this thesis. Particular thanks, however, should go to Alma Ryrie-

Volume 1

Exegesis

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Introduction: Pitching opera in a contemporary world

Capital is an original contemporary opera that incorporates a range of musical styles in a way that is intended to promote meaningful engagement about contemporary issues from a broad-based local audience. In a world where opera increasingly struggles to assert its cultural relevance, such an ambition has prompted a re-evaluation of many aspects of the operatic genre and its traditional role and function. Serious opera emerged in the courts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, celebrating and venerating the achievements of particular regimes or noble dynasties. It functioned as a display of social position and cultural authority. This operatic tradition came under threat as the aristocratic world which supported it crumbled. However, opera not only survived but became an essential feature of the expanding urban landscape of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It increased its audience and popularity, periodically renewing itself through cross fertilisation with more popular and inclusive forms of entertainment consisting of a heterogeneous mix of drama, song and dance. Such entertainments included semi-informal offerings at fairs and carnivals and other public spaces as well as more formal performances in music hall, cabaret or the modern theatre, which became common place as the entertainment industry grew in the nineteenth century. Such performances typically attracted a broad-based audience by drawing on topical subject matter and using musical styles that might be recognisable and engaging for the audience. In composing *Capital*, I have revisited the rich tradition of works which address contemporary concerns, incorporating a multiplicity of styles in a way that might engage a broad-based community audience. This exegesis outlines my key influences, both philosophical and musical.

It is important to revisit opera's role in an era when classical music, in general, is becoming increasingly isolated and is struggling to retain its audience share and assert

its cultural relevance. Bleak headlines appear almost weekly in major western press publications:

"America's Orchestras are in Crisis"[1]

"How the Opera is Dying with its Patrons"[2]

"New York's Met opera house on the edge of a precipice"[3]

"Can the English National Opera be saved?"[4]

With radio audiences of only 1.5 per cent in the United States by the end of the last century, as opposed to 36 per cent who listen to country and western music and "African-American urban music",[5] classical music could easily be described as having a niche audience. Australian live performance data for the last ten years show that attendance at classical music events has fallen from eight per cent of all attendances in 2004 to 6.5 per cent in 2013 while opera has declined from five per cent to two per cent.[6] More generally, popular music downloads outnumber classical by more than 20 to one.[7] If popular music is increasing in popularity while classical music popularity is decreasing, it begs the question of the continued role for classical music in contemporary society.

[1] Kennicott, Philip. 2013. "America's Orchestras Are in Crisis." *New Republic*. http://www.newrepublic.com/article/114221/orchestras-crisis-outreach-ruining-them. Accessed 23 March 2015.

[2] Herrell, Renee C. 2014. "*Peter and the Wolf*: How the opera is dying with its patrons." *Huffington Post*. 29 March 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/renee-c-herrell/peter-and-the-wolf-how-th_b_5051780.html. Accessed 10 October 2014.

[3] Service, Tom, and Maev Kennedy. 2014. "New York's Met Opera House on Edge of Precipice, Says Peter Gelb." *The Guardian.* 6 June 2014. http://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/jun/06/new-york-met-opera-house-edge-precipice. Accessed 20 October 2014.

[4] Christiansen, Rupert. 2015. "Can the English National Opera Be Saved?" *The Telegraph.* 30 January 2015. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/opera/11379605/English-National-Opera-crisis-John-Berry.html. Accessed 23 March 2015.

[5] Botstein, Leon. 2004. "Music of a Century: Museum culture and the politics of subsidy." In *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*, edited by Nicholas Cook and Anthony Pople. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 41.

[6] Ernst & Young. 2013. "Live Performance Industry in Australia: 2013 Ticket Attendance and Revenue Survey Live Performance Australia." Melbourne: Live Performance Australia. http://reports.liveperformance.com.au/ticket-survey-2013/. Accessed 10 October 2014. p. 20.

[7] Wright, Craig M. 2014. *Listening to Music*. Boston: Schirmer/Cengage Learning.

Although attendances at both instrumental concerts and opera has declined, the impact on opera has been particularly dramatic. The National Opera Review's recent discussion paper on the financial viability, artistic vibrancy and audience access of Australia's four opera companies shows that attendance at main stage opera productions (as opposed to outdoor productions and musicals) declined by 27.4 per cent from 2009 to 2014, at an average annual compound rate of 6.2 per cent.[8] The largest part of this decline (35.8 per cent) occurred during the worst years of the global financial crisis, between 2007 and 2010, but a further decline in attendance of 16.2 per cent occurred between 2010 and 2013. By way of comparison, while attendance at classical music instrumental concerts declined by 22.4 per cent between 2007 and 2010, there was actually an increase in attendance of 26.9 per cent between 2010 and 2013. This suggests that the decline in opera attendance cannot be explained by economic factors alone.[9]

Within the increasingly shrinking world of classical music, the performance of contemporary compositions by local composers is a rarity. Leon Botstein has asserted that since the 1950s new music for the concert hall has commanded less attention than at any time in the previous 200 years.[10] For example, from production data covering the past ten years supplied by Opera Australia, I have ascertained that less than 13 per cent

[8] Bonds, Mark Evan. 2013. *After Beethoven: The imperative of originality in the symphony*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press. p. 297.

[9] Australia, Commonwealth of. 2015."National Opera Review: Discussion Paper". http://arts.gov.au/national-opera-review. Accessed 16 October 2015. p. 96.

[10] Botstein, Leon. 1992. "Listening Through Reading: Musical literacy and the concert audience." *19th-Century Music* no. 2 (16): 40.

of productions are works written since 1950.[11] Only four Australian operas were produced in that time, less than three per cent of all productions. The current Artistic Director of Opera Australia, Lyndon Terracini, asserts that Opera Australia lose money when performing contemporary music.[12] Similarly, in 2014, the percentage of Australian orchestral works as a proportion of total performances ranged from a low of two per cent (by the Queensland Symphony Orchestra) to a high of nine per cent (by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra).[13] Estimates of the number of works that Australian orchestras commissioned from Australian composers in that year range from five to eight.[14]

In the United Kingdom, Sound and Music, a national charity for new music, undertook a survey of 466 composers engaged in a variety of practices with a broad range of experience, and found that 88 per cent of those surveyed received five or fewer commissions, with 18 per cent receiving no commissions.[15] The average number of commissions was only 2.65, with the average fee for those commissions being £1,392. This suggests that an emerging composer, such as myself, has very little chance of ever earning a living through commissions.

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[11] Information derived from spreadsheets provided by Opera Australia on 23 June 2014 (in response to a personal request), containing year-by-year listings of repertoire, venue, conductors, and number of performances in each season.

[12] Terracini, Lyndon. 2014. "Opera Australia's Lyndon Terracini responds to Peter Tregear." *Australian Book Review.* 2 September 2014. https://www.australianbookreview.com.au/component/k2/101-arts-update/2151-opera-australia-s-lyndon-terracini-replies-to-peter-tregear. Accessed 5 September 2014.

[13] Letts, Richard. 2014. *Australian Orchestras and Opera Companies Programming Australian Works.* http://musicinaustralia.org.au/index.php?title=Australian_Orchestras_and_Opera_Companies_Programming_Australian_Works. Accessed 6 April 2015.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Sound and Music. 2014. "Commissioning Report." Available at http://soundandmusic.org/sites/default/files/projects/files/Commission Survey 2014v5.pdf. Accessed 23 February 2014. p. 4. I was unable to locate equivalent data on Australia commissions.

The negative outlook for composers using classical music genres is actually occurring at a time when, according to Australian live performance data, contemporary non-classical music is actually increasing in popularity.[16] For example, there was a 33 per cent increase in ticket sales for live events — from 13.5 million in 2004 to 18 million in 2013 — driven largely by increasing attendance at contemporary music events.[17] These grew from 20.3 per cent of all attendances in 2004 to 35 per cent of attendances in 2013. The following graph vividly demonstrates the disparity between attendances at "contemporary music" events and "classical music" events. "Contemporary music" is represented by the light green part of the columns, classical music by the dark green, musical theatre by the dark blue and opera by the light blue.

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[16] Contemporary non-classical music is defined as "all forms of the following … pop, jazz, blues, country, rock, folk, soul, R&B, techno, hip hop, rap, heavy metal, and electronic dance music … performed by any type of ensemble or soloist." Ernst & Young. 2013. "Live Performance Industry in Australia: 2013 Ticket Attendance and Revenue Survey Live Performance Australia." Melbourne: Live Performance Australia. http://reports.liveperformance.com.au/ticket-survey-2013/. Accessed 10 October 2014.
[17] Australian Bureau of Statistics data (http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3101.0Dec%202014?OpenDocument) shows that the population grew by approximately 16 per cent in the same period.
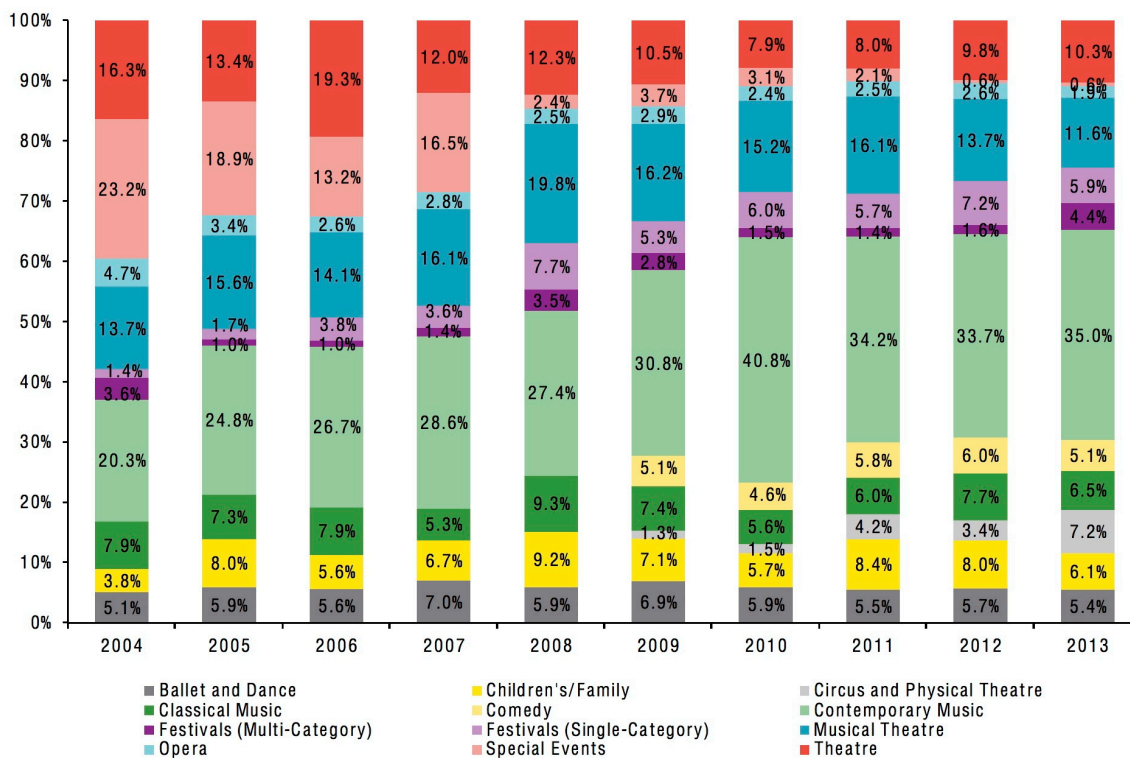
Figure 1: Live performance data (attendances) by category (2004–2013)[18]

The "classical music" category referred to in the Australia live performance data includes orchestral music, chamber music, choral music, traditional music, and "contemporary art music" that is "not pop". "Contemporary music" is defined as music performed by "pop" or "jazz" ensembles, chorus and solo musicians.[19] "Contemporary art music" can only be found in the fine print as a sub-category within the category of "classical music", reflecting the overall irrelevance of such performances to contemporary culture.

There is little consensus about the future of classical music, with diverse commentators including Alex Ross,[20] Norman Lebrecht,[21] Robert Fink,[22] and Rose Subotnik[23] offering

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[18] Ernst & Young. 2013. "Live Performance Industry in Australia: 2013 Ticket Attendance and Revenue Survey Live Performance Australia." Melbourne: Live Performance Australia. http://reports.liveperformance.com.au/ticket-survey-2013/. Accessed 10 October 2014. p. 20.

[19] Ibid. p. 2.

[20] Ross, Alex. 2005. "The Rest Is Noise: A lovely couple: Rodelinda, Bolcom's a wedding." *The New Yorker*. 3 January 2005. http://www.therestisnoise.com/2004/12/rodelinda_bolco.html. Accessed 21 July 2014. pp. 589–590.

widely different perspectives. Lebrecht, a fierce defender of classical music, blames mismanagement by maestros, managers and music corporations for the declining fortunes of classical music, and expresses concern that it is in imminent danger of disappearing from public awareness altogether.[24] Although from a very different analytical perspective, Rose Subotnik, a sociologically oriented musicologist, reaches a similar conclusion for quite different reasons. She suggests that classical music has lost "the kind of vital connection that links a society to the music of its own culture", making it irrelevant for most contemporary Americans, who now find such a connection in popular music.[25] Similarly, Fink suggests that, since 1965, classical music has lost its hegemonic position in a market place now dominated by popular music. Classical music has been attempting to compete in this market place, but is ill placed to do so, particularly while the conservatoria and associated musical institutions fail to accept their loss of "symbolic or ritualistic power to define hierarchies of taste within the larger culture".[26]

Ross more positively suggests a future where the historical divide between classical and popular worlds might be fused:

> One possible destination for twenty-first-century music is a final "great fusion": intelligent pop artists and extroverted composers speaking more or less the same language.[27]

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[21] Lebrecht, Norman. 1996. *When the Music Stops …: Managers, Maestros and the Corporate Murder of Classical Music*. London: Simon & Schuster. p. 12.

[22] Fink, Robert. 1998. "Elvis Everywhere: Musicology and popular music studies at the twilight of the canon." *American Music* 16 (2): 138–139.

[23] Subotnik, Rose Rosengard. 1991. "The Challenge of Contemporary Music." In *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music*, edited by Rose Rosengard Subotnik. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. pp. 292–293.

[24] Lebrecht, Norman. 1996. *When the Music Stops …: Managers, Maestros and the Corporate Murder of Classical Music*. London: Simon & Schuster. p. xiii.

[25] Subotnik, Rose Rosengard. 1991. "The Challenge of Contemporary Music." In *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music*, edited by Rose Rosengard Subotnik. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 286.

[26] Fink, Robert. 1998. "Elvis Everywhere: Musicology and popular music studies at the twilight of the canon." *American Music* 16 (2): 139.

[27] Ross, Alex. 2005. "The Rest Is Noise: A lovely couple: Rodelinda, Bolcom's a wedding." *The New Yorker*. 3 January 2005. http://www.therestisnoise.com/2004/12/rodelinda_bolco.html. Accessed 21 July 2014. p. 590.

Cultural critic Andreas Huyssen similarly suggests that the historical forces that shaped the "modernist paradigm", which required a distinct separation of art from popular culture, has run its course. Although the separation was justified in the past, to preserve the "dignity and autonomy" of the art work from "the totalitarian pressures of fascist mass spectacles, socialist realism, and an even more degraded commercial mass culture in the West", Huyssen argues that "modernism, avant-garde, and mass culture have entered into a new set of mutual relations and discursive configurations which we call 'postmodern'". He argues that we should begin to see this process "as one of opportunity", rather than continue to lament a "loss of quality and failure of nerve".[28]

Unfortunately, there is very little research into the new "opportunities" that might now be coming available. In a recent overview of postmodern cultural studies, Steven Connor found he had reluctantly to exclude music from consideration because of what he termed the "strange absence of a mature postmodernist discourse within music studies".[29] According to Connor, most of the existing work that has been done focuses on "stylistic changes and changes to musical language that take place in scores and in concert halls", rather than a more broad-ranging and clearly more significant discussion about the "explosion of collaborations and fusions",[30] which, he argues, are narrowing the gap between classical and popular music.

Overall, there is very little discussion about how an aspiring composer working within the genre of contemporary opera might create works that appeal to a wider audience. While a small but rich tradition of contemporary Australian avant-garde music flourished briefly in academia during the mid-twentieth century,[31] such positions have become increasingly sparse as conservatoria have merged with universities and have to

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[28] Huyssen, Andreas. 1986. *After the Great Divide: Modernism, mass culture, postmodernism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. pp. x–xi.

[29] Connor, Steven. 2004. "Introduction." In *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, edited by Steven Connor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 17.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Australia's most celebrated composers, including Larry Sitsky, Nigel Butterly, Ann Boyd, Richard Meale, Peter Sculthorpe, and even going back to Alfred Hill in the early-twentieth century, have traditionally supported themselves through careers in academia.

compete with other disciplines in a tight economic environment. Aspiring composers who wish to have their work performed and support themselves as composers must, of necessity, appeal to wider and/or different audiences than the declining art music audience.

I am seeking to write an original contemporary opera by incorporating a range of different musical styles that will both promote accessibility and provide a meaningful musical experience for a diverse audience. The subject matter of the opera centres around issues of current local concern, specifically the way that personal ambitions and misuse of power might thwart personal relationships, the development of community and individual identity. The opera was written in the period leading up to the celebration of the centenary of the establishment of Canberra as the capital city of Australia in 1913 ,which I anticipated might provoke some additional reflection on the nature of the Canberra community.

To explore the best ways of achieving my objective of community engagement, I based the composition of *Capital* on two forms of research undertaken concurrently. First, I explored the theoretical and historical framework in which opera developed, and studied works by composers who have similarly sought to engage a broad-based audience and participate in contemporary discourses. Second, working in partnership with a local theatre, the Canberra Street Theatre, I undertook a form of practice-based research to ascertain audience needs and assess what music might be accessible and meaningful for a local audience.

Chapter 1 considers the way in which aesthetic standards that favour musical unity and originality over heterogeneity and stylistic pluralism became dominant during the nineteenth century. This artificially separated music that was grounded on temporal everyday concerns and designed to appeal to a broad-based audience from more exclusive unique musical works that might reveal other worldly or spiritual truths. Adorno's analysis of this situation draws attention to the difficulties composers face in trying to avoid market pressures and create music which might again play a functional role in social discourse without becoming isolated within an elite institutionalised musical world. His preferred solution was for composers to emulate the composers of the Second Viennese School and isolate themselves as much as possible from market

pressures. However, he did briefly acknowledge the liberating potential of the innovative approach to incorporating popular styles taken by Kurt Weill in his early theatre works, but generally felt that use of popular music styles ultimately resulted in a more commercial approach. Later theorists, such as Peter Bürger and Linda Hutcheon, were similarly attracted to the potential for combining incongruous elements within a single work. They felt that such works allowed multiple perspectives to emerge which might promote contemporary discourse and debate, providing a potential way forward for composers who want to resist the artificial divide between classical and popular music. I argue that there is a long history of composers who have adopted a more heterogeneous strategy as an active means of cultural resistance. Recent work in literary studies and semiotic approaches to musical analysis suggest ways in which the use of familiar musical styles might promote interactive engagement with an audience as they interrogate their musical memories to interpret the music's meaning. Such work has provided a framework for consideration of the ways in which composers use different musical styles as a means of engaging a broad-based audience.

 Chapters 2 to 4 focus on works that have most influenced my own opera. Many of these works have managed to capture the public imagination and break through the artificial divide between classical and popular music. In these chapters, I focus on key works by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791), Ferrucio Busoni (1866–1924), Kurt Weill (1900–1950), Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990), Larry Sitsky (b. 1934), Louis Andriessen (b. 1939) and John Adams (b. 1947). While these composers come from different periods and have taken widely different approaches, I observed certain similarities as I considered their work. Each of these composers incorporated musical styles and musical references that would have been familiar to a broad-based audience at the time of their composition, often challenging contemporary notions about the role and function of music and the composer. In addition, these composers used particular musical motifs to signify particular emotions and ideas to their audiences. They most often did this by associating particular musical ideas with a specific text or action on stage, repeating this later in the opera in such a way that the original meaning might carry across into the new context. By combining these approaches, these composers were able to create opera scores that provided a distinct musical narrative which acted as an additional layer of meaning through which the audience might interpret the

actions on stage. I will suggest that these operas were complex, multi-dimensional or multi-voiced parodic works which addressed contemporary issues from a range of different vantage points.

Chapter 5 details my own compositional process and the way in which I applied the findings of my research when composing *Capital.* This project was undertaken in two distinct stages. In the first instance, an initial version of *Capital,* (henceforth called *Capital 1,* which appears in Appendix A), was workshopped in the week of 7–11 September 2009, with funding support from ArtsACT. The week culminated in a semi-staged performance of the work on 11 September 2009 to a full house of 200 people at the Canberra Street Theatre. As a result of the workshop, I modified the initial approach, taking into account audience reaction and other feedback obtained during the workshop process. Most significantly, *Capital 2* was based on an entirely new libretto by author and poet Alan Gould, funded by an additional grant from ArtsACT. The new libretto enabled me to simplify my compositional approach in line with feedback received during the *Capital 1* workshop.

The score of *Capital 2* is presented in Volume 2 as an original creative work for examination. Like the composers whose approaches I found most relevant to my own aesthetic aims, I have incorporated a range of different styles, freely moving between popular and classical approaches, often layering them against each other both vertically and horizontally. I found that this worked most successfully where the audience clearly understood the musical allusions that I made. As a consequence, in *Capital 2* I deliberately incorporated more popular styles to ensure my sources would be more accessible to the audience. I also removed much of the harmonic complexity which had hampered audience accessibility during the initial semi-staged performance. Unfortunately, to date, funding has not been forthcoming for any additional performances of this work. However, I have included a CD in both scores. The *Capital 1* score includes a recording of the *Bitch Song* taken during the dress rehearsal of the

Capital 1 semi-staged performance.[32] The *Capital 2* score contains excerpts from Scenes 1 and 2 of *Capital 2*.

I conclude by outlining my major findings from undertaking this project. I argue that in the final version of *Capital*, I have been able to demonstrate that polystylism is an infinitely flexible and versatile compositional tool with the potential to cut across the existing paradigm that unnecessarily separates classical and popular forms of music, and attract a broad-based audience. The incorporation of multiple different styles immediately brings into question historical standards about the nature of the autonomous original artwork. I argue that, as different styles are juxtaposed against each other, a new context for hearing familiar forms of music invites a reconsideration of the way a certain style might have been originally framed or sold to the public. The infinite variety of styles that might be combined and the range of different ways a composer may draw different styles into a single coherent work creates numerous creative options for a composer, and can promote innovation and originality. By using musical references and stylistic allusions that are culturally meaningful, a composer can communicate with their audience, harking back to an earlier era when music was valued for its functional utility rather than its structural unity or commercial success. In this way, I hope to demonstrate that it may be possible to resist the current paradigm where a distinct gulf separates classical and popular forms of music, and create a work that is meaningful for a broad-based audience.

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[32] Unfortunately, technical problems prevented me from getting a good quality recording of the actual performance.

Chapter 1.

Setting the stage: Placing *Capital* in its historical and theoretical context

Introduction

Music making, like other forms of cultural expression, is profoundly affected by the social, political and economic context in which it occurs. It should therefore not be surprising that the manifold changes that have altered the world since the breakdown of an aristocratic feudal system in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have fundamentally transformed understandings about the nature and role of music, including opera. In this chapter, I consider how more abstract, autonomous forms of music, particularly instrumental music, came to be privileged over music that seeks to entertain and engage with a more broad-based public audience. The existing division between what we now understand as classical and popular music is a relatively recent phenomenon. The distinction between the two has never been rigidly defined and has often been contested. However, although the distinction between classical and popular forms of music has been under challenge in the western world since the 1960s, there has been little attempt to re-evaluate the underlying beliefs about the nature and role of music that sustain such distinctions. These beliefs are maintained by a range of social, political and economic factors that several cultural theorists, particularly the influential Theodor Adorno,[1] have tried to identify.

In his 1938 essay, "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening", Adorno provided an insightful analysis into factors that limit music's capacity to play a

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[1] Adorno, Theodor W. 1978. "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening." In *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, edited by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt. New York: Urizen Books. pp. 270–299; Adorno, Theodor W. 1976. *Introduction to the Sociology of Music.* New York: Seabury Press.

meaningful role in promoting social change or human emancipation in the contemporary world. His preferred solution was that composers shun commercial and institutionalised forms of music making. Influenced by his own musical preferences and a poor understanding of popular music, Adorno famously championed the work of the composers of the Second Viennese School, most commonly associated with the music of Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951), Anton Webern (1883–1945) and Alban Berg (1885–1935). He felt that by developing and deploying the 12-tone technique these composers were able to effectively quarantine themselves from market forces. However, he also greatly admired what he described as the "montage" approach of Kurt Weill's (1900–1950) early operatic works, *The Threepenny Opera* (1928) and *Mahagonny* (1927–1929). He believed that by appropriating elements of popular musical styles and reintroducing them in a new context, Weill invited the audience to hear this type of music in a new way, which might invite them to reassess previously held assumptions about that music and what it represented.

More recently, in surprisingly similar terms, postmodern literary critic Linda Hutcheon has focused on the way borrowed material can be recontextualised in parodic works. Hutcheon suggests that, when seen or heard in a new context, parodied material might invite a reappraisal that reveals previously hidden facets of the original material. Unlike Adorno, she has little concern about the potentially polluting effect of the marketplace and embraces interaction between popular and traditional art forms. She argues that parodic art can be interpreted in various ways, and can be used to both promote liberation and support more conservative ideologies. What is important to Hutcheon is that parodic art works invite discussion and discourse that allow alternate meanings to be interrogated.

To date, the issue of parody has received limited attention from musicologists. However, recent pioneering work that has considered the issue of musical borrowing, semiotic approaches to musical analysis, and musical narrative does provide some helpful insights. Scholars in these fields typically seek a broader perspective that goes beyond traditional musical analyses of form and musical structure to consider the ways composers try to communicate meaning in their work. Such analyses point to a rich

tradition of works by composers who have always resisted the isolation of music in an abstract, ethereal sphere and the lure of commercialism. Instead, some composers have sought to ground their work in material, everyday concerns and participate in contemporary discourses that affect people in their local community.

I conclude by arguing that many composers have actively sought to create music in the parodic tradition that communicates with the audience in a meaningful way. While these composers may have achieved critical or commercial success (sometimes even both), this was not their focus. Parodic works typically move quickly between different styles and different genres and are often difficult to classify in terms of a classical/popular music paradigm. By using such an approach to my own composition, I hope to engage with a new audience and participate meaningfully in contemporary cultural discourses.

The changing role and function of music

According to Peter Burkholder, the western divide between classical and popular music would have been incomprehensible until the latter part of the nineteenth century.[2] Ground-breaking research by Celia Applegate,[3] Peter Bloom,[4] Philip Bohlman,[5] Michael Broyles,[6] Peter Burkholder,[7] Jane Fulcher,[8] Lydia Goehr,[9] Lawrence Levine,[10] Rose

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[2] Burkholder, J. Peter. 1983. "Museum Pieces: The historicist mainstream in music of the last hundred years." *The Journal of Musicology* 2 (2): 126; Weber, William. 2008. *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert programming from Haydn to Brahms.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

[3] Applegate, Celia. 1992. "What Is German Music? Reflections on the Role of Art in the Creation of the Nation." German Studies Review 15, no. Winter (1992): 21–32.

[4] Bloom, Peter Anthony. 1986. "The Public for Orchestral Music in the Nineteenth Century." In *The Orchestra: Origins and transformations,* edited by Joan Peyser. New York: Scribner. pp. 253–284.

[5] Bohlman, Philip V. 1993. "Musicology as a Political Act." *The Journal of Musicology* 11 (4): 411–436.

[6] Broyles, Michael. 1992. *Music of the Highest Class: Elitism and populism in antebellum Boston*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

[7] Burkholder, J. Peter. 1983. "Museum Pieces: The historicist mainstream in music of the last hundred years." *The Journal of Musicology* 2 (2): 115–134; See also Burkholder, J. Peter. 1986. "The Twentieth Century and the Orchestra as Museum." In *The Orchestra: Origins and transformations,* edited by Joan Peyser. New York: Scribner. pp. 409–432.

[8] Fulcher, Jane F. 1998. "The Concert as Political Propaganda in France and the Control of 'Performative Context'." *Musical Quarterly* 82 (1): 41–67.

Subotnik,[11] Richard Taruskin,[12] William Weber[13] and others has, in recent years, enhanced our understanding about the different environment in which music was composed and performed in previous centuries.

According to Lydia Goehr, during the course of the nineteenth century far-reaching changes affecting the nature and role of music occurred as part of a complex social and cultural revolution which resulted in the growth of museums, theatres, concert halls and opera houses.[14] Precipitating factors suggested by the literature include urbanisation,[15] the rise of the middle class,[16] a growing entertainment industry,[17] and the evolution of the "professional", including the music professional.[18] The bifurcation of musical culture fundamentally changed our understanding of the meaning of music, its functional utility, and the role of the composer and audience.

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[9] See also Goehr, Lydia. 2007. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An essay in the philosophy of music*. Oxford and New York. Oxford University Press; Goehr, Lydia. 2008. *Elective Affinities: Musical essays on the history of aesthetic theory*. New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press.

[10] Levine, Lawrence W. 1988. *Highbrow/Lowbrow*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

[11] Subotnik, Rose Rosengard. 1991. *Developing Variations: Style and ideology in western music*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

[12] For changes regarding the nature of music, see particularly Taruskin, Richard. 2010. *Music in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Taruskin, Richard. 2010. *Music in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[13] William Weber has been particularly prolific, publish numerous books and articles that have significantly enhanced our understanding of the development of the musical canon and the modern concert. Particularly notable are: Weber, William. 1975. *Music and the Middle Class: The social structure of concert life in London, Paris and Vienna*. London: Croom Helm; Weber, William. 2003. "Consequences of Canon: The institutionalization of enmity between contemporary and classical music." *Common Knowledge* 9 (1): 78–99; Weber, William. 2008. *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert programming from Haydn to Brahms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

[14] Goehr, Lydia. 2007. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An essay in the philosophy of music*. Oxford and New York. Oxford University Press. p. 149.

[15] Bouchard, Gérard. 2008. *The Making of the Nations and Cultures of the New World: An essay in comparative history*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press. p. 120.

[16] Pieper, Antje. 2008. *Music and the Making of Middle-Class Culture: A comparative history of nineteenth-century Leipzig and Birmingham*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

[17] McVeigh, Simon. 2004. "'An Audience for High-Class Music': Concert promoters and entrepreneurs in late-nineteenth-century London." In *The Musician as Entrepreneur, 1700–1914: Managers, charlatans and idealists*, edited by William Weber. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. pp. 162–184.

[18] Rink, John. 2001. "The Profession of Music." In *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, edited by Jim Samson. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 55–86.

During the course of these changes, formalist concerns became privileged over the functional role of the music. Up until the late eighteenth century, vocal music sung within a social, political or religious context held the highest status.[19] Instrumental music was considered inferior to vocal music, as it "lacked specificity or intelligible and concrete meaning" in isolation.[20] This did not mean that the music was unimportant. Music, like language, represented an external reality (whether real or imagined).[21] However, it had little meaning on its own. Rather, its meaning could be discerned from its context, most notably the sung text of an opera or other sung form.[22] As music was a means of communication, it was incorporated within the related fields of the liberal arts of rhetoric, dialectics, and grammar, rather than among what we now call the "plastic arts" of painting and sculpture,[23] where music is usually placed today. Music was understood as an activity — a means of contributing to a discourse or an argument, not as a stand-alone autonomous "work" of art.[24]

During the course of the nineteenth century, as orchestral concerts became increasingly popular, the relative importance of vocal and instrumental music was reversed. According to Bonds, this change was advanced by writers such as Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, Ludwig Tieck, Novalis, Jean Paul, Friedrich Schlegel, and E.T.A. Hoffmann, who praised instrumental music for its ability to "transcend that which could be expressed in words".[25] A discourse emerged between musicians and philosophers about the way that music might move the listener from "worldly and

[19] Goehr, Lydia. 2007. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An essay in the philosophy of music*. Oxford and New York. Oxford University Press. pp. 133, 149.

[20] Ibid. pp. 143–144.

[21] Cook, Nicholas, and Nicola Dibben. 2011. "Emotion in Culture and History." In *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, research, applications*, edited by Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 47.

[22] Goehr, Lydia. 2007. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An essay in the philosophy of music*. Oxford and New York. Oxford University Press. pp. 152–153.

[23] Ibid. p. 130.

[24] Ibid. p. vii.

[25] Bonds, Mark Evan. 2006. *Music as Thought: Listening to the symphony in the age of Beethoven*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p. 10.

particular" concerns to "spiritual and universal" experiences.[26] According to this reasoning, music without the distracting element of words could take listeners beyond earthly objects and emotions into a "higher region".[27] Music that provided a catharsis or "the purification of the soul through affective experience" became more highly valued than music with a communicative function.[28] While the redemptive role of music was initially associated with the individual emancipation sought by various nineteenth century revolutionary movements, during the latter part of the century it lost even these external referents and instead became appropriated by more conservative forces which valued music solely for its "autonomous beauty that exists in and of itself".[29] Such purity of form was seen as demonstrating congruence with the natural universe which needed to be free of the burden of external representation.[30] As a consequence, priority came to be placed on music's "internal, structural coherence".[31] "Absolute music" as it became known, should not have outside referents but should be wholly autonomous, self contained, and self-referential.[32]

The elevated position of classical music was given credence by a method of musical criticism which focused on the way the composer had achieved unity and wholeness rather than the more ephemeral nature of a work's reception or audience experience. Such forms of analysis dominated academia throughout much of the twentieth

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[26] Goehr, Lydia. 2007. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An essay in the philosophy of music*. Oxford and New York. Oxford University Press. p. 153. For an interesting discussion regarding the way a discourse evolved between musicians and philosophers in nineteenth century Germany, see Applegate, Celia. 1998. "How German Is It?: Nationalism and the idea of serious music in the early nineteenth century." *19th-Century Music* 21 (3): 274–296.

[27] Bonds, Mark Evan. 2006. *Music as Thought: Listening to the symphony in the age of Beethoven*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p. 23.

[28] Cook, Nicholas, and Nicola Dibben. 2011. "Emotion in Culture and History." In *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, research, applications*, edited by Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 47.

[29] Bonds, Mark Evan. 2006. *Music as Thought: Listening to the symphony in the age of Beethoven*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p. 28.

[30] Ibid. pp. 20, 113.

[31] Goehr, Lydia. 2007. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An essay in the philosophy of music*. Oxford and New York. Oxford University Press. p. 155.

[32] Bonds, Mark Evan. 2014. *Absolute Music: The history of an idea*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

century.[33] Although the reductionist analytical approach based on *a priori* assumptions about unity as an inherently desirable aesthetic quality has, in more recent times, been highly criticised, it continues to be a major focus in any musical education.[34] A musical "work" has now assumed the same status as any other work of art, such as a painting or sculpture, which could be analysed on its own terms.[35] Classical music is now most commonly performed in the concert hall "museum", "stripped of the social functions and historical contexts" that prompted the original composition of the work.[36]

During the course of the twentieth century, as classical music became increasingly exclusive, other forms of music making occurred in the context of an increasingly commercialised musical marketplace[37] which controlled the dissemination of music through the publication of sheet music and the gradual adoption of copyright and performance rights laws.[38] The popular music market has now grown to such an extent that it almost completely overshadows classical music. However, until the 1960s, popular music was generally considered inferior to classical music.[39]

Changes to the way music is experienced and absorbed over the last 200 years have fundamentally changed the role of the composer. Based on an analysis of concert programs, William Weber has demonstrated that during the course of the nineteenth century, the performance of contemporary music as a proportion of all music

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[33] For a good discussion of this see also Kerman, Joseph. 1980. "How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out." *Critical Inquiry* 7 (2): 311–381.
[34] Samson, Jim. 1999. "Analysis in Context." In *Rethinking Music,* edited by Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. p. 41.
[35] Goehr, Lydia. 2007. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An essay in the philosophy of music*. Oxford and New York. Oxford University Press. p.152.
[36] Burkholder, J. Peter. 1983. "Museum Pieces: The historicist mainstream in music of the last hundred years." *The Journal of Musicology* 2 (2): 118.
[37] Middleton, Richard. 1990. *Studying Popular Music*. Milton Keynes and Philadelphia: Open University Press. p. 3.
[38] Ehrlich, Cyril. 1995. "The Marketplace." In *The Twentieth Century,* edited by Stephen Banfield. Oxford: Blackwell. p. 45.
[39] Ibid. p. 39.

performed in the concert halls of major European centres, fell from approximately 80 per cent in the early part of the nineteenth century to less than 20 per cent after 1849.[40]
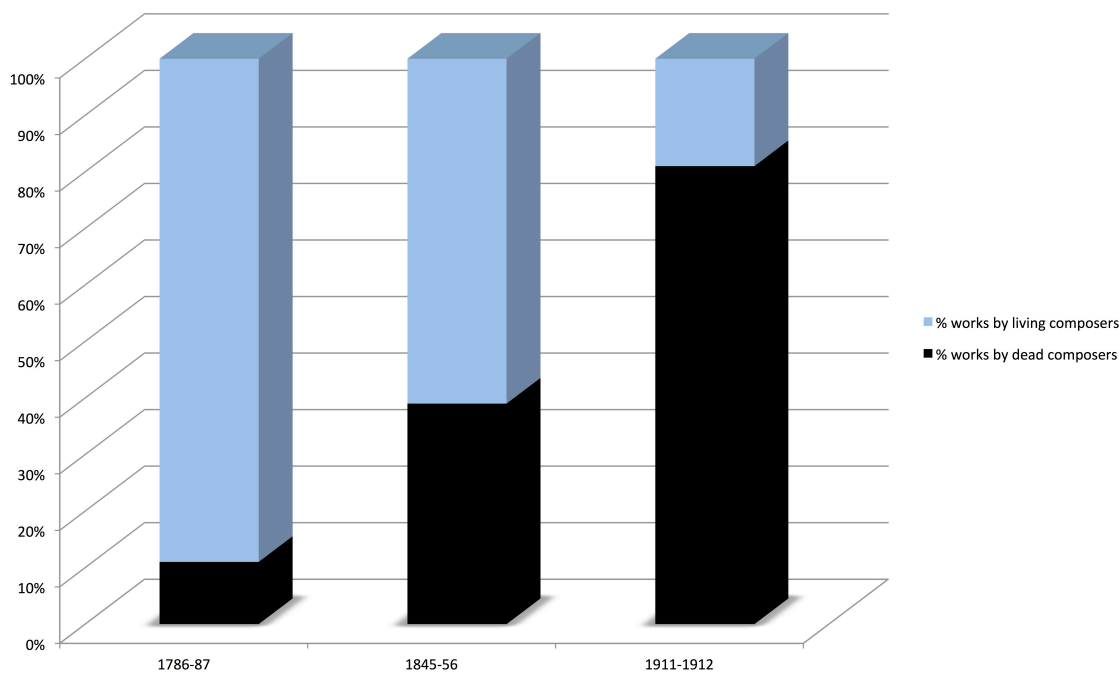
Figure 1.1: Analysis of Gewandhaus concert programs 1786–1912[41]

Contemporary composers had to compete with dead composers. As Burkholder has observed, the small number of classical music composers who were successful typically achieved this position by relating their work to the work of the canonic composers who preceded them in the hope of obtaining a similar canonic status in the future, rather than by demonstrating any utility for contemporary society. The composer of an artwork deemed transcendent became elevated to the same supernatural sphere.[42] Musical meaning, now located within the notated musical score, was perceived as an

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[40] Weber, William. 1977. "Mass Culture and the Reshaping of European Musical Taste, 1770–1870." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Muic* 8 (1): 17-18.

[41] Derived from Weber, William. 2003. "Consequences of Canon: The institutionalization of enmity between contemporary and classical music." *Common Knowledge* 9 (1): 89.

[42] Bonds, Mark Evan. 2006. *Music as Thought: Listening to the symphony in the age of Beethoven*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p. 16.

expression of the experiences of the "authorial persona" of the composer.[43] Such work should not express the "individual or mundane thoughts of a mere mortal", but rather transcendent "universal thoughts".[44] Rather than serving their community, the composer's role was now akin to that of a spiritual guide.

The audience's role also fundamentally changed. Music became a "private experience" performed in a silent (and recently darkened) concert hall.[45] This contrasted starkly with more collective musical traditions where a broad general public might experience and even participate in outdoor entertainments or performances at fairs and community festivals.[46] Audiences at classical music concerts had originally assumed a similarly active role, commonly interjecting even during Mozart or Beethoven performances,[47] but they gradually learned to maintain silence in the same way as attendees at a religious event.[48] This worked against any form of interactive interchange between composers and audience that might make contemporary compositions using classical music genres socially meaningful.

Contemporary music is now almost entirely the province of popular music, where demand is actually increasing in a popular music market that thrives on novelty. In this environment, vocal music continues its dominant position with short songs that might be easily absorbed and understood by consumers as the most dominant musical genre.[49] According to Middleton, as popular music assumed a dominant position, street

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[43] Cook, Nicholas, and Nicola Dibben. 2011. "Emotion in Culture and History." In *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, research, applications*, edited by Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 49.

[44] Goehr, Lydia. 2007. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An essay in the philosophy of music*. Oxford and New York. Oxford University Press. p. 162.

[45] Müller, Sven Oliver. 2014. "The Invention of Silence: Audience behavior in Berlin and London in the ninetheenth century." In *Sounds of Modern History: Auditory cultures in 19th-and 20th-century Europe*. London: Berghahn Books. pp. 153–174.

[46] Levine, Lawrence W. 1988. *Highbrow/Lowbrow*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Loc. 684.

[47] Bashford, Christina. 1999. "Learning to Listen: Audiences for chamber music in early-Victorian London." *Journal of Victorian Culture* 4 (1): 41.

[48] Burkholder, J. Peter. 1983. "Museum Pieces: The historicist mainstream in music of the last hundred years." *The Journal of Musicology* 2 (2): 118.

[49] Middleton, Richard. 1981. "Popular Music of the Lower Classes." In *The Romantic Age 1800–1914*, edited by Nicholas Temperley. London: Athlone. p. 87.

music gradually came to be banished, political songs were pushed into "tight proletarian enclaves", and classics became either marginalised or assimilated in brass band arrangements.[50] Composers who did not achieve commercial success generally had to discontinue their craft unless they also had a private income.[51] This created significant constraints for composers.

Adorno and the culture industry

Writing in the middle part of the twentieth century, Theodor Adorno's analysis of the way music interacts with the marketplace provided many insights into the social constraints that affect the composition and reception of music. Adorno complained that music had been reduced to "moments of sensual pleasure", small dramatic excerpts of music or "irruptions" that were impressed on listeners by "climax and repetition".[52] For Adorno, this diminished music's role to that of a mere commodity or fetish, torn away from any function which could enable music to play a meaningful role.[53] It contributed to a sense of individual alienation[54] or, more dramatically, the "liquidation of the individual"[55] who became subsumed within the overwhelming sweep of the music.

In characteristically bombastic language, Adorno was equally damning of anyone "domesticated under the barbarous name of classical",[56] or seduced by popular music that "mummifies the vulgarized and decaying remnants of romantic individualism".[57] He argued that despite its privileged position, a large proportion of classical music

[50] Middleton, Richard. 1990. *Studying Popular Music*. Milton Keynes and Philadelphia: Open University Press. p. 13.

[51] Ehrlich, Cyril. 1995. "The Marketplace." In *The Twentieth Century*, edited by Stephen Banfield. Oxford: Blackwell. p. 44.

[52] Adorno, Theodor W. 1978. "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening." In *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, edited by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt. New York: Urizen Books. p. 281.

[53] Ibid. p. 278.

[54] Witkin, Robert W. 1998. *Adorno on Music*. London and New York: Routledge. p. 87.

[55] Adorno, Theodor W. 1978. "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening." In *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, edited by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt. New York: Urizen Books. p. 276.

[56] Ibid. p. 271.

[57] Ibid. p. 294.

adjusted itself to the demands of the market (or as he termed it, the "culture industry"[58]) in just the same way as popular music.[59] He condemned those who attended classical music concerts in order to demonstrate their social position and so engaged only superficially with the music.[60] Equally, he condemned popular music which absolved the listener from "the thought of the whole":

> The listener is converted, along his line of least resistance … [the audience] suspend the critique which the successful aesthetic totality exerts against the flawed one of society … The isolated moments of enjoyment prove incompatible with the immanent constitution of the work of art …They are not bad in themselves but in their diversionary function.[61]

Although his experience of popular music was arguably limited, Adorno felt it did little but induce a state of hypnotic stupefaction through repetitive rhythmic and harmonic gestures.

Adorno believed that, ideally, music should reveal underlying social tensions rather than try to hide them and should be a form of consciousness raising rather than a mode of escape. The audience should be able to gain insights by hearing the way different elements of the music interact, conflict and change during the course of the work.[62] Paddison described Adorno's ideal as "self-reflective" music,[63] or music that might, like

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[58] Adorno, Theodor W., and J.M. Bernstein. 2001. *The Culture Industry: Selected essays on mass culture*. London and New York: Routledge. For a definition of Adorno's concept of the "culture industry" see also Leppert, Richard D. 2002. "Commentary on Composition, Composers and Works." In *Essays on Music*, edited by Richard D. Leppert and Susan H. Gillespie. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 201–218. Adorno's concern was culture which was "administered from above", as opposed to that "emerging from below". As such, it includes capitalist musical enterprises as well as traditional musical institutions seeking to impose their will on the general public.

[59] Adorno, Theodor W. 2002. "On the Social Situation of Music." In *Essays on Music*, edited by Richard D. Leppert and Susan H. Gillespie. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 395.

[60] Adorno, Theodor W. 1976. *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*. New York: Seabury Press. p. 6.

[61] Adorno, Theodor W. 1978. "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening." In *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, edited by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt. New York: Urizen Books. p. 273.

[62] Adorno, Theodor W. 2002. "The Radio Symphony". In *Essays on Music,* edited by Richard D. Leppert and Susan H. Gillespie. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 268.

[63] For a good discussion of Adorno's arguments, see Paddison, Max. 1982. "The Critique Criticised: Adorno and popular music." *Popular Music* 2: 201–218.

the written word, have the capacity to empower people and enhance the audience's appreciation of inequitable social and economic relationships. It should point towards alternative modes of social organisation rather than mirror and glamorise what Adorno considered to be dysfunctional aspects of society.[64]

Because, for Adorno, music's position was dependent on external economic, political and social factors, he was not overly optimistic about the ability of any composer to resist some form of commodification and to compose music that might play a more socially useful role. For instance, Adorno was quite dismissive of *gebrauchsmusik* (a term coined by some inter-war German composers aiming to promote the social and community building potential of music[65]) particularly its leading exponent, the composer Paul Hindemith. He felt such music ultimately conformed too closely to market expectations, cancelling any radical gestures or social critique it might contain.[66]

Adorno felt that if music could resume a more functional role, it might reveal false or misleading values which had become what Adorno called a kind of "second nature". This concept, for Adorno, embodied false values or beliefs that had, over time, come to be seen as "natural" and so were not questioned as they should be.[67] Critiquing the nineteenth century realism movement, Adorno argued it would be deceptive for art to claim it represented reality. He felt that art that purported to represent true reality or "nature" was inherently misleading, as it essentially imposed a single version of reality which may or may not reflect the experiences of other people.[68] Instead, Adorno looked back to earlier periods, particularly the early classical period where he felt that the "creative freedom of the individual" had been most perfectly represented. He particularly admired the works of Beethoven's middle period, including *Fidelio* and his

[64] Adorno, Theodor W. 1993. *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 158.
[65] Hinton, Stephen. "2014. "Gebrauchsmusik." *Grove Music Online*.
[66] Adorno, Theodor W. 2002. "On the Social Situation of Music." In *Essays on Music*, edited by Richard D. Leppert and Susan H. Gillespie. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 397.
[67] Adorno, Theodor W. 2002. *Aesthetic Theory*, translated by Gretel Adorno, Rolf Tiedemann and Robert Hullot-Kentor. London: Continuum. p. 66.
[68] Ibid.

Third Symphony, the *Eroica.* For Adorno, such works created the perfect balance, allowing a true debate between the individual or the subject of the music and the whole or structure of the work that had not since been equalled.[69]

Given the all-pervasive influence of the culture industry, Adorno's preferred solution was to quarantine music as far as possible from the effects of the "culture industry". He felt that this was the only way composers could seriously challenge its hegemony. Adorno believed that music should be in some way unsettling, even a little destabilising. The audience should be aware of disparate individual elements of the music and their transformation as they became integral components of the whole.[70] He was therefore insistent that the audience should not be passive but should be able to actively engage with the musical dialogue as the music evolved.[71] They should be able to identify an overarching musical narrative which might metaphorically represent the human struggle for liberty. Adorno's prejudices were very much influenced by his classical music education and he had little understanding of the way in which some popular musicians might also challenge the status quo by questioning existing definitions and establishing new musical boundaries, or by crossing boundaries between classical and popular forms.[72] Despite these limitations, Adorno's critique is perhaps the most comprehensive and detailed account of the dilemmas facing composers who wish to write music that is functional and socially useful. He greatly influenced many modernist composers who sought to evade the influence of the culture industry.

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[69] Adlington, Robert. 1997. "Music Temporality: Perspectives from Adorno and De Man." *Repercussions* 6 (1): 12.

[70] Adorno, Theodor W. 1978. "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening." In *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, edited by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt. New York: Urizen Books. p. 273.

[71] Adorno, Theodor W. 1999. "Criteria of New Music." In *Sound Figures*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. p. 146.

[72] Several critics have argued that Adorno seriously misunderstood popular music. See, for instance, Middleton, Richard. 1990. *Studying Popular Music*. Milton Keynes and Philadelphia: Open University Press p. 35.

Consistent with his isolationist strategy, at least early in his career, Adorno felt that in the contemporary world his ideals could be best achieved through the atonal music of the Second Viennese School. Adorno praised Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg for rejecting the clichéd, formulaic approach of traditional classical and popular music genres and aspiring to create music where the dialectical relationship between various musical elements would be much more transparent.[73] He wrote enthusiastically about the way Schoenberg's music demanded

> active and concentrated participation, the most acute attention to simultaneous multiplicity, the renunciation of the customary crutches of a listening which always knows what to expect, the intensive perception of the unique and specific, and the ability to grasp precisely the individual characteristics, often changing in the smallest space, and their history, devoid of all repetition.[74]

Without the usual signposts of traditional harmonic language, Schoenberg's music was, in Adorno's view, more likely to reveal underlying tensions and contradictions which did not necessarily resolve themselves in the way that an audience might expect, prompting them to new social awareness.

Adorno was not claiming that all music should conform to the approach taken by the Second Viennese School. He was actually highly critical of many of Schoenberg's late works,[75] as well as those of his followers.[76] He realised such innovations might be short-lived before they, in turn, lost their freshness and transparency and became appropriated by the all-pervasive "culture industry". He therefore reflected on a range of other strategies that composers might employ to engage in more socially useful forms of music making, and felt that the evolution of new strategies was an ongoing

[73] Leppert, Richard D. 2002. "Commentary on Composition, Composers and Works." In *Essays on Music*, edited by Richard D. Leppert and Susan H. Gillespie. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 553.
[74] Adorno, Theodor W. 1981 "Arnold Schoenberg, 1874–1951." In *Prisms,* translated by Samuel and Shierry Weber. Cambridge: MIT Press. p. 149.
[75] Jay, Martin. 1984. *Adorno.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press. pp. 151–152. See also Hanssen, Beatrice. 2006. "Dissonance and Aesthetic Totality." In *Sound Figures of Modernity: German music and philosophy,* edited by Jost Hermand and Gerhard Richter. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. p. 189.
[76] Adorno, Theodor W. 2002. "Towards an Understanding of Schoenberg." In *Essays on Music* edited by Richard D. Leppert and Susan H. Gillespie. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 640–641.

challenge. Most notably here, such reflections included detailed consideration of a range of operatic works.

Mozart's *Magic Flute*: "A moment by itself"?

Although it has not attracted as much scholarly attention, in addition to his admiration of the Second Viennese School, Adorno also admired the achievements of several other composers. He focused on composers who had, at least in part, similarly transcended traditional, clichéd harmonic and structural formulae without necessarily giving up on tonality as the Second Viennese School had done. Of particular interest here was Adorno's interest in the early operatic works of Kurt Weill.

While he lamented the "decay of the operatic form",[77] Adorno often used examples from opera and even more popularly oriented operetta to demonstrate ways in which music could provide cultural critique while still engaging with an audience. Indeed, in his early years while studying composition with Alban Berg, Adorno even made sketches for a projected opera based on Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*.[78]

Adorno looked back on Mozart's era with some nostalgia, suggesting that Mozart's last great opera in the *buffa* tradition, *The Magic Flute* (1791), was "a moment by itself" where high and low cultures came together in a way that promoted enlightenment (or human emancipation) while providing pleasure and entertainment that could be enjoyed at all levels of society.[79] Adorno also favourably discussed *Der Freischütz* (1821) by Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826), *Fidelio* (1805) by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827),[80] *Il Trovatore* (1853) by Guiseppe Verdi (1813–1901),[81] *Orpheus in the Underworld*

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[77] Adorno, Theodor W. 1978. "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening." In *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, edited by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt. New York: Urizen Books. p. 297.

[78] Paddison, Max. 1993. *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 5.

[79] Adorno, Theodor W. 1978. "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening." In *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, edited by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt. New York: Urizen Books. p. 273.

[80] Adorno, Theodor W. 1993. "Bourgeois Opera." In *Opera through Other Eyes*, edited by David J. Levin. Stanford: Stanford University Press. p. 34.

(1858) by Jacques Offenbach (1819–1980),[82] *Carmen* (1875) by Georges Bizet (1838–1875),[83] *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1890) by Pietro Mascagni (1863–1945),[84] *Lulu* (1936) by his own teacher, Alban Berg (1885–1935),[85] and, as previously mentioned, *Mahagonny* and *The Threepenny Opera* by Kurt Weill.[86]

The appeal of opera for Adorno was essentially three-fold. Firstly, he felt that because the overall narrative of an opera was derived from the innate tensions and interactions between the various characters, it allowed many perspectives to be represented. Rather than rigidly following pre-determined forms and structures, Adorno appreciated that an opera "cries out to be disrupted".[87] Underlying disjunctions and anomalies are therefore harder to conceal. He insisted:

> Opera does not replicate the stage action in order to elevate it to a
> loftier or symbolic plane, as the cliché would have it. Instead the
> music cuts in on the action as if to proclaim that the strictness of its
> causal motivation shares a frontier with freedom. Just as Orpheus'
> playing rouses the dead from their imprisonment in the cave, so
> opera rescues its characters from fate by singing about them.[88]

For Adorno, this meant that the form should arise from the dramatic needs of the work in a way that enables all voices to speak. Such voices should not be made to conform to any artificially contrived unifying concept.

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[81] Ibid. p. 26.

[82] Adorno, Theodor W. 1992. *Quasi Una Fantasia: Essays on modern music*. London and New York: Verso. pp. 26–27.

[83] Adorno, Theodor W. 1992. "Fantsia Sopra *Carmen*." In *Quasi Una Fantasia: Essays on modern music*, edited by Theodor W. Adorno. London and New York: Verso. pp. 53–64.

[84] Adorno, Theodor W. 1992. "Motifs." In *Quasi Una Fantasia: Essays on modern music*, edited by Theodor W. Adorno. London and New York: Verso. p. 17.

[85] Adorno, Theodor W. 1993. "Bourgeois Opera." In *Opera through Other Eyes*, edited by David J. Levin. Stanford: Stanford University Press. p. 28.

[86] Adorno, Theodor W. 2002. "On the Social Situation of Music." In *Essays on Music*, edited by Richard D. Leppert and Susan H. Gillespie. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 409. See also Adorno, Theodor W. 1993. "Bourgeois Opera." In *Opera through Other Eyes*, edited by David J. Levin. Stanford: Stanford University Press. p. 29.

[87] Adorno, Theodor W. 1992. *Quasi Una Fantasia: Essays on modern music*. London and New York: Verso. p. 30.

[88] Ibid.

Secondly, Adorno felt that, through the representation of magical or unreal worlds, opera provides a glimpse of an alternative society. He argued that the unreal fantastical perspective created distance which throws the present world into sharp relief. In *The Magic Flute,* for instance, Adorno believed that Mozart had enacted a kind of "aesthetic magic" that stripped away bourgeois delusions which might shroud many of the ideals of the Enlightenment.[89] In his treatise entitled "Bourgeois Opera" he argued that, in opera,

> the positivist tendency of bourgeois art — if you can call it that —
> never ruled purely and uncontestably. Just as aesthetic magic itself
> bears something of enlightenment within itself, in that it renounces
> the claim to unmediated truth and sanctions appearance as a special
> realm, so bourgeois art — in order to be at all possible as art — has
> once again brought magic to the fore while transforming it. Opera
> was all the more suitable for this process, since music itself elevates
> the very existence *[Dasein]* against which it strikes.[90]

For Adorno, the music of *The Magic Flute,* as it interacted with the drama and the libretto, provided a means for refreshing enlightenment discourse that revealed dysfunctional aspects of society. By embracing mystical and fantastical elements, Adorno felt that opera might be able to highlight the contradictions within society[91] and reunite otherwise polarised forces.

Through song, Adorno suggested opera could provide "the hope for reconciliation with nature".[92] Adorno discerned a disconnection between "real, live people who speak as in drama, and the medium of singing" within the operatic form.[93] He felt it was a mistake for composers to try to "alleviate" this contradiction with techniques such as recitative,

[89] Adorno, Theodor W. 1993. "Bourgeois Opera." In *Opera through Other Eyes*, edited by David J. Levin. Stanford: Stanford University Press. p. 29.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Adorno, Theodor W. 2002. *Essays on Music* edited by Richard D. Leppert and Susan H. Gillespie. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 35–36.
[92] Adorno, Theodor W. 1993. "Bourgeois Opera." In *Opera through Other Eyes*, edited by David J. Levin. Stanford: Stanford University Press. p. 39.
[93] Adorno, Theodor W. 1992. *Quasi Una Fantasia: Essays on modern music*. London and New York: Verso. p. 30.

or Wagnerian *Sprechgesang*, which aimed to neutralise the inherent contradiction between speech and song. Rather, he argued:

> If there is any meaning to opera at all … then that meaning is to be sought in contradiction itself, rather than in vainly seeking to do away with contradiction in the name of an all too seamless aesthetic unity.[94]

Adorno also observed that operas such as *The Magic Flute, Der Freischütz* and *Il Trovatore* often appealed more to children than adults. This was because children were receptive to the "pictorial language" inherent in the music and drama of these works.[95]

Thirdly, opera prompted composers to accommodate heterogeneous elements, including different musical styles and genres that might naturally occur during the course of a narrative, much like diegetic music might be used in a film.[96] Adorno particularly valorised operas that created a carnival atmosphere in which multiple voices freely interacted, flouting normal social conventions and challenging assumptions about how society is organised.[97] For instance, he celebrated the way in which Mozart's *The Magic Flute* built on the legacy of the popularly oriented Singspiel, turning it into a "world theatre" in which

> the high and the low, opera seria, couplets, songs, decorative singing and enlightened mysticism come together in the great round cosmos as if for the last time.[98]

He similarly admired the way in which Bizet incorporated popular culture by placing it within a different context, allowing the possibility of a critique of the way such music is

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[94] Adorno, Theodor W. 1993. "Bourgeois Opera." In *Opera through Other Eyes*, edited by David J. Levin. Stanford: Stanford University Press. p. 37.

[95] Ibid. p. 26.

[96] For a definition of "diegetic" music as used in film music to describe music originating from the storyworld of the film, as opposed to non-diegetic music where the source is neither visible on the screen or implied by the action, see Bordwell, David. 2013. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. London: Routledge p. 19. Such music might represent a narrator's commentary, sound effects or mood music.

[97] Adorno, Theodor W. 1993. "Bourgeois Opera." In *Opera through Other Eyes*, edited by David J. Levin. Stanford: Stanford University Press. p. 30.

[98] Adorno, Theodor W. 2009. "The Pictorial World of *Der Freischütz*." In *Night Music: Essays on music 1928–1962*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Wieland Hoban. London: Seagull Books. p. 56.

normally consumed. He praised Bizet for "invoking the cliché song and dance; to set the higher music off against the more trivial" without having to use "the most violent contrasts" (by which he means atonality).[99] He also celebrated the efforts of composers such as Mahler who accepted the "vulgarized form" and expropriated themes from popular culture, but in so doing facilitated a transformation process:

> Nothing sounds as it was wont to; all things are diverted as if by a magnet. What is worn out yields pliantly to the improvising hand; the used parts win a second life as variants. [100]

For Adorno, the incorporation of aspects of popular music might provide a kind of polyphony which contrasted sharply with Wagnerian opera. He derided Wagner for his heroic tales which did little but shore up the authority of the story-teller — the bourgeoisie as represented by Wagner himself — rather than representing a range of interests.[101] He argued:

> when all genuine opera makes intermittent use, in however sublimated a way, of the elements of stage music, it is only following the innermost laws of its own nature …[102]

From Adorno's perspective, Wagner's operas effectively fitted within the tradition of *opera seria* which were typically commissioned by a member of the aristocracy celebrating heroic deeds from the perspective of the aristocracy.[103] Adorno clearly identified more closely with the multi-voiced tradition of *opera buffa* tradition rather than the Wagnerian tradition. I will discuss the differences between these traditions in some detail in Chapter 2.

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[99] Adorno, Theodor W. 1992. "Fantsia Sopra *Carmen*." In *Quasi Una Fantasia: Essays on modern music*, edited by Theodor W. Adorno. London and New York: Verso. 56.
[100] Adorno, Theodor W. 1978. "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening." In *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, edited by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt. New York: Urizen Books. p. 298.
[101] Adorno, Theodor W. 2005. *In Search of Wagner*. London and New York: Verso. p. 6.
[102] Adorno, Theodor W. 1992. *Quasi Una Fantasia: Essays on modern music*. London and New York: Verso. p. 30.
[103] Butler, Margaret R. 2009. "Italian Opera in the Eighteenth Century." In *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, edited by Simon P. Keefe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 222.

Adorno, Weill and modernist musical montage

In his discussions of the opera genre, Adorno included a small number of twentieth century operas that he felt followed in the *opera buffa* tradition. For instance, although he was otherwise largely critical of Stravinsky as a composer,[104] he very much admired the "surrealist" approach Stravinsky took in *The Soldier's Tale.*[105] He suggested that by drawing on fragments of both classical and popular styles, Stravinsky had provided an apt reflection of the fragmented social and cultural world of the early 1900s.[106] In Adorno's view, the "surrealist" approach reached its apogée in the operas of Kurt Weill, notably *The Threepenny Opera* and *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (hereafter referred to as *Mahagonny*). While in his later years he was to condemn Weill for what he viewed as his more commercially oriented American works,[107] in the 1920s and 1930s his praise for Weill was effusive:

> It is beyond question that Weill's music is today the only music of genuine social-polemic impact.[108]

His position was that Weill's works drew the audience's attention to a fantastical dystopian world that, like *The Magic Flute,* allowed space for many different voices, including the voices of the most reviled and neglected of all — criminals and prostitutes.

He was particularly intrigued by Weill's use of elements from popular culture. In a 1930 essay on *Mahagonny*, Adorno praised the "explosive force" of Weill's use of "'low'" elements to "break through the middle and partake of the highest".[109]

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[104] For a good discussion of Adorno's position on Stravinsky see Marsh, James L. 1983. "Adorno's Critique of Stravinsky." *New German Critique* 28: 147–169.

[105] Adorno, Theodor W. 2002. "On the Social Situation of Music." In *Essays on Music*, edited by Richard D. Leppert and Susan H. Gillespie. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 395–396.

[106] Paddison, Max. 2003. "Stravinsky as Devil: Adorno's three critiques." In *The Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky*, edited by Jonathan Cross. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 195.

[107] Heldt, Guido. 2005. "Austria and Germany, 1918–1960." In *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, edited by Mervyn Cooke. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 163.

[108] Adorno, Theodor W. 2002. "On the Social Situation of Music." In *Essays on Music*, edited by Richard D. Leppert and Susan H. Gillespie. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 409.

> This music … drags out the worn-out, scratched-up household items
> of the bourgeois parlour … music, cobbled together from triads and
> wrong notes, the nails hammered down with the strong beats of old
> music-hall songs that are not known but remembered as parts of the
> genetic makeup, and glued with the stinking adhesive of softened
> opera potpourris.[110]

For Adorno, such appropriations made the "dead and illusory nature" of the music of the bourgeois tradition evident.[111] Adorno felt Weill had successfully appropriated many aspects of popular musical styles and combined them with traditional compositional techniques to create something new — a 'montage' where clichéd and formulaic musical styles could be re-evaluated and renewed.

Adorno's use of the concept of "montage" was clearly influenced by Russian filmmakers of the 1920s, particularly the director Sergei Eisenstein. According to Eisenstein's "montage theory", two films of the same image merged together inevitably produced a third, quite different, image.[112] Such an image might reveal hidden meanings. Everyday objects might be seen in a new light. Adorno and Eisler appropriated this concept in their analysis of the role of film music. They asserted that in a film, image and music might combine to create a third meaning — film and music might create a multi-layered message that reflected a society "alienated from itself".[113] Similarly, Adorno described Weill's approach as a "montage of dead material" that revealed the false or illusory nature of the culture industry with an "improvisatory, wandering, homeless vigour".[114] He argued that Weill shocked the listener by overexposing "common compositional means" and "unmasking them as ghosts", enabling him to communicate "alarm about the society within which they have their

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[109] Adorno, Theodor W. 2009. "Mahagonny." In *Night Music: Essays on music 1928–1962*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Wieland Hoban. London: Seagull Books. p. 199.
[110] Ibid. p. 197.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Cook, Nicholas. 1998. *Analysing Musical Multimedia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 84.
[113] Adorno, Theodor W., Hanns Eisler, and Graham McCann. 2007. *Composing for the Films*. London: Continuum. p. 50.
[114] Adorno, Theodor W. 2009. "Mahagonny." In *Night Music: Essays on music 1928–1962*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Wieland Hoban. London: Seagull Books. p. 197.

origin".[115] Adorno believed that by combining different musical elements in his montage style, Weill revealed the shallow and superficial nature of a society that had become distracted from addressing substantive issues of human liberation identified by the Enlightenment thinkers.

Adorno equated Weill's montage approach with "the most advanced music of material-immanent dialectic — that of Schoenberg":

> this collection of shards that have already been seen through exceeds
> the bourgeois musical realm … Hence, it is allowed to use triads
> because it does not believe the triads itself, instead destroying each
> one through the manner of its employment.[116]

Significantly, Weill did not need to adopt Schoenberg's atonal techniques since he had invented a way to write in a harmonic context while still avoiding clichéd harmonic progressions. As is discussed in detail in Chapter 3, although Weill used triadic harmonies, he often used them in ambiguous or even atonal contexts that thwarted traditional tonal procedures and surprised the audience.[117] This avoided the predictability of the standard popular song.

Adorno was not the only cultural critic to acknowledge the radical potential of modernist montage techniques. In his 1984 work, *Theory of the Avant-Garde,* Peter Bürger proposed that modernist artists who used montage techniques were fundamentally questioning the role and function of art as promulgated by the artistic institutions of the time.[118] Such institutions, most of which had arisen in the latter part of the nineteenth century, were beginning to assert enormous control over artists and

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[115] Adorno, Theodor W. 2002. "On the Social Situation of Music." In *Essays on Music,* edited by Richard D. Leppert and Susan H. Gillespie. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 409.
[116] Adorno, Theodor W. 2009. "Mahagonny." In *Night Music: Essays on music 1928–1962*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Wieland Hoban. London: Seagull Books. p. 197.
[117] I provide a more detailed musical analysis of Weill's works in Chapter Three, demonstrating Weill's non-traditional approach to tonal harmony.
[118] Bürger, Peter. 1984. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 22.

aesthetic standards at that time.[119] Whereas Adorno essentially accepted that musical meaning was still to be found within the structure of the musical work, Bürger suggested that by bringing together unrelated fragments of other artworks, the montage technique offered a powerful alternative to notions of autonomous original and unified art-works.

> The parts "emancipate" themselves from a superordinate whole; they are no longer its essential elements. This means that the parts lack necessity … What is decisive is not the events in their distinctiveness but the construction principle that underlies the sequence of events.[120]

Bürger observed that, whereas an autonomous work of art seeks to hide its constructed nature, montage actually draws attention to the artwork's artificial and constructed nature.[121] If the meaning is not to be found within the artwork it might draw attention to other questions, including the nature of the incongruity between the elements of the artwork and even the contested nature of art itself. The aim, according to Bürger, was to break through the "aesthetic immanence" of the autonomous artwork[122] and by returning music to its communicative function, encourage a rapprochement between art and "life praxis".[123]

Montage, parody and postmodernism

Adorno's and Bürger's analyses of the disruptive and subversive potential of "montage" prefigures the burgeoning of postmodern interest in polystylism, often discussed under the headings of "collage", "allusion", "paraphrase", "quotation", "intertextuality", "parody", "pastiche", "kitsch", "mash-up", and other similar concepts. Despite increased discourse on these issues, these terms are often poorly defined and are used interchangeably to discuss a range of borrowing and

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[119] Fyfe, Gordon. 2000. *Art, Power and Modernity: English Art Institutions, 1750–1950*. London: Leicester University Press.
[120] Bürger, Peter. 1984. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 80.
[121] Ibid. p. 72.
[122] Ibid. p. 80.
[123] Ibid. p. 22.

appropriation techniques. While there are often subtle distinctions between these terms, I will be broadly discussing polystylism as a compositional technique where a range of different styles are either directly quoted or alluded to within the one work.[124] I will be seeking to differentiate between two types of polystylism: those where the new work is essentially quite similar to the original product, and those which accentuate, transform and recontextualise borrowed material in the creation of an entirely new work. Renowned literary theorist, Linda Hutcheon, whose work is discussed at length below, describes the former as "pastiche" and the latter as "parody".[125] Because, as Adorno suggested, Weill typically recontextualised borrowed material by juxtaposing it against other material, under Hutcheon's definition, his work would be defined as a "parody".[126] Conversely, works such as Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Phantom of the Opera,* might be considered "pastiche" for failing to differentiate themselves sufficiently from their predecessors, given that, as Banfield suggests,

> the show voice and its bodged fix between registers and harmonic styles, lyricism and drama, rock, modernism and romantic opera (epitomized by Christine and the Phantom) sounds arch and stale …[127]

I will primarily be using the terms "parody" and "pastiche" in accordance with these definitions. However, in discussing "parody" I will also refer to "montage", as defined by Adorno.

Opinions about the function of postmodern parody and pastiche vary between two extremes. Taking the most pessimistic view, Frederic Jameson expresses concern about the "effacement" of the "frontier between high culture and so-called mass or commercial culture" and what he considers to be the superficial and "degraded"

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[124] The term "polystylism" was first coined by Schnittke to describe the way he incorporated "elements of another's style" into his own compositions. See Schnittke, Alfred. 2002. "Polystylistic Tendencies in Modern Music." In *A Schnittke Reader*. Indiana: Indiana University Press. p. 87.

[125] Hutcheon, Linda. 1985. *A Theory of Parody: The teachings of twentieth-century art forms*. New York: Methuen. p. 38.

[126] I provide a detailed analysis of Weill's work in Chapter Three.

[127] Banfield, Stephen. 2005. "Popular Musical Theatre (and Film)." In *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, edited by Mervyn Cooke. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 301.

landscape of "schlock and kitsch"[128] which permeates the postmodern era. Jameson recognises that in the modernist era, parody typically consists of a "systematic mimicry" of the eccentricities of an established "norm" and so provides a fertile area of artistic discourse. However, he believes that further fragmentation and commercialisation in the postmodern era has meant that such parody has become meaningless within a morass of many different styles and genres. He argues that in this process "the norm itself has become eclipsed",[129] meaning that there is no adequate foil to the parodied material that can reveal it as a parody. He claims that parody has now degenerated into pastiche:

> Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar mask, speech in a dead language: but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs.[130]

In Jameson's view, it is now difficult to distinguish between subversive and complicitous material and such boundaries are quite blurred.[131]

In contrast to Jameson, Linda Hutcheon welcomes the "double-voiced" nature of the parodic work and its capacity to simultaneously support and critique the status quo. For Hutcheon, the essence of the parodic work is that it can be interpreted in multiple ways. It is not necessarily a politically radical gesture. It might suggest alternative ways of seeing the past and/or the present that invite change, or it might invite a retreat to the more conservative values embedded in the past.[132] For Hutcheon, the point is that

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[128] Jameson, Fredric. 1991. *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. New York: Verso. https://http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/us/jameson.htm. Accessed 3 June 2014. p. 55.

[129] Ibid. p. 65.

[130] Ibid.

[131] For a good discussion of Jameson's position within the debate about postmodern art see the introduction to Brooker, Peter. 1992. *Modernism/Postmodernism*. London and New York: Longman. p. 1–33.

[132] Dyer, Richard. 2007. *Pastiche*. London: Routledge. p. 26.

all parody is "overtly hybrid and double-voiced".[133] As Simon Dentith has observed, the essential point is that parody provides a means of opening up discourse by enabling meaning to be questioned and debated.[134]

According to Hutcheon, parody can play an important role in generating new forms of artistic expression when traditional conventions become overused and stale.[135] Although a "parody" as defined by Hutcheon will share similarities with the original work, it will also critique it.[136] Hutcheon discussed parody in similar terms to Adorno's portrayal of montage. For Hutcheon, although a parodic composition may contain a direct quote or merely allude to another work or style, it will generally differentiate itself in some way from the original through exaggeration, distortion or recontextualisation.[137] It is the difference between the parodic foreground and parodied background that communicates the intended message.[138] As in the montage work something new is created through a bitextual synthesis.[139] Not uncommonly, this leads to stylistic innovations which might contest generally understood artistic standards. For instance, some musicologists have argued that *opera buffa* inspired innovations in instrumental music which led to the development of sonata form. I will briefly explore this proposition in Chapter 2.

Parody implicitly gives an artwork a functional role. Influenced by Bakhtin, Hutcheon describes parody as a "dialogic" form of artistic expression[140] that invites audience interaction and participation. The incorporated texts of a parody are not passive entities, but work with and against the new material in a way that encourages listeners

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[133] Hutcheon, Linda. 1985. *A Theory of Parody: The teachings of twentieth-century art forms*. New York: Methuen. p. 28.
[134] Dentith, Simon. 2000. *Parody*. London and New York: Routledge. p. 37.
[135] Hutcheon, Linda. 1985. *A Theory of Parody: The teachings of twentieth-century art forms*. New York: Methuen. p. 36.
[136] Dyer, Richard. 2007. *Pastiche*. London: Routledge. p. 54; Hutcheon, Linda. 1985. *A Theory of Parody: The teachings of twentieth-century art forms*. New York: Methuen. p. 10.
[137] Ibid. p. 20.
[138] Ibid. p. 32.
[139] Ibid. p. 35.
[140] Ibid. p. 71.

to "find and interpret the backgrounded text in its relation to the parody".[141] This requires that the audience identify the source of the imitation, the nature of its distortion, and the implied message this generates.[142] Jann Pasler has suggested that when a composer uses musical quotations or makes stylistic allusions, listeners not only recall the original context of the quoted work, but their own musical memories and experiences:

> Through calling on experiences of all kinds (including the personal and the social) and suggesting links between memories recorded in different, apparently unrelated categories, their works constitute occasions for us to come to understand the disparate parts of our lives as fundamentally related.[143]

Where a broad range of musical sources are used, the meaning will be readily understood by a wide audience who need consult no authority other than their own experience. This can empower the listener and challenge the authority of the musical academy as the arbiter of aesthetic standards. Conversely, the parody might also exclude people by using subject matter that might only be understood by a select or elite group. Some examples of this are discussed in Chapter 4. Whatever the audience, communication and dialogue is an essential component of parody. Such dialogue can occur horizontally between the creator and their audience, as well as vertically between the text itself and other texts.[144] Importantly, the audience's understanding of the "parody" may differ in different periods and different contexts. Parodic works are open to different interpretations in different time periods. What is critical is that any one parodic work might lend itself to multiple valid interpretations that can be debated and discussed.

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[141] Ibid. p. 22.

[142] Dyer, Richard. 2007. *Pastiche*. London: Routledge. p. 55. See also Hutcheon, Linda. 1985. *A Theory of Parody: The teachings of twentieth-century art forms*. New York: Methuen. p. 24.

[143] Pasler, Jann. 2009. "Postmodernism, Narrativity, and the Art of Memory." *Contemporary Music Review* 7 (2): 19-20.

[144] Hutcheon, Linda. 1985. *A Theory of Parody: The teachings of twentieth-century art forms*. New York: Methuen. p. 87.

Parody also challenges many assumptions about the role of the composer.[145] Composers have always borrowed and appropriated material from other composers. However, as Burkholder has observed, until recently, the issue has been largely neglected in the musicological literature because it challenges an expectation that compositions should be original, self-contained, and based on newly-invented material.[146] In recent times, some artists have not only acknowledged the widespread practice of borrowing but have taken great pride in the appropriation and recontextualisation of pre-existing material.[147] As I will discuss in the next section, musicology has yet to fully explore this trend.

Musicology and parody

Burkholder has written extensively on musical borrowing,[148] arguing that it should now be considered as a "field" that crosses periods and traditions like counterpoint, tonality, opera, or programmatic music.[149] To this end, he has created a "typology of borrowing procedures"[150] to better understand "the variety of borrowing methods, their history over time, and the relation of individual composers and repertoires to the problem as a whole".[151]

Although Burkholder acknowledges that composers who "borrow" from the past may wish to communicate a particular meaning to the audience,[152] his work, like that of

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[145] Burkholder, J. Peter. 1995. *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the uses of musical borrowing*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. p. 2.
[146] Ibid.
[147] For a good discussion of authenticity in the postmodern era Moore, Allan. 2002. "Authenticity as Authentication." *Popular Music* 21 (2): 209–223.
[148] Burkholder, J. Peter. 1994. "The Uses of Existing Music: Musical borrowing as a field." *Notes* 50 (3): 851–870; Burkholder, J. Peter. 1995. *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the uses of musical borrowing*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. See also Burkholder's many entries in Groves Music Online, including "Borrowing", "Collage", "Intertextuality", "Modelling", "Patchwork" and "Quotation".
[149] Burkholder, J. Peter. 1994. "The Uses of Existing Music: Musical borrowing as a field." *Notes* 50 (3): 861.
[150] Ibid. p. 851.
[151] Ibid. p. 861.
[152] Burkholder, J. Peter. 1995. *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the uses of musical borrowing*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. p. 299.

David Metzer's, is primarily descriptive.[153] Such studies significantly advance our understanding of different types of polystylism and have elevated the study of this phenomenon as a matter of serious scholarly concern. However, they reflect more traditional modes of musical analysis, discussed earlier, which focus on the form and structure of the music rather than its role and meaning.[154]

The inherent communicative function of parodic works, as discussed above, calls for a deeper form of analysis that complements their discursive role. It is interesting that despite the recent interest in musical borrowing, the issue of "parody" remains largely neglected in the musicological literature. Oxford Music Online, for instance, has three entries on "parody", defined as the use of pre-existing material for the purpose of making some "specific effect through the relationship with the parodied model", and one entry on "pasticcio". However, the focus is clearly the Renaissance era, with scant reference to the early twentieth century and none to the postmodern era.[155] Hutcheon suggests that semiotic theories derived from the discipline of linguistics are potentially helpful in understanding the discursive structures implicated within the parodic text.[156]

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[153] Metzer, David Joel. 2003. *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 190.

[154] See, for instance Heile, Björn. 2002. "Collage Vs. Compositional Control: The interdependency of modernist and postmodernist approaches in the work of Mauricio Kagel." In *Postmodern Music/Postmodern Thought*, edited by Judith Irene Lochhead and Joseph Henry Auner. New York and London: Routledge. pp. 287–299; Losada, C. Catherine. 2009. "Between Modernism and Postmodernism: Strands of continuity in collage compositions by Rochberg, Berio, and Zimmerman." *Music Theory Spectrum* 31 (1): 57–100; Straus, Joseph Nathan. 1990. *Remaking the Past: Musical modernism and the influence of the tonal tradition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press; Straus, Joseph N. 1991. "The 'Anxiety of Influence' in Twentieth-Century Music," *The Journal of Musicology* 9 (4): 430–447.

[155] See Cook, Elisabeth, and Stanley Sadie. 2014. "Parody." *Grove Music Online.* http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/O007203. Accessed 28 July 2014; Michael, Tilmouth, and Sherr Richard. 2014. "Parody (I)." *Grove Music Online.* http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/20937. Accessed 28 July 2014; Michael, Tilmouth. 2014. "Parody (II)." *Grove Music Online.* http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/20938. Accessed 28 July 2014; Price, Curtis. "Pasticcio." *Grove Music Online.* http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/21051. Accessed 19 April 2014.

[156] Hutcheon, Linda. 1985. *A Theory of Parody: The teachings of twentieth-century art forms*. New York: Methuen. pp. 22–23.

To better understand how composers communicate meaning, I have consulted recent musicological approaches which focus on semiotic theories of music, as well as the related area of narrative in music. Although the field of musical semiotics is still relatively young, with little consensus in approach,[157] those approaches that consider music's interactions with text and/or visual images broadly agree that audiences ascribe meaning differently depending on the context in which they hear certain types of music and their own musical memories. Philip Tagg, for instance, undertook some ground-breaking work surveying listeners to try to understand how they derive meaning from a sample group of songs. He concluded that music demonstrably interacts with other forms of expression, mainly by means of homology, connotation, cross-reference and cultural convention.[158] That is, listeners derive meaning through a complex process drawing on previous experiences and contextual relationships.

The composer's ability to evoke a certain mood through alluding to a pre-existing cultural association is well known by film composers. For instance, Provenazano has observed:

> As a result of centuries of musical and cultural evolution, listeners have learned to interpret a certain horn call as war cry, sweeping strings as an indication of love and romance, creeping percussion as a signal of impending danger, etc. … in order for the composer's work to be effective, the listener must be capable of placing what he/she is hearing into a preexisting vocabulary of musical tropes.[159]

That is, as Burkholder asserts, music becomes meaningful through familiarity and shared associations that accumulate over time between a community of listeners.[160] A film composer may use a well known musical trope or may create a musical association

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[157] For a good summary of the relevant literature in this area, see Agawu, Kofi. 1999. "The Challenge of Semiotics." In *Rethinking Music,* edited by Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 138–160.

[158] Tagg, Philip, and Robert Clarida. 2003. *Ten Little Title Tunes: Towards a musicology of the mass media*. New York: The Mass Media Music Scholars' Press. p. 92.

[159] Provenzano, Catherine. 2008. "Towards an Aesthetic of Film Music: Musicology meets the film soundtrack." *Music Reference Services Quarterly* 10 (3–4): 85.

[160] Burkholder, J. Peter. 2006. "A Simple Model for Associative Musical Meaning." In *Approaches to Meaning in Music*, edited by Byron Almén and Edward Pearsall. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. pp. 77–79.

through an ongoing correspondence between a certain musical motif and a certain image, action, or emotion.[161] This latter approach is the principle that underlines the Wagnerian leitmotif which Kalinak defines as a "leading theme" or a "musical phrase" which can be as complex as a melody or as simple as a few notes. Through repetition, such a motif becomes identified with a character, situation, or idea".[162]

Film composers use such pre-existing associations in a variety of ways.[163] The music may be congruent with the film, suggesting a similar emotion or idea. Alternatively, a composer may deliberately use music with an incongruent meaning to confound expectations and create ambiguity. Provenazano cites the example of a funeral scene where, based on previous cultural conventions, a western audience might expect a slow string quartet accompaniment in a minor key appropriate for a serious religious ceremony. A different meaning would be implied if the composer writes an upbeat dance-like musical soundtrack for the same scene.[164]

Importantly, musical meaning is contextually specific and interpretations will vary in different situations depending on the experiences of the listener. Musical signs are notoriously unspecific and any attempt to develop a universal musical lexicon must inevitably fail.[165] Nevertheless, Kramer suggests that music is "semantically absorptive" and when transferred into another context it may acquire a new meaning which is influenced both by the original context and the new context.[166] This is because the audience not only hears what is familiar, but what is different about the music in its new context.[167] In this way, as both Nicholas Cook[168] and Lawrence Kramer[169] have

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[161] Kalinak, Kathryn Marie. 1992. *Settling the Score: Music and the classical Hollywood film*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. pp. 48–49.
[162] Ibid. p. 63–64.
[163] Provenzano, Catherine. 2008. "Towards an Aesthetic of Film Music: Musicology meets the film soundtrack." *Music Reference Services Quarterly* 10 (3–4): 85.
[164] Ibid. pp. 85–86.
[165] Tarasti, Eero. 1994. *A Theory of Musical Semiotics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p. 11.
[166] Kramer, Lawrence. 2002. *Musical Meaning: Toward a critical history*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 165.
[167] Burkholder, J. Peter. 2006. "A Simple Model for Associative Musical Meaning." In *Approaches to Meaning in Music*, edited by Byron Almén and Edward Pearsall. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p. 79.

concluded, the audience interprets the music's meaning through a dynamic interplay between music and the context in which it is presented.

This suggests, then, that to understand what a composer is trying to communicate it is important to consider both musical unity and instances in which a composer deliberately creates disunity or incongruity.[170] Audiences have little difficulty interpreting music that may seem to be totally at odds with the events, characters or atmospheres of the image or text it is accompanying.[171] Because of this, some scholars have suggested that the search for musical unity is inherently flawed and "inadequate to the richness and complexity of all great musical artworks".[172] Webster argues that by accepting that musical forms may be "multivalent and noncongruent" it may be possible to gain insight into "modes of understanding" such as ambiguity, irony and the inclusion of "social and compositional traditions as an integral component of the meaning of any composition".[173]

In a similar vein, Everett has looked specifically at the way composers use disunity and incongruency to create irony or parody.[174] She argues that a parodic musical discourse

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[168] Cook, Nicholas. 1998. *Analysing Musical Multimedia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[169] Kramer, Lawrence. 2002. *Musical Meaning: Toward a critical history*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

[170] Cook, Nicholas. 1998. *Analysing Musical Multimedia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 81.

[171] Longobardi, Ruth Sara. 2005. "Multivalence and Collaboration in Benjamin Britten's Death in Venice." *Twentieth-Century Music* 2 (1): 54.

[172] Webster, James. 1990. "Mozart's Operas and the Myth of Musical Unity." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2 (2): 217.

[173] Webster, James. 1987. "To Understand Verdi and Wagner We Must Understand Mozart." *19th-Century Music* 11 (2): 192.

[174] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2004. "Parody with an Ironic Edge: Dramatic works by Kurt Weill, Peter Maxwell Davies, and Louis Andriessen." *Music Theory Online* 10 (4). http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.04.10.4/mto.04.10.4.y_everett_frames.html. Accessed 11 August 2014: 91-113. For other good studies discussing the way composers create parody, see Sheinberg, Esti. 2000. *Irony, Satire, Parody, and the Grotesque in the Music of Shostakovich: A theory of musical incongruities*. Aldershot: Ashgate; Wragg, David. 2001. "'Or Any Art at All?': Frank Zappa Meets Critical Theory." *Popular Music* 20 (1): 205–222; Farnsworth, Rodney. 1988. "*Così Fan Tutte* as Parody and Burlesque." *Opera Quarterly* 6 (2): 50–68; Mera, Miguel. 2002. "Is Funny Music Funny?: Contexts and case studies of film music humor." *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 14 (2): 91–113; Munteanu, Dana. 2012. "Parody of Greco-Roman Myth in Offenbach's Orfée Aux Enfers and La Belle Hélène." *Syllecta Classica* 23: 77–101; Williams, Carolyn. 2011. *Gilbert and Sullivan: Gender, genre, parody*. New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press; Zank, Stephen. 2009. *Irony and Sound: The music of Maurice Ravel*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.

occurs where a composer appropriates pre-existing music with an intent to highlight it in a significant way by placing it in a new context.[175] She describes trans-contextualisation as a process for inverting or negating the literal message communicated through sung or spoken text,[176] and identifies three typical procedures used by composers who wish to introduce a satirical or ironic ethos. First, the composer may create ambiguity through "inverted correlation" or "analogy" (for instance, by using a minor melody to set happy words or vice versa).[177] Second, the composer may insert incongruous stylistic elements that seem to contradict or at least create ambiguity or disparity between the other elements of a scene.[178] The use of upbeat dance music at a funeral service discussed earlier would be an example. Additionally, the composer may create a musical discourse as different stylistic elements interact as the music unfolds.[179] Examples of some of these techniques are discussed in Chapter 3.

Everett's discussion about the interaction of different musical material within a musical work has some similarities with the approach taken by scholars considering the issue of narrative in music. It is an issue of particular relevance for film music scholars. Film music may originate in the story world of the film or it may originate in the world of the film narrator, providing musical commentary on the story as it unfolds.[180] Importantly, as Claudia Gorbman discusses at length in her groundbreaking work on film music, music often blurs the distinctions between the diegetic world of the story and the non-diegetic world of the narration, marking shifts in perspective. Gorbman describes music as a mediator:

> Its nonverbal and nondenotative status allows it to cross all varieties
> of "borders": between levels of narration (diegetic/non-diegetic),

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[175] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2004. "Parody with an Ironic Edge: Dramatic works by Kurt Weill, Peter Maxwell Davies, and Louis Andriessen." *Music Theory Online* 10 (4). http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.04.10.4/mto.04.10.4.y_everett_frames.html. Accessed 11 August 2014.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Gorbman, Claudia. 1987. *Unheard Melodies: Narrative film music*. London: Indiana University Press. p. 3.

between narrating agencies (objective/subjective narrators), between viewing time and psychological time, between points in diegetic space and time (as narrative transition).[181]

Similarly, musicologists have in recent times applied narrative frameworks to other forms of music. According to Almén, composers can communicate a narrative arch by observing the shifting hierarchical relationships between contrasting musical units over time.[182] To understand such changes, it is not the similarity between the different voices that is important, but their differences. Burkholder similarly asserts that narrative might unfold musically where there is an awareness of "semantic oppositions" and "a tracking of their interactions through a relevant time span".[183] This method may be used in conjunction with other methods, for example by using motivic associations which can act as a specific signifiers.[184] An example of this is the leitmotif method, discussed earlier.

The emerging literature on musical narrative is challenging traditional understandings about the autonomous nature of music, as well as the traditional focus on musical unity. Film composers were not the first composers to discover these techniques. Claims about music's autonomy and meaning have never been uncontested, and there is a rich tradition of works that have continued the seventeenth and eighteenth century mimetic traditions discussed earlier in this chapter.

Composers contesting the role and function of music

Jann Pasler has argued that in France, particularly in opera, "useful" music was valued aesthetically throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and that artistic value was not necessarily linked to musical autonomy to the same degree as it was in

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[181] Ibid. p. 30.

[182] Almén, Byron. 2008. *A Theory of Musical Narrative*: *Musical meaning and interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p. 27.

[183] Burkholder, J. Peter. 2006. "A Simple Model for Associative Musical Meaning." In *Approaches to Meaning in Music*, edited by Byron Almén and Edward Pearsall. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p. 8.

[184] Almén, Byron. 2008. *A Theory of Musical Narrative*: *Musical meaning and interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p. 14.

Germany.[185] This meant that there was less need of a *Gebrauchsmusik* movement. As Jane Fulcher and Glenn Watkins have observed, composers such as Maurice Ravel (1875–1937), Erik Satie (1866–1925), Albert Roussel (1869–1937) and Charles Koechlin (1867–1950) often used incongruous borrowed material and an eclectic juxtaposition of styles as a means of questioning established styles and genres, including the dichotomy between high and low culture.[186] Fulcher argues that early-twentieth century French composers successfully challenged the boundaries between high and low culture by contesting meaning from within a formal tradition. This effectively challenged the hegemony of more traditional composers, particular Vincent d'Indy and Gabriel Fauré, as well as the "static, anachronistic French culture" represented by the established music order.[187] She argued that in eclectic works such as *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges,* composers like Ravel were not necessarily seeking to engage in class warfare, but were nonetheless challenging the institutionalised, conservative, didactic form of grand opera which had been adopted and supported by the most powerful members of French society.[188] This creates a different perspective from Adorno, who thought that while composers such as Schoenberg and Weill could provide pockets of resistance and offer a momentary vision of an alternative society, it would be difficult to fundamentally change music's role under a capitalist system.

Fulcher's analysis is based on the theories of cultural critic and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who has suggested that, in western societies, artistic groups such as writers and composers create a field of interest constituting "an independent social universe

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[185] Pasler, Jann. 1986. "Music and Spectacle in *Petrushka* and *the Rite of Spring*." In *Confronting Stravinsky: Man, musician, and modernist*, edited by Jann Pasler. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 83.
[186] Fulcher, Jane F. 2007. "Symbolic Domination and Contestation in French Music: Shifting the paradigm from Adorno to Bourdieu." In *Opera and Society in Italy and France from Monteverdi to Bourdieu*, edited by Victoria Johnson, Jane F. Fulcher and Thomas Ertman. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 320; See also Watkins, Glenn. 1994. *Pyramids at the Louvre*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. p. 184.
[187] Fulcher, Jane F. 2007. "Symbolic Domination and Contestation in French Music: Shifting the paradigm from Adorno to Bourdieu." In *Opera and Society in Italy and France from Monteverdi to Bourdieu*, edited by Victoria Johnson, Jane F. Fulcher and Thomas Ertman. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 322.
[188] Ibid. p. 320.

with its own laws of functioning, its specific relations of force, its dominants and its dominated".[189] Those seeking to operate within this field must understand its "laws" and work within the field. However, this field is not a static immovable entity and it can be challenged from within by individuals and groups. This can have the effect of destabilising power relationships within the field, with flow-on effects for broader society. According to Bourdieu:

> The cultural producers, who occupy the economically dominated and symbolically dominant position within the field of cultural production, tend to feel solidarity with the occupants of the economically and culturally dominated positions within the field of class relations.[190]

By challenging the hegemony of those who define the laws within each field, an artist can indirectly challenge societal rules or norms that might otherwise be taken for granted.

This is not necessarily an easy task. It can, as suggested earlier, involve a fundamental reconsideration of the role and function of music. In appealing to the past for inspiration and the future for acceptance, Burkholder claims that composers have

> ignored the goal which the composers they sought to emulate have kept uppermost in their minds: creating music which had current value for an audience in the present and fulfilled a social role above and beyond its value as art.[191]

Composers who offer a mere simple synthesis of classical and popular styles fail to address those underlying issues. Such initiatives, including Gunther Schuller's "third stream" of music, which was briefly popular in the 1950s and 1960s,[192] have typically been short-lived because the overall framework in which music making occurs is

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[189] Bourdieu, Pierre. 1993. "Field of Power, Literary Field and Habitus." In *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on art and literature*, edited by Randal Johnson. Cambridge: Polity Press. p. 163.

[190] Bourdieu, Pierre. 1993. "The Field of Cultural Production, Or: The economic world reversed." In *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on art and literature*, edited by Randal Johnson. Cambridge: Polity Press. p. 44.

[191] Burkholder, J. Peter. 1983. "Museum Pieces: The historicist mainstream in music of the last hundred years." *The Journal of Musicology* 2 (2): 120.

[192] Banks, Don. 1970. "Third-Stream Music." *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 97: 59–67.

embedded within modern notions about the nature and role of music which militate against elevating music that might be socially useful. Fink, for instance, claims that it is futile to seek a rapprochement between classical and popular forms of music without challenging the disjunction between classical and popular musical genres.[193] Including more popular music elements within music played in a classical music context might blur the ill-defined distinction between classical and popular music, but it does little to break-down the paradigm that continues this divide or return music to a more functional role.

Rose Subotnik has suggested that contemporary composers should resile from notions of music's autonomy and re-establish a means of communicating with their audience. To this end, she suggests three strategies. First, composers should renounce the ideal of complete structural autonomy in favour of values associated with community, including communication.[194] Second, composers should not relate to different musical styles using outmoded aesthetic standards that privilege classical forms.[195] Third, composers should write music with a social and/or political function, and promote "conscious moral reflection" on issues of contemporary relevance.[196] She writes:

> The effort to intensify and expand the kinds of relationships their music might have with society could help composers establish a more powerful and promising sense of social need for imaginative music, and hence a stake in such music, as clear evidence that human life is worth sustaining.[197]

Subotnik suggests that, by doing this, composers might again be able to establish a wider audience for their music.

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[193] Fink, Robert. 1998. "Elvis Everywhere: Musicology and popular music studies at the twilight of the canon." *American Music* 16 (2): 146–147.

[194] Subotnik, Rose Rosengard. 1991. "The Challenge of Contemporary Music." In *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music*, edited by Rose Rosengard Subotnik. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 291.

[195] Ibid. p. 291–292.

[196] Ibid. p. 292.

[197] Ibid.

Following such advice, in preparing to write *Capital*, I have sought to renegotiate the role of the composer. Rather than focusing on structural autonomy or commercial success, I have striven to produce a work that, by incorporating a variety of styles and addressing contemporary issues, might engage a broad-based audience. However, as Adorno foresaw, this is not easy in a world in which music serves a range of different interests — interests that often do not reflect social need or contribute constructive commentary to contemporary community discourse. Adorno's insightful analysis demonstrates the inadequacy of any approach which does not seek to fundamentally renegotiate the nature and role of music. Because he believed that music no longer played a functional role, Adorno looked to Mozart's operas as an ideal that could no longer be realised. Instead, he chose an isolationist approach, as exemplified by the work of the Second Viennese School. Adorno's purist approach and his concerns about the potentially polluting effects of popular music made it difficult for him to be satisfied with the parodic approach taken by Weill, even though he initially regarded it with acclaim. Hutcheon, however, has suggested that parody plays a critical role where it promotes community discourse, seeing it as an advantage if a work can be interpreted from multiple perspectives, as this brings underlying social tensions into the open, where they can be discussed and debated. In parody, the familiar becomes defamiliarised, and so can be seen afresh. It is this recontextualisation that many composers rely on for parodic effect when borrowing from or appropriating different musical styles. The motivation of such composers is primarily one of communication rather than structural unity. To understand the way in which composers before me have sought to create music which is socially relevant and communicates to audiences by incorporating different musical styles, I need to consider the way in which composers give their music meaning and create an overarching musical narrative by incorporating different musical styles. This will be my focus in the next three chapters, before the final chapter analyses the way I have applied these techniques in creating my own opera, *Capital.*

Chapter 2.

Opera buffa to operetta: Operatic engagement in community discourse

Introduction

The changes in aesthetic thought during the nineteenth century discussed in Chapter 1 fundamentally affected music's role and function in society. During this process autonomous instrumental works became privileged over music with a more functional role. The most structurally unified forms of music were ascribed transcendent spiritual properties, giving them priority over music with more material concerns. Composers of such otherworldly music were ascribed a priestly role, while audience members were encouraged to listen and absorb rather than interact with the music.

In this chapter, I examine music composed prior to these aesthetic shifts in a search for models to assist the composition of a work for a broad-based audience. I argue that, since Monteverdi's operatic endeavours, serious and comic operatic traditions have interacted dynamically, each influencing the development of the other. Comic operas began as thinly disguised parodies of more serious operas but gradually expanded their role, parodying not just the music, but the social, political and economic relationships represented in more serious operas. During the course of the eighteenth century, expanded multi-act comic operas, or *opera buffa* as they became known, played an essential role in the political and social discourse of an emerging urban society.

In early operas the role of music was of limited importance, but the freer form and convoluted plots of *opera buffa* gradually inspired numerous musical innovations, including through-composed finales and a blurring of the distinction between recitatives and arias. Such music did far more than support the text. It added an additional layer of meaning which aided the audience in the interpretation of the action on stage. In this way, the composer became intimately involved in a musical discourse which enhanced the parodic role of the opera.

By Mozart's time, *opera buffa* performances were a frequent occurrence at the popular theatres of Vienna. In *The Magic Flute*, Mozart demonstrated how a rich, multi-voiced work, dealing with contemporary issues, could be interpreted at multiple levels and appeal to a broad audience. To achieve this, Mozart used numerous strategies, including the incorporation of a range of different styles within the work, an increased role for the orchestra, and the expressive use of harmonic colouring and melodic contours that often countered the text or introduced a sense of ambiguity. Mozart also created an overarching musical narrative through the use of proto-typical leitmotifs. These motifs and the harmonic structure of his opera were motivated by his desire to introduce dramatic elements within the music rather than to create musical unity. His opera served as a model for later nineteenth century operettas as well as some twentieth and twenty-first century operas, which will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

As the nineteenth century progressed, an operatic genre so immersed in contemporary concerns and active interaction with audiences came to be derided in an atmosphere that privileged music with more spiritual concerns. Wagner set about elevating opera to the same status as instrumental music by promoting unity rather than heterogeneity in his quest to create a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art). However, despite Wagner's views, the comedic opera tradition (or light opera/operetta) continued to grow in popularity, incorporating a range of musical styles and providing social commentary in the tradition of *opera buffa*. Operetta flourished in many European countries, with Jacques Offenbach (1819–1880) in France, Johann Strauss (1825–1899) in Austria, and W.S. Gilbert (1836–1911) and Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900) in England. Operettas by these composers were performed around the world and became particularly popular in the United States where, as is discussed in Chapter 4, they further developed during the course of the twentieth century.

Parodic operas

Since the genesis of modern opera in the seventeenth century, there have been serious and comic traditions that have interacted dynamically, each influencing the development of the other. In the early part of the eighteenth century, serious operas might include a short comic scene and/or a short comic intermezzo to provide comic

relief between the acts of a larger work.[1] Such scenes often ridiculed and parodied the elevated tone of more serious scenes.[2] However, such operas gradually became purged of their comic episodes and became known as *opera seria.*[3] *Opera buffa* as it became known, developed as a genre in its own right during the 1730s, in the hands of a small group of "enlightened members of the legal profession and aristocracy" in northern Italy.[4] They gradually developed more extended story lines and became full-length productions in their own right. *Opera buffa* gradually spread north, and by the end of the eighteenth century the production of comic operas in Europe came to eclipse the production of serious operas, outnumbering them by ratios of between two and ten to one.[5] It spawned many offspring in different countries, including the *Singspiel* in Germany, *opéra comique* in France and the ballad opera in England. Although these national variants differed from each other to a greater or lesser degree, they were all essentially parodic. Typically, such operas parodied existing *opera seria,* often appearing in the same city, at the same time as the original.

Initially, the role of the composer in *opera buffa* was often incidental, as the music was derived or directly copied from pre-existing works. "Pasticcio" — "an opera made up of various pieces from different composers or sources and adapted to a new or existing libretto"[6] — was commonplace in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A strict hierarchical arrangement existed, with the ruler or patron as arbiter of taste at the top, followed by the audience, the singer, and the librettist. The lowest person on this

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[1] Troy, Charles E., and Piero Weis. 2015. "Intermezzo." *Grove Music Online.* http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/O002509. Accessed 11 October 2015.
[2] Cook, Elisabeth, and Stanley Sadie. 2014. "Parody." *Grove Music Online.* http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/O007203. Accessed 28 July 2014.
[3] Butler, Margaret R. 2009. "Italian Opera in the Eighteenth Century." In *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, edited by Simon P. Keefe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 222.
[4] Weiss, Piero, and Julian Budden. 2014. "Opera Buffa." *Grove Music Online.* Accessed 5 May 2014.
[5] Hunter, Mary. 1986. "The Fusion and Juxtaposition of Genres in Opera Buffa 1770–1800: Anelli and Piccinni's 'Griselda'." *Music and Letters* 67 (4): 364.
[6] Price, Curtis. "Pasticcio." *Grove Music Online.* http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/21051. Accessed 19 April 2014.

hierarchy was the composer, who was required to serve all.[7] Little by way of originality or ideas was expected from the composer.

An early example of opera parody was *The Beggar's Opera,* first performed in London in 1728. A so-called "ballad-opera", *The Beggar's Opera* had a libretto in English by John Gay, spoken dialogue replacing recitative, and a score of songs freely adapted and arranged by Christoph Pepusch from existing popular songs. The use of simpler, direct, folk-like tunes was, according to Derek Scott, clearly intended as a parody of the heavily embellished melodies of Handelian operas.[8] *The Beggar's Opera* also distinguished itself from the *seria* by assigning the role of the protagonist to a tenor rather than the more stylised voice of the counter tenor, which was a typical conceit of Handel *opera seria* at this time.[9]

Many scholars have debated whether *The Beggar's Opera* is an anti-capitalist indictment directed at those who frequented high-class Italian opera, an indictment of the lower-class characters who populated the cast, or both.[10] However, Richardson has suggested that this is a simplistic response. In a similar vein to Hutcheon, he argued that it represented a "complex resistance to seeing things as they are normally seen".[11] According to Richardson:

> The joke cuts several ways, at the conventional dramatic
> representation of sorrow, at the hard-heartedness of the professional
> informer, at the grief of a highwayman's wife, and at compassion and

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[7] Taruskin, Richard. 2010 *Music in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 173.

[8] Scott, D. 2001. *The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian drawing room and parlour*. Aldershot: Ashgate. pp. 1–4.

[9] Ibid.

[10] J Canfield, J. Douglas. 1995. "The Critique of Capitalism and the Retreat into Art in Gay's *Beggar's Opera* and Fielding's *Author's Farce*." In *Cutting Edges: Postmodern critical essays on eighteenth-century satire*, edited by James E. Gill. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press. pp. 320–334;. Greene, Donald. 1994. "Gay and Brecht: *The Beggar's Opera* and *Die Dreigroschenoper*." In *Time, Literature and the Arts: Essays in honor of Samuel L. Macey*, edited by Thomas R. Cleary. Victoria: University of Victoria. pp. 13–33; Salmon, Richard J. 1981. "Two Operas for Beggars: A political reading." *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory* 57: 63–81.

[11] Richardson, John. 2000. "John Gay, the Beggar's Opera, and Forms of Resistance." *Eighteenth-Century Life* 24 (3): 19.

> grief themselves. Its effect is a bare laughter that includes in its
> mockery the tawdriness of conventional representation, the
> shallowness of others' response, ideals of mourning and compassion
> and the poverty of those, like us, who laugh at them.[12]

The success of this work encouraged many imitators and significantly influenced subsequent opera both in its own time and, as is discussed in Chapter 3, in the twentieth century.

The Beggar's Opera was symptomatic of the increased importance in urban areas of the theatre as a site for public engagement and interaction with contemporary issues in the eighteenth century. Stimulated by industrialisation, major European cities were expanding rapidly and a growing middle class was rising to prominence. An emerging cultural elite consisting of businessmen, professionals, high-status artists, cultural entrepreneurs and some nobility had an enormous impact on musical culture.[13] This occurred often with a commensurate loss of wealth and influence for the courts and court-based culture. Traditional boundaries such as the boundary between "court" music and theatre music became quite "porous".[14] As a result, traditional court-based opera, *opera seria,* came into direct competition with *opera buffa* favoured in urban areas.

Weber identified opera as a key site where members of the emerging elite group met and debated issues of key importance.[15] The frequent musico-politico-literary *querelles* that took place during the eighteenth century, particularly in London and Paris, demonstrated the central role played by opera within urban discourses of that time. According to Hollier and Block:

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[12] Ibid. p. 28.

[13] Weber, William. 2007. "Opera and the Cultural Authority of the Capital City." In *Opera and Society in Italy and France from Monteverdi to Bourdieu*, edited by Victoria Johnson, Jane F. Fulcher and Thomas Ertman. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 171.

[14] Weber, William. 2006. "Redefining the Status of Opera: London and Leipzig, 1800–1848." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 36 (3): 509.

[15] Weber, William. 2007. "Opera and the Cultural Authority of the Capital City." In *Opera and Society in Italy and France from Monteverdi to Bourdieu*, edited by Victoria Johnson, Jane F. Fulcher and Thomas Ertman. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 167–168.

> The opera house had become an extension of the salon, the café, and
> other intellectual and cultural centers where richly symbolic partisan
> alignments, pitting king against queen, French against Italian, and
> even the male against the female principle, reflected a form of
> political conviction.[16]

In this environment, opera occupied a place close to the centre of the "movement of ideas".

Hutcheon claims that although some critics berated the parody as inferior to the original, some members of the intelligentsia considered it to be a superior form of entertainment as it did everything the original did and more.[17] For instance, in the middle of the eighteenth century in Paris, a debate that became known as "Quarrel of the Buffoons" erupted between those who favoured the traditional baroque operatic spectacles of the court and key Enlightenment intellectuals, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Friedrich Melchior Grimm, who championed the new *opera buffa* style which had recently arrived from Italy. According to Hellior, the latter group was attracted to the simplicity and accessibility of the "down-to-earth, popular comic situation" that could be "easily understood by anyone", with "catchy melodies that even ordinary people might sing". They railed against more highly ornate court music using academic styles that might only be understood by connoisseurs.[18] They were keen to appeal to a broad audience and find an appropriate vehicle for communicating moral and political precepts as a means of strengthening order and control within growing urban environments.[19] The aim was to instruct and inspire goodness through representations that the audience could relate to.[20] Simplicity was important, as Rousseau believed that the emotion, and therefore the moral power of music lay in melody rather than in

[16] Hollier, Denis, and R. Howard Bloch. 1994. *A New History of French Literature*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press. p. 533.

[17] Hutcheon, Linda. 1985. *A Theory of Parody: The teachings of twentieth-century art forms*. New York: Methuen. p. 76.

[18] Saisselin, Rémy G. 1992. *The Enlightenment Against the Baroque: Economics and aesthetics in the eighteenth century*. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 45–46.

[19] Bokina, John. 1997. *Opera and Politics: From Monteverdi to Henze*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. p. 46.

[20] Taruskin, Richard. 2010 *Music in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 460.

complex polyphony. Even Mozart found his own music criticised in Paris for "appealing to the mind with counterpoint" rather than "touching the heart" with melody.[21] This suggests a strong tradition where music's affective power was valued over the coherence of the musical structure.

As a result of the "Quarrel of the Buffoons", the French *opéra comique* emerged to replace the extravagances of baroque opera. This influenced the development of simpler, less ornate, more "natural" styles,[22] and an interest in simple folk melodies[23] in Italy and Germany. Of particular interest here is the development of the German *Singspiel,* which were often based on simple, naïve, even sentimental song styles[24] and German folk material. However, in keeping with the Enlightenment ideal that morally uplifting cultural products should be broadly accessible, such works were usually performed in the vernacular, contrasting with more elevated forms of opera, which continued to be performed in Italian. From 1778, *Singspiel* came to enjoy court patronage from Joseph II, who Taruskin describes as the "prototype of all 'enlightened despots' of eighteenth-century Europe".[25] This occurred as part of a proto-nationalistic desire to encourage German poets and composers to produce works "for the improvement of lovers of German rather than Italian or French art",[26] which served to enhance the popularity and acceptability of the *Singspiel.* Although these operas assimilated the music of the people, the music itself was no longer inconsequential. As discussed below, *opera buffa* gradually freed itself from many of the constraints and conventions of *opera seria,* allowing composers to take a more active role in the

[21] Till, Nicholas. 1992. *Mozart and the Enlightenment: Truth, virtue and beauty in Mozart's operas*. London: Faber. p. 43.

[22] Taruskin, Richard. 2010 *Music in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 437.

[23] Till, Nicholas. 1992. *Mozart and the Enlightenment: Truth, virtue and beauty in Mozart's operas*. London: Faber. p. 43.

[24] Ibid. p. 133.

[25] Taruskin, Richard. 2010 *Music in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 462.

[26] Branscombe, Peter, and Thomas Bauman. 2014. "Singspiel." *Grove Music Online.*
http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/25877. Accessed 28 September 2014.

construction of musical scores that did far more than create a background for the sung text. The best scores, particularly those of Mozart, were an essential means for making the intended parodic nature of these works apparent to the audience.

Opera buffa in late eighteenth century Vienna

Eighteenth century *opera buffa* reflects a very different understanding of the meaning of music, the role of the composer, and the involvement of the audience than that which was to prevail in the nineteenth century. *Opera buffa* was becoming increasingly popular in eighteenth century Vienna and other urban areas. Between 1770 and 1790, there were at least 128 *opera buffa* productions. Each received anything from three to 50 or more performances over the course of several years.[27] These operas were intimately engaged in the lively intellectual discourses of the period.

In a detailed study of *opera buffa* in Vienna during Mozart's lifetime Mary Hunter has argued that *opera buffa* played a critical role in addressing "some of the social and ideological changes working their way through Europe during the eighteenth century".[28] Such works typically raised questions about social mobility, aristocratic pretensions, inner and outer nobility, the limits, benefits, and obligations of power, and the changing relations between genders.[29] Hunter claims that although *opera buffa* ultimately reinforced existing social hierarchical relationships, it routinely tested them with "a variety of disruptive elements".[30] This might include the overthrow of a patriarch in a hierarchical society, a servant overstepping their role, or a focus on the centrality of a woman's suffering within a society where male authority was usually unquestioned.[31] Williams has similarly argued that the representation of different "social types" within a theatrical context and the "forms and the principles of their

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[27] Hunter. Mary. 1999. *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna: A poetics of entertainment*. Princeton and Chichester: Princeton University Press. p. 6.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid. p. 52.
[30] Ibid. p. 71.
[31] Ibid. p. 73.

formation" focused attention on the created nature of such social divisions.[32] In *opera buffa*, the routine ridiculing of social boundaries and social mores revealed that such methods of ordering society were not necessarily natural and so invited questioning about the way society was ordered. Using Hutcheon's terminology, *opera buffa* was a "double-voiced" form of art that "denaturalised" the accepted order of things, providing a basis for community dialogue and debate about issues that might not have otherwise been a feature of public discourse.

Opera buffa also invited participant engagement. Many plots were based on existing tropes. For instance, the elopement or abduction archetype was a common feature in many plots, including *The Magic Flute, The Abduction from the Seraglio,* and Beethoven's *Fidelio.* The melodramatic and the magical featured prominently. For Hunter, this had the effect of creating a well understood network of expectations about plot shape and trajectory, while allowing "sufficient room for variation or recombination of related elements to provide a measure of pleasurable uncertainty".[33]

Opera buffa typically gave the audience a privileged role. According to Dahlhaus:

> Unlike spoken comedy, the rationality of opera buffa, without which
> it would not have become the characteristic genre of the Age of
> Enlightenment, comes into force only in its reception by an audience;
> it is a latent center amid the turbulence onstage.[34]

It is often the audience who are brought into a powerful position, given information that is apparently hidden to key characters of the opera. For instance, it is typically the audience who knows when one character is disguised as another or, as in the case of the Act 2 finale in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro,* which characters are hiding where. This stands in stark contrast to the heroic or mythic subject matter of *opera seria* which

[32] Williams, Carolyn. 2011. *Gilbert and Sullivan: Gender, genre, parody*. New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press. p. 16.

[33] Hunter. Mary. 1999. *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna: A poetics of entertainment*. Princeton and Chichester: Princeton University Press. p. 41.

[34] Dahlhaus, Carl. 2003. "The Dramaturgy of Italian Opera." In *Opera in Theory and Practice, Image and Myth*, edited by Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli. Chicago, and London: University of Chicago Press. p. 144.

was presented as historical fact and/or religious truth and usually commanded little more than audience affirmation. In contrast, in *opera buffa*, characters might make direct appeals to audience members, reinforcing the audience's role in asserting critical judgment. This ploy, often called demolishing the "fourth wall" that notionally separates audience from the stage, disturbed the progress of dramatic time and directly brought the audience into partnership with the characters on stage.[35] Typically, *opera buffa* endings were "simultaneously inevitable and satisfying, and arbitrary and unsettling" providing the possibility of "double or multiple perspectives".[36] The audience's secret knowledge often put them in the best position to predict the ending, elevating them to a position above that of a mere consumer who should dutifully absorb the material presented to them in silence.

Opera buffa plots were typically engaged with contemporary events and controversies. Whereas the plot of an *opera seria* plots were usually set in the past",[37] *opera buffa* in Mozart's Vienna was typically set contemporaneously, even if some distance was created by placing the action within an exotic or fantastic location. According to Hunter, such strategies gave the impression that the main action took place "somewhere like here but not here".[38] Reflecting this contemporaneous outlook, *opera buffa* tended to include more genuinely new librettos than *opera seria,* which tended to repeatedly set the same canonic texts.[39] Because it was harder to use previously composed music with new librettos, *opera buffa* more frequently attracted new musical settings.

Whereas the composer's role in *The Beggar's Opera* had been limited to the arrangement of existing songs, by Mozart's time composers were beginning to assume a more central

[35] Hunter. Mary. 1999. *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna: A poetics of entertainment*. Princeton and Chichester: Princeton University Press. p. 51.
[36] Ibid. p. 23–24.
[37] Butler, Margaret R. 2009. "Italian Opera in the Eighteenth Century." In *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, edited by Simon P. Keefe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 222.
[38] Hunter. Mary. 1999. *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna: A poetics of entertainment*. Princeton and Chichester: Princeton University Press. p. 55.
[39] Ibid. p. 33.

role in the dramatic presentation of these works. In *opera seria,* the libretto was fitted around the musical structure of recitative and aria using the number opera format consisting of discrete musical items. However, the more free flowing librettos and comedic transgressions of traditional forms and structures presented in *opera buffa* required significant musical innovations. While retaining the overall number opera format they gradually introduced through-composed sections, giving a sense of emotional or psychological progress through the course of the aria[40] which contrasted sharply with the *da capo* convention of repeating the opening sequence of each song. Composers often smoothed over the stilted separation between recitativo and aria characteristic of *opera seria* and wrote through-composed sequences. The through-composed sections gradually became more extended, ultimately encompassing whole scenes. The extended finale, in which multiple plot strands were finally brought together as the opera reached its climax and resolution, became a key feature of the *opera buffa.*[41]

The extended *opera buffa* finales have been linked with significant developments in the evolution of musical forms and structures that underpinned the music of the classical and romantic era. *Buffa* finales needed to accommodate the dramatic needs of the denouement at the melodramatic end of the opera, and usually involved the entire ensemble. This in itself was a significant departure from *opera seria*, which only rarely departed from solos or duets.[42] The finales typically included multiple characters within a more organic musical structure that could rapidly change mood to match the varying fortunes and emotional states of the characters. Conflicting points of view needed to be represented musically and often balanced against each other until the final resolution. As Rosen has suggested, this development was to have dramatic implications for the subsequent development of sonata form, which, at its essence, has

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[40] Ibid. p. 108.

[41] Taruskin, Richard. 2010 *Music in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 450.

[42] Dahlhaus, Carl. 2003. "The Dramaturgy of Italian Opera." In *Opera in Theory and Practice, Image and Myth*, edited by Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli. Chicago, and London: University of Chicago Press. p. 132.

the rhetorical resolution of two conflicting points of view (represented as two contrasting themes).[43] Taruskin goes so far as to assert that *opera buffa* is "the great stylistic transformer of European music",[44] and that the instrumental music exemplified in the works of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven owe more to developments in *opera buffa* than to the composers of German instrumental music who preceded them.[45] While the complexities of Rosen's and Taruskin's argument are beyond the scope of this study, it is important to stress here that the inclusion of a range of contrasting voices that embodied a variety of extra-musical meanings clearly stimulated new ways of making music. This history suggests that the composition of imitative multi-voiced works were not only highly valued in the pre-Romantic era, but that they fostered an environment where musical innovation and an increasingly flexible approach to form and musical structure flourished. Many of these innovations are apparent in Mozart's *opera buffa* which were to have a profound impact on the subsequent development of opera.

Mozart and *opera buffa*

Mozart was working at a time when the musical market place was opening up new possibilities that made it possible for a composer to turn to a broader general public for support rather than rely on aristocratic patronage.[46] His *opera buffa* were not written for an elite audience. Rather, like the opera I have written, they were intended for a general theatre public. Mozart was intimately involved with Viennese theatre culture of the late-eighteenth century.[47] His use of the *Singspiel* genre in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* and *The Magic Flute* demonstrated that, like many intellectuals, he believed in the popular theatre as a vehicle for both entertainment and conveying ideas.

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[43] Rosen, Charles. 1971. *The Classical Style*. London: Faber p. 289.

[44] Taruskin, Richard. 2010 *Music in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 434.

[45] Ibid. p. 400.

[46] Tarasti, Eero. 2012. *Semiotics of Classical Music: How Mozart, Brahms and Wagner Talk to Us*. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. p. 36.

[47] Till, Nicholas. 1992. *Mozart and the Enlightenment: Truth, virtue and beauty in Mozart's operas*. London: Faber. p.134. See also Lindenberger, Herbert. 2010. *Situating Opera: Period, genre, reception*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 45.

Mozart freely interacted with many of the leading intellectuals of Vienna in the Viennese Masonic movement. Claiming to include "all representatives of the Austrian Enlightenment" it was, according to Till, a "chief vehicle for the propagation and dissemination of the ideals of the Enlightenment in Austria".[48] *The Magic Flute* includes a Masonic cabal and portrays Masonic ceremonies reflecting contemporary concerns of the Masonic movement locating it, like other *opera buffa* of the time, within contemporary discourses.[49] Robinson has argued that by playing his part in the "larger cultural fabric" of his time Mozart comes as close as any single figure to representing "the full spectrum of eighteenth-century sensibilities".[50]

Despite appealing to a broad audience, Mozart was reluctant to relax any of his musical standards. According to Till, he was critical of what he perceived to be the "amateurish"[51] efforts of some German *Singspiel* composers.[52] However, his father repeatedly urged him to ensure his music was broadly accessible. Leopold was influenced by the philosopher Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, who had emphasised that to achieve moral value, a writer should ensure accessibility for all and a "predominantly natural tone".[53] Leopold had frequently urged his son not to forget the "popular style, which tickles long ears".[54] However, Mozart did not believe that all complexity should necessarily be eschewed in the quest for "deliberate primitivism"[55] and struggled to find the right balance between the two. His initial effort at German *Singspiel* in 1782, *The Abduction of the Seraglio*, was greatly admired by Goethe, who

[48] Primary sources cited in Till, Nicholas. 1992. *Mozart and the Enlightenment: Truth, virtue and beauty in Mozart's operas*. London: Faber. p117.
[49] This includes *Don Giovanni, The Marriage of Figaro, Cosi Fan Tutte, The Abduction of the Seraglio* and possibly *The Magic Flute* if interpreted allegorically as a representation of contemporary Masonic ideals.
[50] Robinson, Paul A. 1985. *Opera and Ideas: From Mozart to Strauss*. New York: Harper & Row. p. 47.
[51] Till, Nicholas. 1992. *Mozart and the Enlightenment: Truth, virtue and beauty in Mozart's operas*. London: Faber. p. 136.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Shroeder, David. 2003. "Mozart and Late Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics." In *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*, edited by Simon P. Keefe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 55.
[54] Cited in Shroeder, David. 2003. "Mozart and Late Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics." In *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*, edited by Simon P. Keefe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 55.
[55] Till, Nicholas. 1992. *Mozart and the Enlightenment: Truth, virtue and beauty in Mozart's operas*. London: Faber. p. 136.

praised its "simple and economical style". However, it was derided by Emperor Joseph as having "too many notes". [56] Nevertheless, according to Till, he aspired to write a German opera rooted in his own community and tradition,[57] telling his father in 1783:

> I prefer German opera, even though it means more trouble for me.
> Every nation has its own opera, and why not Germany … Very well
> then! I am now writing a German opera for myself.[58]

The opera to which he referred here was based on a comedy by Goldini, *Il Servitore di due Padroni*, which he unfortunately did not complete. However, his discussion of the project shows the difficulties he faced, rejecting the expectations of the court without succumbing to the commercial pressures of the theatre.

One of Mozart's key strategies to meet his compositional objectives was, as his father had advised him, to incorporate a range of popular styles in his operas. As Warrack has suggested, Mozart had an "astonishing capacity"[59] to assimilate musical influences and assume various manners, letting them stimulate his imagination rather than perceive them as a constraint.[60] His choices were often "wilfully eclectic", including Italian bravura arias, sentimental arias, and simple strophic songs for the popular audience,[61] as well as dances, minuets and gavottes,[62] and even Turkish music.[63] Mozart's parodic purpose in quoting different stylistic elements is apparent in the letter to his father about Osmin's rage aria in Act 2 of *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, where he states "the

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[56] Cited in Shroeder, David. 2003. "Mozart and Late Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics." In *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*, edited by Simon P. Keefe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 135–136.

[57] Shroeder, David. 2003. "Mozart and Late Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics." In *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*, edited by Simon P. Keefe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 272.

[58] Cited in Shroeder, David. 2003. "Mozart and Late Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics." In *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*, edited by Simon P. Keefe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 136.

[59] Warrack, John. 2001. *German Opera: From the beginnings to Wagner*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 144.

[60] Ibid. p. 154.

[61] Ibid. p. 102.

[62] Allanbrook, Wye J. 1992. "Dance Rhythms in Mozart's Arias: The minuet in Mozart's arias." *Early Music* 20 (1): 142–149.

[63] Taruskin, Richard. 2010 *Music in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 471.

rage of *Osmin* is made ridiculous by the use of Turkish music.[64] He clearly assumed his audience would share a cultural understanding about Turkish music that would enable them to interpret his meaning.

Mozart's letters to his father about his operas also show his desire to communicate emotions through his music. In a second reference to Osmin's rage aria, he writes of choosing a key somewhat different (but not too different) to express the way Osmin's "violent rage oversteps all order":

> Inasmuch as the passions, whether violent or not, must never be carried in their expression to the verge of disgust, and music, even in the most awful situations must not offend the ear but always please, consequently always remain music, I have not chosen a key foreign to F (i.e. the key of the aria), but a related one, — not the nearest, D minor, but the more distant, A minor.[65]

In regard to Belmonte's aria *O wie ängstlich, o wie feurig,* (oh how fearful, oh how ardently) from *The Abduction from the Seraglio,* Mozart wrote:

> Would you like to know how I expressed it — and even indicated his throbbing heart? By the two violins playing octaves … You feel the trembling— the faltering — you see how his throbbing breast begins to swell; this I have expressed by a *crescendo.* You hear the whispering and the sighing — which I have indicated by the first violins with mutes and a flute playing in unison.[66]

These quotes suggest that by incorporating different musical styles, through a strategic repetition of particular musical motifs, and choices regarding tonality, dynamics and timbre, Mozart hoped to communicate his interpretation of the text to the audience.

It is interesting to note that, although Mozart wrote to his father about what he hoped to communicate through his musical setting of the libretto, this is rarely the way his

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[64] W.A. Mozart to Leopold Mozart, 13 October 1781. Cited in Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. 1906. *Mozart: The man and the artist, as revealed in his own words*. Compiled and annotated by F. Kerst, translated and edited by H.E. Krehbiel. http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4042. Accessed 1 August 2015. p. 21.

[65] W.A. Mozart to Leopold Mozart, 13 October, 1781. Quoted in Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. 1906. *Mozart: The man and the artist, as revealed in his own words*. Compiled and annotated by F. Kerst, translated and edited by H.E. Krehbiel. http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4042. Accessed 1 August 2015. p. 63.

[66] Cited in Taruskin, Richard. 2010 *Music in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 472.

music is analysed. It would be almost impossible to recreate Mozart's inner musical vocabulary at this stage and, of course, given the changes in contemporary audiences' aural experiences, it is unlikely that we would hear the same musical effects in quite the same way as Mozart did. It is therefore very difficult to objectively assess what Mozart's intention and the audience experience might have been. Nevertheless, as Webster suggests, we must accept that many works of this period had implicit or explicit dramatic or philosophical meanings that composers such as Mozart were endeavouring to communicate musically.[67] It should therefore be a field that deserves more investigation than it has had to date. Instead, there is a long tradition of analysing Mozart operas on the basis of post-hoc standards established in accord with nineteenth century aesthetic ideals about the importance of musical unity which were, as is argued later in this chapter, incorporated into Wagnerian opera.[68] This had the effect of elevating the status of Mozart operas. Whereas in the early part of the twentieth century, they were only performed sporadically, following their introduction at the prestigious Glyndebourne festivals in England in 1934[69] they gradually entered the repertory of most modern opera companies and are now some of the most frequently performed of all operas.[70] Yet, if considered from the perspective of a composer trying to create a polystylistic work that would appeal to a broad-based audience, a different interpretation of the compositional techniques used by Mozart in his operas is possible.

In a study of two dozen *opera buffa* finales by Mozart and his peers, Platoff has concluded that the composers were not seeking the tonal cohesion of instrumental music but made compositional decisions to meet dramatic requirements. Although some of Mozart's operas, particularly *The Marriage of Figaro*, have a coherent tonal

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[67] Webster, James. 1987. "To Understand Verdi and Wagner We Must Understand Mozart." *19th-Century Music* 11 (2): 192.

[68] For a good discussion of this musicological tradition see Abbate, Carolyn, and Roger Parker. 1990. "Dismembering Mozart." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2 (2): 187–195.

[69] Smaczny, Jan. 2003. "Mozart and the Twentieth Century." In *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*, edited by Simon P. Keefe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 192.

[70] According to the statistics detailed at a world-wide opera data base, between October 2009 and April 2013, Mozart was the third most popular opera composer (in terms of performances) after Verdi and Puccini, ahead of Wagner and Rossini. See http://operabase.com/top.cgi?lang=en. Accessed 1 August 2015.

structure, Platoff suggests this is the exception rather than the rule and that more distant key transitions are more usual. Indeed, Mozart often emphasised a "pronounced change in colour" as "near-key moves" did not necessarily provide sufficient dramatic significance for him.[71] Similarly, Rosen claims that Mozart was "deeply aware" of the "expressive character" of distant tonal relations and might juxtapose unrelated tonalities for expressive effect.[72] Such examples add weight to arguments proffered by scholars such as Warrack and Webster, who support the view that Mozart was more concerned with meeting dramatic needs than achieving a musically unified work.[73]

Mozart's operatic innovations in *The Magic Flute*

The Magic Flute, Mozart's final comic opera, written in partnership with his librettist, Emanuel Shikaneder, represents the culmination of his experimentation in this genre. In this opera, he was able to wed elements of a simple folk style with elements of court music in a way that has since won the admiration of many composers and critics, even, as discussed in Chapter 1, the highly critical Theodore Adorno. While music's role within *opera buffa* was becoming increasingly important prior to Mozart's time, it is my contention that in *The Magic Flute* Mozart brought music to the forefront, establishing what Thomas Bauman has described as "a distinctive and wholly musico-dramatic 'persona' … a voice separate from the character's".[74] He achieved this by incorporating a range of musical styles, the expressive use of orchestral colour and harmony, shaping the melodic line, and the repeated use of particular intervals or musical motifs. According to Branscombe, in *The Magic Flute,* the music

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[71] Platoff, John. 1991. "Tonal Organization In 'Buffo' Finales and the Act II Finale Of 'Le Nozze Di Figaro'." *Music and Letters* 72: 389–390.

[72] Rosen, Charles. 2012. *Freedom and the Arts: Essays on music and literature*. Cumberland: Harvard University Press. p. 53.

[73] Warrack, John. 2001. *German Opera: From the beginnings to Wagner*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 311; Webster, James. 1990. "Mozart's Operas and the Myth of Musical Unity." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2 (2): 197–218.

[74] Bauman, Thomas. 1990. "At the North Gate: Instrumental music in *Die Zauberflöte*." In *Mozart's Operas*, edited by Thomas Bauman. Berkeley and Oxford: University of California Press. p. 280.

> not only mirrors the meaning of the text, but illustrates all the
> important actions and emotions of the opera. The dialogue is only
> needed for explanations, ritual and extra comedy.[75]

The techniques that Mozart uses to realise the dramatic potential of the work will be the focus of the following analysis.

The many ambiguities of *The Magic Flute's* plot demonstrate the opera's dialogic function. Although there is a long musicological tradition emphasising this opera's egalitarian or democratic sentiments,[76] such an understanding is not unequivocal. Like other works in the *opera buffa* genre discussed here, *The Magic Flute* can be interpreted in a variety of ways. The Queen of the Night, who originally presents herself as the innocent mother of an abducted daughter is, by the end of the opera, revealed as a "destructive, savage, vengeful, and evil woman".[77] Conversely, Sarastro, initially represented as the wicked abductor, turns into a benevolent and enlightened leader of his spiritual community. Although in this opera Mozart does not blur the normal gender boundaries through cross-dressing or "pants" roles as he does in other operas, there is clear ambivalence about women's role. Powerful women, represented by the Queen of the Night, come to grief. Women are represented as "untrustworthy"[78] and in need of men's guidance. However, Pamina is ultimately raised to the same level of equality and enlightenment as Tamino when she actually leads him through his final trial.[79] According to Till, this representation was typical of eighteenth century Enlightenment debates which sought both to restrict women's spheres of activity while endowing with them with the responsibility "to redeem the sins of male bourgeois

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[75] Ibid. p. 124.

[76] Botstein, Leon. 1994. "Nineteenth-Century Mozart: The fin de siècle Mozart revival." In *On Mozart*, edited by James M. Morris. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 224.

[77] Fisher, Burton D. 2005. *Mozart's the Magic Flute: Die zauberflote*. Miami: Opera Journeys. p. 21.

[78] See Act 1, Scene 3, where women are portrayed as being in need of guidance from men, cited in Fisher, Burton D. 2005. *Mozart's the Magic Flute: Die zauberflote*. Miami: Opera Journeys. Similarly, in Act 2, Scene 2, women are portrayed as being untrustworthy.

[79] See Heartz, Daniel. 1990. "La Clemenza Di Sarastro: Masonic beneficence in the last operas." In *Mozart's Operas*, edited by Thomas Bauman. Berkeley and Oxford: University of California Press. p. 268. According to Heartz, there is no precedent in Masonic doctrine for raising women to the level of equality and enlightenment achieved by Pamina in *The Magic Flute*.

society" by their moral virtue.[80] Although Sarastro articulates ideals of human emancipation, he also keeps slaves.[81] Papageno is represented as a *buffa* character who constantly seeks to evade his moral responsibilities and only reluctantly follows Tamino on his quest. Nevertheless, it is he who first finds Pamina and saves her from Monastro's unwanted and unsolicited advances. Through these multiple plot twists, Mozart and Shikaneder create uncertainty and ambiguity but do not necessarily challenge the established social order.

To emphasise these plot ambiguities and disjunctions, Mozart incorporates a range of musical styles, including Viennese popular songs, Italian coloratura arias and *buffa* ensembles, accompanied recitatives and ariosos, hymns, chorales, and fugues.[82] The different musical styles often become like characters in the opera, providing a means of permeating the different worlds of the various characters. For instance, the Masonic coterie usually sing chorale-like choruses, suggesting their spiritual intent. The simple life of Papageno, the bird-catcher, is represented in his folk-like songs. As Jann Pasler has suggested, the use of musical material that does not depend on elite knowledge is "an easy way to engage listeners".[83] As the material is already known to the listener, they are able to "entertain the meaning suggested by the order and interplay of the elements as well as what is stimulated in their own memory".[84] This may well account for Mozart's incorporation of a wide range of styles in *The Magic Flute* and why it became Mozart's "greatest popular success",[85] quickly spreading throughout major

[80] Till, Nicholas. 1992. *Mozart and the Enlightenment: Truth, virtue and beauty in Mozart's operas*. London: Faber. p. 285.

[81] Branscombe, Peter. 1991. *W.A. Mozart, Die Zauberflöte*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 216.

[82] Ibid. p. 138; See also Taruskin, Richard. 2010 *Music in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 480.

[83] Pasler, Jann 2009. "Postmodernism, Narrativity, and the Art of Memory." *Contemporary Music Review* 7 (2): 20.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Fisher, Burton D. 2005. *Mozart's the Magic Flute: Die zauberflote*. Miami: Opera Journeys. p. 19.

centres of German opera (including Warsaw and St Petersburg) before reaching London in 1811 and New York in 1833.[86]

Mozart also incorporated unexpected effects that were designed to confound audience expectations and ensure their continued attention. For instance, voice and instrumental accompaniment often merged. He introduced two instruments, the flute and the bells, as characters that silence (or attempt to silence) the voices of Tamino and Papageno at various points during the opera. Conversely, the voice can act as an instrument as in the Queen of the Night's virtuosic and famous rage aria, *Der Hölle Rache kochkt in meinem Herzen,* with its extended vocalise sections centred around the almost inhumanly high notes at the extreme end of the high soprano range. Subotnik describes such thwarting of expectations as a technique of "defamiliarization" which calls attention to the music as a distinct "layer of meaning".[87]

Mozart also communicates through his unusual harmonic colouring and modulations. This is graphically illustrated in the finale to the first act of *The Magic Flute* (see Example 2.1). Here Tamino seeks the entrance to Sarastro's temple by searching three possible entrances. Two different tonal worlds are set against each other. The scene opens with the three child-spirits giving Tamino instructions as to how to find Pamina. This section ends in C major. Tamino's search initially takes him away from C major via the sharp keys from G and then to D major. However, Sarastro's world lies in the other direction, leading from C through the various flat keys to E flat major. The close juxtaposition of these two different tonal worlds sounds dramatic even today and must have had a startling effect on Mozart's audience. As Tamino tries the first door, he approaches in D major, only to be turned back by a sudden modulation to B flat major. He then approaches the second door in the more closely related key of G minor, but is again turned back by a sudden modulation to E flat major. When he tries for the third

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[86] Rushton, Julian. 2014. "Zauberflöte, Die." *Grove Music Online.* http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/O907810. Accessed 19 April 2014.

[87] Subotnik, Rose Rosengard. 1996. *Deconstructive Variations: Music and Reason in Western Society.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 32.

and final attempt, he starts in C minor, the relative major to E flat major, where he
finally gains entry with quite a sudden modulation via the sub-dominant of A flat.

Example 2.1: W.A. Mozart. *The Magic Flute.* **Act 1, Scene 8, bars 68–88.**

Mozart's use of harmonic and orchestral coloration and the way he encodes particular
musical intervals with meaning can be demonstrated in Tamino's *bildnis* (picture) aria
which occurs near the beginning of the opera. This through-composed aria sits in stark
contrast to Papageno's folk-like strophic birdcatcher song, which it immediately
follows. During dialogue in between the arias, Tamino has been introduced to the
supposedly kidnapped Pamina by way of her portrait and, in operatic fashion, is
immediately smitten by her and yearns to find her. Despite the spoken interlude,
Tamino's more serious aria about what is happening for him internally fits quite well
after Papageno's more extroverted song. Both arias are lyrical and free of redundant
decoration. However, the shape of the melody line of the *bildnis* aria immediately
suggests a different mood. The melody line for Papageno's aria followed the standard
trajectory for most songs, which start low or in the middle of the range and work their
way to a climactic high note. Tamino's aria, conversely, starts with a leap of a major

sixth to a dramatic high note followed by a step-wise movement down to the tenor's mid-range, symbolically suggesting a more interior mood. The orchestra has already introduced this downward movement in the introduction, creating anticipation by a series of descending arpeggios. In some productions, the staging also emphasises the introspective mood by closing in the set and dimming the lighting.[88]

Example 2.2: W.A. Mozart. *The Magic Flute***. Act 1, Scene 3, bars 2–6.**

In bar ten of Tamino's aria, when Tamino sings "*mein Herz mit neuer Regung füllt*" (my heart with new emotion fills), Mozart changes the accompaniment from a legato quaver figure to short quavers subtly emulating the heart beat in a way that invites the audience to share Tamino's bodily feelings. He delays the expected cadence in the next bar by the insertion of a diminished chord and a rising bass that further draws the audience into Tamino's emotions as the tension mounts, before the phrase is completed with the expected cadence three bars later.

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[88] See, for example, Mozart, W.A. 2006. *Die Zauberflöte*. London: Decca.

Example 2.3: W.A. Mozart. *The Magic Flute.* **Act 1, Scene 3, bars 8–12**

Orchestral commentary is made throughout the aria. Bauman observes that in *The Magic Flute* Mozart makes extensive use of extended orchestral ritornellos. Conventionally, such ritornellos were little more than a "perfunctory cadence or two", even in Mozart's music. However, in key moments of the *Magic Flute* Mozart often extended the sung motifs orchestrally, thereby passing comment on the previous sung material. In this way, Mozart reveals much about the characters and their motivations and goes far beyond merely supporting the text of the libretto. According to Bauman, being closely related to the sung motifs such instrumental moments are heard as "inner text" portraying the inner thoughts of the character that contrasts sharply with the somewhat superficial impression one gains of Tamino's character represented in the

libretto.[89] An example is apparent in bar 25 of the picture aria. As Tamino concludes, singing "*soll die Empfindung Liebe sein?*" (Is this what love feels like?), a sustained crescendo horn note enters, holding throughout the next two bars while Tamino considers his answer, as if to connect us to his inner voice as he consults his feelings. As Tamino resolves to search for his beloved and the tension mounts, a regular dominant bass pedal note is repeated either on the quaver or even semiquaver beat (a standard technique even today in film music to increase tension), while the strings respond with short demisemiquavers. Finally, Tamino considers the outcome if he finds his love "*warm und rein, was würde ich?*" (warm and pure, what would I do?). This finally renders him and the orchestra speechless and after building to this climax at bar 43, Mozart leaves the next bar silent, delaying the return to the tonic to symbolise Tamino's realisation that "*Ich würde sie voll Entzücken an diesen hiesses Büsen drücken, und ewig wäre sie dann mein*" (I will clasp her in all tenderness close to my burning heart and she'd be mine for ever), with the latter part of the phrase now rising to a high note (only a semitone higher than the initial G) as would be expected at the traditional climactic moment. The aria ends as Tamino returns from his soul searching no longer alone but, in his imagination at least, united with his beloved.

Motifs from the *bildnis* aria also recur later in the opera. In Example 2.4, Tamino's initial leap of a major sixth from the picture aria is echoed by Pamina toward the end of the opera when she despairs that Tamino has forsaken her on the words "*als durch Liebesgram*" (than through love's anguish) suggesting a strong link in Mozart's mind between this interval and a feeling of unrequited love.

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[89] Bauman, Thomas. 1990. "At the North Gate: Instrumental music in *Die Zauberflöte*." In *Mozart's Operas*, edited by Thomas Bauman. Berkeley and Oxford: University of California Press. p. 281.

Example 2.4: W.A. Mozart. *The Magic Flute.* **Act 2, Scene 21, bars 75–80.**

This interval carries that meaning to its next iteration a short time later where, in almost a direct imitation of the first two phrases from Tamino's aria quoted above, Pamino sings *"Was? Er fülte Gegenliebe, und verbarg mir seine Triebe"* (What? He loves me in return, but hid his feelings from me) altered slightly to fit the words, beginning again on a major sixth.

Example 2.5: W.A. Mozart. *The Magic Flute.* **Act 2 Scene 21, Bars 106–112**

Mozart's repetition of previously used motifs from the *bildnis* aria creates a link between Pamina's and Tamino's emotional worlds. While such repeated use does also provide musical coherence for the work, this is incidental to its main purpose:[90] semantically encoding a particular theme to represent a certain emotion, character or other key symbol.[91] By making such "musical interconnections", Bauman suggests that Mozart invites a "multilayered interpretation" of the music in the same way that one would traditionally analyse a libretto.[92]

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[90] Webster observes that there is no consensus on the matter of motific unity in Mozart's operas. Webster, James. 1987. "To Understand Verdi and Wagner We Must Understand Mozart." *19th-Century Music* 11 (2): 191. Eric Werner argues that unity was achieved by "symbolic phrases" which create unity by way of their symbolic meaning. Werner, Eric. 1957. "Leading or Symbolic Formulas in the Magic Flute." *The Music Review* 18: 287.

[91] Noske, Frits. 1977. *The Signifier and the Signified: Studies in the operas of Mozart and Verdi.* The Hague: Nijhoff. p. 316.

[92] Bauman, Thomas. 1990. "At the North Gate: Instrumental music in *Die Zauberflöte*." In *Mozart's Operas*, edited by Thomas Bauman. Berkeley and Oxford: University of California Press. p. 283.

The orchestra also plays an important role in Mozart's musical commentary, asserting its voice from the outset of the opera in the initial overture. This begins with a short introduction of solemn chords connected by arpeggio figures usually associated with Masonic symbolism.[93] It then proceeds with a formal fugal exposition which has been much admired as Mozart's "greatest instrumental prologue" on account of its "formal perfection".[94]
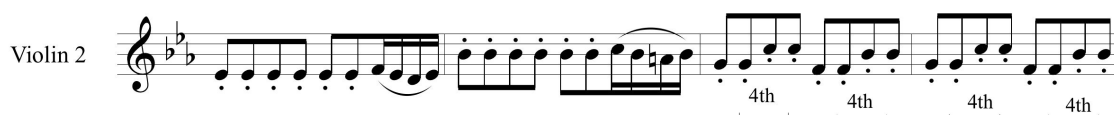
Example 2.6: W.A. Mozart. *The Magic Flute*. Act 1, Overture, bars 16–19.

This overture has received extensive scholarly attention. Bauman, for instance, has portrayed the fugue as a metaphor for the interconnectedness of Tamino and Pamina's relationship,[95] or as symbolic of "an old order of harmonic and thematic organization and discourse" yielding to "sonata form with its higher modes of organization".[96] It is obviously difficult to rebut such assertions, and it is possible that this is indeed the way that Mozart intended that an audience might interpret the overture. However, if one considers that Mozart may have had a more parodic effect in mind, an alternate interpretation becomes possible.

The main theme of the fugue is based on an extended repeated note with a semiquaver turn on the fourth beat of the bar and leaps of a perfect fourth between some of the repeated notes. There are three other notable occasions in the opera where a repeated note motif is used. The first is the Queen of the Night's famous virtuosic and almost

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[93] Chailley, Jacques. 1982. *The Magic Flute, Masonic Opera: An interpretation of the libretto and the music*. New York: Da Capo Press. p. 85.

[94] Bauman, Thomas. 1990. "At the North Gate: Instrumental music in *Die Zauberflöte*." In *Mozart's Operas*, edited by Thomas Bauman. Berkeley and Oxford: University of California Press. pp. 286–287.

[95] Ibid. p. 291.

[96] Ibid. p. 297.

impossibly high coloratura aria in Act 2 (Example 2.7).[97] Hunter suggests the "rage aria" was "an established type" of the period often used in *opera seria.*[98] It was subsequently parodied in *opera buffa* by absurdly high, even hysterical, singing such as that used in Mozart's aria.

Example 2.7: W.A. Mozart. *The Magic Flute.* **Act 2, Scene 14, bars 35–43.**

In this aria, a semiquaver turn is used on the fourth beat of the bar to that used identical to that in the overture. Leaps of a major fourth (upwards in the overture and downwards in the aria) suggest a distinct similarity with the overture's fugal theme. There are two other obviously comical uses of a repeated note in the opera: Papageno's aria in Act 1, where he has been made mute and is therefore forced to sing on one syllable to make himself heard (Example 2.8), and his duet in Act 2 with Papagena, where in their excitement they stumble repeatedly over the repeated "p" (Example 2.9).

Example 2.8: W.A. Mozart. *The Magic Flute.* **Act 1, Scene 5, bars 3–7.**

[97] Tarasti, Eero. 2012. *Semiotics of Classical Music: How Mozart, Brahms and Wagner Talk to Us.* Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

[98] Hunter, Mary. 1991. "Some Representations of Opera Seria in Opera Buffa." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3 (2): 99.

Example 2.9: W.A. Mozart. *The Magic Flute*. Act 2, Scene 21, bars 632–640.

The effect of the moderately fast repeated note later sung is akin to laughter, an onomatopoeic "ha, ha, ha". The high note traditionally repeated in the *Queen of the Night* aria on the syllable "eh" (usually sung "hah" at that register) and the "hm" and "pa" syllables suggests that the repeated staccato note in the overture may also have been intended as an onomatopoeic gesture. When writing for the suburban popular theatre, Mozart would want to engage his audience at the outset with an overture linked to the more comical aspects of the opera. This may have been the reason that he rejected the first overture he wrote for *The Magic Flute*, which connected the overture's principal theme more directly with Tamino's *bildnis* aria.[99] Many scholars have focused on the technical formality of the fugal style of the overture and its similarity with a similar theme in a Clementi piano sonata.[100] However, it can be argued that by juxtaposing the comical theme with the serious fugal style, Mozart was providing his own commentary on the forthcoming action of the opera, raising audience expectations from the beginning.

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[99] Bauman, Thomas. 1990. "At the North Gate: Instrumental music in *Die Zauberflöte*." In *Mozart's Operas*, edited by Thomas Bauman. Berkeley and Oxford: University of California Press. p. 292.
[100] Tarasti, Eero. 2012. *Semiotics of Classical Music: How Mozart, Brahms and Wagner Talk to Us*. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. p. 43.

Throughout the opera Mozart continued to contrast different musical styles. He also semantically encoded particular musical intervals or motifs, and used orchestral and harmonic colour expressively to realise the dramatic potential inherent in the libretto. While some contemporary musicologists have summarily dismissed *The Magic Flute* as little more than "children's theatre",[101] many commentators, such as Adorno, perceive *The Magic Flute* to be a unique and possibly unsurpassed moment in musical history. However, their reasons for coming to this common conclusion vary. Branscombe, for instance, suggests that its success cannot be found in the music alone (although he admires its intrinsic beauty) or in the libretto, which he admires considerably less. Rather, he argues the secret lies in the "reaction between the two", which, according to Branscombe, provides an allegory of "our journey through life and in the shadow of death".[102] Jessica Waldoff has suggested that Tamino's "new awareness", attained at the end of the opera, fundamentally altered his mission from rescuing Pamina to a quest for enlightenment.[103] She claims that this message is only communicated through a complex dynamic interplay between action, text and music.[104] Till claims that the greatness of *The Magic Flute* lies in its esoteric inwardness, presented in the form of a popular and universal entertainment that "reaches out with its spiritual message to all who are willing not merely to see but to hear", a distinction that he claims Mozart himself made.[105] Kerman claimed that Mozartian comedy provides our time with its clearest vision of the dramatic potential of opera.[106] He recognises the diverse "stylistic contradictions" and believes that Mozart's achievement was creating an opera that

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[101] Zenck, Claudia Maurer, Anke Caton, and Simon P. Keefe. 2009. "German Opera from Reinhard Keiser to Peter Winter." In *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, edited by Simon P. Keefe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 382.
[102] Branscombe, Peter. 1991. *W.A. Mozart, Die Zauberflöte*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 140–11.
[103] Webster, James. 1987. "To Understand Verdi and Wagner We Must Understand Mozart." *19th-Century Music* 11 (2): 185.
[104] Waldoff, Jessica. 1994. "The Music of Recognition: Operatic englightenment in 'the Magic Flute'." *Music and Letters* 75 (2): 214.
[105] Till, Nicholas. 1992. *Mozart and the Enlightenment: Truth, virtue and beauty in Mozart's operas*. London: Faber. p. 271.
[106] Kerman, Joseph. 1956. *Opera as Drama*. New York: Knopf. p. 100.

would be appropriate in a concert hall or an opera theatre.[107] Common to many of these commentators is the suggestion that *The Magic Flute* marked both an apex and a turning point in operatic history.

By using *opera buffa* to express "serious" ideals and beliefs, Mozart's operas prompted further innovations, and a merging of the *buffa/seria* traditions. While Beethoven's *Fidelio* shares many aspects of typical *opera buffa* plots, including mistaken identity, cross-dressing, and blurred boundaries between nobility and their servants, it "hovers uncomfortably between the light, unpretentious world of the *Singspiel* and the melodramatic world of the 'rescue opera'", as Branscombe suggests.[108] It had an "earnestness and heroic quality"[109] that was not evident in Mozart's operas, and was perhaps the reason that Beethoven was far overshadowed by his contemporary Gioachino Rossini in the operatic sphere. According to Taruskin, Rossini completed the process begun by Mozart, importing the dramatic ensemble technique traditionally used in *opera buffa* to replace the traditional recitative/aria division in *opera seria*. In doing so, according to Taruskin, he "gave serious opera a new lease on life, transforming it into opera as we know it today".[110] Taruskin believes that Rossini, not Beethoven, was the true inheritor of the "Mozartean operatic legacy".[111] As is argued in the next section, this legacy was carried forward by many operetta composers, and the parodic tradition of *opera buffa* never entirely disappeared.

The parodic tradition in operetta

During the course of the nineteenth century, the creative tension between the *buffa* opera, or light opera/operetta as they became known, and more "serious" endeavours

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[107] Ibid. p. 127.

[108] Branscombe, Peter, and Thomas Bauman. 2014. "Singspiel." *Grove Music Online.* http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/25877. Accessed 28 September 2014.

[109] Bokina, John. 1997. *Opera and Politics: From Monteverdi to Henze*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. p.168.

[110] Taruskin, Richard. 2010. *Music in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 27.

[111] Ibid. p. 7.

increased. [112] According to Traubner, the term "operetta" was originally coined to distinguish comic opera from heavy or grand opera in the "tragic" sense. Initially, it only referred to the lighter subject matter and did not imply that the music was necessarily of a lighter nature or inferior to the music of a tragedy.[113] With the decline of the nobility, operas became a feature of city life that developed in parallel with a growing entertainment industry. At the same time, instrumental music performed in the concert hall gradually assumed a more prominent position, and, according to Weber, by the 1830s had begun to rival the opera for musical dominance.[114] With the status of instrumental music now in the ascendancy, opera's inherent association with extra-musical phenomena threatened to relegate it to being a lesser art form. Nevertheless, opera remained popular and was increasingly commercialised for an expanding global market, with opera troupes making regular tours as far afield as the Americas, Australia, India, and South Africa.[115] At the same time, within major urban centres elite opera houses steadily arose as symbols of cultural achievement and as a means of enhancing the international reputation of aspirational cities of the nineteenth century.[116] Gradually, a distinction arose between the more "serious" works performed in city opera houses and the "lighter" operas typically performed in theatres and by visiting troupes. Philipp Ther suggests that a tendency to distinguish between serious and light music emerged in tandem with criticism of "operetta' as a "foreign" or "inferior" genre from the 1860s.[117] However, as Levine has shown, this distinction

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[112] Ther, Philipp. 2014. *Center Stage: Operatic culture and nation building in nineteenth-century central Europe*, translated by Charlotte Hughes-Kreutzmuller. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press. p. 252.

[113] Traubner, Richard. 1989. *Operetta: A theatrical history*. New York and London: Oxford University Press. p. 10.

[114] Weber, William. 2006. "Redefining the Status of Opera: London and Leipzig, 1800–1848." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 36 (3): 517.

[115] Ther, Philipp. 2014. *Center Stage: Operatic culture and nation building in nineteenth-century central Europe*, translated by Charlotte Hughes-Kreutzmuller. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press. p. 243.

[116] Bereson, Ruth. 2002. *The Operatic State: Cultural policy and the opera house*. London: Routledge. p. 19.

[117] Ther, Philipp. 2014. *Center Stage: Operatic culture and nation building in nineteenth-century central Europe*, translated by Charlotte Hughes-Kreutzmuller. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press. p. 23.

remained relatively porous, and serious and light opera continued to be performed in a wide range of venues to audiences of all classes throughout the nineteenth century.[118]

Both genres of opera were affected by the new understandings about the role and nature of music which were beginning to privilege instrumental music, as discussed in Chapter 1. The increased focus on unity, structural coherence and the theme of individual redemption gave a lower priority to dialogic and comedic art forms that engage the listener as an observer and critic. No one was more preoccupied with the causes of suffering, redemption and musical unity than Wagner, who famously pursued a "union of the arts" through his idealised "Artwork of the Future".[119] Wagner aimed to transform opera from an "arbitrary conglomerate of separate smaller forms of song" to an organically unified form that eliminated all extraneous elements. Rather, all elements of the work should serve the greater purpose:

> Just as the structure of the individual scenes excluded every alien and
> unnecessary detail and led all interest to the main all-governing
> mood of the whole, so did the whole construction of the drama join
> itself into one organic unity … No mood could be struck in any of
> these scenes that did not stand in a significant relationship to the
> moods of all the other scenes, so that the development of the moods
> of each from the others, and the constant prominence of this
> development, should establish the unity of the drama in its very
> mode of expression.[120]

Wagner became obsessed with synthesising all the arts in one great *Gesamtkunstwerk* in his utopian vision to "restore integrity to a fragmented, divided society". His vision was a "total work of art"[121] that would break down the division between separate genres and art forms and so restore the cultural leadership of opera. In other words,

[118] Levine, Lawrence W. 1988. *Highbrow/Lowbrow*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Loc. 1095.

[119] Lindenberger, Herbert. 2010. *Situating Opera: Period, genre, reception*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 146.

[120] Richard Wagner, cited in Taruskin, Richard. 2010. *Music in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 499–500.

[121] Millington, Barry. 2014. "Gesamtkunstwerk." *Grove Music Online.* http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/O011027. Accessed 4 October 2014.

Wagner claimed that opera should be judged by the same aesthetic standards as instrumental music. [122]

This is not to say that in accepting that aesthetic standards of autonomous musical forms Wagner ceased to focus on the voice or the power of the narrative. Indeed, Carolyn Abbate has convincingly shown that Wagner developed and used "narrating gestures of many kinds".[123] She argues that associating the "musical motive" with a "specific phenomenal image or event" or leitmotif was one of the more familiar narrative devices that composers used in the nineteenth century.[124] Rather, according to Abbate, Wagner's focus is the "supernatural" voice. I have argued that *opera buffa* and operetta composers freely used different musical styles, often representing the phenomenal world in which the opera was set through songs, stage bands, marches, fanfares, hunting calls, and other idiomatic cultural markers. As Abbate has observed, such music had traditionally been isolated, with no effort to hide it or integrate it within a more otherworldly or spiritual quest. [125] However, she argues that the distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal music became quite blurred in Wagner.[126]

In striving to express that which is beyond words, Wagner muted an innate musical language that thrives on its relationship to word and image. As he dressed opera with the transcendent voice of instrumental music, the song was somehow lost. Cook described Wagner's desire to eliminate inherent differences between different media (music, text and stage action, in the case of opera) and link them all to the dramatic action of the opera as a theory of "conformance".[127] For Cook, Wagner's idea of fusion is essentially hierarchical, with the idiosyncratic nature of each genre capitulating to

[122] Lindenberger, Herbert. 2010. *Situating Opera: Period, genre, reception*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 70.
[123] Abbate, Carolyn. 1991. *Unsung Voices: Opera and musical narrative in the nineteenth century*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press. p. 19.
[124] Ibid. p. 86.
[125] Ibid. p. 120.
[126] Ibid. p. 122.
[127] Cook, Nicholas. 1998. *Analysing Musical Multimedia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 121.

realisation of a greater dramatic purpose.[128] He quotes Brecht's many writings on theatre:

> So long as the expression "Gesamtkunstwerk" … means that the integration is a muddle, so long as the arts are supposed to be "fused" together, the various elements will all be equally degraded, and each will act as a mere "feed" to the rest.[129]

Such sentiments are eerily close to Adorno's concern that the interaction between different musical elements becomes submerged within the heady mix of emotion and drama engulfed within a great mass of Wagnerian sound.[130] Similarly, Cone argued that by asserting an overarching control of a composite musical line working through orchestra and voice alike, Wagner aimed to express a higher truth, which superseded any other messages that might be conveyed by the different perspectives represented in the opera.[131]

Wagner's increasingly complex epic operadramas were never a commercially viable proposition and the development of the popular operetta continued alongside the development of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Wagner was only able to stage the complete performances of his Ring Cycle in a temple specifically designed for their purpose, at Beyreuth, with considerable patronage from Ludwig II.[132] Despite these developments, the general public continued to create a demand for more popularly oriented musical entertainment, particularly of a comic nature. The quality of such offerings varied enormously. Operetta's reputation as a distinctly inferior genre may, in part, have been justly deserved. As discussed earlier, pastiche has a long operatic tradition. Many operettas lacked the originality or artfulness of Mozart or Rossini. They merely imitated or shamelessly appropriated material from other successful productions purely for the

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[128] Ibid. p. 126.

[129] Brecht, Bertolt. 1964. "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre." In *Brecht on Theatre: The development of an aesthetic*, edited by John Willett. London: Methuen and Co Ltd. pp. 37–38.

[130] For a good discussion of Adorno's views on Wagner see Brunkhorst, Hauke. 1997. "Irreconcilable Modernity: Adorno's aesthetic experimentalism and the transgression theory." In *The Actuality of Adorno: Critical essays on Adorno and the postmodern*, edited by Max Pensky. Albany: State University of New York Press. pp. 46–48.

[131] Cone, Edward T. 1974. *The Composer's Voice*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 13.

[132] Blanning, Tim. 2009. *The Triumph of Music*. London: Penguin Books. p. 107.

purpose of commercial gain. This practice was so widespread that Marvin has suggested that in by the 1880s Victorian London, almost every "truly popular opera" had become the subject of a burlesque.[133]

Yet, while operetta could be both stultifyingly conservative and provide little intellectual stimulation, the best exemplars could, as Adorno observed, provide a window into another world of alternative possibilities.[134] Some composers, notably Offenbach in Paris and Strauss in Vienna, produced new and original works which significantly departed from the "mocked models" and often even surpassed them.[135] Such works were hugely popular and attracted large audiences in the latter half of the nineteenth century. They were firmly in the *opera buffa* tradition, incorporating popular song and dance forms of the time, particularly the waltz and polka.[136] Plots, even if not set in contemporary times, typically made pointed references to contemporary events or controversies in a new "reportage" style.[137] For instance, Offenbach's *Orpheus and the Underworld* was a parody of Gluck's opera *Orpheus and Eurydice*, drawing on classical mythology, contemporary French politics, and earlier musical compositions dealing with the same topic.[138] In a thinly disguised caricature of Napoleon III (who ruled France from 1852 to 1870), Zeus was presented as a comical figure surrounded by "disgruntled Olympians", echoing contemporary political concerns.[139]

Such works continued to question and transgress boundaries of class, gender and marital status. For instance, Act 2 of *Die Fledermaus* is devoted to a lengthy masked ball

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[133] Marvin, Roberta Montemorra. 2006. "Burlesques, Barriers, Borders, and Boundaries." In *Operatic Migrations: Transforming works and crossing boundaries*, edited by Roberta Montemorra Marvin and Downing A. Thomas. Aldershot: Ashgate. p. 205.

[134] Adorno, Theodor W. 2009. "The Tales of Hoffmann in Offenbach's Motives." In *Night Music: Essays on music 1928–1962*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Wieland Hoban. London: Seagull Books. p. 70.

[135] Munteanu, Dana. 2012. "Parody of Greco-Roman Myth in Offenbach's Orfée Aux Enfers and La Belle Hélène." *Syllecta Classica* 23: 80.

[136] Patinkin, Sheldon. 2008. *"No Legs, No Jokes, No Chance": A history of the American musical theater*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press. p. 29.

[137] Crittenden, Camille. 2000. *Johann Strauss and Vienna: Operetta and the politics of popular culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 133.

[138] Munteanu, Dana. 2012. "Parody of Greco-Roman Myth in Offenbach's Orfée Aux Enfers and La Belle Hélène." *Syllecta Classica* 2381.

[139] Ibid.

scene where many of the underlying conflicts of the work are played out. This is facilitated by concealing the identity of the heroine, Rosalinde, who attends the ball incognito, her identity concealed by a mask. In this capacity she cannot recognise her husband (nor can he recognise her). Nor can she chastise her maid who has illicitly obtained an invitation to the ball without revealing her real identity. Her identity remains obvious to the audience, who as in traditional *opera buffa* are in the best position to observe and pass judgements on the entire interplay of characters. This action is accompanied by an array of popular dance tunes, a ballet, and a final triumphant waltz: "Ha, what joy, what a night of delight".

The use of popular dance music by operetta composers has the potential to deepen the audience experience, as the body physically comes to resonate with the visual and aural image on stage.[140] This need not be at the expense of intellectual engagement. Indeed, McConachie asserts that a modest level of emotional engagement is necessary to sustain rational attention in the theatre.[141] Recent studies in film, theatre and the performing arts, influenced by cognitive science discoveries about the role of mirror neurons, suggest that as people watch action on a screen or stage their brains respond as if they themselves were actually enacting the same movements.[142] This enables an audience to "embody" or grasp the emotion without consciously processing that emotion. Dancing, in particular, brings the audience into active participation in the stage production as audience members may be subconsciously joining in the movements they observe.[143] This connection is enhanced where the viewer is already familiar with the dances.[144]

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[140] Krois, John Michael. 2007. *Embodiment in Cognition and Culture*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins. p. 175.

[141] McConachie, Bruce A. 2008. *Engaging Audiences: A cognitive approach to spectating in the theatre*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 3.

[142] Ibid. p. 18.

[143] Warburton, Edward C. 2011. "Of Meanings and Movements: Re-languaging embodiment in dance phenomenology and cognition." *Dance Research Journal* 43 (2): 74.

[144] Plamper, Jan. 2015. *The History of Emotions an Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 229.

The operettas of Offenbach and Strauss toured internationally and were so popular that they often inspired local imitators who focused on events relevant to their local community. Perhaps the most famous of these imitators in the English speaking world were W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. To meet English sensibilities, Gilbert avoided risqué cross-dressing[145] and the more overtly bawdy elements of European operetta, such as the can-can. Nevertheless, the blurring and reversals of class and gender roles typical of *opera buffa* is apparent in their work, and there was a deep engagement with an array of contemporary issues, including English insularity, respectability and national fervour.

While the Gilbert and Sullivan phenomenon has spawned a sizable literature, much of it relates to the literary and sociological aspects of these operas, rather than the way in which Sullivan's music interplays with and interprets Gilbert's text to the audience. Indeed, much of the literature that I have sourced on operetta gives very little serious consideration to the music and is largely written by music theatre enthusiasts who provide detailed descriptions of plot and performances without significant musical analysis.[146] This sits in sharp contrast to the voluminous literature devoted to instrumental and operatic works of the same period, and reflects the historical prejudices of musicology. Given the widespread popularity of operetta, this is obviously an area in need of further research.

In one of the more insightful works about this genre, Williams suggests that parody in Gilbert and Sullivan operettas allowed for multiple layers of reception: they can be enjoyed as simple amusement, or appreciated for their topical allusions and engagement with precursor traditions of music, literature, art, and theatre.[147] Sullivan

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[145] Traubner, Richard. 1989. *Operetta: A theatrical history*. New York and London: Oxford University Press. p. 155.
[146] See for instance Hyman, Alan. 1978. *Sullivan and His Satellites: A survey of English operettas, 1860–1914*. London: Elm Tree Books; Mates, Julian. 1987. *America's Musical Stage: Two Hundred Years of Musical Theatre*. New York: Praeger; Traubner, Richard. 1989. *Operetta: A theatrical history*. New York and London: Oxford University Press.
[147] Williams, Carolyn. 2011. *Gilbert and Sullivan: Gender, genre, parody*. New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press. p. 13.

freely mixed popular genres, including sea shanties, folk songs, church anthems, and music hall songs, along with traditional German and Italian operatic styles.[148] This ensured his operettas were accessible to all classes of people and had a unique ability to entertain children and adults, and highly educated and relatively uneducated audience members.[149] The music interacted with the words and the action on the stage in a complex way. At times, according to Williams, it cuts across the plot, interrupting the action with moments of "great emotional fervour, seriousness, idealism, piercing sentiment, and sheer beauty".[150] Sometimes the music supported the text, and sometimes appeared to contradict it, creating ambiguity that, like Mozartean opera, enabled communication to occur simultaneously at multiple layers.[151] For instance, the overly pompous style of "He is an Englishman", along with the elongation of the "I" syllable by the melisma on the "Eng" syllable in the final word of the chorus "Englishman" in *H.M.S. Pinafore,* created a comical effect that contradicts the superficially patriotic words of the libretto and the militaristic march style of the music.[152] Through operetta, music's role as an active participant in community discourse was carried through into the twentieth century.

With the growth in disposable income and increased leisure time in the late-nineteenth century for middle class and some working class people, there was a growing commercial pressure to fill theatres and provide a quick turnover of successful works. As a consequence, a formulaic approach emerged which fixated on the romantic elements of the plot, particularly when set in an exotic location. Ther suggests that around the turn of the century, social and political topics fell out of fashion, while

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[148] Scott, Derek B. 2003. "English National Identity and the Comic Operas of Gilbert and Sullivan." In *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies,* Vol. 3, edited by Bennett Zon Peter Horton. Aldershot Ashgate. pp. 137–152.

[149] Williams, Carolyn. 2011. *Gilbert and Sullivan: Gender, genre, parody*. New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press. p. 12.

[150] Ibid. p. 28.

[151] Ibid. p. 29.

[152] Scott, Derek B. 2003. "English National Identity and the Comic Operas of Gilbert and Sullivan." In *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies,* Vol. 3, edited by Bennett Zon Peter Horton. Aldershot Ashgate. p. 141.

works that explored emotional issues and psychological states came more into vogue,[153] as exemplified in works such as *The Maid of the Mountains* (1917) and *Chu Chin Chow* (1916).[154] Similarly, according to Traubner, "in that process, the comedic and satirical elements of operetta (if any) became relegated to subplots".[155] Early in the twentieth century, the romantic musical became a prominent feature of New York's Broadway, outnumbering operetta productions by the time of the outbreak of World War I.[156] The transformation of the "lively, competitive, and contemporary cosmopolitanism" of the operetta was completed in the more conservative atmosphere of the inter-war era, when there was a tendency for people to seek comfort in more sentimental and nostalgic works.[157] The "fantastic" became displaced by the "domestic".[158]

Nevertheless, the radical potential of operetta remained. In this tradition, a range of heterogeneous elements, including popular musical styles and dance elements, might be included, inviting the participation of the audience. In addition to incorporating familiar musical styles or genres, a composer might embed certain musical gestures with emotion or other meaning and so provide a commentary by repeating such encoded musical references at various pivotal points in the work. This usually also gave a sense of musical coherence, but the composer's narrative was rarely provided at the expense of other voices that might compete for attention. Multiple voices remained, and musical meaning was embedded at multiple levels. In contrast to Wagnerian opera, such composers deliberately chose not to ensure conformity to a single unifying idea or principle. Composers used ambiguity and uncertainty intentionally recognising that the audience interpreted the meaning of the music by recognising such divergences. In this

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[153] Ther, Philipp. 2014. *Center Stage: Operatic culture and nation building in nineteenth-century central Europe*, translated by Charlotte Hughes-Kreutzmuller. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press. p. 242.

[154] Platt, Len, and Tobias Becker. 2013. "Popular Musical Theatre, Cultural Transfer, Modernities: London/Berlin, 1890–1930." *Theatre Journal* 65 (1): 12.

[155] Traubner, Richard. 1989. *Operetta: A theatrical history*. New York and London: Oxford University Press. p. xi.

[156] Bordman, Gerald Martin. 1981. *American Operetta: From H.M.S. Pinafore to Sweeney Todd*. New York: Oxford University Press.

[157] Platt, Len, and Tobias Becker. 2013. "Popular Musical Theatre, Cultural Transfer, Modernities: London/Berlin, 1890–1930." *Theatre Journal* 65 (1): 18.

[158] Emslie, Barry. 1993. "The Domestication of Opera." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5 (2): 167.

way, the composer remained engaged within contemporary discourses and played an active and meaningful role in their communities. Such composers provided a healthy resistance to those who believed that music should play a more other-worldly role.

Conclusion

Mozart's *Magic Flute* was, as Adorno suggested, indeed a "moment by itself",[159] but it was not the end of the *opera buffa* tradition. The techniques he developed remain relevant today. Of particular importance was Mozart's methods of including multiple different styles and encoding his music with meaning through the strategic repeated use of certain intervals or musical motifs and the expressive use of orchestral timbre and harmony were inherent means of realising the parodic potential of the *buffa* genre. Such techniques made *The Magic Flute* accessible to a broad-based audience and contributed to the work's immediate popularity even in his own lifetime.

Like *opera buffa, Capital* uses the number opera format and incorporates magical elements. It even uses the rescue trope and, like *opera buffa*, addresses contemporary concerns. Like Mozart, I have incorporated a range of different styles that I believe will be meaningful for a broad-based audience and have semiotically encoded discrete musical motifs that are repeated throughout the course of the opera. The score also provides musical commentary through the orchestral accompaniment, the use of colourful harmonic language and timbral effects.

Despite these similarities, the composition of *Capital* has also been influenced by a range of modern compositional techniques that are discussed in the next chapter. Such techniques were developed in the context of a twentieth century reimagining of the *opera buffa* genre in response to Wagnerian opera.

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[159] Adorno, Theodor W. 1978. "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening." In *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, edited by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt. New York: Urizen Books. p. 273.

Chapter 3.

Modern responses to Wagner: Reimagining the *opera buffa* heritage

Introduction

After Wagner's revolutionary recasting of opera within the same aesthetic parameters used to evaluate instrumental music, some twentieth century composers returned to *opera buffa* models as a means of investigating new applications of this genre for a modern world. In Chapter 2, I argued that *opera buffa* composers frequently and unashamedly embraced different musical styles from a range of sources, without necessarily privileging any particular style. In doing so, they created multi-voiced, parodic works which engaged with wide audiences and promoted stylistic, structural and harmonic innovations. Importantly, the expansion of *opera buffa* finales enabled composers to lengthen the duration of a particular movement or scene, integrating musical and dramatic concerns, and creating longer, more complex musical structures. In this process, the music of the opera gradually began to assume greater prominence, providing its own discrete commentary which went far beyond supporting the text. *Opera buffa* reached its apogée in the hands of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Just as Beethoven's legacy had paralysed symphonic composers in the nineteenth century,[1] many early-twentieth century opera composers were obsessed with escaping the shadow of Wagner's legacy, prompting considerable experimentation. The Italian composer, performer and music theorist Ferruccio Busoni wrote extensively about the need to reform opera. His contemporary, Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971), introduced technical innovations that enabled a layering of different stylistic attributes within a

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[1] For a good discussion of this issue see Bonds, Mark Evan, 2013. "Beethoven's Shadow: The nineteenth century." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Symphony*, edited by Julian Horton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

single work. In this chapter, I will initially discuss key aspects of Busoni's teachings and Stravinsky's technical innovations before proceeding with an analysis of the way that Weill and Sitsky applied these principles in key works.

Busoni proposed a return to what he perceived as a Mozartean ideal, with an independently functioning musical score that might draw out a range of different perspectives rather than conform to a single unifying vision. Stravinsky demonstrated the effectiveness of an unconventional compositional technique involving the juxtaposition of different stylistic elements, both vertically and horizontally, in the same piece of music. As discussed in Chapter 1, as the hierarchical relationship between different musical elements shift and change during the course of a work, a musical narrative can emerge which provides an additional form of musical commentary for the action on stage. In this chapter, I argue that in applying the theoretical and technical innovations espoused by Busoni and Stravinsky, both Weill and Sitsky were effectively able to develop an overarching musical narrative which gave their works structural coherence while allowing for the expression of multiple perspectives. The way they applied the layering techniques effectively recontextualised the appropriated musical styles, creating a sense of incongruity and ambiguity. The resulting juxtaposition of various musical elements created a dialogic interplay between the layers, consistent with Hutcheon's definition of parody as discussed in Chapter 1. This effect was often enhanced by exaggerating or distorting discrete characteristics of the appropriated style. These composers would also frequently modify the original material harmonically or rhythmically, thwarting audience expectations. They also chose musical styles that are traditionally enjoyed collectively, such as chorales or folk-like melodies, which symbolically invited their audiences into the narrative space of their operas. Most importantly, they often organised their works structurally by treating different styles like musical motifs that might interact and metamorphose over time.

The strongly cohesive musical narrative created by these composers suggests that they did not entirely walk away from the Wagnerian tradition and the need to retain some sense of musical coherence, despite using a heterogeneous mix of musical material.

Rather, their operas demonstrate that unity and heterogeneity need not be mutually exclusive.

While both Weill and Sitsky actively questioned nineteenth century aesthetic standards about the nature of the musical work and the role of the composer, they came to very different positions on this issue. Whereas Sitsky wished to encourage a musically educated audience, Weill deliberately spurned institutionalised forms of opera, incorporating popular musical elements that clearly attracted a more general audience. His approach demonstrates the potential for engaging an audience by employing musical styles that are familiar to a broad range of people.

While I have learnt a great deal from studying the scores of these composers and, as is discussed in Chapter 5, have used many similar polystylistic techniques in my own work, their main inspiration has been to imbue a desire to communicate to an audience and think creatively about the nature and role of music in my own compositional approach.

Early twentieth century experimentation with opera and polystylism

Many early twentieth century opera composers found themselves having to choose between commercially-oriented operetta and the Wagnerian style of opera which attempted to emulate the aesthetic standards of instrumental music. At the end of Chapter 2, it was suggested that at the beginning of the twentieth century, although widely popular, operetta had begun to lose its political edge, with romantic themes tending to dominate. It was increasingly performed in separate venues from grand operas, typically theatrical venues, and was generally considered significantly inferior to grand opera. In contrast, Wagner's operas grew in both stature and popularity in Europe and the United States after his death in 1883[2] until the anti-German sentiment

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[2] On the popularity of Wagnerian opera in the fin de siècle period, see Musgrave, Michael. 1995. *The Musical Life of the Crystal Palace*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 94; McColl, Sandra. 1996. *Music Criticism in Vienna, 1896–1897: Critically moving forms.* Oxford: Clarendon Press. p. 108; Horowitz, Joseph. 1994. *Wagner Nights: An American history*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 2.

that accompanied World War I curbed audience enthusiasm.[3] In this environment, even Italian opera generally struggled to retain its respectability and composers such as Puccini were generally not accepted as serious opera composers because of the privileged place ascribed to German music, particularly that of Wagner.[4]

Wagner's continued dominance in the operatic realm both fascinated and frustrated early twentieth century opera composers seeking to establish their own voice, especially in Russia[5] and France.[6] Some composers attempted to respond by extending the notion of *Gesamtkunstwerk* — a notable example being Scriabin, who aspired to involve all the senses through the use of coloured lights, music, and even taste in his final, incomplete work, *Mysterium.*[7] This work, which Scriabin envisaged as being performed in the foothills of the Himalayan mountains, was to be an "all-encompassing ritual enactment" lasting seven days and nights, designed to transform the consciousness of participants so that they could lead the world into a "higher plane of consciousness".[8] Such "maximalism", as Taruskin has styled it, had obvious limits.[9] Rather than compete on this basis, some composers instead went back to first principles, often seeking inspiration in simpler forms such as ancient, folk and non-western sources, as well as popular music.[10]

Both the maximalist response and the urge for a return to basic principles of composition as practised by traditional peoples of Europe and beyond were among the varied responses of artists to the problems of modernity. Modernism in music is often

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[3] Horowitz, Joseph. 1994. *Wagner Nights: An American history*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 2.

[4] Wilson, Alexandra. 2007. *The Puccini Problem: Opera, nationalism and modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 45–46.

[5] MacKenzie, John M. 1995. *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts.* Manchester: Manchester University Press. p. 154.

[6] See for instance Zank, Stephen. 2009. *Irony and Sound: The music of Maurice Ravel*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press. p. 14; Huebner, Steven. 1999. *French Opera at the Fin De Siècle: Wagnerism, nationalism, and style*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 12; Fulcher, Jane F. 2005. *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France 1914–1940*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 101.

[7] Shaw-Miller, Simon. 2002. *Visible Deeds of Music: Art and music from Wagner to Cage*. New Haven: Yale University Press. p. 62.

[8] Taruskin, Richard. 2010. *Music in the Early Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 225.

[9] Ibid. p. 5.

[10] Cross, Jonathan. 2003. "Stravinsky's Theatres." In *The Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky,* edited by Jonathan Cross. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 139.

characterised by a questioning of traditional assumptions about the way music was constructed, including assumptions about tonality, rhythm and form.[11] However, most modernists retained many nineteenth century assumptions about the need for musical unity as outlined in Chapter 1. While they might debate the boundaries and seek inspiration in popular musical sources, most modernist composers were keen to retain some separation from popular culture which, as they saw it, was one of the many problematic aspects of modernity. For most composers, this included what they viewed as an increasingly commercialised and formulaic approach to the composition of operettas.[12] Such an attitude typified the approach taken by one of music's most famous and archetypal modernists, Igor Stravinsky.

Stravinsky profoundly influenced many twentieth century composers, particularly those considered here. In his iconic work, *The Rite of Spring* (1911–1913), rather than using folk material as a resource for thematic material, as most composers before him had, he used fragmentary gestures (rhythmic, harmonic and melodic) drawn from folk material, and constructed blocks of sound which were characteristically juxtaposed against similarly constructed contrasting soundblocks.[13] Such fragments typically incorporated narrow-range melodies based on "non-functional diatonic modality" and/or the constant repetition of short rhythmic motifs in typically irregular Russian folk music meters.[14] The combined effect has been compared to the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*.[15] Like a cubist painting, the resulting music retained only generalised stylistic characteristics of the original source material. Stravinsky's dramatic shifts in colour and timbre were inspired by artists such as Mikhail Larionov (1881–1964) and

[11] For a good discussion of modernism in music see Botstein, Leon. 2011. "Modernism." *Grove Music Online.* http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/40625. Accessed 25 July 2011.

[12] For a good discussion of modernist concerns about the increasingly commercial and sentimental nature of operetta see Janik, Allan. 2001. "The Critical Modernism of a Viennese Composer." In *Wittgenstein's Vienna Revisited*, edited by Allan Janik. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers. p. 25ff.

[13] Straus, Joseph Nathan. 1990. *Remaking the Past: Musical modernism and the influence of the tonal tradition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p. 43.

[14] Taruskin, Richard. 1997. *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and hermeneutical essays*. Princeton and Chichester: Princeton University Press. p. 373.

[15] For a discussion on this issue see Pasler, Jann. 1986. "Music and Spectacle in *Petrushka* and *the Rite of Spring*." In *Confronting Stravinsky: Man, musician, and modernist*, edited by Jann Pasler. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 55.

Natalia Goncharova (1881–1962).[16] These artists had adopted the "bright colours and simplified forms of the Fauves",[17] often contrasting blocks of colour against each other like panes in a stained glass window. Such an approach was, according to Taruskin, unprecedented in Russian or French music.[18]

Stravinsky's sound blocks became structural devices on which he constructed his great works. Rather than constructing his music from melodies and their harmonisations, Stravinsky often layered the various sound blocks against each other both horizontally and vertically. Each layer represented a different perspective. Their ongoing interaction enabled the composer to guide the overall progress of the narrative.[19] This technique influenced a range of twentieth century composers, such as Edward Varèse, and may be understood as a compositional precedent for *musique concrète*.[20] It also influenced the composers discussed in this chapter and Chapter 4.

Stravinsky's two innovative theatre works composed during the war, *Renard* (1916) and *The Soldier's Tale* (1918), demonstrated a viable alternative to Wagner and operetta. Stravinsky's model, according to Cross, was "rough theatre", including folk and street theatre, circus, pantomime and cabaret.[21] In these works, he revisited the interactive style of such forms of theatre, bringing the audience and performers together rather

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[16] Taruskin, Richard. 1986. "From Subject to Style: Stravinsky and the Painters." In *Confronting Stravinsky: Man, musician, and modernist*, edited by Jann Pasler. Berkeley, University of California Press. pp. 37–38.

[17] Stokstad, Marilyn, Marion Spears Grayson, and Stephen Addiss. 1995. *Art History*. New York: H.N. Abrams. pp. 1081.

[18] Taruskin, Richard. 1986. "From Subject to Style: Stravinsky and the Painters." In *Confronting Stravinsky: Man, musician, and modernist*, edited by Jann Pasler. Berkeley, University of California Press. p. 16.

[19] For a good discussion about Stravinsky's "block" approach and the way he worked with connective and discontinuous elements often operating in dynamic tension between each other, see Horlacher, Gretchen Grace. 2011. *Building Blocks: Repetition and continuity in the music of Stravinsky*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[20] Cross, Jonathan. 1998. *The Stravinsky Legacy*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 34–35.

[21] Cross, Jonathan. 2003. "Stravinsky's Theatres." In *The Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky,* edited by Jonathan Cross. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 139.

than separating them via an orchestra pit. [22] Such works could be performed for a broad audience both indoors and outside.

While *The Soldier's Tale* does not feature the more radical juxtaposing of abstracted sound elements used in *The Rite of Spring,* Stravinsky did incorporate a range of different musical styles in it, including ragtime, tango, waltz, march tunes and two pseudo-Lutheran chorales,[23] often layering these both vertically and horizontally. In addition, he incorporated other heterogeneous elements, such as spoken parts (as opposed to sung parts), music, and dance, without making any effort to unify them. The spoken parts are at times accompanied by the music and at others are declaimed without musical accompaniment. *The Soldier's Tale* was scored for just seven instruments: clarinet, bassoon, cornet, trombone, violin, double bass, and percussion, more closely resembling many theatre orchestras, dance bands or outdoor bands than traditional classical music ensembles. The seven instruments of the band frequently act as soloists, retaining their own timbral qualities, even when combined. [24] The melodic lines of each instrument retain independence from each other and are not treated contrapuntally.[25] Stravinsky was further able to create a sense of dissonance by altering harmonies or rhythms, by placing a tonal melody in an atonal or pantonal musical context, by disrupting traditional harmonic conventions,[26] and by rudely juxtaposing different stylistic elements.[27] This and other innovations by Stravinsky freed composers from Wagner's imperative of ensuring all aspects of work conform to a single unifying vision. As discussed in Chapter 1, the resulting "montage" effect even drew grudging admiration from Adorno, who was not generally one of Stravinsky's greatest admirers — although he did state that Stravinsky provided a model later brought to fruition by

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[22] Weisstein, Ulrich. 2006. "Cocteau, Stravinsky, Brecht, and the Birth of Epic Opera (1962)." In *Word and Music Studies, Volume 8: Selected Essays on Opera by Ulrich Weisstein*, edited by Walter Bernhart. London: Brill. p. 25.
[23] Cross, Jonathan. 2003. "Stravinsky's Theatres." In *The Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky,* edited by Jonathan Cross. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 143.
[24] Marsh, James L. 1983. "Adorno's Critique of Stravinsky." *New German Critique* 28: 160.
[25] Ibid. p. 161.
[26] Straus, Joseph Nathan. 1990. *Remaking the Past: Musical modernism and the influence of the tonal tradition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p. 60.
[27] Cross, Jonathan. 2003. "Stravinsky's Theatres." In *The Cambridge Companion to Stravinsky,* edited by Jonathan Cross. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 143.

Weill.[28] Weisstein largely agrees with Adorno's assessment, claiming that while music and action did not always run a parallel course in *The Soldier's Tale*, they do not clash or look at each other ironically as they came to do in Weill's and Brecht's works.[29]

The Soldier's Tale influenced a number of other French and Russian composers who made similar theatrical and operatic experiments, such as *Parade*, (1917) by Erik Satie (1866–1925); *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, (1925), by Maurice Ravel (1875–1905); *The Love for Three Oranges*, (1921) by Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953); *Le pauvre matelot,* (1927) by Darius Milhaud (1892–1974); *Transatlantic,* (1928) by George Antheil (1900–1959); and *Antigone,* (1927), *Amphion* (1929), and *Les Aventures du Roi Pausole* (1930) by Arthur Honegger (1892–1955). Like Stravinsky, these composers incorporated a range of different styles, often layering the sounds against each other, fundamentally disrupting the organically unified approach advocated by Wagner.

Erik Satie's approach in *Parade* was one of the more extreme approaches. Satie was profoundly dismissive of Wagner's romantically charged method, stating: "Look, a property tree doesn't go into convulsions when a character enters the stage",[30] to describe what he perceived as the contrived nature of the *Gesamtkunstwerk.* Pre-empting postmodern developments, Albright has asserted that, in *Parade*, Satie used music as a "self-engrossed domain of action" congruent with the action on the stage but occupying a separate theatrical space or "an immiscible background for the stage action".[31] He claims that Satie's "smooth impenetrable sound-hunks" disengaged from all need to evolve, and drew attention to "matters that the artist would rather ignore" (that is, World War I) more effectively than highly evocative, emotional works by more romantic composers.[32]

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[28] Adorno, Theodor W. 2002. "On the Social Situation of Music." In *Essays on Music*, edited by Richard D. Leppert and Susan H. Gillespie. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 395–396.

[29] Weisstein, Ulrich. 2006. "Cocteau, Stravinsky, Brecht, and the Birth of Epic Opera (1962)." In *Word and Music Studies, Volume 8: Selected Essays on Opera by Ulrich Weisstein*, edited by Walter Bernhart. London: Brill. p. 31.

[30] Cited in Albright, Daniel. 2001. "Postmodern Interpretations of Satie's Parade." *Canadian University Music Review/Revue de Musique des Universités Canadiennes* 22 (1): 28.

[31] Ibid. pp. 28–29.

[32] Ibid. pp. 31–32.

A reaction to Wagner occurred somewhat later in Germany, prompted by the changed economic and political circumstance of the Weimar Republic. According to Heldt, the breakdown of the monarchies at the end of the World War I, and the subsequent transformation of court operas into national, state or municipal operas in Germany, had weakened the position of those who traditionally patronised the opera. Set adrift from aristocratic patronage, traditional court operas struggled under new financial imperatives which necessitated public accountability and a need to appeal to wider audiences. This promoted much heated debate about the nature of opera and its future in the major music journals and periodicals of the period.[33] Keen opera supporters among the educated middle classes[34] asserted strong views about the need to promote opera's social relevance and accessibility. Within this debate, Busoni, who had made Berlin his home, and who urged a return to the multi-voiced techniques of pre-nineteenth century composers and the re-engagement of the composer in a socially meaningful role, was, along with his Russian contemporary, Igor Stravinsky, a "pivotal figure".[35]

Busoni and the reform of opera

Busoni transmitted his views about opera and the role of the composer through his many writings and his pedagogical interactions with students in composition and performance master classes or private lessons.[36] According to Knyt, because his teaching focused on ideas rather than compositional techniques, his influence is often underestimated.[37] Nevertheless, Knyt claims that Busoni played a pivotal and lasting ideological role in compositional history by "directly influencing the works and theories of his disciples" and continues to have relevance in an age of musical

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[33] Cook, Susan C. 1988. *Opera for a New Republic: The Zeitopern of Krenek, Weill, and Hindemith*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press. p. 3.

[34] Pieper, Antje. 2008. *Music and the Making of Middle-Class Culture: A comparative history of nineteenth-century Leipzig and Birmingham*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 53.

[35] Heldt, Guido. 2005. "Austria and Germany, 1918–1960." In *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, edited by Mervyn Cooke. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 156.

[36] Knyt, Erinn Elizabeth. 2010. "Ferruccio Busoni and the Ontology of the Musical Work: Permutations and possibilities." Phd Thesis, Standford University. p. 476.

[37] Ibid. pp. 476–477.

pluralism.[38] However, his views were far from conventional and his ideas about the role and function of music and the role of the composer challenged hegemonic views about the nature of the musical work and the paradigm which strictly divided classical and popular forms of music.

In his 1911 essay *Sketch Of A New Esthetic Of Music,* Busoni was highly critical of the "insatiable", "voluptuous sensuality"[39] of the Wagnerian heritage among German composers, challenging many concepts underpinning Wagnerian opera. He developed this theme in his influential 1921 paper *The Essence and Oneness of Music* arguing that opera should neither attempt to replicate the "conditions of the spoken drama" with continuous singing nor allow itself to merely provide a source of "cheap amusement"[40] with stand-alone popular style songs. Like Adorno, he looked to Mozart's *The Magic Flute* as the most desirable model because of the way it "unites instruction and entertainment with a solemn spectacle to which entrancing music is added, or rather permeates all this and holds it together".[41] He distinguished between "a musical work of the combined arts" which allowed for a range of perspectives to be presented simultaneously and the "Bayreuth conception" of "a work of the combined arts" where the different arts conformed to a single unifying concept.[42] Interestingly, in the 1920s and 1930s, Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975) was making similar observations in the literary field.

In a critique that is very similar to the one that Busoni makes of Wagner, Bakhtin distinguished between the "dialogic", multi-voiced approach from the one dimensional, "monologic" work in which the various strands are integrated by an overarching and all-pervasive authorial voice.[43] Poetry, from Bakhtin's perspective, was

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[38] Ibid. p. 475.

[39] Busoni, Ferruccio. 2010. *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music*. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/31799/31799-h/31799-h.htm. Accessed 29 November 2014.

[40] Busoni, Ferruccio. 1965. "The Essence and Oneness of Music." In *The Essence of Music: And other papers*, translated by Rosamond Ley. New York: Dover Publications. p. 7.

[41] Ibid. p. 8.

[42] Busoni, Ferruccio. 1957. "The Essence and Oneness of Music, the Oneness of Music and the Possibilities of the Opera." In *The Essence of Music: And other papers*, translated by Rosamond Ley, edited by Ferruccio Busoni. http://www.rodoni.ch/busoni/essenceingl.html. London: Rockliff.

[43] Dentith, Simon. 1995. *Bakhtinian Thought: An introductory reader*. London: Routledge. p. 42.

a "monologic" language which, like classical music, had been ascribed a transcendent character, becoming "a language far removed from the petty rounds of everyday life, a language of the gods".[44] Novels, on the other hand, which absorbed a multiplicity of languages through the voices of the different characters, were "dialogic".

From Bakhtin's perspective, implicit within the multiple languages of the novel are a variety of verbal-ideological belief systems which the reader might observe playing out during the course of the novel. The interplay of these voices creates a "dialogic play of discourse"[45] which Bakhtin described as "heteroglossia".[46] According to Bakhtin:

> This zone surrounding the important characters of the novel is stylistically profoundly idiosyncratic: the most varied hybrid constructions hold sway in it, and it is always, to one degree or another, dialogized; inside this area a dialogue is played out between the author and his characters … The potential for such dialogue is one of the most fundamental privileges of novelistic prose, a privilege available neither to dramatic nor to purely poetic genres.[47]

For Bakhtin, such a discourse is essentially multi-dimensional or, in Bakhtin's words, a form of "socio-linguistic orchestration" that occurs when different languages and styles are mixed together.[48] As discussed in Chapter 1, these ideas informed Hutcheon's concept of the multi-voiced nature of the parodic work.

While for Bakhtin a novel may represent many voices, such representation is always refracted through an authorial voice. The very language and style of the speech used by a novel's characters ensures their perspective is heard but the authorial voice is ever-present:

> Heteroglossia, once incorporated into the novel … is *another's speech in another's language,* serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way … It serves two speakers at the same time and

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[44] Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1995. "Heteroglossia in the Novel." In *Bakhtinian Thought: An introductory reader*, edited by Simon Dentith. London: Routledge. p. 224.

[45] Hatten, Robert S. 1994. *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, correlation, and interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p. 202.

[46] Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1995. "Heteroglossia in the Novel." In *Bakhtinian Thought: An introductory reader*, edited by Simon Dentith. London: Routledge. pp. 195–224.

[47] Ibid. p. 214.

[48] Ibid. p. 219.

expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct
intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention
of the author.[49]

In Bakhtin's view, such a dialogic interplay is not present in monologic works which typically represent only the authorial voice, or dramatic works where multiple voices interact with each other and the authorial voice is less apparent. In remarkably similar terms, Busoni realised that, like the novelist, the opera composer might also interact with the voices of his or her characters. To this end, Busoni focused on three strategies: a return to the "number" opera of Mozart's era, the return of "song", and the incorporation of a variety of different musical styles.

Busoni advocated using discrete, self-contained musical numbers or scenes typical of Mozartean opera:

> I should like also to establish the fact that the opera as a musical
> composition always consisted in a series of short, concise pieces and
> that it will never be able to exist in any other form. Neither human
> conception nor reception lasts long enough for threads to be spun
> uninterruptedly for three or four hours. This cutting up into smaller
> pieces was shown quite openly by the old composers, the new vainly
> hide it under the mask of rejecting "full closes", thereby losing the
> rhythmic structures, and rhythmic structure is an organic condition
> of the musical structure, as breathing is to human beings and
> animals.[50]

For Busoni, this did not mean that the music should disrupt the dramatic action, a concern that Wagner and his followers were trying to address by writing through-composed operas. Rather, Busoni felt that the dramatic purpose of the work could best be realised by allowing each character to stand on their own terms. The composer Edward T. Cone expresses this perspective as follows:

> In the number opera, the separation of each aria or ensemble draws
> attention to the specific character or characters involved. In a work of
> the Wagnerian type … the continuity of the orchestral sound and of

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[49] Ibid. p. 218.
[50] Busoni, Ferruccio. 1965. "The Essence and Oneness of Music." In *The Essence of Music: And other papers*, translated by Rosamond Ley. New York: Dover Publications. pp. 14–15.

the musical design constantly refers to an all-inclusive persona surveying the entire action from a single point of view.[51]

To bring out the different voices of his characters, Busoni argued for a return to the lyricism of the song. Busoni considered that it was "fitting that people assert their love and unleash their loathing while singing", and was comfortable about retaining passionate, highly dramatic arias requiring virtuosic singing:

> The sung word on stage will always remain a convention and an obstacle to any genuine impact: in order to emerge from this conflict with any degree of propriety, a plot in which people act while singing has to be based on the unbelievable, the untrue, the improbable, so that one impossibility may support the other and both become possible and acceptable.[52]

Busoni argued that the composer should accept that singing within a drama would always appear somewhat contrived and suggested that any attempt to make the music seem natural or realistic by using *Sprechstimme* or other quasi-musical forms of dramatic enunciation was pointless.

Busoni also advocated a return to the inclusion of heterogeneous stylistic elements in opera. For Busoni, this was the very essence of opera. Busoni claimed that opera conceals within itself

> all the means and forms which otherwise only come into practice singly in music. It allows them and requires them. It gives the opportunity for making use of them collectively or in groups. The domain of the opera extends over the simple song, march, and dance tunes, to the most complicated counterpoint, from the song to the orchestra, from the "worldly" to the "spiritual" — and still further — the unlimited space over which it disposes qualifies it to take in every kind and style of music and to reflect every mood.[53]

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[51] Cone, Edward T. 1974. *The Composer's Voice: The Ernest Bloch lectures*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 29.

[52] Busoni, Ferruccio. *Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst* cited in Hinton, Stephen. 2012. *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of reform*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 51.

[53] Busoni, Ferruccio. 1965. "The Essence and Oneness of Music." In *The Essence of Music: And other papers*, translated by Rosamond Ley. New York: Dover Publications. p. 5.

For Busoni, it would therefore be inevitable that a composer would incorporate songs or dance tunes from the story world of the opera as well, as styles that might be used to express certain emotional or spiritual states, as this was the essence of opera.

Busoni's views on opera reflected his personal philosophical beliefs about the nature of the musical work. He felt that composers derived their music by accessing a universe of styles that already existed, rather than creating anything new. He drew an analogy to a gardener, arranging and cultivating the available flora to the best of his ability:

> To me, a composer is like a gardener to whom a small portion of a
> large piece of ground has been allotted for cultivation: it falls to him
> to gather what grows on his soil, to arrange it, to make a bouquet of
> it; and if he is very ambitious, to develop it as a garden.[54]

According to Knyt, Busoni's works frequently contained borrowed material and he found it difficult to distinguish between arrangements and original compositions,[55] calling into question the concept of the "original" musical work.[56] She observed that his opera *Doktor Faust* (which remained incomplete at his death[57]) involved not only the juxtaposition of music from different institutional styles but also of different historical eras, with multiple styles sometimes simultaneously in play.[58] Like Stravinsky, Busoni layered styles both vertically and horizontally, treating the horizontal styles as another polyphonic voice. He acknowledged that a composer might be limited by their time and place of their birth in terms of the styles they might be familiar with, but felt that to go beyond a formulaic approach where "lesser composers take over from the greater" the composer should strive to "set up a miniature model of that sphere from which all

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[54] Busoni, Ferruccio. 1965. "The Essence of Music: A paving of the way to an understanding of the everlasting calendar." In *The Essence of Music: And other papers*, translated by Rosamond Ley. New York: Dover Publications. p. 197.

[55] Knyt, Erinn Elizabeth. 2010. "'How I Compose': Ferruccio Busoni's views About invention, quotation, and the compositional process." *The Journal of Musicology* 27 (2): 227.

[56] Knyt, Erinn Elizabeth. 2010. "Ferruccio Busoni and the Ontology of the Musical Work: Permutations and possibilities." Phd Thesis, Standford University. p. 476.

[57] Busoni's score for *Doktor Faust* was completed posthumously by other composers including his student Philipp Jarnach, and English musicologist Antony Beaumont. For a discussion of these versions of *Dr Faust,* see ibid. p. 407. In 2007, Sitsky composed an alternate completion for Busoni's *Doktor Faust* based on his understandings of Busoni's intentions.

[58] Ibid. p. 439.

beauty and power flow to them".[59] For Busoni, then, polystylism was a source of innovation and renewal.

Despite his polystylistic predispositions, like most modernists, Busoni maintained a belief in the importance of musical unity. Even his most polystylistic works maintained a strong sense of motivic unity.[60] According to Knyt, he typically used a generative process of transformation and development based on a small motif that "foreshadows and grows into a complete melody".[61] This approach was not dissimilar to Schoenberg's, although Busoni's insertion of sectional and textual breaks and contrasts ensured his works never appeared as the "seamless outgrowths" of an opening idea in the same way as Schoenberg's.[62] However, Busoni's views on unity were very different to those of many of his peers. As previously discussed, he considered that all new works drew on ideas from previous compositions. He considered that such works, in turn, drew from a single mystical source.[63] He subscribed to utopian visions of an all-encompassing musical unity which might ultimately be achieved through the consolidated efforts of all composers throughout time.[64] Busoni was an example of a modernist artist who might anticipate some "decentring and destabilising aspects of postmodern thought",[65] but who nonetheless had a strong desire for unity, structure and meaning. However, for Busoni, unity and heterogeneity were not mutually exclusive concepts.

Busoni understood that an opera inherently included collaborators, such as librettists and set designers, whose voices would also be included in the opera. Busoni had a clear conception of an opera as a multi-media genre in which "sounds and pictures maintain

[59] Busoni, Ferruccio. 1965. "The Essence of Music: A paving of the way to an understanding of the everlasting calendar." In *The Essence of Music: And other papers*, translated by Rosamond Ley. New York: Dover Publications. p. 200.
[60] Knyt, Erinn Elizabeth. 2010. "Ferruccio Busoni and the Ontology of the Musical Work: Permutations and possibilities." Phd Thesis, Standford University. p. 285.
[61] Ibid. p. 295.
[62] Ibid. p. 297.
[63] Ibid. p. 285.
[64] Ibid. p. 286.
[65] Pegrum, Mark A. 2000. *Challenging Modernity: Dada between modern and postmodern*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books. p. 25.

their position". [66] He insisted that his students write scores that could function simultaneously with but independently of drama or text,[67] arguing that "an ideal union is found only in the solution that a composer should be his own poet".[68] For Busoni, the music of an opera had a clearly defined purpose. It should not be confined to a merely descriptive or supportive role. Rather, like the authorial voice of the novelist, the composer's voice should interact with the voices of characters and collaborators.

It followed, then, that rather than distancing himself or herself from the audience, the composer should engage with ideas and promote discussion among the audience. Busoni argued against a romantic conception of the musical work as "an expression of the artist's soul" that existed on a "transcendental plane" outside "normal everyday activity". [69] Instead, he argued that art was "a transmission of life".[70] He did not think that composers should shrink from entertaining the audience and representing experiences outside the "ordinary lives" of his audience. However, he was critical of those who exploited such forms of entertainment without "involving the audience in the accompanying dangers and disasters".[71] Like Adorno, Busoni was concerned that what might often be described as "realism" discouraged audience inquiry and promoted acceptance of what he conceived of as a false reality.[72] He condemned the Italian *verismo* style as "untenable", claiming:

> The opera should take possession of the supernatural or unnatural as
> its only proper sphere of representation and feeling and should create
> a pretence world in such a way that life is reflected in either a magic

[66] Busoni, Ferruccio. 1965. "The Essence and Oneness of Music." In *The Essence of Music: And other papers*, translated by Rosamond Ley. New York: Dover Publications. p. 14.

[67] Levitz, Tamara. 1996. *Teaching New Classicality: Ferruccio Busoni's master class in Composition*. Frankfurt and New York: P. Lang. pp. 293–294.

[68] Busoni, Ferruccio. 1965. "The Essence and Oneness of Music." In *The Essence of Music: And other papers*, translated by Rosamond Ley. New York: Dover Publications. p. 14.

[69] Taylor-Jay, Claire. 2009. "The Composer's Voice?: Compositional style and criteria of value in Weill, Krenek and Stravinsky." *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 134 (1): 87–88.

[70] Busoni, Ferruccio. 1965. "The Essence and Oneness of Music." In *The Essence of Music: And other papers*, translated by Rosamond Ley. New York: Dover Publications. p. 2.

[71] Busoni, Ferruccio. 1965. "The Future of Opera." In *The Essence of Music: And other papers*, translated by Rosamond Ley. New York: Dover Publications. pp. 39–41.

[72] Gatti, Guido M., Ferruccio Busoni, and A. Arbib-Costa. 1934. "The Stage-Works of Ferruccio Busoni." *The Musical Quarterly* 20 (3): 271.

> or a comic mirror, presenting consciously that which is not to be found in real life.[73]

Busoni particularly embraced the fantastical elements of operas such as *The Magic Flute*, as he felt that by creating distance from the "real world" his audience could gain new insights and imagine alternative forms of reality.

Busoni believed that composers might engage with unreality in one of two ways: by representing the magical or supernatural, or through comedy. He claimed that the "magic mirror" was for "grand opera", while the "comic" was for "light opera".[74] In the next section I consider the work of two of Busoni's students: Larry Sitsky, who adopted the former approach in his opera *Golem*, and Kurt Weill, who modelled his work more directly on *opera buffa* in two key works of the 1920s, *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* and *The Threepenny Opera.*

Larry Sitsky has a particularly strong link to the Busoni tradition. He initially studied piano at the Sydney Conservatorium with Winifred Burston from 1952 to 1958. Burston had studied with Busoni in Berlin in 1911 and, as a matter of course, instructed Sitsky in many of Busoni's key works.[75] With encouragement from Burston, Sitsky subsequently travelled to San Francisco to study with Busoni's lifelong friend and student Egon Petri from 1958 to 1961, and through Petri became so absorbed by Busoni's music that Crispin describes him as "a posthumous composition student of Busoni".[76]

Through Sitsky, I came to study the music of another of Busoni's students, Kurt Weill. Weill studied directly with Busoni as a student in his master class in composition at the

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[73] Busoni, Ferruccio. 1965. "The Future of Opera." In *The Essence of Music: And other papers*, translated by Rosamond Ley. New York: Dover Publications. p. 40.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Sitsky, Larry, and Judith Michelle Crispin. 2007. "Transcript of an Interview with Larry Sitsky by Judith Crispin." In *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky: The operas Doktor Faust and the Golem*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press. p. 176.

[76] Crispin, Judith Michelle. 2007. *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and Its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky: The Operas Doktor Faust and the Golem*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press. p. 1.

Akademie der Künst in Berlin from 1921 to 1924.[77] Weill eventually settled in the United States after being expelled from Germany by the Nazis in 1933 and had a strong influence on the development of music theatre in America after World War II.

Kurt Weill and the parodic opera

In following Busoni's comic tradition, Weill's model was the parodic style of Busoni's one act opera *Arlecchino*, written in *opera buffa* style.[78] Using this genre Weill sought to reach a wide audience without compromising his teacher's ideals.[79] To achieve this, he typically drew on a range of contemporary, popularly-oriented material, using different stylistic elements to represent contrasting perspectives that reflected subtexts between the different characters. Weill also provided a musical commentary by associating certain musical motifs with non-musical meanings and juxtaposing different musical layers. This also provides a sense of musical coherence, and is consistent with his teacher's approach to combining both heterogeneous and unifying elements.

As mentioned earlier, Weill was one of a number of composers who experimented with the operatic genre in Weimar Germany. These composers sought to reclaim opera's cultural relevance by writing operas that became known as *Zeitopers* or "topical operas", which, according to Susan Cook, aimed to capture "the spirit of the time".[80] This was part of a broader movement to engage with the community and challenge the hegemony of "autonomous" music through the creation of *Gebrauchsmusik*, music that might be socially useful. This movement stimulated the development of an unprecedented number of new works in the 1920s, including Ernst Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf* (1927), Max Brand's *Maschinist Hopkins* (1929), Paul Hindemith's *Cadillac* (1926), and, of most significance for this project, Kurt Weill's *Mahagonny-Songspiel* (1927), *The*

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[77] Drew, David, and J. Bradford Robinson. 2014. "Weill, Kurt (Julian)." *Grove Music Online*. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/30032?print=true. Accessed 27 October 2014.
[78] Hinton, Stephen. 2012. *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of reform*. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 42–43.
[79] Knyt, Erinn Elizabeth. 2010. "Ferruccio Busoni and the Ontology of the Musical Work: Permutations and possibilities." Phd Thesis, Standford University. pp. 547–548.
[80] Cook, Susan C. 1988. *Opera for a New Republic: The Zeitopern of Krenek, Weill, and Hindemith*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press. pp. 3–4.

Threepenny Opera (1928) and *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (1930). The 1926–1927 season was outstanding, with new works accounting for 20 per cent of opera productions.[81]

In various articles originally published in the 1920s and 1930s, Weill, like Busoni, advocated a withdrawal from Wagner's sphere of influence[82] toward more socially relevant music making, as exemplified in Mozart's operas. He believed that the sanctification of music was detrimental to the development of art and insisted that opera needed to be "rescued" from "the state of solemn seclusion".[83] Referring to Wagner, he derided the "problematic nature of the erotically overcharged man from the pre-war period".[84] Like Adorno, Weill believed that such excesses aroused emotions without providing any critical engagement, acting more like an aural "narcotic" which "excludes the process of thinking". He set himself the ambitious task of escaping the "insatiable", "voluptuous sensuality"[85] of the Wagnerian heritage:

> In music the immediate task is to continue the struggle against those forms of expression of the nineteenth century which we already considered to have been overcome: verbosity, deluge, unnaturalness, and false pathos.[86]

Weill's model, like Busoni's, was Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.[87] He considered the "provocative mix of elements from fairy tale and ritual, comedy and tragedy, buffa and

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[81] Heldt, Guido. 2005. "Austria and Germany, 1918–1960." In *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, edited by Mervyn Cooke. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 147.
[82] Weill, Kurt. 1979. "New Opera." In *Kurt Weill in Europe*, edited by Kim H. Kowalke. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press. p. 464.
[83] Weill, Kurt. 1979. "Socially-Creative Opera." In *Kurt Weill in Europe*, edited by Kim H. Kowalke. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press. p. 489.
[84] Hinton, Stephen. 2012. *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of reform*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 38.
[85] Busoni, Ferruccio. 2010. *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music*. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/31799/31799-h/31799-h.htm. Accessed 29 November 2014.
[86] Weill, Kurt. 1979. "The Paths of Music Journalism—Discussion About *Melos*." In *Kurt Weill in Europe*, edited by Kim H. Kowalke. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press. p. 538.
[87] Hinton, Stephen. 2012. *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of reform*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 455.

seria" of Mozart's *Magic Flute* as an ideal opera or "ur-opera", and was generally more optimistic than Adorno about the possibility of returning to the Mozartean ideal.[88]

Weill felt that opera should be more relevant to the everyday lives and experiences of the audience.[89] According to Hinton, rather than seeking to express his own "inner" voice or emotional state, Weill felt the composer should serve the community rather than his own "anima".[90] In keeping with this understanding, he chose to work in the theatre, where he could engage in a range of broadly based musical entertainments rather than the more exclusive atmosphere of the concert hall.[91] In this way, he sought to renegotiate the role of the composer.

Weill also admired Offenbach's "reportage style" discussed in Chapter 2. His own version of "socio-political journalism" was a particularly notable feature of his operetta *Der Kuhhandel*, composed in Paris in 1933.[92] He made his views clear in an article on *Zeitoper*:

> The new operatic theater that is being generated today has epic character. It does not propose to describe, but to report … Music in the new operatic theater renounces pumping up the action from within, glazing over the transitions, supplying the background for events, and stirring up passions.[93]

Der Kuhhandel, with its pointed references to the militaristic ethos of petty dictators, had a very contemporary focus.

Weill's operas, like Mozart's and Sitsky's, were typically divided into separate scenes or numbers in the Mozartean style. In *The Threepenny Opera*, there are many stand-alone songs in the style of a ballad or cabaret song, although more extended finales at the end

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[88] Weill, Kurt. 1979. "The Problem of Form in Modern Opera." In *Kurt Weill in Europe*, edited by Kim H. Kowalke. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press. p. 542.

[89] Kurt Weill, letter to the editor, Trybuna artystów, cited in Hinton, Stephen. 2012. *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of reform*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 55.

[90] Ibid. p. 33.

[91] Weill, Kurt. "Score for a Play," *New York Times*, 5 January 1947, cited in Hinton, Stephen. 2012. *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of reform*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 63.

[92] Drew, David. 1986. "Reflections on the Last Years: *Der Kuhhandel* as a Key Work." In *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill*, edited by Kim H. Kowalke. New Haven: Yale University Press. p. 221.

[93] Weill, Kurt. 1979. "Zeitoper." In *Kurt Weill in Europe*, edited by Kim H. Kowalke. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press. p. 484.

of each act distinguish it from such forms of entertainment and mark a connection with the *opera buffa* tradition. In *Mahagonny*, as in the operetta tradition,[94] dance music is often used to provide the overall framework for each scene.[95] Weill achieved this by extending the dances and inserting other stylistic elements.

Weill deliberately chose to incorporate popular musical forms such as dance tunes as a way of communicating with his audience. Like Busoni and Sitsky, he wanted to challenge his audience, but also wanted to engage with them on their own terms by incorporating music that would be familiar and accessible, declaring his ambition to find a musical language "which is just as natural as the language of the people" to "deal with the monumental themes of our time".[96] He claimed that like all great art, music should facilitate "the reflection of their life and of their experiences on a sublime level of artistry".[97] For Weill, "high" and "low", or "serious" and "light" were not mutually exclusive categories, and he did not believe that attempting to embrace an art form that advocated human emancipation was incompatible with entertainment.[98] He believed that "a certain branch of dance music" (jazz) expressed "the spirit of our times" reflecting the "instinct of the masses" rather than "towering personalities who stand above time". [99] For this reason he decided to explore the "full complexity of rhythm, harmonic precision" and "auditory and modulatory richness" [100] of dance music in order to create music that would be broadly accessible and relevant to the audience he hoped to engage.

Weill typically incorporated popular musical references that might carry pre-existing cultural meaning for his listeners. In Weill's time, for instance, the tango had been

[94] Banfield, Stephen. 2005. "Popular Musical Theatre (and Film)." In *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, edited by Mervyn Cooke. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 297.
[95] Cook, Susan C. 1988. *Opera for a New Republic: The Zeitopern of Krenek, Weill, and Hindemith*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press. p. 122.
[96] Weill, Kurt. 1979. "Opera—Where To?" In *Kurt Weill in Europe*, edited by Kim H. Kowalke. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press. p. 508.
[97] Kurt Weill, letter to the editor, Trybuna artystów, cited in Hinton, Stephen. 2012. *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of reform*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 55.
[98] Ibid. p. 456.
[99] Cited in Weill, Kurt. 1979. "Dance Music ." In *Kurt Weill in Europe,* edited by Kim H. Kowalke. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press. p. 473.
[100] Ibid.

popularised through films starring Rudolph Valentino. This dance was considered to have sexual overtones and functioned, according to Sanders, as "an ambivalently erotic expression, the sound of an illicit love that stands on the borderline of disaffection or betrayal".[101] By writing in the style of the tango, Weill appropriated its the sexual overtones. Similarly, writing in the style of a waltz enabled a composer to appropriate its acquired meaning as a symbol of grace and well-ordered society.[102] In many respects, Weill incorporated different styles in the same way that Bakhtin describes a novelist's use of different speech types to express the perspective of each character.[103]

Despite many obvious parallels in music,[104] musicologists have on the whole been slow to take an interest in Bakhtin's theories. Hatten is a notable exception. He has made a direct comparison between Bakhtin's concept of "heteroglossia", discussed earlier, and a composer's use of different musical styles. Hatten argued that different musical styles can cue shifts in perspective, allowing different voices to emerge. In this way, he suggested that style can act as a musical marker which is defined by reference to other styles placed in opposition to it.[105] Based on linguistic concepts, a "marked" musical feature suggests the presence of particular characteristics which are negated by an "unmarked" musical feature. For instance, Hatten suggested that in the classical style, while major modes might be used in a variety of contexts (heroic, pastoral or comic), the use of the minor mode was usually defined by its opposition to the major, ensuring that it assumes a tragic aura more often than not.[106] The minor, in this context, is "marked" in relation to its opposition to major. Hatten claimed that the use of this technique of "markedness" allows dialogue between the different musical styles incorporated within a work.

[101] Sanders, Ronald. 1991. *The Days Grow Short: The life and music of Kurt Weill*. Los Angeles: Silman-James Press. p. 120.

[102] Taylor, Ronald. 1992. *Kurt Weill: Composer in a divided world*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

[103] Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1995. "Heteroglossia in the Novel." In *Bakhtinian Thought: An introductory reader*, edited by Simon Dentith. London: Routledge. p. 203.

[104] For discussion about the potential application of Bakhtin's theories in musicology, see Korsyn, Kevin. 1999. "Beyond Privileged Contexts: Intertextuality, influence, and dialogue." In *Rethinking Music,* edited by Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 55–72.

[105] Hatten, Robert S. 1994. *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, correlation, and interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p. 172.

[106] Ibid. p. 36.

Weill aimed to exploit the full potential of the different musical styles that he appropriated. Although Weill wanted his music to be accessible, he didn't want to be "tied to the needs of the masses" or make "severe concessions to the so-called public taste".[107] He believed that it was possible to use "simple, easily-comprehensible melodies" which might superficially resemble "the melodies of 'light' music" in a serious way.[108] He argued:

> … despite all such simplicity, I must give my best and highest. To be sure, in the theater I can also write in a simple style, but I can still count on the support of more ingenious and complicated means. [109]

Like Busoni, Weill aimed to introduce his audience to a rich vein of culture and ideas through his music.

Weill, like Busoni, also felt that the musical score should operate independently of the text. Weill argued that music should not have a dependent or subservient relationship to the text.[110] He felt that it should not be left to the libretto and the stage setting to carry the dramatic action and its idea on their own. Rather, he insisted that in an opera the music must be actively involved in the presentation of any individual episode. He argued that music could be of "decisive importance for the presentation of man in the theatre" [111] and "set down the basic tone and the basic *gestus* of an action to the extent that a wrong interpretation can be avoided".[112] Unfortunately, he failed to adequately define the word *gestus*,[113] leading to ongoing debate among contemporary scholars as to its meaning.[114]

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[107] Weill, Kurt. 1979. "Opera—Where To?" In *Kurt Weill in Europe*, edited by Kim H. Kowalke. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press. p. 506.

[108] Ibid. p. 507.

[109] Weill, Kurt. 1979. "Topical Dialogue About *Schuloper* between Kurt Weill and Dr. Hans Fischer." In *Kurt Weill in Europe*, edited by Kim H. Kowalke. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press. p. 521.

[110] Weill, Kurt. 1979. "Zeitoper." In *Kurt Weill in Europe*, edited by Kim H. Kowalke. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press. p. 483.

[111] Weill, Kurt, and Erich Albrecht. 1961. "'Gestus' in Music." *The Tulane Drama Review* 6 (1): 29.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Thomson, Peter. 2002. "Dismantling the Gesamtkunstwerk: Weill, Neher and Brecht in collaboration." *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 22 (1): 38.

[114] Hinton, Stephen. 2012. *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of reform*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 34.

Hosokawa has suggested that *gestus* in Weill's music is a process of mediating between "heterogeneous elements on stage",[115] such as those between stage and hall, between actor and character, text and, importantly for this study, between heterogeneous elements within the music itself. This is consistent with other *Neue Sachlichkeit*[116] (new matter-of-factness)[117] artists, who, according to Taylor aimed to "shock the observer out of his complacency and conventionality by creating incongruity, parody," and "a world that stood on its head".[118] To achieve this, these artists, like surrealist and Dada artists in other European countries, characteristically used montage, collage, and "the agglomeration of elements familiar in their individuality but disturbing, even destructive, in their new composite function".[119] Weill identified with this group, asserting that in *The Threepenny Opera* "the music again assumes its irrational role" often interrupting the plot and creating disruption rather than acting as a unifying force, as in Wagnerian opera.[120] Adorno too saw similarities between Weill and surrealist forms of art, calling *Mahagonny* the first surrealist opera.[121]

As discussed in Chapter 2, polystylism is not an invention of modernist composers. *Opera buffa* composers often used different styles to present different characters or to evoke a mood associated with a particular style. Such techniques are also common among postmodern artists. Despite this, modernist artists are often interpreted from a postmodern perspective by some critics who argue that Dada and surrealist artists transcended the bounds of modernism in a direction that anticipates postmodernism.[122]

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[115] Hosokawa, Shuhei. 1985. "Distance, Gestus, Quotation: 'Aufstieg Und Fall Der Stadt Mahagonny' of Brecht and Weill." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 16 (2): 194.

[116] Hinton, Stephen. 2012. *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of reform*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 3.

[117] Kowalke, Kim H. 1995. "Kurt Weill, Modernism, and Popular Culture: *Offentlichkeit Als Stil*." *Modernism/Modernity* 2 (1): 31.

[118] Taylor, Ronald. 1992. *Kurt Weill: Composer in a divided world*. Boston: Northeastern University Press. p. 81.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Weill, Kurt. 1979. "Opera—Where To?" In *Kurt Weill in Europe*, edited by Kim H. Kowalke. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press. p. 508.

[121] Adorno, Theodor W. 2009. "Mahagonny." In *Night Music: Essays on music 1928–1962*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Wieland Hoban. London: Seagull Books. p. 195.

[122] Pegrum, Mark A. 2000. *Challenging Modernity: Dada between modern and postmodern*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books. p. 2.

However, as I will discuss in the next chapter it is not always a simple matter to differentiate modernism from postmodernism.[123]

Both modernist and postmodernist composers use polystylism in similar ways. However, as I will argue, they also use Stravinsky's block approach to incorporate polystylism into the structure of the musical work. While there are some differences in the approach taken by modernist and postmodernist composers, there are also considerable overlaps. This issue is further discussed in Chapter 4.

Everett argues that a parodic musical discourse occurs where a composer appropriates pre-existing music with an intent to highlight it in a significant way by placing it in a new context.[124] Citing Hutcheon's notion of "critical distance", Everett's analysis focuses on the way the composer moves beyond imitation, inverting or negating the original meaning of the backgrounded referent by placing it in a new context. She adopts Hutcheon's term "transcontextualization" to describe this process.[125] Everett's description of the procedures which composers typically use to create a sense of parody (described in Chapter 1) are based on Hatten's work. All three of these techniques are apparent in Weill's work.

First, Everett suggests that composers substitute one expressive state for another, thereby inverting the meaning that might otherwise be represented by the words of the text. For instance, using a major key to express sad sentiments might suggest some ambiguity about whether the singer is truly sad.[126] Certain harmonies, most obviously a perfect cadence associated with a musical ending, might also be associated with certain meanings. Weill used harmonic distortions designed to thwart listener expectations and create a range of musical ambiguities, which work against words and/or melody and evoke contrasting moods, in both *The Threepenny Opera* and *Mahagonny.*

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[123] Ibid. p. 24.

[124] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2004. "Parody with an Ironic Edge: Dramatic works by Kurt Weill, Peter Maxwell Davies, and Louis Andriessen." *Music Theory Online* 10 (4). http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.04.10.4/mto.04.10.4.y_everett_frames.html. Accessed 11 August 2014.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid.

In the famous *Moritat*, which opens *The Threepenny Opera*, Weill sets an innocuous and simple melody against atypical harmonies which work against the simplicity of the melody, creating a sense that all is not as it seems. The opening (Example 3.1) is harmonised with an added sixth chord which has a dual function. Firstly, as Taylor and others have suggested, it creates the "treacly commonplace" ambience of the more sentimental jazz and dance-band music of the era.[127] This is amplified by ambiguous harmonies that suggest bi-tonality.

Example 3.1: Kurt Weill. ***Die Dreigroschenoper***. **bars 1–7.**

The bass of the harmonisation suggests C major, yet the anacrusis E and flattened leading note moving to an A on the first beat of the bar suggest an Aeolian mode with a tonal centre of A. Many composers would have harmonised such a melody with a dominant minor chord in the anacrusis leading to an A minor chord in the first bar, establishing an A minor tonality. Weill leaves the anacrusis unharmonised and uses an implied C major bass ostinato of C to G against an A minor triad to harmonise the melodic A in the first bar, implying a C major tonality. The distinctive minor sound, at odds with the C major bass ostinato, suggests a bi-tonal flavour, giving a sense of uncertainty and anticipation. In bar three, the D minor chord with an added seventh, which could be read as a subdominant in A minor or a supertonic chord in C major, maintains a sense of tonal ambiguity. The continuation of the C major bass ostinato adds to the complexity of the sound. In bar five, there is an unambiguous dominant chord — a G chord with added sevenths and ninths — in C major. However, the

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127 Taylor, Ronald. 1992. *Kurt Weill: Composer in a divided world*. Boston: Northeastern University Press. p. 139.

expected resolution to the tonic chord of C major is weakened because the ninth of the dominant chord is not resolved. Rather, it is sustained as an added sixth in the C major/A minor chord in bar seven and by a melody which returns to the initial bi-tonal opening rather than resolving to C. The somewhat sardonic effect of such a weak resolution sits in stark contrast to the standard heroic opening of many musical comedies and operettas, implying that dramatic events about to unfold may also not be satisfactorily resolved.

A second example of the way Weill thwarts listener expectations can be found at the end of the third act of *Mahagonny*, where Weill uses the sacred connotations of a hymn tune to imply, paradoxically, an irreligiousity and spiritual impoverishment in the materialistic society of the city of Mahagonny. Interestingly, Stravinsky had used a "great chorale" in *The Soldier's Tale* at the climactic point where the tale's moral is enunciated. As will become apparent, this is a common feature of the works of all the composers featured in this exegesis, including Mozart, who incorporated chorales in the Masonic rituals represented in *The Magic Flute*. Revermann has suggested that the use of the chorale invokes the symbolism of the traditional Greek chorus as the voice of the people[128] — a sentiment echoed in the tradition of protestant church hymnody, where the congregation joins together in the singing of hymns. Interestingly, the early-twentieth century socialist workers' movement also appropriated hymn tunes to promote solidarity among members.[129] By appropriating the cultural connotations associated with the chorale, Weill draws the audience into the action on stage, placing them in a position to make moral judgments about it.

In Example 3.2, instead of the rich four-part harmony of the typical chorale, Weill harmonised the chorale-like melody sung by Jimmy with a spare chorale-like counter-melody sung in unison. The resulting harmonies often clash with Jimmy's melody, particularly where marked with an asterisk (*). For instance, in bars one and two,

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[128] Goldhill, Simon. 2013. "The Greek Chorus: Our German eyes." In *Choruses, Ancient and Modern*, edited by Joshua Billings, Felix Budelmann and Fiona Macintosh. Oxford University Press. p. 36.

[129] Revermann, Martin. 2013. "Brechtian Chorality." In *Choruses, Ancient and Modern*, edited by Joshua Billings, Felix Budelmann and Fiona Macintosh. Oxford University Press. p. 165.

Jimmy's chorale-like melody clearly implies a conventional harmonic progression of Chords I, I, V, I, resolving to chord V in C major in the second bar. However, Weill's counter-melody immediately introduces an aberrant A flat in the third beat of bar one, which creates a tri-tone against Jimmy's D. In bar two, the counter-melody returns to the tonic, while Jimmy's part clearly indicates a dominant chord (or appropriate substitute), creating a clash of D against a C. Despite the clashing harmonies, the counter-melody at times moves in similar motion and at times in contrary motion to the melody-line in imitation of a typical chorale bass-line, creating a sense of familiarity with the chorale style. At the end of the counter-melody a harmonic sequence revolving around chords I, IV and V is suggested in the penultimate bars, resolving to chord I in A major in the final bar as would be typical at such a cadential point in a chorale. However, the melody line does not relate to these chords at all. In fact, a different tonality is suggested altogether with the B flat and C natural. This counteracts any sense of sacred meaning suggested by hymn-like setting and instead emphasises Jimmy's nihilistic words as he is about to be executed:

> *Lasst euch nicht verführen, es gibt keine Wiederkehr. Der Tag steht vor den*
> *Türen, ihr könnt schon Nachtwind spüren. Es kommt kein Morgen mehr.*
> (Let's not deceive you, there is no return. The day is at the doors, you
> can already feel the night wind. There is no tomorrow.)

Morley has described Weill's setting as a type of "anti-chorale".[130] It negates the sacredness of this moment, suggesting a deeper concern about the meaninglessness of life and the futility of religion itself.

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[130] Morley, Michael. 1986. "'Suiting the Action to the Word': Some observations on *Gestus* and *Gestiche Musik.*" In *A New Orpheus: Essays on Kurt Weill,* edited by Kim H. Kowalke. New Haven: Yale University Press. p. 194.

Example 3.2: Kurt Weill. *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. Act 3, Scene 20, bars 65–75.

Weill does not restrict himself to unusual harmonisations and melodic inflections to create a parodic effect. He also rudely juxtaposes contrasting stylistic elements, often treating them like Stravinskian blocks of sound.[131] The "incongruous juxtaposition of different stylistic elements"[132] is the second procedure that composers might use to invoke parody described by Everett. In Scene 9 of *Mahagonny*, Weill made extensive use of this technique to juxtapose the decadent lifestyle of the people of Mahagonny against the spare and frugal lifestyle of the Alaskan tree-fellers and the increasingly desperate mindset of Jimmy. The scene begins with a quotation from Theckla Badarzewska's late-nineteenth century parlour song, *The Maiden's Prayer*. The tune is played by the bar's piano player in an extremely ornamented, quasi virtuosic manner. According to Everett, the "inflated style of playing" distorts the innocence of the original tune and instead turns it into a "symbol of decadence". [133] The sarcastic intent is made patently clear to the audience when one of Jimmy's friends listening to the piano solo says, "*Das*

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131 Hinton, Stephen. 2012. *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of reform*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 74.
132 Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2004. "Parody with an Ironic Edge: Dramatic works by Kurt Weill, Peter Maxwell Davies, and Louis Andriessen." *Music Theory Online* 10 (4). http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.04.10.4/mto.04.10.4.y_everett_frames.html. Accessed 11 August 2014.
133 Ibid.

119.

ist die evige Kunst" (That is immortal art).[134] However, there is more than just a simple one-dimensional distortion of a parlour song happening in this scene. Throughout Scene 9, Weill creates a distinct musical narrative as two markedly different styles of music interact and clash against each other as the scene unfolds. The resulting interaction between these styles is an example of the third procedure that composers might use to create a parodic effect, as described by Everett, the creation of a musical discourse by the interaction of different stylistic elements.

In Scene 9 of *Mahagonny*, the decadent life in the city of Mahagonny is represented by the lavish and virtuosic setting of *The Maiden's Prayer*, while the simple, often difficult but honest, life in Alaska experienced by Jimmy and his friends is represented by spare, open harmonies and the simpler rhythmic and musical texture of Jimmy's solo. The initial piano solo teases out the tune of *The Maiden's Prayer* with a richly arpeggiated accompaniment in common time. In contrast, Jimmy's solo, when it commences five bars after Figure 116, is in triple meter and is set austerely and stridently with spare staccato chords, often little more than bare fourths. It is also sung three times faster than the more indolent opening. The accompaniment is underpinned by an ostinato of two beats accented by a snare drum that works against the triple metre creating a sense of ambiguity and disjunction. This transition is demonstrated in Example 3.3.

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[134] Albright, Daniel. 2000. "Kurt Weill as Modernist." *Modernism/Modernity* 7 (2): 275.

Example 3.3: Kurt Weill. *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. **Act 1, Scene 9, bars 23–28.**

As the scene unfolds, the disjunction between the two styles of music is further exaggerated to express Jimmy's bitter disappointment that the city of Mahagonny is not the paradise he dreamed of while suffering untold deprivations and discomforts working in the Alaskan wilderness. After the first verse of Jimmy's solo, the *Maiden's Prayer* piano solo resumes briefly, its character enhanced by a syrupy choral accompaniment of four bars. This accompaniment uses a stereotypical progression of tonic chord, the supertonic and a dominant that resolves somewhat uncertainly on a tonic seven chord. The second stanza of Jimmy's solo (Example 3.4) comes in abruptly at Figure 119 in E major, which is totally unrelated to the previous key of E flat major in which the parlour song was set. Jimmy's solo continues to be underlined by the rhythmic ostinato and spare harmony, as in the first verse.

Example 3.4: Kurt Weill. *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny.* **Act 1, Scene 9, bars 49–54.**

Near the end of the second verse (Example 3.5), the piano solo returns with another highly florid recapitulation of the parlour song along with the choral refrain before Jimmy's solo is quite complete. This further emphasises the differences between Jimmy's style of singing and the parlour song by creating a somewhat disjunctive and awkward overlap.

Example 3.5: Kurt Weill. *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. Act 1, Scene 9, bars 72–77.

Jimmy's despair as he realises that it has been pointless to endure the hardships of work in Alaska in order to come to Mahagonny comes to a climax in the third verse. As the piano solo returns, Jimmy starts to get more and more agitated as he sees the innkeeper increasing the prices. Interrupting the piano solo, he calls out:

Ja was fällt each denn ein Ja was fällt euch denn ein?

Das könnt ihr doch mit uns nicht machen!

Da seid ihr an die Falschen gekommen!

(What are you doing?

123.

You can't get away with that!

You've got the wrong guys!)[135]

Jimmy then pulls out his pistol in protest, saying:

Komm' heraus! Du Hier … darfst du. Schlampe!

Hier ist Jimmy Mahony! Aus Alaska! Dem gefällt's hier nicht!

(Come out you tramps!

It's me, Jimmy Mahoney! From Alaska! Who doesn't like it here!)[136]

At this point (Example 3.6) the music becomes more confused as the contrasting elements of both musical styles are juxtaposed at close quarters. The ostinato figure previously accompanying Jimmy's solo is condensed and syncopated, and the tune morphs into common time. While the harmony remains fairly spare, additional discordant notes are introduced as the tension rises. Jimmy's solo is punctuated by comment from the chorus who, displaying little empathy for Jimmy's plight, hums a threatening refrain (*drohend*) which is nonetheless in the romantic syrupy style of the refrain previously sung to *The Maiden's Prayer*.

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[135] Translation taken from New York Metropolitan Opera Production.
[136] Translation taken from New York Metropolitan Opera Production.

Example 3.6: Kurt Weill. *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. Act 1, Scene 9, bars 130–135.

This culminates in a quasi celebratory music hall chorus (Example 3.7) which summons images of dancing girls kicking up their legs, in marked contrast to, or even as a belittling of Jimmy's impassioned rage, which reaches its climax at the same point as he sings "*Haltet mich zurück, sonst gibt's ein Unglück*" (Hold me back, otherwise there's an accident).

Example 3.7: Kurt Weill. *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny.* **Act 1, Scene 9, bars 171–174.**

With the chorus caught up in their own enjoyment, it is clear that Jimmy's one-man attempt at revolution has been a complete failure. The scene ends ominously with Jimmy's realisation:

> *Ach mit eurem ganzen Mahagonny wird nie ein Mensch glücklich werden,*
> *weil zuviel Ruhe herrscht Eintracht und weil's zuviel gibt, woran man sich*
> *halten kann.*
>
> (Mahagonny will never make a man happy as there is too much
> unity/harmony and too much quiet.)

In Scene 9 of *Mahagonny*, Weill has created a dialogic framework using two different musical styles. Although the styles undergo alteration as they are refracted through the composer's own voice, the differing perspectives of those on stage become apparent. Jimmy's emotions and frustrations are barely represented at all in the spare musical style that he sings, and the highly romantic music of *The Maiden's Prayer* is used in such a way that might invoke criticism rather than empathy. As in Satie's *Parade,* the emotional power of this scene comes from the juxtaposition of the different musical elements which distances the audience and places them in the position of observer.

As discussed briefly in Chapter 1, Byron Almén has argued that the interplay of different musical elements interacting over time creates a musical narrative.[137] In Scene 9 of *Mahagonny,* as the two irreconcilable styles of music struggle against each other,

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[137] Almén, Byron. 2008. *A Theory of Musical Narrative*: *Musical meaning and interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p. 29.

Jimmy's simple spare harmonies are overwhelmed by the voluptuous harmonies, which represent materiality and commercialism. The changed relationship and resulting despair that Jimmy experiences pre-figures his eventual fate. Weill used all the resources of a twentieth century composer, not only juxtaposing different musical elements, as discussed by Almén, but also different tonalities and rhythms, resulting in polyrhythms and polytonalities that fundamentally alter the audience's perception of the original material over the duration of the opera. This approach is not dissimilar to the approach taken by novelists, as discussed by Bakhtin and Hutcheon.

Weill also embedded meaning in repeated musical motifs that recur throughout the operas. For Weill, like Mozart, these insertions have typically been defined as leitmotifs and, consistent with the preoccupation of most musicologists, focus has centred on the way such motifs contribute to the overall musical unity of the work. While repeated motifs no doubt create a sense of musical coherence, unity as such may not have been Weill's main intention. By correlating a certain theme or motif or harmonic progression with a particular emotion or piece of dramatic action, like Mozart, Weill is able to provide an ongoing musical commentary. The semantic purpose of these motifs is further supported by their lack of musical development. In Weill's works, the intervallic relations between key motifs are typically maintained when quoted elsewhere, creating dialogue between different sections of the opera. For instance, as David Drew has suggested, themes from the *Barbara Song*, (Quotations A and B shown in Example 3.8) subsequently recur in the finale.[138]

Example 3.8: Kurt Weill. Die Dreigroschenoper. Act 1, Scene 9, bars 114–130.

[138] Drew, David. 1990. "Motifs, Tags and Related Matters." In *Kurt Weill: The Threepenny Opera*, edited by Stephen Hinton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 153.

In this section of the *Barbara Song* Polly is concluding her song about her devastating experiences in love. The words of the chorus quoted here reflect Polly's bitterness about her experiences, and in the last line of the refrain (Quotation A) she states, "*ja da gabs überhaupt kein Nein!*" (there was never anything!), suggesting the emptiness of her experiences.

The meanings associated with these themes in the *Barbara Song* subsequently transfer to their recurrence in the finale to Act 3 (Example 3.9), negating the meaning of the text. After MacHeath is freed, Polly sings "*Ich bin sehr glücklich*" (I am so lucky)(Quotation B). As in Mozartean opera, the subsequent orchestra ritornello provides the commentary. Quotation A is played in the upper part while Quotation B is quoted in a lower part played by the saxophone, invoking the unhappy ending of the *Barbara Song.*

Example 3.9: Kurt Weill. *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Act 2, Scene 20, bars 116–122.

An extended version of Quotation B is also used in the *Salomon Song* sung by Jenny when she ponders MacHeath's fate in the words, "*Da seht ihr unsrer Sünde Lohn*" (As you can see the wages of sin), again associating this distinctive chromatic motif with expressive states of despair and pain (Example 3.10).

Example 3.10: Kurt Weill. *Die Dreigroschenoper*. Act 3, Scene 17, bars 71–78.

By using repeated musical motifs to make interjections and comments, Weill's authorial voice is never far away. While he has sought to restore music's mimetic function, he does not totally reject nineteenth century aesthetic standards. However, as with Mozart,

there is little evidence that Weill tried to ensure conformity to any overarching unified

structural plan. Like Mozart, Weill does not inject his own voice at the expense of other

voices. Rather he provides a loose narrative arch that allows for individual stories and

utterances. According to Bakhtin:

> … the stratification of literary language, its speech diversity, is an
> indispensable prerequisite for comic style, whose elements are
> projected onto different linguistic planes while at the same time the
> intention of the author, refracted as it passes through these planes,
> does not wholly give itself up to any of them.[139]

By using the vernacular music of the people, Weill allows for the diversity of speech

that Bakhtin admired in the novel. In this way, according to Bakhtin, the novelist is able

to

> broaden the horizon of language available to literature, helping to
> win for literature new worlds of verbal perceptions, worlds that had
> been already sought and partially subdued in other — extraliterary
> — spheres of linguistic life.[140]

By repeating and recontextualising such "utterances", Weill is similarly able to

introduce his audience to new and different ways of viewing their world. Weill

provided a loose musical structure that refracts and reflects different aspects of

different points of view at different times. This is the essence of the "montage"

approach admired by Adorno.

Weill's commentary on the stultifying effect of popular culture and the false promises

of consumerism no doubt influenced Adorno's positive opinion of this work, as

discussed in Chapter 1.[141] One of Adorno's concerns about popular music was that the

sensuous pleasure that the audience might experience from such music distracted them

from political engagement. Ironically, as Lydia Goehr has suggested, in *Mahagonny*,

Weill's method of juxtaposing different musical elements allows the audience to not

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[139] Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1995. "Heteroglossia in the Novel." In *Bakhtinian Thought: An introductory reader*, edited by Simon Dentith. London: Routledge. p. 206.
[140] Ibid. p. 217.
[141] Adorno, Theodor W. 2009. "Mahagonny." In *Night Music: Essays on music 1928–1962*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Wieland Hoban. London: Seagull Books. pp. 186–199.

only enjoy the music, but to become aware of the appropriated "culinary" character of popular culture in all its inherent social contradictions:[142]

> *Mahagonny* was a work *of* pleasure *about* pleasure … The pleasures, therefore might have been pleasurable, but under current conditions they were socially false. Real pleasures might have been promised, yet false pleasures were delivered.[143]

The audience is free to enjoy the sensuous aspects of the music while simultaneously being aware of the superficial nature of pleasure in the city of Mahagonny. However, from Adorno's perspective, such enjoyment can only be legitimately consciousness raising when experienced in the context of the opera. Adorno was deeply concerned that many of Weill's songs were taken out of context, and, when considered in isolation, becoming mere pastiche, indistinguishable from other commercial material. For this reason, he was highly critical of the commercial orientation of Weill's later works.[144] Weill's career contrasts with Sitsky's, who in his implementation of Busoni's teachings has steadfastly avoided all involvement with commercial forms of music making.

Sitsky and the magical *Grand Opera*

Sitsky's opera *The Golem* was composed as a response to Busoni's *Doktor Faust*,[145] with both operas concerned with the supernatural arts and the unintended consequences of acquiring other worldly powers. There are many similarities between the two works, including the use of a double chorus and the paired evocation of rituals at the beginning and end of the operas.[146] Sitsky also pays homage to Busoni through a recurrent 'F' pedal — 'F' standing for Ferruccio.[147] Sitsky, like Weill, also took up Busoni's challenge to embrace heterogeneous elements within the opera. To achieve

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[142] Lydia Goehr, "Lydia. 2008. "Hardboiled Disillusionment: 'Mahagonny' as the Last Culinary Opera." *Cultural Critique* 68: 9.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Adorno, Theodor W. 1999. "Criteria of New Music." In *Sound Figures*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. p. 180.

[145] Crispin, Judith Michelle. 2007. *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and Its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky: The Operas Doktor Faust and the Golem*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press. p. 2.

[146] Ibid. p. 112.

[147] Ibid. p. 143.

this, Sitsky uses two main techniques. First, using Stravinsky's block approach, extreme contrasts of style and musical intensity are juxtaposed, creating a sense of rupture and unpredictability that reveals the transitory nature of the operatic world he has created. Second, Sitsky provides a nuanced and semantically rich musical commentary through a complex system of musical codes to represent key mystical ideas and characters within the opera. Described by reviewer John Carmody as "a collage of metaphor, ceremony, legend, religion, of life and death — carnal and spiritual",[148] *The Golem* provides a multi-media extravaganza in the Busoni tradition that is deliberately designed to challenge and provoke the listener. However, the opera's epic quality, its spiritual themes and the stimulating sensory environment that Sitsky creates also demonstrate the continuing influence of the Wagnerian tradition in his work.

Throughout his career, Sitsky has engaged with philosophical and spiritual ideas and, like Busoni, has encouraged his students to engage with contemporary cultural concerns. Sitsky is widely read in philosophy, literature, politics and religion,[149] and esoteric religious writings have been a frequent source of inspiration.[150] Sitsky's music typically provides a form of musical commentary in relation to the non-musical sources that have provided his original inspiration:

> I have found over the years that people mistakenly think that I write programmatic music. What's difficult to explain is that these non-musical sources are the beginning — they are not the end. That the idea, or the mythology, or a piece of poetry, starts the sound in my head. It's not a literal interpretation.[151]

While *The Golem* is set in the sixteenth century, the religious tensions and power struggles embodied in the opera are particularly pertinent for a modern audience in a post-holocaust age.

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[148] Carmody, John. 1990. "Soul-Shaking Opus of Optimism: Review of *the Golem*." In *Golem: Grand Opera in 3 Acts,* Vocal Score, edited by Larry Sitsky and libretto by Gwen Harwood. New York: Seesaw Music.
[149] Sitsky discusses his philosophical influences at Cotter, Jim. 2004. *Sitsky: Conversations with the composer*. Canberra: National Library Australia. p. 94.
[150] Crispin details Busoni and Sitsky's common interest in esoteric religious writings in Crispin, Judith Michelle. 2007. *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and Its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky: The Operas Doktor Faust and the Golem*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press.
[151] Cotter, Jim. 2004. *Sitsky: Conversations with the composer*. Canberra: National Library Australia. p. 102.

The plot of *The Golem* revolves around a Jewish Rabbi who, concerned for the future of his people in the face of ongoing anti-Jewish pogroms, magically creates a golem, a human-like artificial being, to protect them. Inevitably, the golem becomes embroiled in the Christian/Jewish clash as he struggles to come to terms with his own quasi-human nature and the feelings he has for the Rabbi's daughter, Rachel. Tragically, Rachel is killed in the ensuing violence and the golem subsequently loses all control and starts killing others indiscriminately in revenge. The Rabbi must reluctantly terminate the golem's existence. The opera ends with the rabbi repenting his decision to take on the God-like creator role, even though his initial motives had been to protect his people. The opera raises questions about power and resistance and the search for meaning in a violent world where compassion is often in short supply.

While Sitsky's works are highly structured, intuition plays an extremely important role in his music. He urges students not to become "slaves" to any "system" or set of compositional rules:

> You have to have enough trust in your intuitive side and enough self-belief to actually do it, to sit down and write a piece that kind of flows in your head …[152]

Sitsky likens his preferred musical structure to a house with several rooms; within each room there is a freedom to move and develop organically, enabling different ideas to sit alongside each other. Contrasting perspectives are on display as he proceeds through the various rooms of the house.[153] Sitsky structured *The Golem* around ten stand-alone choral settings of mystical text from the Kabbalah that he had written prior to the opera, creating separate sections in the tradition of the number opera. But within this structure he composes quite freely, incorporating a range of different elements, including some stand-alone songs. For instance, in Act 1, Scene 1, Rachel sings a folk song, *Great Solomon went a-walking*. Similarly, in Act 2, Scene 2, the chorus sings a Gypsy song, *Gypsy, gypsy where are you going*. These songs are seamlessly woven into

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[152] Ibid. p. 77.
[153] Sitsky claims to have learnt of this notion from Busoni, but I can't find a reference to such a concept in Busoni's writings.

the overall structure of the house, but also sit apart from it, inviting the audience to perceive the opera from different rooms within the house.

Sitsky's musical house also provides a place for different styles to interact, and sometimes to clash quite violently. A feature of *The Golem* is extreme contrasts in style and musical intensity. Sitsky incorporates different musical styles to represent different perspectives within the opera, including traditional Jewish melodies and other folk material, rabbinical chant, sixteenth-century Roman polyphony, and Anglican chant and plainsong. Extreme contrasts, ranging from a "delicate lullaby in G minor" to dense and violent "orchestral explosions", mirror the events on stage.[154] Sitsky believes that composers cannot help but "regurgitate" musical pieces they've heard, but will inevitably distort and embellish any such musical references, creating a new work. What is important for Sitsky is that the original musical source is not a substitute for inspiration:

> What comes out is a mix of those two things and the icing on the cake
> is probably the craft and, hopefully, the art that is sprinkled on after
> the guts of it is received, concocted — whatever word you want to
> use.[155]

Often these styles are layered and contrasted against each other in blocks of sound created through abrupt changes and fragmentations that reveal the highly tenuous and fragile position of key protagonists.

Sitsky used polystylism as a way to represent the overlapping and intersecting cultural worlds of his main protagonists. For instance, at the beginning of Act 3 of *Golem*, with the inevitable violence between Christians and Jews now imminent, the Christian choir and Jewish choir sing simultaneously, each to their own God, in their own musical style. The Christians sing Latin prayers seeking God's blessing (*Ergo Benedicamus domi*) while the Jewish choir pray to their God for protection. The Jewish and Christian chants are layered against each other, with the Jewish song coming to dominate as their

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[154] Gee, Christopher Lyndon. 1990. "Larry Sitsky, the Golem and Opera in the Twentieth Century." In *Golem: Grand Opera in 3 Acts,* Vocal Score, edited by Larry Sitsky and libretto by Gwen Harwood. New York: Seesaw Music.

[155] Cotter, Jim. 2004. *Sitsky: Conversations with the composer*. Canberra: National Library Australia. p. 76.

situation becomes more perilous. While this happens, Rabbi Loew tries to negotiate with an increasingly enraged Cardinal. This is punctuated by a sparse accompaniment of brass interjections and string cluster chords as the community moves toward rupture and chaos. In this way, Sitsky critiques not just anti-Semitism and historical Catholic-Jewish tensions, but the irony of both sides seeking deliverance from what the Christians at least claim is the same God when, inevitably, only one side can prevail (See Example 3.11).

136.

Example 3.11: Larry Sitsky and Gwen Harwood (libretto). *Golem: Grand opera in 3 acts.* **Act 3, Scene 1, bars 117–134.**

Sitsky also creates a complex, multi-voiced musical commentary by creating a rich set of semantic associations using an extensive network of musical motifs that reflect his keen interest in esoteric symbols.[156] This ensures that various esoteric symbols, like characters within the opera, have their own voices as the audience is engulfed in a gigantic metaphysical battle. In her work on esoteric symbolism linking Sitsky and Busoni, Crispin detailed an extensive system of codification in her study of *The Golem*. She found that Sitsky ascribes musical meaning by:

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[156] Crispin, Judith Michelle. 2007. *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and Its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky: The Operas Doktor Faust and the Golem*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press. p. 43.

- The assignment of a common pitch to groups of words that Sitsky intends to be understood as related in meaning.

- The assignment of a common interval to groups of words and short phrases that Sitsky intends to be understood as related in meaning.

- The assignment of common intervallic sets to groups of words and longer phrases that Sitsky intends to be understood as related in meaning.

- The assignment of particular instrumental colours and textures to groups of words and longer phrases that Sitsky intends to be understood as related in meaning.

- The recurrent use of intervallic sets to highlight a particular word or phrase.

- The assignment of particular pitch rows to each individual character.

- The use of certain chords to illustrate particular words or phrases throughout the opera.[157]

Such a highly complex and organised system shows the priority that Sitsky gives to conveying a distinctive musical meaning which both complements the text and goes beyond it.

In the Busoni tradition, Sitsky's music has a clearly defined purpose that both sits alongside the stage action and operates independently of it. At one level, the code is so esoteric that Sitsky is clearly intending that only keen students of his work such as Crispin will decipher his intended meaning. However, as Lyndon Gee suggests, many of the motifs, even when as little as two or three notes, "unmistakably present themselves to the musical consciousness of the listener" on repetition and draw "the listener into the psychological world of the characters".[158] This is not achieved by developing the motifs in a Wagnerian manner or by rigidly applying a set of self-assigned compositional constraints. Rather, although Sitsky quotes the motifs in exactly the same way throughout the work, the context in which they are used is constantly changing, providing a means for listeners to track the journey of the characters through the course of the opera and experience the music as an organic outgrowth of the musical structure.

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[157] Ibid. pp. 111–139.
[158] Gee, Christopher Lyndon. 1990. "Larry Sitsky, the Golem and Opera in the Twentieth Century." In *Golem: Grand Opera in 3 Acts,* Vocal Score, edited by Larry Sitsky and libretto by Gwen Harwood. New York: Seesaw Music.

Crispin details how Sitsky uses certain pitches to represent certain words. The authority of the king is usually invoked through widely spaced intervals, with the word "king" represented by the note "G" sitting at the apex of the phrase as in the first scene of Act 3 in the following excerpt sung by the Cardinal (Example 3.12):
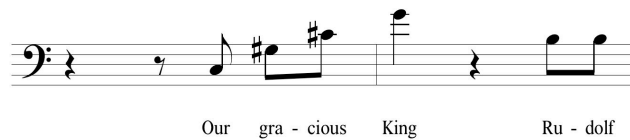
Example 3.12: Larry Sitsky and Gwen Harwood (libretto). *Golem: Grand opera in 3 acts.* **Act 3, Scene 1, bars 62–63.**

However, earlier in the opera, when the Jews question the King's ability to protect them, even though they have his "seal" that "the blood accusations will never be told again", the "G" for the king is placed in a more ambiguous and uncertain position in the phrase (Example 3.13).
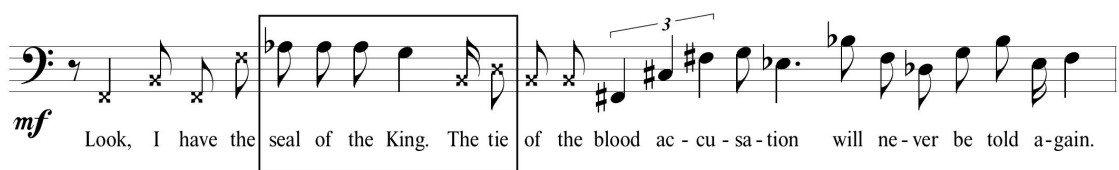
Example 3.13: Larry Sitsky and Gwen Harwood (libretto). *Golem: Grand opera in 3 acts.* **Act 1, Scene 6, bar 15.**

In this way, Sitsky demonstrates the emotional uncertainty of the Rabbi even while trying to reassure his community. Similarly, in Act 2, with Meisel's trial on trumped-up charges about to commence, Meisel asks why the king doesn't intercede (Example 3.14).
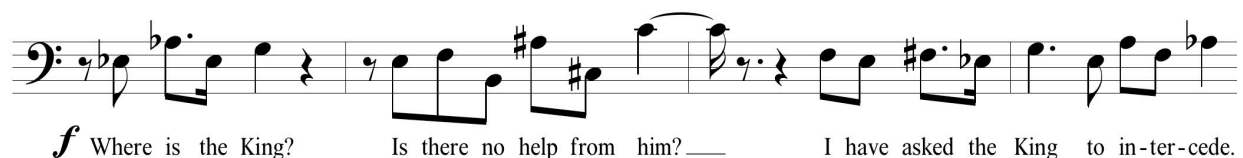
Example 3.14: Larry Sitsky and Gwen Harwood (libretto). *Golem: Grand opera in 3 acts.* **Act 2, Scene 3, bars 60–63.**

139.

Using a similar technique, Sitsky provides a context for his own mystical search for union. "God", "death", "spoken", "seal", "work", "home", "speak", and "down" are all represented by the note C, suggesting that, in Sitsky's mind at least, some links or parallels can be drawn between these words and concepts.[159] Significantly, the opera ends with an unaccompanied Hebrew chant which ends on a high C at the word "one", which has not previously been associated with that note (Example 3.15). Sitsky would have presumably chosen the final note for this text with great care, aware of the other associations he had already set in play for this note.

the Lord ___ is one.
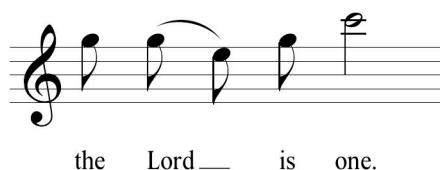
Example 3.15: Larry Sitsky and Gwen Harwood (libretto). *Golem: Grand opera in 3 acts.* **Act 3, Scene 7.**

In the context of the other words assigned to C, this suggests that for Sitsky the goal of the journey he has taken us on is the mystical union of all things. "God" and "death", rituals and words, adversity and work are all part of the journey to such oneness as the golem dissolves back into the mud from whence he came.

Such examples demonstrate Sitsky's firm position within the modernist aesthetic with which he identifies. Early in the twentieth century it was not uncommon for modernist artists to seek an escape from the discourses of western modernity in mysticism. Pegrum interprets this interest as evidence of some artists' engagement with modernist utopian yearnings for an alternate source of order in a chaotic world.[160] Certainly, Sitsky's disciplined approach to an eclectic array of source material and his use of mystical symbolism are consistent with such modernist idealism.

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[159] Crispin, Judith Michelle. 2007. *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and Its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky: The Operas Doktor Faust and the Golem*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press. p. 118.
[160] Pegrum, Mark A. 2000. *Challenging Modernity: Dada between modern and postmodern*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books. p. 39.

Sitsky writes music in the explicit hope that it will extend and educate the audience. In his work he strives to "elevate the human spirit" and provide a "glimpse of something unknown",[161] displaying some similarities with a Wagnerian understanding of the role and function of music. Like a priest or a shaman, he sees himself as someone who is "acting as an intermediary between this dimension and another".[162] In this role, he believes, like Adorno, that it is important for the audience to commit themselves to doing some of the work. He has said to me:

> The composer should aim to educate the audience. They should have to read and prepare for the performance. The audience should not be passive.[163]

Unfortunately, it seems that fewer and fewer audience members are prepared to make such a commitment.

Conclusion

Weill chose to follow Busoni's comic opera model, while Sitsky's work represents his vision for a grand magical opera. Despite their differences, both of these composers shared aspects of Busoni's philosophical outlook and incorporated many of the techniques he advocated. Both composers incorporated multiple different styles. Weill, for instance, used the 1920s dance styles of the Weimar Republic, while Sitsky used an eclectic range of styles reflecting the Christian and Jewish cultures of the story world of his opera, as well as folk music and music that reflected his interest in mystical philosophies. Both composers also adopted Stravinsky's method of juxtaposing and layering different styles so that their ongoing interaction creates an overarching musical narrative as the opera unfolds. They also both used musical motifs to create a form of musical commentary and to bring musical coherence to their work. In this way, they were able to use their operas as vehicles for creating a discourse around a range of contemporary political and social concerns.

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[161] Sitsky, Larry, and Judith Michelle Crispin. 2007. "Transcript of an Interview with Larry Sitsky by Judyth Crispin." In *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky: The operas Doktor Faust and the Golem*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press. p. 183.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Personal communication, 20 January 2015.

A close consideration of the work of these composers demonstrates that the hegemony of autonomous art music was never complete, and that a rich tradition of parody based on mimetic aesthetic standards continued well into the twentieth century. As in the novel, different voices are refracted and refocused through the authorial voice of the composer, enabling different perspectives to emerge from his work. However, both composers, particularly Sitsky, remain influenced by nineteenth century aesthetic standards and their works, while incorporating heterogeneous elements remain highly unified.

While both Sitsky and Weill aimed to communicate musically with their audience, they also wanted to challenge this audience. As is discussed in Chapter 5, Sitsky's application of Stravinsky's layering technique and his method of encoding different non-musical symbols have been significant influences on my own work. Sitsky's opera, which explores a rich musical vocabulary and complex esoteric religious ideas, provides more challenges than Weill's less complex approach, which incorporates elements of popular music. Weill's approach was clearly more accessible to a broad audience. In its initial run, *The Threepenny Opera* sold out every night.[164] For this reason, like Weill, I typically incorporate more popular musical references than did Sitsky. Unfortunately, as I discussed in Chapter 1 after World War II the *Gebrauchsmusik* movement in which Weill participated became somewhat discredited in Europe because of its association with Nazism. Despite this, as is discussed in the next chapter, the ideal of composing a "social opera" lived on in the USA relatively free of such stigma.

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[164] Hinton, Stephen. 1990 *Kurt Weill: The Threepenny Opera*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 181.

Chapter 4.

Renegotiating opera in the late-twentieth century

Introduction

Busoni's ideas about the multi-voiced nature of opera gained new relevance in the era following World War II which — in the western world — saw an explosion of musical genres and styles, leading to unprecedented musical pluralism. Such a change in the musical landscape inevitably encouraged renewed debate about the nature and role of music. These debates brought into question previously held beliefs about the musical work and the role and authority of the composer.

In this chapter, the focus moves from Europe to the United States. At the beginning of the twentieth century, operetta had begun to evolve into a new art form, the popular modern musical theatre now commonly referred to as the musical. During the 1920s, musicals were becoming increasingly domestic, often focusing on romantic themes. However, the social upheavals of the 1930s stimulated the development of more politically motivated works. Weill's immigration to the United States in 1935 and his involvement in musical theatre directly influenced one of the foremost figures in the development of the modern musical, Leonard Bernstein.

Bernstein was an interesting figure, with a deep involvement in both musical theatre and opera. His rise to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s coincided with a renewed interest in polystylism, spurred on by the posthumous premieres of many of the works of the eccentric early twentieth century composer Charles Ives (1874–1954). These works captured the imagination of many composers seeking an alternative to the increasingly isolationist Darmstadt School and their total serialism. This approach was

an extension of the 12-tone serialism advocated by the Second Viennese School. Darmstadt composers argued that all musical parameters — including pitch, tempo, duration, register, dynamic and articulation —should be treated serially.[1] Polystylism not only promised liberation from such a severe approach, but reflected the stylistic pluralism that pervaded a world in which popular music was clearly claiming a more dominant role.

In this chapter, I discuss Bernstein's connections with the Busoni tradition and his influence on the evolution of the musical and opera in the context of developing postmodern thought. I focus on composers who have most influenced my own work, particularly the American composers Stephen Sondheim and John Adams, and Dutch composer Louis Andriessen.

Like most of the composers considered in this chapter, Bernstein juxtaposes different musical styles both vertically and horizontally. He also creates a musical commentary through the use of repeated musical motifs which provide a means of unifying his approach without silencing different voices. His unparalleled achievement in *West Side Story* was to combine classical and popular styles to create a highly engaging work on topical issues that achieved widespread popularity among a broad audience.

Bernstein's most famous successor, Stephen Sondheim continues to create highly unified musical works, even while incorporating different stylistic elements. However, while most contemporary composers working in this space are influenced by Sondheim, I have found a greater commonality with John Adams and Louis Andriessen. These composers give greater prominence to the layering and juxtaposition of different styles using techniques, which I have found particularly useful in the composition of my own work. However, as with Bernstein, heterogeneity is not necessarily created at the expense of musical coherence. Adams and Andriessen are

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[1] Fox, Christopher. 2015. "The Darmstadt School." *Grove Music Online*. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/49725. Accessed 25 October 2015.

able to find ways to give voice to multiple perspectives while still providing an overarching structural framework, which retains commonalities with the approach by taken by the composers discussed in Chapter 3. Adams and Andriessen also seek to represent their ideals musically and participate in contemporary discourses in a way that is far removed from the sacralised autonomous musical work discussed in Chapter 1.

Leonard Bernstein and the return of social opera

The musical, like operetta, has always been a stylistically eclectic genre. During the 1920s, in the hands of composers such George Gershwin, the boundaries between classical and popular styles of music were regularly challenged.[2] Gershwin's revolutionary opera *Porgy and Bess* (1935) greatly inspired the next generation of composers, including Kurt Weill, who attended a rehearsal of this work soon after he arrived in the United States in 1935. This confirmed Weill's decision to continue the quest for a more "integrated form of musical" that he had begun in Europe.[3] At the same time, the depression-era Federal Theatre Project, an initiative to encourage out of work artists and theatre directors, fostered the notion of providing socially relevant art to entertain poor families. Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock* (1935) was an initiative of this project which later influenced Bernstein, who conducted a performance of the work in 1948.[4] Bernstein also conducted a revival of Weill's *The Threepenny Opera* in English translation in 1952, shortly after Weill's death in 1950, which stimulated a rediscovery of Weill's German works by American audiences.[5]

Leonard Bernstein shared much of the philosophical outlook of Busoni and Weill, and emulated many of their techniques in his opera *Candide* (1956) and his musical *West Side*

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[2] Savran, David. 2006. "The Search for America's Soul: Theatre in the jazz age." *Theatre Journal* 58 (3): 475.
[3] Hinton, Stephen 2012. *Weill's Musical Theater: Stages of reform*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 368.
[4] Seldes, Barry. 2009. *Leonard Bernstein: The political life of an American musician*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 175.
[5] McClung, Bruce D., and Paul R. Laird. 2008. "Musical Sophistication on Broadway: Kurt Weill and Leonard Bernstein." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, edited by William A. Everett and Paul R. Laird. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 190.

Story (1957). According to McClung and Laird both Bernstein and Weill composed in "cultivated forms", such as symphonic and chamber music, and in "vernacular genres", such as film scoring and the musical. Both drew musically on their Jewish heritage and both brought a "new level of musical and dramatic sophistication" to the Broadway musical.[6] Bernstein's method of composition emulated Stravinsky's use of intervallic relationships and juxtaposition of different musical blocks.[7] Bernstein also used a multi-voiced approach, consistent with Bakhtin's concept of a multi-voiced heteroglossia, as discussed in Chapter 3. However, as is argued, Bernstein provided a much more developed musical structure and a much stronger narrative arc through the use of musical motifs which evolved throughout his operas.

Like Weill, Bernstein sought to challenge the artificial divide between high and low culture, lamenting what he described as a "20th-century phenomenon" that while "people are listening to more music than ever before"[8] the focus was on museum works rather than "compositions of our time".[9] He claimed that it was only in the area of "pop music" that "unabashed vitality, the fun of invention" or "the "feeling of fresh air" could be found.[10] Like Weill, Bernstein's ambition was to bridge the gulf between art music and popular music and to reinstate the importance of "musical communication". With a focus more on the mimetic aspects of music than the cathartic, he claimed that music was a kind of "psychic speech":

> I mean by it the tenderness we feel when we recognize and share
> with another human being a deep, unnameable, elusive emotional
> shape or shade.[11]

He believed that all music began in the theatre, and that American music would also find its own unique language in the theatre. According to Bernstein, just as the German

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[6] Ibid., pp. 191–192.

[7] Smith, Helen. 2011. *There's a Place for Us: The musical theatre works of Leonard Bernstein*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate. p. 15.

[8] Bernstein, Leonard. 1975. "An Open Letter." In *The Professional Symphony Orchestra in the United States*, edited by George Seltzer. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press. p. 447.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid. p. 448.

[11] Ibid.

musical language had evolved from the *Singspiel,* American *Singspiel* equivalents, such as *Oklahoma* and *Can-Can*, might provide the inspiration for a "real American symphonic form, or a real American style of whatever kind of concert music". According to Bernstein:

> … the musical language it will speak must first be created in our theater; then one day it can be divorced from "meaning" and stand alone, abstract.[12]

Rather than importing European musical traditions with their associated cultural baggage, Bernstein was suggesting that such music might be renewed through interaction with popular genres in the American theatre. Like *opera buffa* and operetta composers, he typically focused on contemporary themes. For Bernstein, the incorporation of popular genres was a means to reinvigorate older cultural forms and make them socially relevant in a new country. In doing this, he adopted many of the techniques used by Weill.

Firstly, like Weill, Bernstein had an interest in using popular music and other different musical styles, often recontextualising or otherwise distorting elements of the original style to create a parodic effect. A good example of this is his use of a chorale in *Candide* which provides a subtle commentary on the nature of patriotism. *Candide* was written against the backdrop of the McCarthy hearings, and the opera includes subtle political commentary throughout.[13] Like Sitsky and Weill, Bernstein distorted the quasi-religious attributes of the chorale by introducing dissonant elements. For instance, in Example 4.1, the initial harmonisation is in unison (not unusual at the beginning of a hymn). However, he introduces parallel fifths and octaves in the second phrase of the chorale, which runs counter to traditional chorale harmonic conventions, as represented in any

[12] Seldes, Barry. 2009. *Leonard Bernstein: The political life of an American musician*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

[13] Patinkin, Sheldon. 2008. *"No Legs, No Jokes, No Chance": A history of the American musical theater*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press. p. 325.

harmony primer.[14] In the third phrase, the harmonisation becomes more orthodox with the addition of thirds, although, unusually, there are several extended triads with sevenths and ninths included. The resulting false relations create some unusual clashing harmonies. In the last phrase, breaking more significantly with tradition, he introduces a series of parallel fifths and sevenths. These provide a much starker sound than more standard chord progressions. Like Weill, Bernstein observed good voice-leading practices which ensures that the unusual harmonies still make some sense to the listener. Most of the aberrant harmonies are quickly resolved. The "wrong" harmonies, combined with the exaggerated performance style directed by the composer, (Bernstein's tempo marking is *Andante pomposo,* and his stylistic marking *pesante,* meaning heavy and ponderous), produce a sense of disjunction for the listener, suggesting that true sacredness is not the composer's intent. Rather, he is effectively ridiculing the sanctification of patriotism and glorification of war suggested by the words of this chorale in its various iterations. At the end of the chorale, this restraint is suddenly lost as the singers are directed to glissando to a higher note, suggesting the composer's true feelings about such pomp.

Example 4.1: Leonard Bernstein. *Candide: A comic opera in two acts*. Act 1, Scene 3 (section 5e), bars 1–10.

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[14] Aldwell and Schachter, for instance, state that in four part harmony it is "forbidden" for voices to move in parallel perfect fifths or octaves. Aldwell, Edward, and Carl Schachter. 2003. *Harmony and Voice Leading*. Third edition. Australia and United States: Thomson/Schirmer. p. 72.

Bernstein's use of the chorale style, like Weill's, effectively countered the meaning of the text and substituted one expressive state for another, providing another example of a parodic musical technique, consistent with Everett's paradigm, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Cunegonde's aria from *Candide* is a more extended example of Bernstein's use of parodic techniques. Here Bernstein skilfully interweaves a variety of musical styles to create a musical sub-text which has many similarities with the techniques Weill used in Scene 9 of *Mahagonny.* In *Glitter and Be Gay*, Bernstein appropriated elements of Violetta's tragic solo "*Addio del passato*", sung at the end of *La Traviata* (1853) by Guiseppe Verdi (1813–1901). In this particularly tragic and poignant aria, Violetta laments that she is dying and will not see her beloved Alfredo again. The style is typical of tragic soprano arias found throughout nineteenth century opera, particularly those by composers such as Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924), Ruggiero Leoncavallo (1857–1919), Pietro Mascagni (1863–1945), and Verdi.[15] However, Bernstein introduces a series of distortions which gradually suggest an opposite meaning that counters the implied tragedy of this style of aria.

The opening motif (Figure A in Example 4.2) is a direct quotation (transposed up a minor third) of the main motivic figure in Verdi's aria (Figure A[1] in Example 4.3). Similarly Figure B (Example 4.2) in *Glitter and Be Gay* is a variation (almost an inversion) of Figure B[2] from *Addio del passato* (Example 4.3). Where the opening phrase of Verdi's aria commences with a leap of a minor sixth, Bernstein's version concludes with a leap of a minor sixth.

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[15] Smith discusses possible models as Gounod's *Jewel Song*, and a range of other arias by Bellini and Rossini and does not mention the Verdi aria, which is clearly alluded to. Smith, Helen. 2011. *There's a Place for Us: The musical theatre works of Leonard Bernstein*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate. pp. 123–124.

Example 4.2: Leonard Bernstein. *Candide: A comic opera in two acts*. **Act 1, Scene 7 (no. 10), bars 1–11.**

Example 4.3: Giuseppe Verdi. *La Traviata*. **Act 3, Scene 4, bars 28–35.**

Bernstein exaggerated the most dramatic aspects of the Verdi aria in almost every way. Both operas are punctuated by wide octave leaps of lament. Verdi notates a highly embellished glissando down the octave before again jumping the octave (Example 4.4). Bernstein notates a simple glissando, but the higher pitch of the Bernstein aria makes the leap more shrill and dramatic (Example 4.5). Both high notes are intended to be sung softly, although most sopranos would find such a feat very difficult for the high C sharp notated by Bernstein. The sudden appearance of this shrill leap in the Bernstein aria gives the heroine's despair a melodramatic flavour which is often exaggerated by the performer, with comic results.[16]

Example 4.4: Giuseppe Verdi. *La Traviata*. **Act 3, Scene 3, bars 61–65.**

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[16] See, for instance, Kristin Chenoweth's performance in Bernstein, Leondard. 2005. *Leonard Bernstein's Candide: A comic operetta in two acts*. Chatsworth: Image Entertainment

Example 4.5: Leonard Bernstein. *Candide: A comic opera in two acts.* **Act 1, Scene 7, bars 43–48.**

In addition, both arias include plaintive obligatos, in Verdi's case played on the oboe, and in Bernstein's the deeper and even more plaintive English horn. But in the middle section of the Bernstein aria, the tragic mood implied at the beginning is now unambiguously revealed as affectation when the more superficial Cunegonde, unlike the long suffering Violetta, is able to find conspicuous comfort and consolation for her plight by revelling in the rich lifestyle provided by her paramours — specifically the drinking of champagne and her fine wardrobe and jewels. At this point, incongruously, Cunegonde revels in her good fortune with a lively melody accompanied by a habanera dance rhythm (Example 4.6), in sharp contrast to the style of the tragic soprano aria of the previous section. Like Verdi's aria, the middle section of Cunegonde's aria is also in the relative major. In Verdi's aria, this modulation provides a momentary change of mood as the heroine thinks of her lover but ultimately finds little to comfort her weary spirit in the thought of his love. The move to the major mode in Bernstein's aria is not so short-lived.

Example 4.6: Leonard Bernstein. *Candide: A comic opera in two acts.* **Act 1, Scene 7 (no.10), bars 48–52.**

After a florid coloratura section, an obvious parody of the Queen of the Night Aria — *Der Hölle Rache kochkt in meinem Herzen* from Mozart's *Magic Flute,* discussed in Chapter

151.

2 — there is a return to the music of the opening section. While the orchestra accompanies a solo violin obligato playing the Verdi motif previously sung by the soloist, Cunegonde speaks over the music, again trying to assert her sadness. This is now less than convincing, and adds to the melodramatic presentation of the aria. In this context, this music no longer represents the sadness of the tragic heroine, but the affectation and shallowness of the protagonist. The incongruous habanera dance rhythm returns, followed by an even more virtuosic display of coloratura singing which covers a very similar range to the *Der Hölle Rache kochkt in meinem Herzen* and is obviously derived from it, particularly in the final cadenza. As the cadenza moves to a climax, Bernstein incorporates a cross rhythm, with the bass operating in a triple metre against accented crotchet chords in the upper instruments of the orchestra (Example 4.7).

Example 4.7: Leonard Bernstein. *Candide: A comic opera in two acts*. Act 1, Scene 7 (no. 10), bars 135–138.

The loss of the regular rhythm gives an out of control sense to the music and suggests a new layer of meaning. Is Cunegonde really this superficial or is she becoming perhaps a little unhinged, and losing all perspective, as is suggested by the appropriation of the style of the "mad" aria?

In *Glitter and be Gay,* Bernstein has effectively recontextualised both the Verdi and Mozart reference arias within a contemporary celebratory habanero style. As the aria unfolds and the audience becomes aware of the recontextualisation, the different musical elements work in and against each other as his musical narrative emerges. During the course of the aria, they finally come into an entirely new relationship with

each other. In the process, the new meaning, that of a less than tragic heroine relishing her own bad fortune in a rather unhinged manner becomes apparent.

While Bernstein clearly delighted in the juxtaposition of different musical styles, he also provided a strong overarching musical narrative throughout *Candide* by using repeated "sound patterns" and "cells" or musical motifs. As in the works of Sitsky and Weill, the important relationship is the intervallic relationship between the notes themselves, not their tonal relationship.[17] According to Smith, these intervallic motifs are used not only in their natural state as musical building blocks, but are treated as entities in themselves and are usually associated with specific emotional states.[18] According to Smith, the most prominent motif in *Candide,* two quavers leaping a minor seventh resolving upwards to the octave (Example 4.8), is an "optimism motif".[19] This motif is first introduced in the very first aria, when Pangloss articulates his philosophical position that one should maintain optimism even in the face of disaster, and is repeated when Bernstein wishes to remind the audience of this teaching.[20]
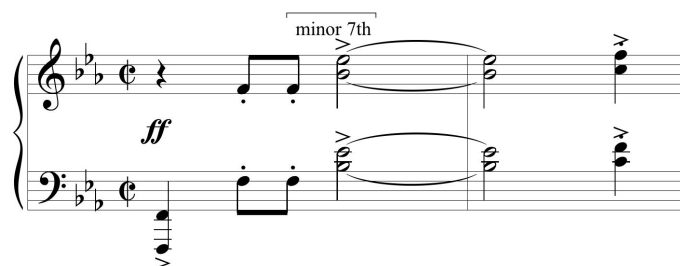
Example 4.8: Leonard Bernstein. *Candide: A comic opera in two acts*. Act 1 overture, bars 1–2.

The absurdity of Pangloss's advice becomes increasingly apparent during the course of the opera as the protagonists face a series of disasters. The recurrence of the motif is likewise increasingly facetious.

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[17] Smith, Helen. 2011. *There's a Place for Us: The musical theatre works of Leonard Bernstein*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate. p. 15.
[18] Ibid. p. 19.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid. p. 113.

While the intervallic relationships of the optimism theme remain the same, the motifs are more integrated into the overall structure of the musical work than Weill and Sitsky's motifs typically are. For instance, Candide and Cunegonde use a variant of the optimism motif in most of their duets. In the final part of Scene 1, *Oh Happy We* (Example 4.9), the optimism motif is reversed as we see a leap of an octave falling to the minor seventh as if to symbolise the way their union (symbolised by the octave) is usually thwarted at the last moment.

Example 4.9: Leonard Bernstein. *Candide: A comic opera in two acts.* **Act 1, Scene 1, bars 28–43.**

In a further variation of this theme, later in the first act (Example 4.10) Candide's and Cunegonde's short-lived reunion is introduced with a waltz that starts similarly, with an octave falling a major second (the inversion of the minor seventh).

Example 4.10: Leonard Bernstein. *Candide: A comic opera in two acts.* **Act 1, Scene 7, bars 1–4.**

Example 4.11 is another variation of the optimism theme, with octave leaps going downward and then upward to a major ninth on the repeat.

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Candide

Once a - gain I must be gone, Mov - ing on to El - do - ra - do

Example 4.11: Leonard Bernstein. *Candide: A comic opera in two acts*. **Act 1, Scene 8 (no. 13), bars 1–5.**

Yet another variation occurs in Candide's and Cunegonde's final duet of the opera, where some sort of equilibrium is finally achieved. After the now familiar octave leap, the melody finally descends to the dominant, coming to rest between the two octaves (Example 4.12).

Candide

We're nei - ther pure nor wise nor good; We'll do __ the best we know; We'll build our house, and

Can.

chop our wood, And make our gar - den grow, And make our gar - den grow. ___

Example 4.12: Leonard Bernstein. *Candide: A comic opera in two acts*. **Act 2, Scene 10 (no. 27), bars 13–24.**

These variations become apparent on a detailed analysis of the score. While some aspects of their constant repetition no doubt become obvious to the audience, like Sitsky's more esoteric codes, hidden meanings become apparent only through extended study of the score. They demonstrate that Bernstein is concerned with ensuring some sort of internal consistency and unity within an overall work that is otherwise quite heterogeneous in nature.

Repeated motifs also play an important role in conveying emotions in Bernstein's work. For instance, according to Block, in *West Side Story*, Bernstein uses the "highly charged dissonant interval" of a tri-tone as a musical equivalent "to the driving emotions of

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passionate youthful hate and its counterpart in youthful love". [21] This motif (Example 4.13) is first introduced in the prologue shortly after Bernardo's entry, which prompts a responding emotion of hatred by the Jets. The inherent tension of the tri-tone and various attempts at resolving it then play a narrative role as the racial tension continues to escalate. [22]

Example 4.13: Leonard Bernstein. *West Side Story***. Act 1, prologue, bars 108–109.**

The Maria theme is subsequently developed during the cha-cha music (Example 4.14) anticipating Tony's enunciation of the theme in *Maria (*Example 4.15)*.*

Example 4.14: Leonard Bernstein. *West Side Story***. Act 1, Scene 4c, bars 207–216.**

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[21] Block, Geoffrey. 2009. *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway musical from 'Show Boat' to Sondheim and Lloyd Webber*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 301.
[22] Ibid. p. 302.

Example 4.15: Leonard Bernstein. *West Side Story*. **Act 1, Scene 5, bars 9–11.**

At the end of the wedding scene (Example 4:16), as the couple completes their duet, *One Hand, One Heart,* the Maria theme is enunciated in an orchestral ritornello similar to Mozart's orchestral ritornellos in *The Magic Flute,* discussed in Chapter 2. In this context, the inclusion of the unstable tri-tone upsets the harmonious unison resolution of the duet, suggesting the unstable context in which their relationship exists. Block also identified a "procession" motif and a "somewhere" motif, concluding that motifs play a central unifying role in *West Side Story.*[23]

Example 4.16: Leonard Bernstein. *West Side Story*. **Act 1, Scene 9a, bars 141–149.**

Because of Bernstein's highly integrated use of recurring motifs, Block has compared his approach to Wagner's use of leitmotifs.[24] However, in comparison with the connections between Bernstein, Weill and other composers discussed here, this analogy is weak. Although it is clear that Bernstein's use of motifs is more extensive than Weill's, Bernstein also makes frequent use of polystylism, often layering and

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[23] Ibid. p. 301.
[24] Ibid. p. 296.

juxtaposing different styles to emphasise apparent incongruities. In *West Side Story*, for instance, Bernstein incongruously uses one of the most academic forms, that of the fugue, in *Cool* (Scene 8) as the Jets prepare to fight.[25] This is perhaps a moment when one would least expect the use of such a rigid and organised musical style. To add to the complexity and highly organised nature of this small section, Bernstein also incorporates a 12-tone row, albeit within a tonal context, as part of the instrumental interlude. (Example 4.17)

Example 4.17: Twelve-tone row from "Cool".[26]

The disparity between the escalating, poorly controlled emotions and the disciplined and highly organised form of the fugue (accompanied by a disciplined dance routine) provides distance for the audience, allowing them to take the role of observer. Rather than identifying with one particular protagonist, the audience is invited to analyse the underlying causes of the conflict. Issues such as peer pressure, gender roles and racial tensions take centre stage, rather than who should win the fight. Instead of romantically engulfing the audience in the emotions of the situation, Bernstein allows a degree of detachment so that the audience can understand and analyse what is happening. This allows the audience to see the situation from multiple perspectives within a single coherent narrative framework.

There are many other instances of Bernstein's application of the layering approach. In the dance scene at the gym where Tony and Maria meet and fall in love, multiple dance styles interact, some represent the different cultures portrayed in the story world of the opera, while others provide Bernstein's commentary on what is happening. As in the

[25] Smith, Helen. 2011. *There's a Place for Us: The musical theatre works of Leonard Bernstein*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate. p. 165.
[26] Cited in Smith, Helen. 2011. *There's a Place for Us: The musical theatre works of Leonard Bernstein*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate. p. 165.

Cool scene, the music is highly organised, allowing the audience distance from the emotions being presented on stage. When Tony and Maria start to dance together, the exuberant and highly syncopated mambo dance enjoyed by the combined group of Jets and Sharks (the two rival gangs depicted in the musical) gives way to a more elegant cha-cha. While this is still nominally a Cuban dance, Bernstein provides authorial commentary on the scene, mixing ornamentation typical of the baroque period dances with elements of the traditional cha-cha. The subtle incorporation of high artistic styles suggests the sacred nature of the love between Tony and Maria, and creates a sense of calm and peacefulness which contrasts markedly with the more raucous music of the public dance. The orchestration accompanying this moment is also markedly different, moving away from brass instruments and heavy percussion to the lighter woodwinds, strings and more delicate percussion instruments, creating a sense of privacy and interiority as the two doomed lovers first connect. The musical narrative, coupled with stage effects such as lighting that focuses on Maria and Tony while dimming out the other dancers, is so obvious here that the small amount of dialogue between the two people is almost superfluous. Tony and Maria then dance a paso doble, a traditional Spanish couples' dance that is performed to a standard four square beats, quite distinct from the highly syncopated rhythm of earlier dances (Example 4.18).

Example 4.18: Leonard Bernstein. *West Side Story*. Act 1, Scene 4d, bars 250–257.

When Tony and Maria's conversation is interrupted by Bernardo (Maria's brother), the syncopated rhythms of the jazz-influenced dance music suddenly return. Like Weill and Sitsky, Bernstein juxtaposes different musical layers, creating a musical narrative as

different elements of the music come into prominence. Obviously influenced by film music,[27] Bernstein uses musical styles that are part of the story world of the opera and which subtly provide a narrative overlay that blurs the distinction between diegetic and non-diegetic elements. As the relationship between the different musical elements changes, the plot is progressed.

Written contemporaneously, *West Side Story* and *Candide* present an interesting contrast. While *Candide* clearly sits within the *opera buffa* tradition, it was not targeted at a general audience. Bernstein's use of operatic source material suggests it was clearly intended for an opera-going audience. *West Side Story*, although not at all comic, had a much wider audience appeal because of the inclusion of numerous popular musical elements and its initial performances in the theatre, and then as a film. However, Bernstein did not compromise his musical standards, carefully constructing a score around several key motifs as he did in *Candide*. Bernstein made extended use of both popular and operatic and symphonic conventions, demonstrating that he still had a strong allegiance to nineteenth century aesthetic standards.[28] Because of its unique mix of classical and popular styles, some have compared *West Side Story* to Mozart's *The Magic Flute.*[29] In terms reminiscent of the way Busoni and Adorno discussed Mozart's great work, Negron-Muntaner has suggested that *West Side Story* is a "liminal case" of "both entertainment and utopia",[30] portraying "an ambivalent picture of life in the United States, with all its oppression and promise".[31] Although the musical makes reference to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet,* it struck a chord in the late-1950s and early-1960s as inter-racial conflict began to gather momentum as a political issue. Bernstein's music, although popular with audiences, had difficulty gaining acceptance by the musical establishment. Like Arthur Sullivan over half a century earlier, Bernstein's

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[27] It is notable here that *West Side Story* was made into a film with very little change to the score.

[28] Smith, Helen. 2011. *There's a Place for Us: The musical theatre works of Leonard Bernstein*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate. p. 140.

[29] Peyser, Joan. 1987. *Leonard Bernstein: A biography*. Toronto: Billboard Books. p. 16.

[30] Negrón-Muntaner, Frances. 2000. "Feeling Pretty: West Side Story and Puerto Rican identity discourses." *Social Text* 18 (2):102.

[31] Ibid. p. 93.

involvement with theatre and polystylism debased his compositional output in the eyes of many within the musical establishment, who condemned him for his commercial success.[32] Despite this, his influence was still felt widely within the musical theatre world.

Stephen Sondheim

Leonard Bernstein's immediate successor in the musical theatre sphere was Stephen Sondheim (b. 1930), with whom he collaborated on *West Side Story*. Whereas Bernstein's career predominantly unfolded in the concert hall, Sondheim made his way almost exclusively within the theatre. However, many of his works, such as *Sweeney Todd* (1979) and *A Little Night Music* (1973), are operatic in scope and are now often performed in the opera theatre.[33] Like Bernstein, Sondheim's subject matter is usually contemporary (or has contemporary implications) and often includes biting social criticism. According to Block, Sondheim has provided Broadway with "some of the most compelling, innovative, thought-provoking, and often emotionally affecting musicals of this, or any, time".[34]

Prior to Sondheim, the musical typically had a narrative structure which provided a framework for all songs, dances and dialogues. However, in Sondheim's musicals, the music, lyric, dance, dialogue, design and direction are fused to support a central idea in much the same way as a Wagnerian opera. Many scholars and critics have commented on the interwoven "seamless whole" created by Sondheim in his musicals.[35] Banfield has suggested that by writing concept musicals which explore the various facets of a single idea, rather than plot driven musicals that explore the actions and motivations of a range of different characters, Sondheim's musicals "imply a kind of Wagnerian

[32] Subotnik, Rose Rosengard. 1991. *Developing Variations: Style and ideology in western music*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 277.

[33] Warner, Keith. "'And One for Mahler': An opera director's reflections on Sondheim in the subsidized theater." In *The Oxford Handbook of Sondheim Studies*, edited by Robert Gordon. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 237.

[34] Block, Geoffrey. 2009. *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway musical from 'Show Boat' to Sondheim and Lloyd Webber*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 337.

[35] Gordon, Joanne Lesley. 1992. *Art Isn't Easy: The theater of Stephen Sondheim*. New York: Da Capo Press. p. 7; Schiff, Stephen. 1983. "Deconstructing Sondheim." *New Yorker* 49(3): 86.

Gesamtkunstwerk".[36] Joanne Lesley likewise compares Sondheim's musicals to a

Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*.[37] Similarly, Stephen Schiff describes Sondheim as the first

writer of musicals to use motifs in the Wagnerian manner, "tying themes and

characters together, and probing the psychology behind what is being sung".[38]

Doubtlessly comparisons of his work with Wagner's would horrify Sondheim, who is

not an admirer of Wagner.[39] However, he does acknowledge his preoccupation with

musical unity. He often cites one of his most influential teachers, Milton Babbit, a

composer of integral serial music:

> This is what Milton Babbitt taught me … How do you organize
> something that lasts twenty or thirty minutes so that it doesn't fall
> apart or become a series of five-minute pieces? … To me, it's
> important that a score be not just a series of songs—that it should in
> some way be developed, just the way the book is … Composition is
> about development, not about repetition. You move a motif along just
> the way you move a character; the character remains the same, but it
> also changes.[40]

Sondheim is clearly not such a fan of the number opera format usually embraced by the

other composers discussed here. His compositional approach is likewise quite different.

Although Sondheim incorporates a wide range of disparate musical styles, he typically

integrates them into the unified web of his overall score[41] rather than layering them

using the Stravinskian or Ivesian technique. According to Schiff, Sondheim uses a

vertical compositional approach that gives primacy to harmony rather than melody. He

typically begins the compositional process with the accompaniment figure rather than

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[36] Banfield, Stephen. 1993. *Sondheim's Broadway Musicals*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. p. 147.
[37] Gordon, Joanne Lesley. 1992. *Art Isn't Easy: The theater of Stephen Sondheim*. New York: Da Capo Press. p. 7.
[38] Schiff, Stephen. 1983. "Deconstructing Sondheim." *New Yorker* 49(3): 86.
[39] For a good discussion about the debate surrounding the comparison between Sondheim and Wagner see Calderazzo, Diana. 2005. "Stephen Sondheim's Gesamtkunstwerk: The concept musical as Wagnerian total theatre." Master of Arts Thesis, University of Central Florida.
[40] Cited in Schiff, Stephen. 1983. "Deconstructing Sondheim." *New Yorker* 49(3): 86.
[41] See, for instance, Lovensheimer, Jim. 2008. "Stephen Sondheim and the Musical of the Outsider." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, edited by William A. Everett and Paul R. Laird. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 213.

the melody, employing "a tonal language not dissimilar to that of such early-twentieth-century composers as Rachmaninoff and Ravel". As with these composers, the resulting effect is, an "atmospheric wash against which one melody sounds no more appropriate" and, for Schiff, "no more memorable" than another.[42] The resulting monologic, poetic nature of his work stands in stark contrast to the multi-layered, multi-voiced works that have been discussed here, in which clearly differentiated musical soundblocks create a musical narrative through interacting layers of sound.

Sondheim's achievements are much admired and few composers of musical or opera since Sondheim can fail to take account of his work. Indeed, like Wagner, his work has exerted something of a paralysing influence. Commentators struggle to suggest any obvious successor to Sondheim.[43] Just as opera struggled to find its identity after Wagner, the musical is now also struggling to find its identity after Sondheim. In a recent interview about his successful musical *Matilda,* Tim Minchin has stated:

> I have a public profile, not too much financial pressure, a show in the West End, Hollywood interest. If I can't be [Stephen] Sondheim — apart from my massive lack of talent in the face of him — then who can be? It's almost like a f***ing obligation, to write something that is not commercially pressured, in the hope that it could be a drop in the turning of the tide against all those safe bets.[44]

The "safe bets" that Minchin is referring to are commercially produced American musicals. Because of his ability to create socially relevant works that escape the formulaic approach of most commercial musicals, like Minchin, I greatly admire Sondheim's craftsmanship and his skill. I likewise looked to Sondheim as a model for my work but ultimately, like others, I have felt it would be almost impossible to emulate his unique approach. His ability to write lyrics and music and create a

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[42] Schiff, Stephen. 1983. "Deconstructing Sondheim." *New Yorker* 49(3): 86.

[43] Patinkin, Sheldon. 2008. *"No Legs, No Jokes, No Chance": A history of the American musical theater*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press. p. 410; See also Banfield, Stephen. 2005. "Popular Musical Theatre (and Film)." In *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, edited by Mervyn Cooke. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 304.

[44] Aspden, Peter. 2011. "Lunch with the Ft: Tim Minchin." *Financial Times.* 5 November 2011. http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/dadba4fc-048e-11e1-ac2a-00144feabdc0.html. Accessed 26 August 2015.

musically and dramatically unified work has bought the musical to new heights. My response, like that of many twentieth-century composers responding to Wagner, has been to return to the early days of opera for inspiration, as I have done here. My main influences among late twentieth century composers are those who have likewise looked back to the more inclusive and multi-voiced, polystylistic approach of *opera buffa* and operetta composers to find inspiration for their work.

Postmodern engagement with polystylism

Polystylism is a musical approach often associated with musical postmodernism. Yet, in one of the more comprehensive discussions of collage and polystylism currently available, Watkins has argued that it is difficult to find distinctions between twentieth century postmodern use of collage and earlier modernist avant-garde movements such as Dadaism and surrealism:

> Attempts to differentiate such late twentieth-century perspectives from those of earlier avant-garde movements and to relocate them in elaborate criticisms have become chronic. Yet the debt remains clear even when distinctions are made with respect to intention and significance: the need for perpetual and mutating guidance in reading such a mixture of the playful and the technical, the narrative and the abstract, is common to both.[45]

It is certainly true that there are many similarities, and that almost any argument to differentiate between postmodern and modernist polystylistic approaches usually has an exception. Whitley, for instance, argues that postmodernist artists reject the need for unity which, as is argued in Chapter 3, was such an essential part of modernism.[46] Kramer makes a similar point but with more qualifications, suggesting that while unity is a prerequisite for musical sense for a modernist, for some postmodernist composers

[45] Watkins, Glenn. 1994. *Pyramids at the Louvre*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. p. 418.
[46] Whitley, Ed. 1999. "The Postmodern White Album." In *The Beatles, Popular Music and Society: A thousand voices*, edited by Ian Inglis. Basingstoke: Macmillan. p. 105.

"unity is an option".[47] Reflecting on the changing status of the musical work involved in such a redefinition, Kramer states:

> I believe that unity is not simply a characteristic of music itself but
> also a means of understanding music, a value projected onto music.
> As such, it is necessarily demoted from its previous position of
> universality. It is no longer a master narrative of musical structure.[48]

While the creation of an autonomous musical work is clearly not a high priority for many of the composers discussed in this chapter, this does not mean their works lack musical coherence. This holds true even when the composer is engaging with a diverse range of musical material which, on the surface at least, seems to have few interconnections. Modernist and postmodernist approaches, as Pegrum has observed, can both be found within the oeuvre of many individuals or even within a single work,[49] leading him to conclude:

> It is not always a simple matter to differentiate modernism from
> postmodernism, and numerous elements present in modernist art
> will develop into hallmarks of postmodernism.[50]

As has been suggested in the discussion on Bernstein, what is important from the perspective of this exegesis is that it is not necessarily incongruent to incorporate heterogeneous elements that represent multiple voices in otherwise unified works. Some of the operas that are discussed in the following sections, particularly those by Andriessen, use innovative methods to create musical coherence, even while giving leash to a number of disruptive elements and seeking to draw attention to social fragmentation and cultural decay.

Postmodern interest in polystylism was heavily influenced by modernist use of polystylism, and was particularly stimulated by the rediscovery of the works of Charles

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[47] Kramer, Jonathan D. 2002. "The Nature and Origins of Musical Postmodernism." In *Postmodern Music/Postmodern Thought,* edited by Judy Lochhead and Joseph Auner. New York and London: Routledge. p. 14.
[48] Ibid. pp. 14–15.
[49] Pegrum, Mark A. 2000. *Challenging Modernity: Dada between modern and postmodern*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books. p. 69.
[50] Ibid. p. 24.

Ives in the 1960s. The swirling masses of disparate and often clashing sounds, disembodied hymn tunes and fragmented folk melodies of Charles Ives' fourth symphony, first performed in its entirety in 1965,[51] provided a stimulus for composers seeking new ways forward beyond Darmstadt serialism. This performance occurred as part of a revival of interest in Ives' work following his death in 1954.

Ives' approach to juxtaposing different musical styles was graphically demonstrated in one of his earliest experimental works using the multi-layered approach, *The Unanswered Question* (1908). In this work, Ives explored the idea of "simultaneity" using multiple layers or "planes" of originally composed sound.[52] According to MacDonald, Ives distinguished the different layers in terms of their special characteristics, particularly instrumentation, pitch, tempo, register, dynamic, degree of metric regularity, degree of continuity, and dynamics and/or articulation markings.[53] Although Ives often used direct quotations from an eclectic array of sources, at times his method of making stylistic allusions can be quite subtle. For instance, in *The Unanswered Question,*[54] each layer represents a different voice. The slow-moving, chorale-like chordal movement of the string part represents what MacDonald describes as "a harmonious, unified element", while the quasi-fanfare of the trumpet represents "a higher entity that poses the existential dilemma to man".[55] The woodwinds are the most erratic, unpredictable part and are difficult to place stylistically. However, it is not surprising that they were intended to represent "man", whose existence is fundamentally flawed and who experiences a profound existential crisis.[56] Each of the three layers is clearly differentiated in terms of a number of variables. The "diatonic" settled elements of the string part sit at odds with the atonal questioning interjections of

[51] Burkholder, J. Peter, B. Sinclair James, and Magee Gayle Sherwood. "Ives, Charles." *Grove Music Online.*
[52] Budiansky, Stephen. 2014. *Mad Music: Charles Ives, the Nostalgic Rebel.* New York: ForeEdge. p. 127.
[53] McDonald, Matthew. 2004. "Silent Narration? Elements of Narrative in Ives's the Unanswered Question." *19th-Century Music* 27 (3): 267.
[54] Ibid. p. 278.
[55] Ibid. pp. 282–283.
[56] Ibid.

the trumpet.[57] The woodwind layer shares a superficial similarity with the strings in terms of the melodic and harmonic elements. However, the different timbre of the woodwinds, the short duration of these interjections, the shorter rhythmic values, cross rhythms and high pitch of the flutes distinguishes them markedly from the static, rhythmically regular string layer. As the three musical layers interact over time, a musical narrative emerges where, according to McDonald, Ives explores the nature of human existence.[58] As is discussed below, this approach stimulated both Adams and Andriessen.

Minimalist parody

Minimalist music demonstrates many of the difficulties in clearly distinguishing between modernist and postmodernist musical works. Many early minimalist composers' preoccupation with "pure form", as Gloag describes it, suggests the broadly formalist preoccupation of high modernism.[59] However, the lack of concern with ongoing development and transformation of ideas creating essentially endless or even pointless musical works conforms with typical understandings of the postmodern work.[60] Since the early minimalist experiments of composers such as Terry Riley (b. 1935) and Steve Reich (b. 1936), minimalism itself has taken a more polystylistic approach, with many composers freely combining minimalist and non-minimalist techniques. According to Masnikosa, there is now a broad spectrum of approaches among composers who use minimalist techniques, ranging from those who demonstrate an ongoing commitment to textual unity in a way which is "very close to modernist music", to those who totally renounce textual unity in favour of textual heterogeneity.[61]

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[57] Ibid. p. 285.
[58] Ibid. p. 283.
[59] Gloag, Kenneth. 2012. *Postmodernism in Music*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 120.
[60] Ibid. p. 122.
[61] Masnikosa, Marija. 2013. "A Theoretical Model of Postminimalism and Two Brief 'Case Studies'." In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Minimalist and Postminimalist Music*, edited by Keith Potter, Kyle Gann and Siôn Pwyll. Farnham: Ashgate. p. 302.

While the composers considered here include both heterogeneous and unifying elements within their music, my main interest is the way they incorporate a range of techniques in order to engage a broad audience and contribute to contemporary debates on a range of social issues. John Adams and Louis Andriessen stand out in this regard. Both composers have been highly controversial, have actively sought to reinvent the role of the composer, and have questioned traditional understandings about the nature of the musical work. They have provided a very useful model for my own work for the following reasons. Both composers write works that engage in contemporary social and political discourse. In addition, both composers use layered blocks of music, to varying degrees, applying techniques pioneered by Stravinsky and Ives. This provides their music with a high degree of musical coherence, while allowing different musical voices to emerge and interact within an overall narrative framework. They also both look to pre-romantic eighteenth century models, where music had a more active engagement with text and rhetoric, and seek to imbue their music with meaning, creating music with a functional role. To do this, they typically incorporate popular music or other commonly understood musical sources as a means of appropriating pre-existing cultural understandings into new musical contexts, enhancing their communication with their audience. Like the other composers discussed here, they also use musical motifs which, through repetition, become imbued with meaning and contribute to an overarching musical commentary. Using these methods, Adams and Andriessen create complex but coherent musical narratives which incorporate a range of voices, inviting parodic engagement with their audience.

John Adams: Seeing Nixon from multiple perspectives

John Adams has consistently advocated the importance of theatre for the "contemplation and discussion of the most urgent issues in our lives".[62] As discussed in Chapter 2, this was a common practice during the eighteenth and early-nineteenth

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[62] Cited in Steinberg, Michael. 2006. "Liner Notes for *Nixon in China,* Nonesuch, 1988." In *The John Adams Reader: Essential writings on an American composer*, edited by Thomas May, Pompton Plains: Amadeus. p. 114.

centuries, but, as Steinberg suggests, is unusual in the operatic industry today.[63]

Although Adams, like Bolcom and Corigliano, has conducted a successful career largely within the embrace of the classical musical institutions of opera theatre and concert hall, the controversial nature of his subject matter often attracts widespread community discussion and debate to an extent unmatched by other contemporary operas. For instance the initial performances of *Nixon in China* (1985–1987) were reviewed by a diverse range of publications, from *The New York Times* to *Playboy*.[64] *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1989–1991), which touches on the particularly sensitive relationship between Israelis and Arabs, aroused heated protests and demonstrations which disrupted performances during the New York Metropolitan Opera's 2014 production.[65] For this reason, these operas have been compared with the *Zeitoper* of Weill's era.[66]

Adams' achievement in *Nixon in China* was to sympathetically portray the events that took place on the historic first visit by a United States President to China from multiple perspectives. The opera provides great insight into the complex motivations and agendas of the ensuing negotiation between the Americans and the Chinese. Adams acknowledges the influence of Bach's *Passion* works and their "penetrating tellings of the death of the Christ, from several points of view".[67] According to Adams:

> To me, *Nixon in China* is really about the collision of the two ways of looking at how people live their lives. Do they follow market principles of life, which we are in a hectic, orgasmic state over right now? Or should they choose Communism, which, in its purest and most idealistic form, is about a life of sharing?[68]

[63] Ibid.

[64] Daines, Matthew. 1995. "Nixon's Women: Gender politics and cultural representation in Act 2 of Nixon in China." *Musical Quarterly* 79 (1): 6.

[65] Maloney, Jenifer. 2014. "'Klinghoffer' Protests Heat up Ahead of Met Opera Opening." *The Wall Street Journal*, 20 October 2014. http://www.wsj.com/articles/klinghoffer-protests-heat-up-ahead-of-met-opera-opening-1413842342?mod=evernote. Accessed 27 November 2014.

[66] Clements, Andrew. 2006. "Tales of Our Times." *The Guardian.* 16 June 2006. http://www.theguardian.com/music/2006/jun/16/classicalmusicandopera2. Accessed 25 April 2015.

[67] Swed, Mark. 2006. "On Top, But Ever the Risk-Taker." In *The John Adams Reader: Essential writings on an American composer*, edited by Thomas May. Pompton Plains: Amadeus. p. 325.

[68] Cited in Swed, Mark. 2006. "On Top, But Ever the Risk-Taker." In *The John Adams Reader: Essential writings on an American composer*, edited by Thomas May. Pompton Plains: Amadeus. p. 48.

Throughout the opera, a range of individual vignettes are provided enabling the audience to see events through the eyes of the different characters. In a reversal of the *Zeitoper* approach, which typically focuses on ordinary people (such as Jimmy in *Mahagonny*) and makes them exceptional, *Nixon in China* focuses on exceptional figures and seeks to make them ordinary. As Matthew Daines suggests, Adams hones in on characters' humanity — their loneliness, isolation, self-doubt and alienation.[69] This is not universally the case. For instance, Kissinger is not considered in a favourable light and is given a somewhat villainous role, similar to the buffo-bass typical of *opera buffa*.[70] But even this serves to emphasise the complexity of other characters by comparison. Adams is able to create multiple perspectives, often of the same character, presenting their public and private personas and thereby encouraging the audience to question their judgments and assumptions about particular characters.[71] In doing so, Adams portrays public political figures as having the same doubts and insecurities as other people.

Swed claims that by presenting multiple viewpoints, Adam's operas force the audience to play an active role in sorting through the contradictions and conflicts presented on the stage.[72] As discussed previously, it is common for composers of parodic works to create some distance so that the audience is free to analyse a range of factors rather than focus entirely on the main protagonist(s). Adams takes a slightly different approach, often taking the audience close to conflicting characters and resisting the temptation to create opposing good and bad sides. I would argue that his aim, like that of Bernstein, is to focus on underlying tensions that affect all characters rather than encouraging audience support for a particular side. However, this has been quite confronting for some among his audience, who have complained that his portrayal of terrorists in *The*

[69] Daines, Matthew. 1995. "Nixon's Women: Gender politics and cultural representation in Act 2 of Nixon in China." *Musical Quarterly* 79 (1): 12.
[70] Buchler, Michael. 2006. "The Sonic Illusion of Metrical Consistency in Recent Minimalist Composition." Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Music Perception and Cognition.
[71] Swed, Mark. 2006. "Seeking Answers in an Opera." In *The John Adams Reader: Essential Writings on an American Composer*, edited by Thomas May. Pompton Plains: Amadeus. p. 325.
[72] Ibid.

Death of Klinghoffer is too sympathetic and ultimately supports their cause.[73] Such a response is curious, given his exceedingly sympathetic portrayal of the Jewish characters, particularly the Klinghoffers. Like the eighteenth century *opera buffa* and nineteenth century operettas discussed in Chapter 2, Adams' work often allows for contradictory interpretations which, according to Schwarz, can be understood as both "resistant to" and "a glorification of the American geo-political enterprise".[74]

The Ivesian layered compositional approach lends itself well to the presentation of multiple viewpoints. In his autobiography, Adams described how Ives' music fed his "imaginative processes".[75] He particularly admired the way Ives created a kind of "impressionism with constantly emerging and receding levels of musical activity" in *Three Places in New England* and Ives' *Fourth Symphony* by using

> a highly refined sense of foreground, middle ground, and background, an ordering of musical ideas according to their imagined placement in a perspective, just as a painter might fill a canvas with a mix of images, some of which appeared very close and in photographic clarity, while others grew more vague and less defined as they receded into the background. In my mind, Ives was the first composer to approach the orchestral setting as if it were a giant mixing board … This is a radically different way of treating musical material from the traditional rhetorical procedures of European art music, where the discourse is far more linear and logically spun out.[76]

Similarly, in Adams' music, different layers move in and out of prominence as he provides a musical commentary to the action on stage.

In *Nixon in China*, for example, Adams uses contrasting musical styles to represent different perspectives. He frequently chooses particular musical elements which, as

[73] Ross, Alex. 2014. "Long Wake: The Death of Klinghoffer at the Met." *The New Yorker*. 3 November 2014. http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/11/03/long-wake. Accessed 7 October 2015

[74] Schwarz, David. 1992. "Postmodernism, the Subject, and the Real in John Adams's Nixon in China." *Indiana Theory Review* 13 (2): 108.

[75] Adams, John. 2008. *Hallelujah Junction: Composing an American life*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. p. 227.

[76] Ibid.

discussed in Chapter 3, might have pre-existing cultural associations that will assist him to communicate extra-musical ideas to the audience. Adams has stated:

> When we communicate, we point to symbols that we have in common. If people want to make a point, they reach for a reference …[77]

His reference is different musical styles. In his autobiography, he describes how he used big-band music from the swing era to represent the "psyche" of Richard Nixon in *Nixon in China*. He believed that swing music, with "with its admixture of sentimentality and reminiscence", would convey the "ideal of Nixon's imagined Middle America".[78] There is little use of indigenous Chinese music in *Nixon in China.* Ingeniously, he often portrays the Chinese perspectives using "very bad imitations of Russian and French ballet music" which sound as if they had been composed by a "committee".[79] He does this on the basis that such music was often used to glorify Chinese achievements in the period in which the opera was set — a cultural allusion which would be meaningful for much of his audience when the opera was first performed.

The big-band music from the swing era music is used to provide insights into Nixon's state of mind as it is layered against a musical texture consisting of minimalist arpeggios, Wagnerian sound clouds, and contrapuntal ensemble sections. The swing band music moves in and out of this texture throughout much of the opera. At the beginning of Act 1, Scene 3 (Example 4.20), the audience meets the Nixons during an intimate moment in their bedroom as they prepare for the evening's banquet. The underlying saxophone accompaniment could be mood music seeping in from the banquet rooms, but the music doesn't fade into the background. Rather it draws attention to itself by a number of unanticipated alterations, reflecting some of the discomfort being experienced by the Nixons. The familiar triadic saxophone voicings

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[77] Cited in Ross, Alex. 2006. "The Harmonist." In *The John Adams Reader: Essential writings on an American composer*, edited by Thomas May. Pompton Plains: Amadeus. p. 33.

[78] Adams, John. 2008. *Hallelujah Junction: Composing an American life*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. p. 141.

[79] Ibid.

with added sevenths or ninths, typical of jazz music, are often set against a bass note that is foreign to the chord, or even the key in which the chords are played. Superficially, the music sounds like a traditional waltz with alternating long and short notes. The audience might expect the accented note to be the long note followed by a short note in a triple metre time signature, but Adams subtly alters this pattern by writing in a compound duple time signature, with the short note rather than the long note falling on the first beat of the bar, creating a simultaneous sense of both familiarity and strangeness.

Example 4.19: John Adams and Alice Goodman (libretto). *Nixon in China*. **Act 1, Scene 3, bars 1–11.**

As the scene progresses to the actual banquet, the band music is used diegetically as part of the entertainment.

The various stylistic allusions are contrasted with more neutral layers of sound derived using minimalist compositional techniques. Adams, however, has tried to differentiate himself from what he describes as the more limited expressive world of early minimimalism, which often confined itself to a single "monochromatic" effect.[80] To do this, he develops sound blocks derived from the "repetition of small motifs", a method he claims to have learnt from Italian Renaissance architecture.[81] Like a Renaissance building, different patterns are juxtaposed to create complex structures, often using

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[80] Ibid. p. 93.
[81] Ibid.

eighteenth century counterpoint techniques. As the various layers interact, polyrhythmic and polytonal effects are often created, amplifying the sense of disjunction that Adams is aiming to create. For instance, two contrasting patterns are presented for the very first meeting between Richard Nixon and Mao Tse-tung (Example 4.21), with a broken chord in G minor layered against a repeated G major chord, creating a polytonal effect which foreshadows the clash of cultures soon to take place. In addition, a polyrhythmic effect is created by layering two-note patterns against three-note patterns. This results in what Buchler has described as a "grouping dissonance", where some three-note quaver patterns are grouped against two-note patterns. As the different rhythmic cycles clash, a conflict arises between clashing G major and G minor chords. According to Buchler the multiple musical layers seem to exist on "radically different musical planes" with their relationship "ever-changing",[82] reflecting the complex nature of the talks between the two leaders.

Example 4.20: John Adams and Alice Goodman (libretto). *Nixon in China*. Act 1, Scene 2, bars 1–5.

This allows for heterogeneity within an organised structural framework, perhaps not dissimilar to the metaphorical house that Sitsky aimed to build in his musical works, as discussed in Chapter 3.

The overall structural framework for the work is apparent in the way that Adams connects the beginning and the end of *Nixon in China* through a series of ascending

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[82] Buchler, Michael. 2006. "The Sonic Illusion of Metrical Consistency in Recent Minimalist Composition." Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Music Perception and Cognition.

passages, adding a sense of optimism to the breaking dawns of the 24-hour period that frames the events of the opera. At the beginning of the opera, the sense of rising anticipation is conveyed through a series of ascending Aeolian scales. Using the old device of the mensuration canon, the scale pattern is repeated at different speeds in different voices. In Example 4.22 the upper voice plays the scale in dotted crotchets. The lower voice in the top stave plays the same scale pattern using a dotted minimum while the accompaniment figure (played by the strings) plays the same scale in quavers.

Example 4.21: John Adams and Alice Goodman (libretto). *Nixon in China.* **Act 1, Scene 1, bars 1–6.**

At the end of the opera there is a recurrence of the rising scale pattern. However, as demonstrated in Example 4.23, it is a much freer, more melodic scale pattern when compared to the mathematically controlled opening sections. Some notes of the rising E flat minor scale are left out as a transformation to E flat major takes place. While the on-stage visuals provide the context of the rising sun, the music adds a sense of expectancy and forward motion, propelling the listener into future events both within the opera and beyond it.

Example 4.22: John Adams and Alice Goodman (libretto). *Nixon in China.* **Act 3, bars 931–938.**

Within this overall framework, as in Weillian and Mozartean number operas, different scenes in *Nixon in China* operate as discrete musical units. Included within these scenes are set piece arias and choruses which enable the audience to see events and characters from a range of perspectives. Nixon's opening "News" aria in Act 1 gives Nixon's perspective, the perspective of how events might be reported in the newspaper, and even the perspective of those who might be listening to the news back home in America:

> Dishes are washed and homework done.
>
> The dog and grandma fall asleep.[83]

As Daines suggests, this aria provides a biting critique of "the photo-opportunity and sound bite mentality of the 1980s where there was no substance behind anything that was said or shown on television".[84] In this way, Adams gives the reportage style of Offenbach and Strauss a new and modern twist by presenting vignettes of newsworthy events while simultaneously providing commentary on the making of the news.

Chiang Ch'ing's dramatic aria, *I am the wife of Mao Tse-tung*, is derived directly from the tradition of the high soprano rage aria, discussed in Chapter 2. Although woven into the overall fabric of the scene, like a Mozart aria, Madame Mao's aria can also stand on its own. It uses a modified da capo format as Chiang extols her authority as the wife of Mao Tse-tung and an exponent of "the book" which is repeated hysterically on a series of dramatic leaps in a very high tessitura (Example 4.24).

Example 4.23: John Adams and Alice Goodman (libretto). *Nixon in China*. Act 2, Scene 2, bars 931–940.

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[83] Adams, John, and libretto by Alice Goodman. 1994. *The Death of Klinghoffer*. Vocal score. New York: Hendon Music, Boosey & Hawkes. p. 37.

[84] Daines, Matthew. 1995. "Nixon's Women: Gender politics and cultural representation in Act 2 of Nixon in China." *Musical Quarterly* 79 (1): 10.

Coming as it does at the end of the second act after a ballet representing the struggle for human rights in China, Johnson suggests Madame Mao's aria moves from the "collective people" to the power of an individual, making a mockery of what has proceeded it.[85]

Motific development in Adams operas has had little analysis to date. Whittall, for instance, suggests the orchestral accompaniments are "largely devoid of motivic content" and that the vocal lines "seem to have more to do with pitch successions that conform to the governing chordal routines than with individualized motivic elements".[86] I am arguing a contrary view, suggesting that, like the other composers discussed in this exegesis, Adams often uses a number of small musical gestures or motifs based on certain intervallic relationships as a way of establishing associations between certain emotions, ideas, and characters. Adams himself has supported this contention, admitting that he has been influenced by Bach's "tone painting" with different intervallic relationships used to express certain emotional states.[87]

One particularly prominent motif used throughout the opera is that of the falling octave. Adams uses this interval structurally to underpin a lot of the musical accompaniment, as well as to provide musical interjections that interrupt the flow of the music and link different scenes. This primarily occurs, although not exclusively, in association with the American characters. It first appears in Act 1, Scene 1 as Nixon's aircraft is first heard approaching the runway as part of the accompaniment pattern, which is then echoed by interjections in the brass as the music alternates between the tonally unrelated chords of A major and E flat major (Example 4.25). The major chords give a sense of optimism, although the unusual harmonic progression suggests something new and unexpected might be about to occur.

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[85] Johnson, Timothy A. 2011. *John Adams's Nixon in China: Musical analysis, historical and political perspectives*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate. p. 113.

[86] Whittall, Arnold. 2012. "John Adams's Nixon in China: Musical analysis, historical and political perspectives." Review by Timothy A. Johnson." *Music and Letters* 93 (4): 632.

[87] Beverley, David. 1995. "Klinghoffer and the Art of Composing." Interview with John Adams. http://www.earbox.com/klinghoffer-and-the-art-of-composing/. Accessed 1 October 2014.

Example 4.24: John Adams and Alice Goodman (libretto). *Nixon in China*. **Act 1, Scene 1, bars 258–262.**

Similarly, the vocal line of Nixon's "News" aria begins with an ascending octave which gradually falls towards but does not quite reach the lower octave. This opening is also punctuated by descending octave interjections on the piccolo (Example 4.26).

Example 4.25: John Adams and Alice Goodman (libretto). *Nixon in China.* **Act 1, Scene 1, bars 482–490.**

A similar octave interjection, this time harmonised with a B minor chord, occurs in Act 1, Scene 3. As Nixon rises to give thanks at the official banquet, the woodwinds interpolate with the same octave motif as used in the "News" aria with a B minor harmony (Example 4.27).

Example 4.26: John Adams and Alice Goodman (libretto). *Nixon in China.* **Act 1, Scene 2, bars 515–519.**

This is later expanded to provide the accompaniment using the same B minor harmony as Kissinger enters, playing the role of Lao Szu, the wicked landlord's factotum in the

Chinese ballet in the second act, perhaps suggesting that Kissinger shares some similarities with the character he is portraying (Example 4.28).

Example 4.27: John Adams and Alice Goodman (libretto). *Nixon in China.* **Act 2, Scene 2, bars 118–120.**

A further variation occurs at the beginning of the "News" aria, where the minor third of the octave is added to break up the octave leap in a flute obligato (Example 4.29).

Example 4.28: John Adams and Alice Goodman (libretto). *Nixon in China.* **Act 1, Scene 1, bars 374–377.**

This motif is also used in both the accompaniment and the vocal line of the following passage from the "News" aria (Example 4.30).

Example 4.29: John Adams and Alice Goodman (libretto). *Nixon in China.* **Act 1, Scene 1, bars 394–398.**

While octaves are most commonly used in association with the American characters, significantly, the final iteration of the octave motive occurs in the flute part of the accompaniment of Chou En-lai's final pronouncement in Act 3 (Example 4.31). Here, however, the octave is presented slowly and hauntingly, separated by a discordant triad paving the way for the final series of ascending scale passages that closes the opera, perhaps suggesting that there are still many obstacles to achieving the perfect relationship represented by the pure octave leap.

Example 4.30: John Adams and Alice Goodman (libretto). *Nixon in China.* **Act 3, bars 891–896.**

This demonstrates the way in which this motif contributes to the overarching narrative that encompasses the whole opera.

In addition to the polyrhythmic and grouping dissonances described above, Adams uses a number of tonal ambiguities and even bi-tonal harmonies to create a parodic effect. Following in the tradition of Mozart, Weill and Bernstein, Adams uses chorale-like choruses as a cultural marker of community engagement, providing comment on what might be held as sacred within a certain community. Like Weill and Bernstein,

Adams incorporates aberrant harmonies using traditional step-wise voice-leading procedures so that the audience might begin to predict where the harmonies are heading. However, this expectation becomes thwarted and the harmonies never resolve quite as expected. Adams' step-wise voice-leading practices typically create harmonic transformations characteristically explained by Neo-Riemannian theory rather than the more usual modulations that occur as a result of traditional tonal procedures.[88]

In the opening chorale from *Nixon in China* (Example 4.32), Adams uses stepwise voice-leading procedures but gradually introduces unexpected chromatic shifts which move from A minor to E flat, D, and D flat before resolving to a C major chord. Weill's "semi-tonal" slip, discussed in Chapter 3, has now become the basis of an alternate harmonic system where subtle alterations to the original triad create a series of transformations based on voice-leading behaviour.[89] However, in *Nixon in China*, rather than adding humour as did the unexpected harmonies in Bernstein's chorale, they draw attention to an alternate humanist understanding of the divinity of the worker. This chorale music is used in a secular context as the Red Army perform a military song, *The Three Main Principles and the Eight Points of Attention*, promulgated by Mao Tse-tung as the ideals by which the army should function.[90] Adams did not create a simple militaristic parody as one might expect.[91] Instead, he provides a poetic realisation of Goodman's paraphrase of the text in a more sombre and sympathetic fashion, adding credibility to Mao's ideals rather trying to undermine them. The biblical allusion to someone who rules the world "with truth and grace" is given added prominence by a change in metre and an accelerated harmonic rhythm. This has the effect, in a humanistic context, of placing the labourer in the role of God.

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[88] Neo-Riemannian theory describes a process of triadic tonal transformations that can occur by maintaining common notes in consecutive triads and using step-wise progressions where the note changes. For discussion of the application of Neo-Riemannian theory to *Nixon in China* see Johnson, Timothy A. 2011. *John Adams's Nixon in China: Musical analysis, historical and political perspectives*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate. pp. 9–14.

[89] Ibid. p. 213.

[90] Gordon, Joanne Lesley. 1992. *Art Isn't Easy: The theater of Stephen Sondheim*. New York: Da Capo Press. p. 31.

[91] A traditional military setting can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdWpeRmzveg.

Example 4.31: John Adams and Alice Goodman (libretto). *Nixon in China*. **Act 1, Scene 1, bars 96–106.**

Adams also creates a heightened sense of ambiguity by using bi-tonal elements. For example, in the section of the "News" aria shown in Example 4.25, the melody line leaps an octave from E, then descends in a scale-like pattern suggesting a Mixolydian mode with an E tonal centre, which is harmonised with C major chords, causing the G sharp in the melody-line to seem slightly out of place. An even more jarring example of this occurs at the end of Act 1, when Nixon gives voice to some of his fears and suspicions about the coming talks with Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai. At Nixon's statement "nobody is a friend of ours", an E flat augmented chord is played against a D flat dominant seven chord, which Johnson describes as an "extremely dissonant", "whole-step related bichord". Johnson argues that Adams uses such "bichords" as a means of heightening the tension.[92]

By his masterful use of layering techniques, and the subtle use of musical motifs, Adams has created a multi-layered, multi-textural work in *Nixon in China* which has many similarities with other works discussed here. He deliberately moves perspective between different characters, providing a range of stand-alone songs and arias. He uses colourful, even bi-tonal harmonies to make subtle comment on and alter the meaning of the text. At times of heightened tension, Adams draws attention to the disjunct layers of sound by allowing different tonalities and different rhythmic groupings to sit in opposition to each other, creating polytonal and polyrhythmic effects.

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[92] Johnson, Timothy A. 2011. *John Adams's Nixon in China: Musical analysis, historical and political perspectives.* Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate. p. 92.

Adams' work has significantly contributed to contemporary discourses about American geo-political engagement with the broader world, the role of the media, and the sensitive discourse between Palestinians and Israelis. His work has now been adopted by some of the world's most staunchest bastions of high culture, including the New York Metropolitan Opera. But, as the recent controversy caused by the New York Metropolitan Opera's 2014 production of *The Death of Klinghoffer* discussed earlier suggests, Adams' operas have not lost their power to shock and disturb.

Louis Andriessen and the composition of vital, radical opera

Many of Louis Andriessen's compositions reflect a desire to find some rapprochement between his musical career and his intensely felt political beliefs. Early in his career, responding to a very conservative European tradition which was fostered by the established Dutch musical institutions of the 1950s and 1960s, Andriessen advocated for a more socially inclusive approach to state-supported musical activities.[93] For Andriessen, the composer does not acquire "authenticity" by being "authoritative or genuine in accordance with a given tradition, practice, or principle", but by being socially relevant.[94] He abhorred what he described as an "idolising of individuals", arguing that composers should be embedded within their local communities and actively working to engage their audience and undertake cooperative activities with performers.[95] To this end, as a politically engaged student of the 1960s, Andriessen repudiated the compositional aesthetics of Darmstadt composers and often wrote music specifically for political events.[96] These works included *Volkslied* (1971) and *Dat gebeurt in Vietnam* (This is happening in Vietnam")(1972), where he used "collaborative chanting" as a vehicle for promoting collective solidarity, and instrumental works such

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[93] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2006. *The Music of Louis Andriessen*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 22.
[94] Ibid. p. 94.
[95] Andriessen, Louis, and Mirjam Zegers. 2002. *The Art of Stealing Time*. Todmorden: Arc Music. p. 53.
[96] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2006. *The Music of Louis Andriessen*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 59.

as *Volharding* (1972) and *Workers Union* (1975), which were written to express a sense of "perseverance and strife" through repetition and "collective" unison.[97]

For many years, Andriessen also strenuously avoided becoming a part of the musical establishment and rejected the symphony orchestra, which he has described as an enemy "only important for capitalists and record companies".[98] Instead, he forged a "street ensemble", *Orkest De Volharding* (Perseverance Orchestra), made up of jazz and classical musicians[99] in which many traditional distinctions were ignored — for example, the distinctions between composer and musician, improvised and composed music, and high and low culture.[100] He has worked extensively in non-traditional musical settings, particularly theatre. He has maintained that his theatrical works play "a very important role" in his oeuvre.[101] He looks back nostalgically to the theatre involvement of early-twentieth century composers such as Stravinsky, Ravel, and Manuel de Falla (1876–1946), where distinctions between operas, oratorios and plays were often blurred. He has also been inspired by the experimental theatre work of Bertolt Brecht, Hanns Eisler, and Vsevolod Meyerhold,[102] actively turning away from the standard narrative or metanarrative of nineteenth century opera in favour of "contrapuntal" and "oppositional" narratives.[103] Late in his career, in turning to opera — which, according to Everett, he considered "the most bourgeois art form" — he sought to infuse it with "a new form of vitality and radicalism".[104] His opera works should be seen in the context of his ongoing engagement with the musical theatre and

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[97] Ibid.

[98] Schwarz, K. Robert. 1996. "Music Review: From rebel to guru to (horror of horrors) elder statesman?" *New York Times*. https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/alt.fan.frank-zappa/cLetyypJfXE. Accessed 10 March 2015.

[99] Adlington, Robert. 2004. *Louis Andriessen, De Staat*. Aldershot: Ashgate. p. 5.

[100] van der Waa, Frits. 2002. "Louis Andriessen and His Habitat." *The Music of Louis Andriessen*, edited by Louis Andriessen and Maja Trochimczyk. New York and London: Routledge. p. 36.

[101] Andriessen, Louis, and Maja Trochimczyk. 2002. "Dialog 4: Vermeer and painting." In *The Music of Louis Andriessen*, edited by Louis Andriessen and Maja Trochimczyk. New York and London: Routledge. p. 230.

[102] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2006. *The Music of Louis Andriessen*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 171.

[103] Ibid. p. 200.

[104] Ibid. p. 168.

his political interests, rather than as an attempt to engage in the elite high art of the opera house.

Everett has described Andriessen's approach as a "parodic style of composition modelled on the music of Stravinsky and Ives".[105] Andriessen famously acknowledged his great admiration for Stravinsky in a monograph entitled *The Apollonian Clockwork.*[106] Here he described Stravinsky's "montage" technique and the radical new approach to form announced in *The Rite of Spring.* He also acknowledged the influence of early twentieth century film experiments with montage[107] describing it as a way to:

> build, to make stacks (like the index cards …), to give form by means of assembling parts … "suites" of contrasting, consequential, dramatic episodes.[108]

Andriessen also acknowledged his debt to Charles Ives, dedicating an early polystylistic work with quotations from both high and low culture, *Anachronie I* (1966), to the American pioneer.[109] The juxtaposition of independent musical layers in *Il Principe* (1974) has been compared to the layering of strings, brass and woodwinds in *The Unanswered Question* by Charles Ives, discussed earlier.[110] Unlike Berio, Rochberg, and some of the other collage composers mentioned in the early part of this chapter, Andriessen takes great care not to foreground or privilege one style of music over another in his approach to polystylism. Rather, according to Everett, like Ives, he interspersed "heterogeneous sources" while maintaining a position of "neutrality", enabling all such references to be viewed "objectively" from a distance.[111]

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[105] Ibid. p. 30.
[106] Andriessen, Louis, and Elmer Schönberger. 1989. *The Apollonian Clockwork: On Stravinsky*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
[107] Ibid. p. 163.
[108] Ibid. p. 161.
[109] Schönberger, Elmer. 2015. "Andriessen: (4) Louis Andriessen." *Grove Music Online*. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/47613pg4. Accessed 9 February 2015.
[110] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2006. *The Music of Louis Andriessen*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 76.
[111] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2004. "Parody with an Ironic Edge: Dramatic works by Kurt Weill, Peter Maxwell Davies, and Louis Andriessen." *Music Theory Online* 10 (4).

Andriessen often applies polyphonic procedures used by the "great contrapuntal masters", such Guillaume de Machaut (c. 1300–1377) and J.S. Bach, to the way he contrasts and manipulates different musical layers.[112] These include the juxtaposition of fast tempi and slow melodies (as, for instance, in Bach's chorale preludes for organ), the use of instrumental obligatos in vocal pieces which provide two or more distinct layers of sound, and textures based on fast-paced sixteenth-note figuration and canonical techniques such as inversion and augmentation.[113]

Andriessen also acknowledges a desire to find a musical language that might be understood by his audience:

> These audiences have an interesting outlook on what music is. Composers know that music has its own musical meaning, but for ninety-five per cent of the people around us, music has, in the first place, all sorts of other meanings. It is important that you realise this. You must not suffer from it, but enjoy it, use it and make the best of it.[114]

To this end, Andriessen, like Adams, incorporates commonplace musical material, including popular music, that might have meaning for a wide public. However, he insists the composer should not write down to his audience. He feels that while music should ideally sound "simple", it should not be without complexity:

> Anyone who has ears in his head knows the difference between the simplicity of Ravel and the simplicity of Andrew Lloyd Webber. Ravel, just like Stravinsky, can create something very simple in a complex way. Lloyd Webber does the opposite; his music seems to be brilliant and luxurious, but it comes about easily.[115]

http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.04.10.4/mto.04.10.4.y_everett_frames.html. Accessed 11 August 2014. p. 49.

[112] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2006. *The Music of Louis Andriessen*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 140–141.

[113] Trochimczyk, Maja. 2002. "Andriessen and the Art of Composing." In *The Music of Louis Andriessen*, edited by Louis Andriessen and Maja Trochimczyk. New York and London: Routledge. pp. 278–279.

[114] Andriessen, Louis, and Mirjam Zegers. 2002. *The Art of Stealing Time*. Todmorden: Arc Music. p. 304.

[115] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2006. *The Music of Louis Andriessen*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 252.

He feels that the composer should work to engage their audience by using material that they might be able to readily understand and interpret, and then take them on a journey with this music.

Andriessen has written two recent operas, *Rosa* (1994) and *Writing to Vermeer* (1999) (henceforth referred to as *Vermeer*), in collaboration with the experimental filmmaker and artist, Peter Greenaway. These operas explore their subject matter through text, images and live action as independent, intersecting and multi-dimensional fields.[116] They share many characteristics with some of the other operas discussed here. Typically, his operas comprise distinct musical units, as in a number opera, using multiple quotations from a range of musical sources. In working with text, Andriessen's stated objective is to use his music to provide commentary: "my efforts are concentrated on providing a musical and rhetorical commentary on the highly disputable views contained in the text".[117]

Andriessen builds the structure of his works around this discrete musical commentary. Everett and Braddock and Routley have undertaken detailed studies of Andriessen's operas, arguing that in his musical process he routinely defamiliarises or decontextualizes his reference material and explores the resulting duality and contradiction as subjects in their own right.[118] Through embracing and exploring such disjunctions, Andriessen is able to provide a clear musical narrative with a musical structure based on the ongoing dialogue between different or even contradictory elements within his score. The structure of the piece is derived from the ongoing tension between contrasting elements of the score. This is particularly evident in *Vermeer*.

Vermeer is set in a seventeenth century Holland which faces very similar issues to those of the twenty-first century: religious conflict, impending war and natural disaster (especially flooding, which has particular relevance given the potential threat of global

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[116] Ibid. p. 170–171.
[117] Ibid. p. 77.
[118] Ibid. p. 241; See also Braddock, Rowena, and Nicholas Routley. 2004. "Productive Disjunction and the Play of Rupture: Reading 'the blanks' in writing to Vermeer." *Musicology Australia* 27 (1): 73–93.

warming). There is very little plot. The narrative is related through text which consists largely of quotations from fictitious letters to Vermeer from members of his family, who remain preoccupied with domestic concerns, romantic entanglements, consumption of goods that Vermeer might be purchasing on his travels, and other relatively petty matters, almost oblivious to the disasters unfolding in the outside world. Throughout the opera, Andriessen juxtaposes the domestically serene world inside the Vermeer household with the increasingly turbulent world outside, using radically contrasting music. During the course of the opera, the two worlds gradually merge together as the external events intrude more and more frequently on the domestic.

The household world is largely derived from well known folk tunes used by the music of the seventeenth century Dutch composer Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562–1621). In particular, Andriessen takes several excerpts from Sweelinck's simple tune *Mein junges Leben hat ein End* and uses them motifically throughout the work to represent the characters' affection for Vermeer and their feelings for one another.[119] This theme comes together in its entirety only once, at the golden section.[120] Burkholder describes "a thematic, non-repetitive form in which the principal theme is presented, not at the beginning as in traditional forms, but near the end" as "cumulative form".[121] He observed this technique in much of Ives' concert music written between 1907 and 1920, describing how Ives typically developed the main theme prior to its definitive statement at the end of the piece.[122] Everett suggests that Andriessen uses this technique here as a structural alternative to the nineteenth century notion of musical climax.[123] Instead, Andriessen uses the theme in its simplest form at the climactic moment to

[119] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2006. *The Music of Louis Andriessen*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 188.

[120] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2006. *The Music of Louis Andriessen*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 189. The "golden section" is a term used in mathematics to denote the ratio between two numbers in a Fibonacci sequence.
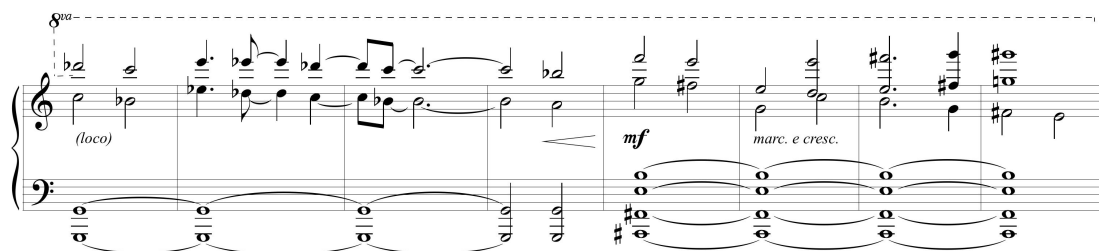
[121] Burkholder, J. Peter. 1995. *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the uses of musical borrowing*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. p. 137.

[122] Ibid. pp. 137–138.

[123] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2006. *The Music of Louis Andriessen*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 194.

encapsulate a moment of epiphany or revelation. The revelation he captures here is a growing awareness that the external disruptions are about to impinge on their domestic bliss.

The audience is made aware of the external events by an electronic score, created by Michel van der Aa to accompany film excerpts, which are interspersed throughout the opera. The domestic scenes are interrupted by Aa's electronic sound effects track, which becomes increasingly disruptive in the second half of the opera.[124] When the disruptions occur, actions on stage are temporarily suspended as Aa's sound track accompanies film excerpts depicting mob violence on the streets, an accidental gunpowder explosion and, finally, floods.[125] When returning to the domestic scenes, the Sweelinck music becomes gradually overlaid with an array of disparate elements. Initially, these are quite subtle and consist of some added ninths, major sevenths and tri-tones played heterophonically by a piccolo with a wide registral gap over two octaves above the main melody, which somewhat softens the effect of the dissonance (Example 4.33). These "wrong" notes momentarily jar in a similar way to Weill's and Bernstein's altered chorale harmonies discussed earlier.

Example 4.32: Louis Andriessen. *Writing to Vermeer: Opera in six scenes for 3 women, 2 children, women's chorus and orchestra.* **Scene 1, bars 15–23, p. 3.**

As the opera progresses, these disparate elements become more dominant. Andriessen derives this material from various musical sources including John Cage (1912–1992), Morton Feldman (1926–1987), Webern, Johannes Brahms (1833–1897), Stravinsky, and

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[124] Ibid. p. 187.
[125] Andriessen, Louis, and Mirjam Zegers. 2002. *The Art of Stealing Time*. Todmorden: Arc Music. p. 311.

even at one point his own brother, Jurriaan Andriessen.[126] Some of these quotations function as what Everett describes as "referential codes" that "index explicit references to borrowed models and mood invoked by the sung text".[127] For instance, a quotation from the "Sacrificial Dance" from *The Rite of Spring* used in Scene 6 provokes an image of water as a destructive force, ironically countering the children's innocent musings about falling into the canal and pre-empting the disastrous flood that concludes the opera (Example 4.34).

Example 4.33: Louis Andriessen. ***Writing to Vermeer: Opera in six scenes for 3 women, 2 children, women's chorus and orchestra.*** **Scene 6, bars206–212.**

The disparate elements gradually become so dominant that at the end of the opera the domestic music and the electronic overlay merge together as they are engulfed by the flood. The changed relationship between the domestic and external musical worlds creates a strong overarching narrative. Each style of music is "marked" in contrast to the other. As the two styles merge, the pre-established differences disappear and a process of what Almén describes as "transvaluation" takes place, where a new meaning emerges.[128]

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[126] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2006. *The Music of Louis Andriessen*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 189–195.

[127] Ibid. p. 198.

[128] Almén, Byron. 2008. *A Theory of Musical Narrative*: *Musical meaning and interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p. 40.

What is significant here is that Andriessen has, in essence, crafted his entire musical framework around a process of rupture and disjunction. According to Braddock and Routley:

> The ruptures are sites of concentrated creative energy wherein the contradictory, the irreconcilable, are allowed free play to produce meaning in a manner at odds with ideas of integration or closure. This meaning is not expressible as a dialectic synthesis; it is generated in defiance of unity and so confounds expectations of resolutions.[129]

Unlike conventional operas, Andriessen's music is not a simple elaboration of what happens in the opera. Rather, as Andriessen himself describes it, the music carries the "emotional trajectory" of the whole work:

> Gradually, you hear that the negative emotion comes forth in the music and in the singing; it does not manifest itself in the written text because the text is strictly domestic and simple … Their voices and their manner of singing are permeated by anxiety while they still sing the words of their happy letters to Vermeer.[130]

The "dramaturgy of the music" is largely independent of the text of the letters the women are writing.[131] In this way, Andriessen skilfully crafts a musically coherent score, ironically structured around a range of disunifying ruptures.

Everett argues that in *Vermeer,* irony operates at an "implicit, hidden level" as the music simultaneously affirms and negates the meaning of the words.[132] Like Adams, Andriessen does not use parody to crudely satire or ridicule but to subtly invite audiences to interrogate historical and contemporary preoccupations with domesticity in the face of major social and environmental challenges. Unlike traditional *opera buffa,* for Andriessen there are no happy endings or a return to any sort of domestic idyll.

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[129] Braddock, Rowena, and Nicholas Routley. 2004. "Productive Disjunction and the Play of Rupture: Reading 'the blanks' in Writing to Vermeer." *Musicology Australia* 27 (1): 87.

[130] Andriessen, Louis, and Maja Trochimczyk. 2002. "Dialog 4: Vermeer and painting." In *The Music of Louis Andriessen*, edited by Louis Andriessen and Maja Trochimczyk. New York and London: Routledge. p. 234.

[131] Novak, Jelena. 2013. "From Minimalist Music to Postopera: Repetition, representation and (post)modernity in the operas of Philip Glass and Louis Andriessen." In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Minimalist and Postminimalist Music*, edited by Keith Potter, Kyle Gann and Siôn Pwyll. Farnham: Ashgate. p. 138.

[132] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2006. *The Music of Louis Andriessen*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 199.

Rather, *Vermeer's* ending is open-ended, inviting the audience to draw their own conclusions and invent their own solution.

Rosa is set more contemporaneously, focusing on the murder of a mythical Uruguayan composer, Juan Manuel de Rosa, who had become accidentally famous for composing music for cowboy films rather than the avant-garde music he had been trained to compose. The work is scored for the non-traditional ensemble of woodwinds, brass, four saxophones, amplified strings, two pianos, two electric guitars, bass guitar, synthesizer, and amplified voices.[133] According to Andriessen, "accessibility" itself was the subject of the opera.[134] In keeping with this, much of the music is derived from the type of music that people will instantly recognise from television, film and popular music, including the spaghetti western, film music by Ennio Morricone (b. 1928) and cabaret.[135] Everett compares it with Weill's musical setting for *Aufsteig und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, with its closed form, choral commentary, exaggeration, distortion and montage of familiar tunes.[136] However, Andriessen also uses less obvious musical references, including quotations of music by Brahms, Prokofiev, and Scarlatti.[137] The tension between the composer's training and his commercial success is a sub-theme of the opera,[138] which suggests there is more than a little autobiographical component to this work.

In this work leitmotifs are often derived from quoted material and are intended to have a symbolic meaning drawn from the original context. For instance, Andriessen uses a Brahms children's song (opus 39, no. 2, 1865) as a symbol of "childhood".[139] Similarly,

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[133] See http://www.nonesuch.com/albums/rosa-the-death-of-a-composer.

[134] Andriessen, Louis, and Mirjam Zegers. 2002. *The Art of Stealing Time*. Todmorden: Arc Music. p. 245.

[135] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2006. *The Music of Louis Andriessen*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 176–177.

[136] Ibid. p. 176.

[137] Andriessen, Louis, and Mirjam Zegers. 2002. *The Art of Stealing Time*. Todmorden: Arc Music. pp. 242–266.

[138] Meurer, Ulrich. 2014. "Horse in Motion: On the 'rationalities' of cinema and opera." *Kinetephone* 1: 35–58. http://www.kinetophone.net/uploads/1/8/3/3/18338489/5horse_in_motion_-_ulrich_meurer_-_kinetophone_1_2014.pdf. Accessed 15 March 2015. p. 52.

[139] Andriessen, Louis, and Mirjam Zegers. 2002. *The Art of Stealing Time*. Todmorden: Arc Music. p. 251.

he uses 1960s Italian "juke-box" songs (a common source in his work) as "a metaphor for the erotic".[140] Rosa the composer-protagonist of the opera also appropriates melodies — not to subvert them like Andriessen, but because of his lack of originality.[141] As in *Vermeer,* the appropriated music is often exaggerated or in some way distorted. For instance, the "polka" used to represent "salon music" in America is transformed from its original simple duple rhythm to the asymmetrical 5/8 rhythm.[142] Sometimes Andriessen makes relatively simple stylistic allusions using just one aspect of a style. For instance, he has said that he realised it was enough to incorporate Latin percussion sounds if he needed to refer to a South American musical style.[143] As discussed in Chapter 3, a stylistic quotation or allusion may bring with it certain pre-existing referents which can contribute to the way the music is interpreted in its new context. In this way, according to Everett, Andriessen reclaims the "use-value" of music as a form of empowerment that counters the objectification of music as commodity that Adorno decried so vehemently.[144]

As in *Vermeer,* the way these musical fragments are distorted and mixed together is an integral part of the work's structure. As in Adams' work, disparate elements emerge from a musically coherent score. Ambiguities are emphasised through polytonality and polyrhythms. The opera contains twelve "self-contained" scenes, each of which forms "a self-contained musical unit without transition or bridge", but which are linked by the musical leitmotifs and musical symbols that Andriessen uses throughout the opera. The musical and dramatic climax of the work is Scene 9, in which the "serious musical material" and the "vulgar" material are "strongly contrasted and confronted with each other".[145] However, as in *Vermeer* there is no easy resolution — the crime is not solved,

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[140] Ibid. p. 257.
[141] Ibid. p. 258.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid. p. 261.
[144] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2006. *The Music of Louis Andriessen*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 95.
[145] Andriessen, Louis, and Mirjam Zegers. 2002. *The Art of Stealing Time*. Todmorden: Arc Music. p. 261.

and the "grieving widow" is "forced into the emptied out abdominal cavity of a dead mare and then set on fire".[146]

Everett sees *Rosa* as "a caricature of Hollywood films that exploit sexuality and violence".[147] *New York Times* critic Anne Midgette concluded that *Rosa* was a "compelling, direct, riveting and even beautiful" work that both confronted and challenged audiences with "layers of image, sound and meaning", providing a "mirror of society, with contemporary relevance and challenge" that forced an audience to think.[148] The surreal quality of the final scene is subverted by a postscript solo rap which provides a commentary on the main aspects of the opera. This is an obvious homage to Brecht and Weill's *Moritat* which opens *The Threepenny Opera*, demonstrating the interdependent nature of modernist and postmodernist creative outlooks.

Andriessen continues to excite those seeking to negotiate an alternate role for the twenty-first century composer. His following is particularly strong on the east coast of the United States. Among the most prominent of Andriessen's American followers are a group of New York composers, Michael Gordon (b. 1956), David Lang (b. 1957), and Julia Wolfe (b. 1958), who co-founded the *Bang-on-a-Can* collective. This group aims to foster "a new kind of audience that doesn't concern itself with boundaries",[149] and has actively been involved in trying to reinvent the opera genre in a more socially relevant manner with a trio of collaborative multimedia stage productions: *The Carbon Copy Building* (1999), *Shelter* (2005), and *Lost Objects* (2001). However, as Ross has pointed out, their audience remains somewhat exclusive, mainly because of their frequent use of pounding climaxes where "the instruments tend to become a blurry shriek in the loudspeakers".

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[146] Meurer, Ulrich. 2014. "Horse in Motion: On the 'rationalities' of cinema and opera." *Kinetephone* 1: 35–58. http://www.kinetophone.net/uploads/1/8/3/3/18338489/5horse_in_motion_-_ulrich_meurer_-_kinetophone_1_2014.pdf. Accessed 15 March 2015. p. 46.
[147] Everett, Yayoi Uno. 2006. *The Music of Louis Andriessen*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 183.
[148] Midgette, Anne. 2014. "Critics Diary: Challenging opera arrives in New York, only on film." *New York Times*, 11 May 2004. http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/11/movies/critic-s-diary-challenging-opera-arrives-in-new-york-only-on-film.html. Accessed 15 March 2014.
[149] See Bang on A Can's website: http://bangonacan.org/about_us. Accessed 15 March 2015.

> One piece after another seems to pump its arms in the air and shout, "Classical music kicks ass!" At some point, the urge to confound expectations becomes self-defeating. If a composition tries too hard to sound like rock, it sounds only like a lame, tame version of the real thing.[150]

I am aware that if I wish to attract a broad audience in my own city, I will need to modify Andriessen's approach. However, I have been inspired by Andriessen's method of building a musical structure around the juxtaposition of different musical elements in a way that creates a coherent musical narrative, and I have used a similar approach in *Capital.* Like Andriessen, I also use an eclectic combination of traditional acoustic and electronic instruments, as is discussed at length in the next chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have highlighted the way each of the three featured composers, Bernstein, Adams and Andriessen, use the same building blocks to craft their music. First, all three composers incorporate polystylistic elements. Second, all three composers also use specific repeated musical motifs derived from specific intervals to create a musical commentary. Finally, all three composers layer different blocks of sound against each other, deliberately using the resulting disjunctions and clashes as a way to create a musical narrative as the music unfolds. What differs is the extent to which each of these composers uses these basic building blocks. Bernstein's approach favours the use of musical motifs, but incorporates different styles to set the scene and portray character. Andriessen incorporates an exceedingly diverse range of material, even quite disruptive elements, within an coherent overarching narrative framework that layers different elements of the score against each other, allowing for a high degree of heterogeneity. Adams relies on all three techniques and uses Ivesian techniques to differentiate between layers and to blur them together so that particular voices move in and out of focus at different times.

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[150] Ross, Alex. 2003. "Shall We Rock?". *The New Yorker.* 30 June 2003.
http://www.therestisnoise.com/2004/04/bang_on_a_can_1.html. Accessed 16 March 2015.

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Such approaches radically alter traditional notions of unity and the autonomous musical work, bringing to fruition many of Busoni's ideals, as discussed in Chapter 3. In addition, such works take us back to the time of *opera buffa* where composers were intent on communicating with their audience, creating their own musical narrative which interacted with the text and stage action to create a complex multimedia work where multiple interpretations might be possible. They have been a powerful inspiration in the composition of my own opera *Capital*, which I will now discuss at length.

Chapter 5.

The making of *Capital*

Introduction

As indicated at the beginning of this exegesis, my objective in composing *Capital* was to create an original contemporary opera that incorporated a range of musical styles in a way that would promote meaningful engagement about contemporary issues from a broad-based local audience. In its composition, I have chosen to be consciously informed by the historical and theoretical context in which it has been written, and by analysis of significant works that serve as the musical precedents for what I set out to achieve in *Capital*. The process has been further informed by practice-based research that aided my understanding of the expectations and needs of an audience. In this chapter, I discuss my approach to the composition of this work and detail the way I used audience feedback to inform a radical revision of the work. A detailed analysis of *Capital 2* is then provided.

As discussed in the introduction to this exegesis, *Capital* was composed in two stages. In the first section of this chapter, I focus on the development of *Capital 1* and the workshop process undertaken in partnership with a local theatre, the Canberra Street Theatre. I discuss the difficulties faced in finding a librettist and raising funds for the project, and the process by which audience feedback was obtained. I then outline the extent to which I achieved my objectives and the areas in which I decided further work was required.

In the final section of this chapter, I discuss my approach to composing the current version of *Capital* — *Capital 2* — and the way the works discussed in previous chapters influenced my compositional approach. Like many of these works, in writing *Capital*, I set out to develop a clear, overarching musical narrative which would not require conformity and unity, but which would allow many different and competing voices to speak through the course of the work. To achieve this objective, I deliberately tried to

enhance accessibility by making stylistic allusions to popular and classical musical sources that would be familiar to a broad audience and which would enable me to communicate with them in a meaningful way. I typically selected and shaped the material using many of the techniques discussed in previous chapters, including exaggeration, harmonic and rhythmic alterations, and layering of different musical styles.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to assess audience reception of this work at this time. I hoped my work would contribute to community discourse about the historical development and future role of the Canberra community, as part of the celebration of Canberra's centenary in 2013. In doing this, I wanted to invite the audience to look afresh at some of the ideals that Canberra's designers, Marion Mahoney Griffin and Walter Burley Griffin, had sought to achieve and the ongoing relevance of their vision in a new century. While I was unsuccessful in obtaining funds for that year, I hope that at some point funds can be obtained to pursue this objective so that I can more fully assess how well I have met my objectives. I hope to demonstrate that by composing in the parodic tradition, it is still possible to use opera as an effective medium for engaging a broad audience.

A CD is enclosed with each score, providing one excerpt from *Capital 1* and three excerpts from *Capital 2*.

Project background

The composition of *Capital* was undertaken in two stages as a form of practice-based research. In the first stage of the project, I engaged in a partnership with the Canberra Street Theatre who provided mentoring as part of their Made in Canberra program. Like many of the composers discussed in previous chapters, I sought engagement with a local theatre rather than an opera company or other art music ensemble as a means of engaging more broadly with my local community, particularly those who do not normally attend classical music events. As a participant in the Street Theatre's Made in Canberra program, I was able to obtain a grant from ArtsACT to workshop and present a semi-staged performance of the work. At this performance, the work was conducted by eminent Melbourne opera conductor, Dr David Kram, with Caroline

Stacey, Artistic Director of the Canberra Street Theatre as director. This performance of *Capital 1* was presented on 11 September 2009. The libretto for *Capital 1* was mostly written myself with support from a dramaturg provided by the Canberra Street Theatre.[1] The score of *Capital 1* is attached in Appendix 1.

Like the Tom Stoppard play *Arcadia,*[2] the action of *Capital 1* and *Capital 2* is set within two intersecting time periods: the early-twentieth century and the early-twenty-first century. In the early period, the initial stages of the design and construction of Canberra as the capital city of Australia are explored from the perspective of husband and wife architectural team, Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahoney Griffin, who won the 1911 competition to design a capital city for Australia. The Griffins' experiences are contrasted with the experiences of an imaginary early-twenty-first century couple, Ed and Caroline (renamed Moose and Bon-Bon in *Capital* 2), who, at the point the opera opens, are in their thirties, with the visions of their youth either frustrated (in the case of the male) or fading (in the case of the career-obsessed female). The aim was to develop contemporary characters who the audience might identify with, and who, with their identity merged with the Griffins, might provoke a creative response from the audience when considering Canberra's future.

In the early period, the plot concerns the difficulties experienced by Walter Burley and Marion Mahoney Griffin in getting their full vision for Canberra realised during the implementation process. After winning the competition, Walter (not with his wife, although they operated as a team in developing the design) was appointed as Federal Capital Director of Design and Construction and came to Canberra with his wife to advise the government on the implementation of their plans in 1913. Subsequently, the original Griffin plan was subject to considerable political and bureaucratic criticism, especially regarding cost and practicality. The opera concerns the difficult struggle which the Griffins faced to realise their vision and the role the colourful Australian politician King O'Malley played in supporting them and finally enabling them to retain critical aspects of their design for Canberra, despite some significant alterations to their

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[1] I had attempted to write the libretto for *Capital 1* with assistance from a friend, but artistic differences emerged early in this process and I had little choice but to continue on my own, although I was aware that I was not a particularly good wordsmith.

[2] I wrote incidental music for a production of *Arcadia* by the Canberra Repertory Society in 2008.

original plan. Perhaps one of the most famous alterations was the decision to situate the present Parliament House on Capital Hill, which the Griffins had identified as a site for a gathering point to represent the primacy of the people within an Australian democracy that they called "The Capitol". A small tribute to the Griffins remains by way of a grassy hill which covers the roof of parliament (where one scene of *Capital* is set). The public can still visit this space, situated underneath the current flagpole, and symbolically stand on top of the parliament building (under the scrutiny of security services). Significantly, at the time of writing the original version of *Capital 1,* this space had been closed off from the public because of security concerns. The plot for this part of the opera is loosely based on Marion Mahoney Griffin's account of their experiences in Canberra from her autobiographical work *The Magic of America.*[3]

While the story-line and the actual characters of the early period are based on the historical personages, the contemporary characters are deliberately designed in a much less realistic, more melodramatic way. I aimed to make the plot as typically fantastic and predictable as that of traditional *opera buffa*, with clear villains and heroes. For instance, as discussed in Chapter 2, kidnap, rescue and thwarted love are recurrent themes in *opera buffa.*[4] Caroline/Bon-Bon is metaphorically kidnapped by the unnamed Cabinet Minister for whom she works. She is manipulated emotionally and persuaded to join his crazy plan to "rejuvenate" Canberra. In this way, he tempts her away from her partner and their earlier youthful idealistic visions. Ed/Moose, the unwitting hero of *Capital*, is portrayed as a sympathetic, if somewhat morose character. His pet project, to develop improved means of community engagement through an ultra-efficient broadband network, has just been shelved by the government. As a result, he has left his secure public service career and become a window cleaner. In the evenings, he seeks escape in medieval war gaming activities.

During the course of the opera, King O'Malley and the Griffins magically appear in the twenty-first century to help Ed/Moose rescue his wife and revive his ideals. At the end of the opera, the Minister is discredited while Bon-Bon and Moose are reconciled. The

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[3] Griffin, Marion Mahoney. 2009. *The Magic of America*. http://www.artic.edu/magicofamerica/. Accessed 23 March 2009.

[4] Hunter, Mary. 1999. *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna: A poetics of entertainment*. Princeton and Chichester: Princeton University Press. p. 89.

Griffins' plans to establish the Capitol are given a new form when Moose's plan to establish a community-based consultative network through a national broadband service is reinstated. Through the course of the opera, my aim was to promote discussion about the nature of the Canberra community as envisioned by the Griffins and our hopes for its future.

Like Andriessen, Weill and Adams, my orchestration uses a combination of instruments usually associated with popular music as well as instruments more usually associated with classical music. The band for *Capital 1* included flute (doubling piccolo), clarinet (doubling bass clarinet), soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophones, mallet instruments and drum kit, electric and classical guitar, electric keyboard and strings. I hoped that this would create a more comfortable environment for people not familiar with orchestral music. To ensure balance between the instruments, the strings and singers were amplified for the performance.

Some composers who are trying to reach a general audience deliberately eschew the operatic voice, often preferring, as Sondheim did, an actor who can sing and enunciate words.[5] However, I was aware that composers such as Adams, who had also deliberately opted for non-operatic voices in his musical *I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky*, needed considerable extra rehearsal time to coach his singers because of the technical demands of the music.[6] Given lack of time to train non-operatic singers and the relatively demanding nature of many of the vocal parts, *Capital 1* required trained operatic voices. I felt I could also use the operatic style of singing to add to the musical parody.

With only limited advertising, a full house of 200 people attended the semi-staged performance of *Capital 1* on 11 September 2009, suggesting that the subject matter of the work was one that strongly interested people. The Canberra Street Theatre obtained feedback from audience members, critics and participants in the workshop.

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[5] Block, Geoffrey. 2009. *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway musical from 'Show Boat' to Sondheim and Lloyd Webber*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 352.
[6] Adams, John. 2008. *Hallelujah Junction: Composing an American life*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. p. 221.

This input, which is detailed at the end of the next section, informed the subsequent composition of *Capital 2.*

The composition of *Capital 1*

In *Capital 1,* I decided to base the musical structure, as much as possible, on some of the features of Canberra's design as laid out in the Griffin plan. As committed anthroposophists, the Griffins sought inspiration from the "deep geomorphic time" of the landscape and "the forces of an ancient past",[7] symbolised in the hills and watercourses of the natural environment. Rather than force the landscape to conform to their vision for the city, they tried to develop a design that was in harmony with the landscape, a revolutionary concept at the time. Accordingly, they built their plans for Canberra around three intersecting axes: the land axis, extending from Mount Ainslie in the north to Bimberi Peak in the distant Brindabella Ranges to the south; the water axis, marked out in right angles to the land axis, running from the heights of Black Mountain in the west towards the regional town of Queanbeyan about seven miles distant, and loosely following the course of the Molonglo River; the third axis, forming a triangle, would be the municipal axis or, as I interpreted it, the urban axis.[8]

Influenced by Sitsky's method of encoding particular musical notes and motifs with symbolic meaning, I decided to build the musical structure of my opera around three musical gestures which would represent the design axes of the Griffin plan. While the opera was modelled on the number opera, with six discrete scenes, each with a clear beginning and end, I used motivic material that recurs throughout the opera as a means of locating the action of the opera. During the course of the opera, a number of different perspectives emerge around these themes.

The land axis, the vertical axis in the Griffin plan, was represented by a six note chord based on Scriabin's "mystic chord", which he referred to in theosophical terms as the "chord of the pleroma"[9] (Example 5.1).

[7] McGregor, Alasdair. 2009. *Grand Obsessions: The life and work of Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin*. Camberwell: Penguin. p. 131.

[8] Ibid. pp. 131–132.

[9] See Leikin, Anatole. 2002. "From Paganism to Orthodoxy to Theosophy: Reflections of other worlds in the piano music of Rachmaninov and Scriabin." In *Voicing the Ineffable: Musical representations of religious experience*, edited by Siglind Bruhn. Hillsdale: Pendragon Press. p. 41.The term "pleroma", meaning the

Example 5.1: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1*. Land axis represented by "mystic chord". Scene 1, bar 1.

I chose this chord because of the philosophical links between Scriabin, a composer heavily influenced by theosophy, and the Griffins' interest in the related area of anthroposophy. I was also interested in the musical properties of this chord, which is built on fourths rather than triads. This means that the chord has an ambivalent harmonic role, with no obvious resolution apparent in diatonic terms. Composers such as Scriabin frequently exploited the resulting sense of "harmonic stasis",[10] as Taruskin describes it, to create a sense of a timeless spiritual world. Because of this it seemed a particularly appropriate means of expressing the ancient timelessness of the Australian landscape.

The water axis is a vertical axis represented by a flowing marimba pattern that was intended more to give a timbral effect rather than provide an identifiable melody (Example 5.2).

Example 5.2: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1*. Scene 1, bars 3–5.

However, elements of the opening section were used motifically through the opera. For instance, even in the opening sequence a flute interjection is loosely based on the notes

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spiritual universe or abode of God, is used by Madame Blavatsky, founder of the theosophical movement, in *The Secret Doctrine* (1888).

[10] Taruskin, Richard. 2010. *Music in the Early Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 205–206.

of the opening marimba sequence (Example 5.3).

Example 5.3: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1*. **Scene 1, bars 6–7.**

The opening three notes of Marion's first solo are also derived from this motif
(Example 5.4). In shaping Marion's character around the water symbol. I envisaged
that she would respond fluidly to the surrounding environment and mould herself
around a shifting landscape. I was aware that this symbolism might not necessarily be
obvious to the audience, but I found it useful as a means of imagining music that
Marion might sing.

Example 5.4: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1.* **Scene 1, bars 40–41.**

The urban axis (also a vertical axis on the Griffin plan) was represented by a jagged
four part sequence played by the saxophones. Syncopated chords and saxophones
have become associated with city life through their inclusion in a range of crime shows
and movies. This tradition began with the famous *Peter Gunn Theme,* which consists of
saxophone chords over a ground bass played on an electric bass. I chose to appropriate
this meaning by using a four part saxophone chorus in *Capital 1* (Example 5.5).

Example 5.5: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1*. Scene 1. Urban axis, derived from bars 9–34.

I used harmonies which, like the chorale harmonies of Weill, Bernstein and Adams, mimic the voice-leading practices of typical four part chorale harmonies. The bass part typically moves in contrary motion while the inner parts mostly move by step. The harmonies are slightly discordant and never quite resolve as the listener might expect from a tonal perspective.

Elements of the urban theme are also used motifically. For instance, the opening vocal line of Scene 6 (Example 5.6) is derived from the same opening intervals (although using different rhythmic values) as the opening soprano saxophone part of the urban theme (the first bar of Example 5.5), transposed up a minor third.

Example 5.6: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1*. Scene 6, bars 1–2.

This scene was written as one of the climaxes of the opera, where the characters realise something of the alienation of their urban existence and struggle to reconnect with their natural environment. I tried to enhance audience recognition of particular themes through an association with a particular instrument. Interjections from the saxophones tend to occur at times of urban alienation and disjunction. Similarly, the marimba is

used to remind the audience of the water theme and to connect this theme with Marion.

The landscape themes are not only used motifically. Like Ives, I tried to distinguish the themes clearly from each other in terms of timbre, pitch, rhythm and instrumentation so that they could be layered against one another. In Example 5.7, for instance, as Marion concludes her opening song (based on the blues) outlining her vision for Canberra, the strings hold a long chord (derived from the mystic chord used for the land axis) while the water theme is played in the marimba part and the saxophones outline the urban theme.

Example 5.7: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1.* **Scene 1, bars 126–130.**

In much in the same way as Adams bookends *Nixon in China* with his musical reference to the sunrise, I bookended my opera with land and water themes, aiming to signify that Canberra's history is but a short snapshot within a longer history which precedes the opera and will continue long after the events of the opera have been forgotten. This was intended to call into question Canberra's importance in its temporary role as the capital city of Australia. Interestingly, during the workshops, the conductor suggested I should cut this ending as, in his opinion, I would get more applause if I ended with the climax of the final song, "We are the people of Canberra". However, I strongly resisted, insisting that this would subvert the intention of the work. I did not want to end on a "triumphant" note that might encourage a sense of parochialism and false pride. Rather, like the composers discussed in previous chapters, my aim was to provide the audience with space to reflect on the events depicted in the opera and see them from a different perspective. Example 5.8 shows the final moments of Scene 6 with the water theme and the final chords (derived from the mystic chord) in the marimba and the strings, woodwinds and guitars.

Example 5.8: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1*. Scene 6, bars 512–519.

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Each character in the opera is differentiated by the style of music they sing, as well as the timbre and register in which they are placed. For instance, Marion's music is written in the warm mezzo soprano range, in a passionate bluesy style designed to emphasise her passionate nature and take us back in time to the early history of jazz. Typically, I give Marion flowing vocal lines with complementary clarinet and saxophone obligatos. Example 5.9 shows Marion singing in a quasi-improvisatory blues style.

Example 5.9: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1*. Scene 1, bars 96–106.

In contrast to the flowing style of Marion's music, Walter's music is typically accompanied by staccato chords — reminiscent of the urban theme — and off-beat rhythms designed to give the impression of a much more clipped and calculating nature. Example 5.10 shows a typical example of his style of singing.

Example 5.10: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1*. **Scene 1, bars 80–88.**

Ed/Moose, who is interested in medieval role-play, sings modal music in a quasi-medieval style. For instance, Ed/Moose's main aria in Scene 4 is built on a ground bass and is loosely modelled on the type of music often used in computer games, with a medieval theme. However, I also slightly distorted this — as Andriessen did when using Sweelinck's music as a reference to an archaic style (see Example 1 in Chapter 4) — by including aberrant harmonies almost from the beginning of the song. In Example 11.11, I have added additional C sharps and D flats which are designed to sound out of

place within the context of an otherwise diatonic passage in G minor.[11] As the aria continues, such aberrant notes become increasingly common.

Example 5.11: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1*. Scene 4, bars 17–30. Aberrant C sharps and D flats marked with an asterisk.

Example 5.12 shows where I added cross rhythms and changed the metre from 3/4 to 7/8. At this point, the soloist sings a rhythmically altered version of the ground bass, aiming to give the aria a slightly off-kilter feel.

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[11] See earlier discussion of Andriessen's opera *Writing to Vermeer* in Chapter 4.

Example 5.12: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1*. **Scene 4, bars 64–74.**

This ground bass was almost the only item I transferred to *Capital 2,* where it is also used for Ed/Moose's main aria. However, the different words and metre ensured a different result.

During the course of the opera, I experimented with parody, using the techniques outlined in previous chapters. For instance, Scene 2 was structured as a strophic popular song with a bridge passage in the middle, but it incorporated a range of operatic features, including recitative and some coloratura vocal effects, creating an interesting juxtaposition of contradictory elements. In this song, (a recording of which is provided on track 1 of the CD inserted into the *Capital 1* score), which I describe as *The Bitch Song,* Caroline sings with great excitement and passion about her desire to please the Minister. The words for the libretto were patched together using public service jargon and are intended to demonstrate the nonsensical nature of many of these clichés. Example 5.13 shows the beginning of the scene, commencing with Caroline/Bon-Bon flirtatiously singing a recitative to her boss, the Minister, who is off stage. The flirtatious nature of the recitative is conveyed by the trill in bars six and

seven. Complex compound chords give a slightly jazzy effect and are rhythmically offset to counteract the speech-like rhythm of the vocal part.[12]

Example 5.13: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1*. Scene 2, bars 1–12.

Following the opening recitative section, a quasi-popular style song emerges, built over a piano vamp loosely derived from the theme song of the *Batman* TV series and songs in the style of the Beach Boys (Example 5.14).

[12] A recording of this song is on the accompanying CD.

Example 5.14: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1*. Scene 2, bars 32–35.

This superficial popular style of music sits in stark contrast with the typewriter sound (used as a percussion instrument) and the operatic voice. This juxtaposition is designed to create a sense of dissonance and demonstrate the superficiality of the public service jargon in the lyric. Example 5.15 shows the changing cross rhythms in the bridge section, emphasised by a snare drum which is designed to add a threatening, unsettling element, suggesting that Caroline's obsession with public service procedures could be quite dangerous.

Example 5.15: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1*. Scene 2, bars 75–80.

The Bitch Song is largely set at the extreme high end of the soprano range. As demonstrated in Example 5.16, the high tessitura is designed to give a sense that Caroline/Bon-Bon is somewhat unhinged, perhaps even a little mad. It is deliberately modelled on the *opera buffa* tradition of the rage aria similar to the examples discussed in previous chapters — the famous Queen of the Night Aria in *The Magic Flute,* "Glitter and be Gay" from Bernstein's *Candide,* and Madame Mao's aria from John Adams' *Nixon in China.* The popular song setting creates a melodramatic air, enhancing the hysterical nature of the singing.

Example 5.16: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1*. Scene 2, bars 47–51.

Example 5.17 is taken from the end of the aria. As the song builds to its climactic ending, with the voice rising higher and higher, I tried to suggest that the character, who is obsessed by the rational instrumentality of public service life, has, ironically, lost all reason.

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Example 5.17: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1*. Scene 2, bars 87–94.

Workshop feedback

The Canberra Street Theatre initiated several feedback processes as part of their project management processes. The audience had an opportunity to provide feedback in writing or via email to the Canberra Street Theatre. Details were provided in the program and announced by the conductor at the beginning of the performance. In addition, the audience was invited to a panel discussion as part of the postgraduate student annual musicology conference at the ANU School of Music, held on 12 September 2009. The panel consisted of Professor Emeritus Graham Hair, Professor Emeritus Larry Sitsky, Caroline Stacey (Artistic Director of the Canberra Street Theatre), and myself. I also had extensive discussions with the musical and artistic directors during the course of the workshop.

I deliberately chose not to read the written or emailed feedback from audience members and to receive only an aural briefing provided by Dr Kram and Ms Stacey which summarised the main points. There were many reasons for this approach. Firstly, as I have stated from the outset, I was not aiming to create a work purely for

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popular consumption. In his recent and insightful analysis of early-twentieth century avant-garde artists, Walter Adamson concluded that cultural democracy does not necessarily mean that artists should simply respond to popular taste. Instead, he suggests that artists should seek to examine, challenge, contest, and reshape that taste.[13] Rather than writing standard, predictable music that might achieve short-lived popularity, I wished to create music that the audience could relate to, but which might still challenge and discomfort them in some ways. Such music, as twentieth century composer Hans Werner Henze has suggested, is becoming increasingly rare:

> … today music that truly wishes to speak, to be open, virtually resembles an esoteric cult: under attack, sometimes even persecuted, in flight from the dangers of mass society and standardization under dictatorships, and elsewhere from the platitudes of aesthetic slogans.[14]

While I wanted feedback about whether the audience had understood my musical references and related to them, I did not necessarily want to follow their advice as to how I should go about revising the musical score.

In addition, the quality of the performance was hampered by a short rehearsal and workshop period of only five days. The work was clearly not ready for a full critical evaluation and I was not interested in undertaking a full audience survey on a work that was still in development.

Finally, it was apparent from the workshop, and from comments made to me personally, that opinions varied enormously between the two extremes of those who absolutely loved the work to those who absolutely hated it. Given the range of views, it was difficult to discern any clear pattern in responses and I considered that reading written responses would only confuse my thinking about where to take the work in the next phase of development.

Five key issues emerged for me from the review process.

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[13] Adamson, Walter L. 2007. *Embattled Avant-Gardes: Modernism's resistance to commodity culture in Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 350–251.

[14] Henze, Hans Werner. 1982. *Music and Politics: Collected writings 1953–81*. London: Faber. p. 123.

First, there was a very positive response to an opera based on local issues. At the end of the semi-staged performance, a large number of people stayed on for drinks (which were not provided free of charge) and there was audible excitement about the subject matter of the opera, with ongoing discussion about the role of the Griffins and how my portrayal of them had (or had not) worked.

Second, the audience responded best to music with which they had some familiarity. *The Bitch Song* in Scene 2 had the most positive reception and some audience members had spontaneously burst into applause at the end of the aria.

Third, the libretto was problematic. The singers often sang about events that had occurred off-stage and it was evident that more of the drama needed to be shown to the audience. My libretto was awkward and not particularly poetic. Because there was no consistent rhythmic metre, it was difficult to reprise musical themes that might give the audience a sense of familiarity as the opera progressed. There was little that the audience could take with them as a hummable melody. I clearly needed to find a collaborator to assist with the libretto.

Fourth, some audience members expressed concerns about the accessibility of the music. The biggest challenge I had faced in composing *Capital 1* was trying to achieve accessibility without resiling from challenging audience expectations. Like most composers, I have probably listened to more contemporary avant-garde music than the general public, and am probably more tolerant of discordant and complex sound clouds than the average theatre-goer. Despite incorporating many popular music elements, including music I thought would be familiar to the audience, I found it very difficult to judge accessibility. As the Griffins emerged in the contemporary time period and the various styles of music symbolically clashed and collided, at times the music became quite complex. Scriabinesque sound clouds were layered against slightly discordant jazz and medieval musical components, reducing accessibility for some audience members. For instance, Example 5.18 shows a section from the final scene where I tried to create a sense of timelessness using string chords derived from the mystic chord. The rhythmic timing of the chord changes was determined using a Fibonacci sequence. The ability to sense a regular metre therefore disappears in this

section. Woodwind and percussion interjections were derived from key themes used throughout the opera and the timing for these parts was determined using a reverse Fibonacci sequence. The review process identified such sequences as difficult for the audience.

Example 5.18: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 1*. Scene 6, bars 255–261.

Finally, the large 16-piece orchestra required for *Capital 1* was an expensive proposition. Although I had tried to make economies — for instance, by using individual string players and amplifying them rather than having a complete string section — most of the expense of the semi-staged production was the orchestra. It was evident that I would need to reduce the size of the orchestra to ensure the project's ongoing viability.

These findings gave me a good basis for proceeding to the next stage of the project. The composition, workshop and semi-staged production of *Capital 1* demonstrated that there was community interest in an opera based on local contemporary issues, and gave me some clear directions for revising the work in ways that would help me to better achieve my objectives. In *Capital 2,* I resolved to find an artistic partner who could provide a more satisfactory libretto and to significantly simplify my compositional approach without compromising the nature of the social critique I had endeavoured to provide.

Capital 2

Capital 2 addresses the main issues raised during the *Capital 1* feedback process. The most important change was a new libretto. As mentioned earlier, with support from the Canberra Street Theatre, I was able to obtain a second grant from ArtsACT to engage a professional librettist, Alan Gould. In the following discussion, I will outline how, with the new libretto and, taking into account the feedback received from *Capital 1,* I was able to significantly alter my compositional process and create what I hope will be a more accessible work without being a mere pastiche of popular musical styles. I was able to do this by incorporating more familiar musical styles and by extending and further developing many of the parodic techniques that I had begun to experiment with in *Capital 1.*

Alan Gould's libretto essentially followed the same plot as *Capital 1,* but more of the action now occurred on stage. The Minister and King O'Malley, who were discussed in *Capital 1* but did not appear on stage, became real characters. This made for a more substantial work, enabling me to extend the one act version of *Capital 1* to a full-length,

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two act opera. Whereas the libretto for *Capital 1* had essentially been prosaic, the new libretto was metrical, which allowed for stand-alone strophic songs. As outlined below, it also lent itself well to reprisals and repeated refrains.

With the new libretto, on the basis of the feedback I received, I decided to make a number of changes deliberately incorporating more traditions from *opera buffa* and simplifying my compositional approach. The main changes were as follows:

- Like *Capital 1, Capital 2* is based on the number opera format, but includes more stand-alone songs;

- I created ensemble finales at the end of Scene 4 which concludes Act 1, and a grand finale at the end of Act 2, as in the *opera buffa* tradition;

- King O'Malley is given the affectionately comical role of the traditional *buffa bass*;[15] and

- The score was orchestrated for a simplified band, consisting of flute, clarinet, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, electric keyboard, mallet instruments/percussion, electric guitar, and double bass, in order to minimise costs.[16]

Like *Capital 1, Capital 2* has six scenes. Each of these scenes is through-composed, with a discrete beginning and end. They also incorporate several songs which are designed to stand on their own, if need be. These include the duet sung by Marion and Walter in Scene 1; the Minister's arias, *I am the Minister of What-Comes-Next,* and *Rejuvenate, Revitalise* in Scene 2; King O'Malley's *Keep Your Hair On* song in Scene 4; Moose's lament in Scene 4; and a reprise of the Minister's aria *Rejuvenate, Revitalise* as the finale. The required cast for *Capital 2* is as follows:

- Bon-Bon — Soprano

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[15] Hunter, Mary. 1999. *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna: A poetics of entertainment.* Princeton and Chichester: Princeton University Press. p. 110.
[16] To create an effective balance using this ensemble, as in *Capital 1,* they will need to be amplified.

- Moose — Baritone

- Marion Mahoney Griffin — Mezzo Soprano

- Walter Burley Griffin — Tenor

- The Minister — Counter-Tenor

- King O'Malley — Bass Baritone

In the following analysis, I discuss the most significant changes made in composing *Capital 2.* In particular, I focus on the way I used more familiar musical material and popular styles, including dance music; the development of more recognisable musical motifs to create a musical narrative through the course of the work; the use of more accessible triadic harmonies (albeit often within a very ambiguous, even bi-tonal, context); linkage of some of the more "difficult" music with appropriately dramatic moments within the opera; and, where multiple layers overlapped, provision of an ongoing stable element, particularly a strong bass line or rhythmic regularity to provide the audience with a clear point of focus.

Capital 2: Musical analysis

Capital 2 essentially combines three styles of music. Ragtime music is used to represent the period in which the Griffins developed their original plans for Canberra. Rather than quote any particular form of ragtime music, I alluded to the genre by use of certain characteristic traits, particularly dotted rhythms in simple duple time, four bar phrases, chord progressions that cycle through secondary dominants, and a stride bass typical of this music. The ragtime music is loosely based on Scott Joplin rags. This style of music has been used in popular culture to create a period association with early-twentieth century United States urban culture in films such as *The Sting* and *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button.* It is also used in a somewhat different context in the original *Star Wars* movie (music performed by alien Cantina Band) giving a sense of "otherness" to the music. Because of these associations, it provided a more direct link to the early twentieth century than the blues music used in *Capital 1*, while still retaining a sense of "otherness" that enabled me to distinguish the two different time periods*.*

In *Capital 2's* contemporary scenes I use allusions to contemporary popular rock music. The rock music traits include a strong, syncopated bass and rock style rhythms played by a drum kit, as well as electric guitar and repetitive triadic chord cycles.

In *Capital 2*, I also use two older musical forms. As in *Capital 1*, the contemporary male hero (now named Moose) retains a sentimental, romantic character which is underpinned by quasi-medieval music suggested by his interest in medieval gaming. Typically, his music is in a triple metre, using devices such as a ground bass and modal inflections to give a medieval flavour. Again, films and television shows, such as *The Pillars of the Earth,* set in the medieval era, as well as video games such as *The War of the Roses*, often use modally inflected dance music. This has created a pre-existing cultural association that should enhance audience recognition and accessibility.[17] In addition, to represent bureaucratic instrumental forms of government, I used academic baroque styles derived from music by Handel and Bach. This music is used in a parodic manner, giving an exaggerated sense of gravity to ludicrous administrative processes and ministerial pronouncements. The effect was designed to emulate Mozart's approach at the beginning of *The Magic Flute,* discussed in Chapter 2, where an onomatopoeic repeated note that sounds something like a laugh is used in the learned, contrapuntal style of the academy.

In focusing on simpler, more accessible styles of music in *Capital 2*, I decided that, like Bernstein and Mozart, I should create a more accessible and simpler opening, which would appeal to a more general audience. In *Capital 1's* short overture, the audience feedback had suggested I had failed to engage my listeners with the more abstract Scriabinesque chords. In contrast, the overture to *Capital 2*, like *The Magic Flute,* opens with a short, sombre section in which I briefly outline two key themes that recur throughout the opera, before launching into a more upbeat excerpt from the ragtime tune which permeates the entire opera. This simple juxtaposition is repeated three times, slightly differently on each occasion, leading directly into Marion's solo entry after 36 bars.

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[17] For a detailed discussion of how film composers create a medieval association see Haines, John. 2013. *Music in Films on the Middle Ages: Authenticity vs. fantasy.* London: Routledge.

The two contrasting themes — the chaos and harmony themes — are intended to represent the two contrasting ideas of the opera and provide an overall musical narrative for the work. These themes were derived from historical understandings about intervallic relationships. Historically, intervals with simpler ratios have been understood to reflect universal harmony and goodness[18] while intervals with more complex ratios reflect more pernicious concepts.[19] Even now, when equal temperament makes such distinctions less relevant, composers continue to harness this historical association, using more pure intervals to represent goodness and intervals such as the tritone (historically known as the devil's interval) to represent evil. I was also influenced by Sitsky who represented the "shining light" in *The Golem* with perfect fourths, fifths and a major second (Example 5.19).
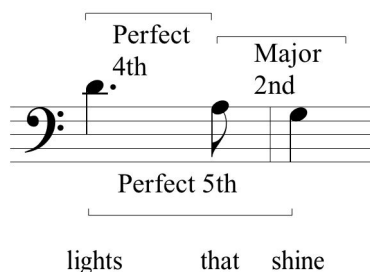
Example 5.19: "lights that shine" in *The Golem*.[20]

Conversely, he uses the tritone to represent Adam and the Golem (among other things) who, perhaps by virtue of their created nature, are always imperfect.[21] Benjamin Britten also invoked Renaissance understandings about the tritone as the "devil's interval" in his *War Requiem*.[22] As I have suggested in previous chapters, composers often enhance the audience's understanding of a particular musical motif or intervallic

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[18] McLachlan, Neil, David Marco, Maria Light, and Sarah Wilson. 2013. "Consonance and Pitch." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 142 (4): 1142.

[19] For a good discussion on this issue, see Gann, Kylie. 2015. *An Introduction to Historical Tunings.* http://www.kylegann.com/histune.html. Accessed 18 March 2015.

[20] Cited in Crispin, Judith Michelle. 2007. *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and Its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky: The Operas Doktor Faust and the Golem*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press. p. 120

[21] For more information see Judith Michelle Crispin, *The Esoteric Musical Tradition of Ferruccio Busoni and Its Reinvigoration in the Music of Larry Sitsky : The Operas Doktor Faust and the Golem* (Lewiston, N.Y. : The Edwin Mellen Press, 2007), 119.

[22] Phillips, Daniel. 2006. "Benjamin Britten's War Requiem." *Herodotus* 16: 52.

relationship by linking the motif with certain lyrics and stage actions. I adopted this strategy in *Capital 2.*

The chaos theme consists of four short phrases with prominent intervals, starting with a minor ninth (built from a major sixth and a diminished fourth), and finishing with a minor sixth and a tritone with the harmony theme built from perfect fourths, fifths and major seconds (Example 5.20). The imperfect, slightly awkward intervals of the chaos theme are intended to symbolise the contemporary era — a capital city in chaos, a city which has lost internal cohesion. Conversely, the harmony theme is designed to represent a harmonious, balanced society — a city that lives in harmony with the landscape. The interaction of these two themes at the opening of the opera is demonstrated in Example 5.20. The descending scale passage between the two themes is intended to mark the transition back in time. The scale is deliberately ambiguous, initially resembling a descending Aeolian mode but then unexpectedly introducing a raised fourth and major third.

Example 5.20: Fiona Fraser. C*apital 2*. Scene 1, bars 1–16.

The chaos theme and the harmony themes frequently interact and compete with each other during the course of the opera, revealing the core conflict of the opera as each theme strives for supremacy. At the beginning, most of the music is based on the harmony theme, but the chaotic theme emerges briefly at key points in the first scene to

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anticipate problems ahead. The opening ragtime theme is constructed from perfect fourths and fifths (Example 5.21).

Example 5.21: Fiona Fraser. C*apital 2*. Scene 1, bars 37–42.

During the course of Scene 1, (an abridged version of this scene is provided on track 1 of the CD inserted in the *Capital 2* score), as Walter and Marion become excited by the possibilities of their plan for Canberra, they are directed to dance the Grizzly Bear dance of the ragtime era.[23] As discussed in Chapter 3, recent cognitive science studies suggest that dancing invites audience participation by way of mirror neurons. Through their dance, I wanted the audience to feel some of the physical energy being generated by the Griffins' creativity.

Ragtime proved to be a highly flexible medium to work with, as most ragtime composers took great liberties with their harmonies, adding unexpected modulations and melodic enhancements. At times, I exaggerated these characteristics to promote dramatic tension. As Walter and Marion finalise their plans in the last frantic rush to get their entry in on time, a rising set of arpeggios with added chromatic notes is intended to create the impression of the creative frenzy that engulfs them at that point (Example 5.22).

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[23] For information on animal dances see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMyEnTZP0yI. Accessed 23 October, 2010.

Example 5.22: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. **Scene 1, bars 252–256.**

The use of open fourths and fifths allows an easy transition to other forms of music such as gospel music and American hymnody, which is also frequently based on these intervals. At one point, I even suggest a hint of native-American music through the use of repeated open fifths and a simple drum beat when Walter fondly refers to Marion as his "Apache" (Example 5.23).

Example 5.23: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. **Scene 1, bars 43–47.**

At the climax of Scene 1, Walter gives a good imitation of a traditional Irish tenor as he sings to his "Irish banshee" about his vision to use a triangular design to represent a city in harmony with its landscape (Example 5.24). He does this through a rising sequence of perfect fifths. Marion responds, mirroring Walter's excitement, but, in a foreshadowing of what is to come, the balanced intervals of the perfect fifth morph into the chaos theme, with a minor sixth and a tritone on the word "strangulate". The

contrast between the two themes at this point mark them as polar opposites and cement the meaning of each of the themes for the audience.

Example 5.24: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. Scene 1, bars 217–224.

At the end of Scene 1, the Griffins briefly celebrate their competition win, but immediately take a step into the future and morosely start reflecting on how their vision "came undone". This is expressed by a descending tritone and minor sixth extracted from the chaos theme (the last three notes of the theme reversed)(Example 5.25) leading into the next scene which introduces the Minister and his sordid plans both for Bon-Bon and the national capital.

Example 5.25: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. Scene 1, bars 260–270.

Less harmonious intervals dominate in Scene 2, which opens with the Minister's first aria, in which he reveals his dishonourable intentions towards Bon-Bon. The aria is underpinned with a repeated two-bar staccato ground bass figure which begins with a minor sixth and ends with a tritone (Example 5.26). It also includes a major seventh and minor second which recur throughout this scene to symbolise the Minister's lustful instincts. This bass figure was designed in imitation of silent movie melodrama conventions, where similar musical tropes are used to identify the villain. Such figures continue to have popular currency because of their use in cartoons and computer games.[24]

The Minister's aria begins with an invented two octave non-diatonic scale pattern played in the woodwinds over the repeated bass-line (Example 5.26). This is intended to suggest a move forward in time to the contemporary period, and is an example of where I ventured away from normal tonal procedures while maintaining an element of predictability by way of the repeated villain theme in the bass. This was designed to ensure the audience retains a meaningful musical marker.

Example 5.26: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. Scene 2, Bars 1-5.

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[24] See discussion regarding "The Sneaking Theme/The Villain Theme" at
http://www.toplessrobot.com/2012/10/the_10_most_common_music_cues_in_nerd-dom.php. Accessed 14 June 2015.

As the aria continues, the sexually suggestive nature of the minor second and major seventh is repeatedly emphasised as these intervals are sung as the Minister composes a risqué text message (Example 5.27) to Bon-Bon.

Example 5:27: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. **Scene 2, bars 48–56.**

In doing this I was influenced by Mozart's use of the minor second in the accompaniment to Osmin's aria, *Hal wie will ich triumphieren* (Example 5.28) to underpin a villain role. In the following excerpt, the flutes and violins perform a tremolo figure between G sharp and A. The G sharp is played on the quaver beat, directly clashing with the A and F sharp played in the oboe and viola.

Example 5:28: W.A. Mozart. *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. **No. 19:** *Hal wie will ich triumphieren*, **bars 4–6 (reduced orchestration).**

During the course of the Minister's opening aria in Scene 2, tension is increased by added chromaticism and cross-rhythms. The comic effect is enhanced as the Minister moves between his counter-tenor baritone ranges throughout the aria. As the aria rises to its orgasmic climax, repeated semi-quaver patterns with clashing minor seconds (similar to those used in Osmin's aria quote in Example 5.28) create cross-rhythms as the pitch rises in the upper voices of the accompaniment (Example 5.29).

Example 5.29: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. Scene 2, bars 70–74.

The relationship between music and sexual climax has, since Susan McClary's monumental work *Feminine Endings,* been much debated. The rising pitch and implied accelerando of the altered accents uses the musical sexual stereotype identified by McClary.[25] My aim here was to make an overt reference to the relation between music and sexual performance to make it a matter for discussion and/or derision, rather than covert manipulation of the audience.

At the conclusion of this aria, the scene moves to the office where the Minister and Bon-Bon are working late into the night. Bon-Bon's theme, reflecting her name, is a

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[25] McClary, Susan. 2002. *Feminine Endings: Music, gender, and sexuality*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 113.

theme of goodness based on perfect fourths and fifths and major seconds similar to the Griffin theme (Example 5.30).

Example 5.30: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. Scene 2, bars 86–89.

My intention here was to express an innate goodness in Bon-Bon's character that becomes corrupted by her association with the Minister.

Bon-Bon's theme is accompanied by eighteenth century counterpoint in the style of Handel or Bach, which continues as she and the Minister discuss official matters of state (Example 5.31). Like Andriessen (as discussed in Chapter 4), I used several contrapuntal techniques, including canon, inversion and augmentation, and fast-paced semiquaver figuration. The association is emphasised by the use of the harpsichord setting on the keyboard, as the harpsichord has an association with music of this period.

Example 5.31: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. Scene 2, bars 191–196.

The symbols of high culture are here used to symbolise the rational intellectual systems of high political office and the bureaucracy. However, there are frequent interjections of a more sexually risqué style of music which are designed to demonstrate the ongoing designs of the Minister. Similarly, Bon-Bon's efficiency wanes as she becomes distracted by her general feelings of dissatisfaction with life, her concerns about her relationship with Moose, and whether or not to have children. To express these concerns, she sings in a more passionate, romantic style loosely based on lyric romantic opera arias such as those by Puccini (Example 5.32). An excerpt from this scene demonstrating some of Bon-Bon's exchanges with the Minister and her musical asides as she ponders her personal problems is provided on track 2 of the CD included in the *Capital 2* score.

Example 5.32: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. Scene 2, bars 209–217.

This scene ends with the Minister finally revealing his true character as he outlines his mad plans for Canberra in a final aria. The fast-paced semiquaver figuration, previously used to imitate the baroque keyboard style of Handel and Bach, now becomes part of a frenetic, frenzied heavy metal song (an excerpt is provided on track 3 of the CD inserted in the *Capital 2* score). During the course of this song, Bon-Bon, who had previously been dubious about the Minister's plans, becomes caught up by the hysteria and joins in the song. She and the Minister dance, and Bon-Bon is now lost to Moose. The chorus of the song — "rejuvenate, revitalise/this Capital/from bedrock, to the sky" — is sung to the chaos theme in an ironic way that is now meant to demonstrate the falsity of the words being sung by the Minister (Example 5.33).

Example 5.33: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. Scene 2, bars 209–217.

Using the counter-tenor voice to sing a rock song was intended to parody the use of falsetto by rock singers, as well as creating a sense of disjunction that allows the audience to judge the situation objectively.

This concluding aria in Scene 2 is intended as a critique of the way both music and political spin (both separately and together) are used to promote an emotional rather than a rational response from the general public. I also wish to critique the lack of rationality in many government decisions and the way politicians manipulate public opinion to avoid adequate political scrutiny. Whitley claims that parody subverts the pretentiousness of a system by taking it to its illogical extremes and revealing its limitations, enabling commentary that uses the "very modes and techniques of that system".[26] In the Minister's aria, the audience is invited to enjoy the music, but remain conscious that they can be distant from it, and so not succumb to the same fate as Bon-Bon. In this way, I hope that, like Weill in *Mahagonny*, I have been able to create music

[26] Whitley, Ed. 1999. "The Postmodern White Album." In *The Beatles, Popular Music and Society: A thousand voices*, edited by Ian Inglis. Basingstoke: Macmillan. pp. 113–114.

that engages the senses while continuing to encourage critical reflection on the nature of the manipulation being experienced.

Scene 3 commences with a quite discordant section which some audience members might find challenging. However, there is a strong dramatic reason for this. It is intended to express the discordant nature of Bon-Bon and Moose's relationship. Taruskin has suggested that atonal music, while generally not appealing to audiences, has been successfully used in film music as "a metaphor for physical or psychological abnormality" or to symbolise stress, aberration or horror.[27] Similarly, discordant music is often used to symbolise relationship breakdowns. Like the Minister's opening aria in the previous scene, Bon-Bon's solo opens with a major seventh. Elements of the chaos theme emerge throughout this section. For instance, the accompanying arpeggio figure frequently uses the intervals of a minor sixth and the tritone which concludes the chaos theme (see Example 5.33). In Example 5.34, the solo clarinet plays a downwards descending scale. The small gesture of a descending scale passage is used here and in other places in the opera to provide commentary that expresses sadness about the deteriorating state of affairs — in this instance, their relationship.

Example 5.34: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. Scene 3, bars 7–13.

Relief is provided by a more diatonic middle section which is intended to sound slightly folky as the couple discuss their memories of their early love. The folk element is created through an arpeggiated guitar accompaniment. The asymmetrical 5/8 rhythm provides an element of non-conformity, intended to suggest a freedom from

[27] Taruskin, Richard. 2010. *Music in the Early Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 520.

standard forms and structures. In keeping with the themes expressed in this section, there is a return to the more consonant harmonies of the perfect fourth and fifth that I have previously associated with goodness (Example 5.35). The descending scale continues in this section, connecting the two sections together as a commentary on the deteriorating state of their relationship.

Example 5.35: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. Scene 3, bars 182-187.

In Scene 4, the Griffins emerge in the modern time period and the various musical styles are juxtaposed and layered against each other as the fight to save Canberra (and Moose and Bon-Bon's relationship) escalates. The scene begins with Moose's aria, in which he tells of his dreams for a national broadband network and his fall from grace as the project was shelved. He describes his current preoccupation with medieval gaming as an escape from the real world. As in *Capital 1,* I have used a traditional ground-bass format in a dance-like triple metre to capture the melancholy nature of his character and his retreat into a fantasy world. I have also again added dissonant notes such as tritones, minor and major sevenths, and major seconds, separating the dissonant notes by several octaves (Example 5.36). This is intended to soften the dissonance so that audience members can better engage with the aria, while maintaining a sense of unease.

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Example 5.36: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. **Scene 4, bars 13–21.**

As Scene 4 continues, the dissonant intervals of the chaos theme and the more consonant intervals of the Griffins vie for supremacy. Towards the end of Moose's aria, as he enthuses about his vision for the national broadband network, and anticipating the imminent entry of the Griffins into the twenty-first century, I reintroduced the harmonious intervals of the Griffin theme, with perfect fourths and fifths and major seconds piled on top of one another (Example 5.37).

Example 5.37: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. **Scene 4, bars 162–171.**

However, Moose was ultimately unable to implement his vision, and so the phrase ends with the minor sixth and tritone of the chaos theme. As he begins to despair, the Griffins arrive on the scene to offer renewed hope for the future.

With the entry of the Griffins, the ragtime music is reintroduced and layered over the medieval music while Moose sings about how his ambitions were destroyed by bureaucratic bungling. Marion sings about how Walter turned to King O'Malley when

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bureaucrats tried to thwart his ambitions for Canberra. At this point I introduce King O'Malley's tag-line derived from the chorus for his main aria as he sings "keep your hair on". This is played by the bass clarinet, foreshadowing his imminent entry and performance of this song (Example 5.8). Each layer is set within a different register, creating a pitch separation between them.

Example 5.38: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. Scene 4, bars 231–319.

King O'Malley enters, promising to resolve the bureaucratic problems with a light-hearted satirical folk-like song in triple metre. This is loosely based on the Purcell drinking chorus, "Your hay it is Mow'd, and your Corn is Reap'd", from *King Arthur*, with Marion, Walter and Moose joining in the chorus. Like the Purcell, the song is designed as a simple song that people might sing along with. The cast join in on the repeated refrain "the Minister of keep your hair on" (Example 5.39).

Marion

Walter

Moose

King O'Malley
5. When gov-ern - ments are lost or hobb - ling   you'll find in me no jerr - y

Clarinet in B♭

Keyboard

Mn

W

Mse

K.O.
wobb - ling.   My clerks don't quail when there's a scare on   The Min-is-try

B♭ Cl.

Kbd.

Example 5.39: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. Scene 4, bars 422–437.

As mentioned earlier, most of the music in *Capital 2* is diatonically based, although elements of polytonality arise as different styles interact and change over time. Like

Adams and Weill, I typically used stepwise voice-leading procedures that enable me to freely move between keys or to be simultaneously across several different keys while sounding basically diatonic. In Example 5.40, Moose responds to the arrival of the Griffins with a reprisal of his lament.

Example 5.40: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. **Scene 4, bars 566–577.**

While the ground bass in G minor remains, chromaticisms are introduced in other parts moving in thirds to create an "other worldly" effect reminiscent of movie or TV music from the 1950s and 1960s that depicts paranormal events. The effect of being "out of time" is enhanced by the polyrhythm of 7/8 (marked by accents) against 3/4.

When layering different styles, I learnt much from Adams and Ives and their method of foregrounding different stylistic material depending on the dramatic context. In *Capital 2,* different stylistic elements often merge in and out of a composite texture to underpin the action on stage. In scene 4 the harmony and chaos themes move in and out of focus often merging together. For instance, with the Griffins and King O'Malley now in contemporary Canberra, the music of the early-twentieth century comes into

direct contact, and sometimes conflict, with the music of the twenty-first century. Their music becomes infected by the contemporary chaos theme. Although in ragtime style, the clarinet riff in Example 5.41 uses the minor sixth and tritone, rather than more harmonious intervals of the rag-time era. In addition, the descending scale passages (see boxed areas) are in parallel major sevenths rather than parallel octaves.

Example 5.41: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. Scene 4, bars 501–509.

This approach is not dissimilar to that taken by Andriessen in *Writing to Vermeer*, as discussed in Chapter 4, where the musical structure is built around two competing styles of music: the archaic musical form in the style of Vermeer, and more discordant and noisy "eruptions" as chaos and crisis impinges on the domestic bliss of the Vermeer household. As the opera progresses, the archaic style is increasingly altered and corrupted. Similarly, in *Capital 2,* early-twentieth century music and early-twenty-first century music likewise clash together. A utopian past is remembered by reference to the medieval and baroque style music and the ragtime music of the Griffins. However, this music becomes corrupted when infected by the modern era. Ultimately, the solution is not found in looking back to a utopian past, and as the opera progresses it becomes increasingly difficult for the characters to take refuge in the past era to which the music refers.

I was aware that as the music becomes more complex in this scene, I needed to give the audience some familiar reference points. To enhance the audience's familiarity with the

music, as mentioned above, with a metrical libretto I was able to reprise certain elements of the score effectively. For instance, at the climax of Scene 4, Bon-Bon arrives and announces that she is going to leave Moose (Example 5.42). This leads to indignant interjections from King O'Malley and a further reprisal of the chorus of his song, with Bon-Bon joining in and somewhat hysterically getting stuck on the high note to a baroque-style accompaniment played so quickly it should sound quite silly.

Example 5.42: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. Scene 4, bars 665–675.

Moose responds at bar 676 with a reprisal of the love duet previously sung with Bon-Bon in Scene 3 as they remembered better days, as the descending scales again reference the sad state of their relationship. At the end of this solo he and Bon-Bon have a further exchange, agreeing that they are out of touch with each other, or, in the more poetic language of the libretto, "out of time". Moose, the hero of the piece, sings these words using a perfect fourth and fifth used to represent harmony, while Bon-Bon sings these words with the tritone and minor sixth of the chaos theme, suggesting that it is she who has become infected by the chaotic world around her, while Moose remains faithful to the original ideals of the Griffins (Example 5.43). The reprisal of these elements allow the audience to retain some sense of familiarity even while the music becomes corrupted and transformed.

Example 5.43: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. Scene 4, bars 757–763.

Scene 5 marks a change of pace as King O'Malley and the Griffins conspire to bring about a return to the harmonious relationships exemplified in their vision for Canberra. King O'Malley, a lay preacher, gives a sermon-like speech which I notate as *Sprechstimme* not to try to hide the fact that he is singing, but to emphasis the sense that he is preaching by using a more declamatory style of singing. Sparsely spaced chords based on perfect fifths, fourths and major seconds (sometimes in inversion) are intended to provide a return to the Griffin era in a slightly recontextualised other-worldly environment. The "keep your hair on" theme plays *sotto voce,* creating a link with King O'Malley's previous solo (Example 5.44).

Example 5.44: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. Scene 5, bars 1–11.

King O'Malley finds it hard to maintain the preaching role and slips into a more clownish attitude as he provides commentary on his own commentary. The Griffins respond devotedly, agreeing with everything O'Malley says, singing a chorus sung in the style of an American revival hymn. Like the Minister's aria in which he brainwashes Bon-Bon into agreeing with his plans to rejuvenate Canberra, here I provide a light-hearted musical commentary on the ways in which music can be used as a form of manipulation, although now in a religious context. This music also recalls the allusions to American hymnody made in Scene 1 (Example 5.45).

Example 5.45: Fiona Fraser. *Capital 2*. Scene 5, bars 82–103.

With King O'Malley and the Griffins resolved to work their magic, the focus shifts to our contemporary couple. In a final effort to rescue his wife from the Minister's clutches, Moose climbs to her office window using his window cleaning equipment and sings to Bon-Bon of his love. At first she doesn't see him, although she has begun to regret her earlier outburst. This duet is loosely based on *Pur ti Miro,* the concluding duet from Monteverdi's opera *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* (quoted in Example 5.46) which is built on a series of repeated suspensions (marked in the example with an S) and resolutions (marked with an R).

Example 5.46: Di Claudio Monteverdi. *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*. Act 3, *Nel Vittoriale degli Italiani*, bars 778–787.

This allusion might not be immediately apparent, even to those familiar with Monteverdi's opera, as it is not directly quoted until the end of the duet, when some hope of reconciliation between Bon-Bon and Moose finally emerges. Like Andriessen (see Chapter 4), I have used the Ivesian "cumulative"[28] technique in which the quoted source is not made apparent until the end of the piece. In Bon-Bon and Moose's duet, I try to build tension continually through a series of exaggerated suspensions, emulating the approach taken in *Pur ti Miro* (although using different harmonies). Finally, as Moose and Bon-Bon decide to try to resolve their difficulties, one last agonising suspension is finally resolved and the duet concludes with a full statement (slightly altered to fit the words) of the opening theme from *Pur ti Miro* (Example 5.47). At this point, the reference to the Monteverdi duet becomes more overt and they start singing in harmony, eventually merging together into unison at the end of the duet.

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[28] Burkholder, J. Peter. 1995. *All Made of Tunes: Charles Ives and the uses of musical borrowing*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. p. 137.

Example 5.47: Fiona Fraser. *Capital* 2. Scene 5, bars 278–295.

The reason I used *Pur ti Miro* as a model, while recognising that it would probably not be familiar to many in the audience, was that I felt that its repeated suspensions graphically communicated the ongoing tension and pain inherent in any relationship. This is an example in which the inherent qualities of the music speak on their own terms to an audience familiar with the tension and release approach taken in western harmony. I also used the downward stepwise movement of the ground bass in *Pur ti Miro* (Example 5.48).

Example 5.48: Fiona Fraser. *Capital* 2. Scene 5, bars 267–276.

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However, this is extended beyond the four note phrase used in the Monteverdi duet, consistent with my previous use of descending scale patterns to express deteriorating circumstances discussed previously (see Example 5.41).

As new hope emerges for Bon-Bon and Moose, the scales begin to ascend (Example 5.49). These are very simple gestures which, in their dramatic context, provide musical commentary on the state of their relationship.

Example 5.49: Fiona Fraser. *Capital* 2. Scene 5, bars 260–267.

Scene 6 commences with a restatement of the chaos theme and a reprisal of the Minister's frenetic heavy metal aria from Scene 2. Walter contemplates the disaster waiting for Canberra should the Minister's plans be successful and expresses regret that his proposal to create the "Capitol" as Canberra's crowning glory on Capital Hill was unsuccessful. Walter's aria is based on the opening of the chaos theme. However, unlike the opening, the minor sixth followed by a major third resolves downward instead of moving upward, and is set within a more folk-like context with an arpeggiated guitar accompaniment (Example 5.50).

Example 5.50: Fiona Fraser. *Capital* **2. Scene 6, bars 150–158.**

During the course of this scene, Bon-Bon, Moose, the Griffins and King O'Malley are able to join forces to discredit the Minister. Walter's unrealised "Capitol" can now be realised as a virtual community where those in power must finally bow to the democratically realised visions of the community through the reinstatement of Moose's idealistic (and deliberately unstated) plan. I chose to bring my opera to a happy conclusion, like most *opera buffa,* improbably resolving the difficulties so that both the good and bad get their just desserts while our estranged couple are happily reunited, having resolved some of the dilemmas in their relationship, their respective careers, and regarding whether or not to have children. As they gain the upper hand, the chaos

theme is resolved and transformed, and the two key thematic polarities come together in a moment of resolution, with King O'Malley and the Griffins playing their trump card as guardians of history as perfect fifths, perfect fourths and major seconds prevail (Example 5.51).

Example 5.51: Fiona Fraser. *Capital* **2. Scene 6, bars 256–272.**

Twentieth century and twenty-first century composers have often had an ambivalent attitude towards providing a happy ending. Brecht and Weill did sometimes oblige with happy endings, although often with a sting in the tail. Adams and Andriessen preferred to leave their endings more ambiguous. I would argue that in a parodic

context, the happy ending does not necessarily contradict any of the unsettling, denaturalising aspects of the opera. It is a utopian moment that invites the audience to have a small taste of an alternate world. Its very unreality marks it as a fiction that is far removed from the real world.

In the tradition of most of the operas discussed in previous chapters, both versions of *Capital* incorporate a chorale, involving the entire cast, within the finale. This, for me, suggests the coming together of the community and symbolically involves the audience who, in a church setting, would be expected to join in singing a hymn. The chorale sits between verses of a reprisal of Walter's earlier aria with each character singing of their hopes for a true democracy in which each can share their views through Moose's virtual network. The ascending scale of the clarinet part suggests this new, forward-looking outlook. This is also emphasised in the movement of time through the opera, which starts in the middle of a Canberra winter and concludes with the first signs of spring (Example 5.52).

Example 5.52: Fiona Fraser. *Capital* **2. Scene 6, bars 602–620.**

Curtain calls take place with a final reprisal of the Minister's "Rejuvenate" aria from

Scene 2, now in a major key with a new chorus derived from the harmony theme. Here

the final fate of each of the characters is revealed in Shakespearian style, with a final request for the audience to clap their hands.

Ideally, *Capital 2* should undergo a workshop experience similar to that of *Capital 1.* I have been seeking funding to present the latest version of the work to the community to assess accessibility and relevance for a general audience. Unfortunately, my efforts to obtain funding achieve this have been unsuccessful to date.

Conclusion

By bringing together a unique blend of different styles and adapting the techniques of *opera buffa,* Weill, Bernstein, Sitsky, Adams, and Andriessen to meet my own compositional goals, I have been able to compose an original opera, described here as *Capital 2.* This work has been significantly influenced by the practice based research I undertook by way of the *Capital 1* workshop at the Canberra Street Theatre in September 2009, as well as my own theoretical and historical research.

As a result of the feedback I received from the *Capital 1* workshop, I incorporated more popular music references in *Capital 2* and tried to simplify my compositional approach in a bid to make the work more accessible for a broad audience and to make it more economical to stage. This feedback provided significant insights into writing an opera that might engage a broad based audience, while ensuring that my approach was not completely theoretical.

However, my research has also played an important role in the composition of this work. Some elements of *Capital* are clearly reminiscent of *opera buffa*, particularly the use of the metaphorical kidnap/rescue theme, the happy ending, the use of the concept of the "rage aria" and the *buffa bass* character. The eclectic mix of orchestral and electric instruments in the accompanying band is reminiscent of Andriessen, as is the use of rock music. To Sitsky, I am indebted for the idea of encoding different musical motifs to represent non-musical symbols — in my case, the chaos and harmony themes. Like Andriessen, I juxtapose these different themes throughout the course of the opera to provide the main narrative framework for the work. Like Sitsky, Weill, Andriessen, and Adams, I have incorporated musical references that will be understood and relevant for my audience, and have created a musical narrative through the

juxtaposition and interaction of different stylistic elements. Such juxtapositions are often emphasised by the polyrhythmic and polytonal sections which occur as part of the layering process. As in Adams' operas, different layers move between foreground and background and become merged together, depending on the dramatic needs of the work. Harmony and voice-leading procedures are similar to the approaches used by Weill, Adams and Andriessen. While the different compositional styles and techniques present in *Capital 2* have precedents in the influences I have discussed, their synthesis in this new work, in combination with the engagement with local issues, results in a unique work which stands as an original contribution to opera in Australia.

Conclusion: Creating discourse through diversity

Capital is an opera that seeks community engagement and interaction by incorporating musical references that are meaningful and accessible for the audience. Writing this opera has been a long process of investigation and discovery that has taken me back to the early days of sixteenth century Italian opera. I have explored different perspectives on the role and function of music, focusing on music as entertainment, as a source of enlightenment, and music which performs specific social functions. I have traced how, during the course of the nineteenth century, the autonomous, structurally unified, original musical work came to be valued over more heterogeneous approaches which have a capacity to communicate meaning through interaction with other art forms. The more privileged autonomous forms of music defined as classical music gradually became increasingly removed from everyday life. Interest in classical music in many western countries is now largely focused on an established canon of historical works rather than new music, and its practice is contained within the sheltered and increasingly exclusive realm of the concert hall and the opera house. At the same time, popular forms of music have become increasingly reliant on achieving commercial success in a highly competitive marketplace. In this environment, music that seeks to play a more functional role in promoting community engagement and participating in contemporary discourses has become less commonplace. Such changes were

foreshadowed by Adorno in his early-twentieth century analysis of the development of the music marketplace.[1]

It is not easy for composers today to break free of the paradigm that maintains the existing divide between classical and popular musical styles. The usual choice is relative isolation within the musical establishment, or to enter the popular music market aiming for commercial success. Adorno asserted that it was virtually impossible for a composer to find a third alternative, and warned against engaging with popular music, claiming composers would find it difficult to resist commercial influences.[2] However, he did allow a possible exception in the case of operas which might critically engage an audience through the lens of an imaginary or fantastical world.[3] He admired the "montage" technique, used by Kurt Weill in his early operas, for revealing the fragmented and illusionary nature of society.[4] Later theorists such as Linda Hutcheon have been less concerned with the potentially polluting effect of popular culture which was condemned by Adorno.[5] She detailed the ways in which many artists are able to work within existing cultural paradigms while providing a counter-narrative that questions these paradigms through parody.[6] This provided another framework for understanding the parodic work of Weill and the tradition he sought to emulate and influence through his work. Such works offer resistance to the market forces which

[1] Adorno, Theodor W. 1978. "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening." In *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, edited by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt. New York: Urizen Books. pp. 270–299.

[2] Adorno, Theodor W. 2002. "On the Social Situation of Music." In *Essays on Music*, edited by Richard D. Leppert and Susan H. Gillespie. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 397.

[3] Adorno, Theodor W. 1993. "Bourgeois Opera." In *Opera through Other Eyes*, edited by David J. Levin. Stanford: Stanford University Press. p. 29.

[4] Adorno, Theodor W. 2009. "Mahagonny." In *Night Music: Essays on music 1928–1962*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Wieland Hoban. London: Seagull Books. p. 197.

[5] Adorno, Theodor W. 2002. "On Jazz." In *Essays on Music*, edited by Richard D. Leppert and Susan H. Gillespie. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 470–495.

[6] Hutcheon, Linda. 1985. *A Theory of Parody: The teachings of twentieth-century art forms*. New York: Methuen.

arbitrarily separate different musical styles and segment audiences in accord with criteria that take little account of music's social utility or community engagement.

Opera buffa was a multi-media, heterogeneous, polystylistic art form which attracted a broad-based audience throughout the latter part of the eighteenth century and early part of the nineteenth century, despite the rising status of instrumental music. *Opera buffa* often engaged with contemporary issues and provided an important outlet for discussion and debate on a range of issues affecting community life in the evolving urban world. As the genre developed, composers became increasingly skilled at juxtaposing different musical styles and creating a discrete musical commentary. In the process, the musical score realised the inherent parodic potential of these works. Such works differed significantly from *opera seria*, which primarily sought to celebrate the authority of the local ruler. In contrast, *opera buffa* encouraged the audience to observe the unfolding events on stage from multiple viewpoints. This placed the focus on the overall interaction of the on-stage singers and their various motivations. Rather than investing their emotional energy in supporting a single protagonist, an *opera buffa* audience might enjoy convoluted story-lines and unexpected plot twists that placed into question underlying assumptions about who should win and who should lose. Such multi-voiced works align with the parodic model developed by Hutcheon, and stand within the tradition of the dialogic novel admired by Bakhtin.[7]

However, over the course of the nineteenth century such "light" operas, or operettas as they came to be called, were swept to one side in the wake of Wagner's dramatic reorientation of the nature of opera. His concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* gave primacy to the authorial voice of the composer who, in Wagner's view, should ensure that all aspects of an opera conformed to a single unifying vision. He aimed to raise opera to an

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[7] Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1995. "Heteroglossia in the Novel." In *Bakhtinian Thought: An introductory reader*, edited by Simon Dentith. London: Routledge. pp. 195–224.

elevated status, at least equal to that of the symphony, transporting the listener beyond the limited confines of this world to reveal greater existential truths. Such an approach sought to reduce the impact of heterogeneous elements which, from a spiritual perspective, might be considered extraneous. However, this may have also had the unintended effect of limiting the ability of the composer to communicate incongruities and differences of perspective to their audience.

While Wagner's operatic aspirations have had a huge influence on the subsequent development of opera, there has always been a group of composers who have actively embraced opera as a heterogeneous mix of art forms that is ultimately grounded in the hopes and aspirations of contemporary life. This counter-tradition, as promoted by Ferrucio Busoni, is apparent in the works of Leonard Bernstein, Kurt Weill, Larry Sitsky, Louis Andriessen, and John Adams. The works of these composers often hark back to the *opera buffa* tradition as exemplified in Mozart. Abrogating a need to conform to a single unifying vision, they delighted in re-embracing the multi-perspective framework of the number opera by having several discrete, self-contained scenes, often incorporating stand-alone songs. Like Mozart, they incorporated a range of different musical references and encoded their own musical motifs in ways that meaningfully engage and communicate with their audience. While their work was produced in diverse cultural, economic and political circumstances and drew on very different musical vocabularies, meeting different audience needs and expectations, these composers shared many similarities in their approach to opera writing.

Each of these composers typically incorporated a range of different stylistic elements, often building on techniques pioneered by Stravinsky and Ives. During the course of each work, as the different stylistic elements interact they create an overarching musical narrative within which they could frame their work. This creates a sense of musical coherence within which multiple perspectives might be expressed. Their approach is capable of both delighting and challenging the audience, giving them an active role in interpreting the on stage action as they interrogate their own musical memories during the course of the opera. By actively engaging with different voices and resisting a desire

to ensure conformity to a single unifying vision, different perspectives emerge which enable an audience to interpret their works in a variety of ways.

In the process of writing their operas, Weill, Bernstein and Andriessen have also actively sought to reinvent the role of the composer. Rather than insisting on music's isolation as an autonomous, sacred artefact that must be listened to in respectful silence in a darkened hall devoted to this purpose, they have often written for performances in venues other than the concert hall, particularly the theatre. Their music is more than a mere synthesis of popular and classical musical styles that redefines the boundaries between what might be classed as classical and what might be classed as popular music. Rather, they seek to challenge the long-standing paradigm that separates classical and popular music on a hierarchical basis, accepting that both popular and classical traditions might be legitimate sources for music which seeks to play a functional role in contemporary discourses. Typically, they use both classical and popular music sources and write in both classical and popular idioms, without privileging either.

During the course of this exegesis, I have argued that, like the novelist, the opera composer is able to allow space for a range of different voices, refracting or amplifying them in accord with their own preoccupations and prejudices. Polystylism is a highly flexible tool for this purpose, allowing for innovation and invention. By choosing different styles and different stylistic combinations, virtually endless variation is possible. The overt emulation of different styles and genres immediately brings traditional notions about the autonomy of high art into question. It is also possible to bring the audience into dialogue with the artist as they actively interpret the work drawing on their own listening experiences.

While *Capital 2* exhibits many of the compositional techniques used by Weill, Bernstein, Sitsky, Adams and Andriessen, it is nonetheless stands alone as an original creative work. It includes a unique blend of styles spanning several centuries, including ragtime, music hall, jazz, American hymnody, rock and roll, eighteenth century counterpoint, folk song, Puccini opera, protestant chorale, and a Monteverdi ground-bass. Typically, I make allusions to these styles by imitating style characteristics such as

rhythm, harmony or melodic shape, rather than consciously quoting pre-existing music. I often layer the styles as foreground or background components so that I can easily cut between styles, and juxtapose and incorporate competing voices into my musical commentary. While I hope that the audience will retain a familiar reference point, I also hope that at times they experience a sense of disjunction during the course of the work which might give them pause for reflection. I often emphasise such disjunctions through the polyrhythms and poly-tonal sections that are an inevitable consequence of the layering process. This music sits within an overall musical structure which provides an overarching narrative framework. The relationship between the main musical motifs, the chaos and harmony themes, change during the course of the opera. During the opening scene there are small hints at the chaos to come. During the course of the opera, as chaos threatens to upset the harmonic balance of the city, the chaos theme becomes more prominent. Resolution is withheld until almost the end of the opera, when harmony and stability are reinstated as the plot reaches its denouement. Within this narrative framework, each character speaks with their own unique voice, often using musical styles appropriate for the character and the time period from which they speak.

The process of developing *Capital* is one of ongoing dialogue between myself and the Canberra community. In creating *Capital,* I have tried to engage more broadly with my local community, outside of the isolated sphere of the opera theatre or the concert hall, through involvement with a local theatre. Through this project, I am seeking to reinsert the composer's voice within cultural dialogues that seek to question the unquestioned, denaturalise the naturalised, and consider ways that we as a society can address the challenges ahead. The role of the composer is already central to the language of film, where it is able to engage a broad based audience. Because opera easily absorbs different styles and different mediums, like film, it has a huge potential to engage more widely with a general community, as it did in the early days of its development.

It is my hope that a stylistically diverse approach grounded in everyday concerns might, like much of the music discussed here, demonstrate music's continuing relevance to social discourse. In doing so, I hope to counter classical music's increasing

isolation and offer an alternative non-commercially oriented form of music that nevertheless attracts a broad audience. In this way, *Capital* serves as a challenge to the limiting paradigm that continues to artificially separate classical and popular musical styles.

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Chapter 5