

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: CHARMERS, COMEDIANS & CONQUERORS:
OPERATIC REPERTOIRE FOR TENOR

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Dissertation directed by: Professor Gran Wilson,
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This performance dissertation consists of a performance component, program notes supporting the performances, annotated bibliography, and a discography. The performances explore five different roles for tenor ranging from the late 18th century to the contemporary period. The purpose of this dissertation is to determine how composers define different characters through various musical and physical characteristics in their compositions. The supporting document examines 18th, 19th, and 20th-century techniques employed by composers to develop characters both musically and theatrically. The first role performed is Luigi in *Il tabarro* (1918) by Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) presented November 19-22, 2011. As part of the Art of Argento celebration, the roles of Man with Old Luggage in *Postcard From Morocco* (1971) and Bentley Drummle in *Miss Havisham's Fire* (1996) by Dominick Argento (b.1927) are performed in repertory from April 20-29, 2012. The fourth role is Monostatos in *Die Zauberflöte*

(1791) by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) performed November 16-20, 2012.

The final role of this project is the title role in Mozart's *Idomeneo* (1781) performed April 12-20, 2013. All operas are produced by the Maryland Opera Studio and presented in the Ina and Jack Kay Theatre in the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland, College Park. Archival DVD and CD recordings are available in the University of Maryland library system.

CHARMERS, COMEDIANS & CONQUERORS:
OPERATIC REPERTOIRE FOR TENOR

By

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To my parents, Bruce and Deborah Cook

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The following document is the written component supporting the doctoral dissertation performance project titled “Charmers, Comedians & Conquerors: Operatic Repertoire for Tenor.” The performances explore five different tenor roles in five operas by three separate composers performed with the Maryland Opera Studio at the University of Maryland, College Park.

To accompany the archival DVD recordings of the performances, scholarly program notes aimed to educate and guide the viewer during the exploration of this project are included. Original printed program booklets from the live performance events can be found at the end of this portfolio. The annotated bibliography lists source materials and additional references used during the research and compilation of this document.

Chapter 2: Puccini's *Il tabarro*

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) was one of the last great composers in the expansive history of Italian opera. Born into an extensive musical family in Lucca, Italy, the young Puccini received a thorough musical education and, as a young man, continued in the family tradition of playing the organ.

Today, Puccini is remembered as one of the most popular and significant Italian opera composers and his operas remain some of the most performed in the entire repertory. *La bohème* (1896), *Tosca* (1900), and *Madama Butterfly* (1904) established Puccini as an important operatic composer on the international scene and paved the way for a number of important collaborations and projects, such as *La fanciulla del West* (1910), the first world premiere presented by the Metropolitan Opera starring Enrico Caruso, Emmy Destinn and conducted by Arturo Toscanini.¹ The success of *La fanciulla del West* confirmed Puccini's popularity in America and influenced the Metropolitan Opera's decision to commission and premiere Puccini's next opera, *Il trittico* on December 14, 1918. The three operas of *Il trittico* (*Il tabarro*, *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi*) were intended by the composer to be performed together in one evening.²

As early as 1904, Puccini began planning a collection of one-act operas, each reflecting a part of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Eventually, only *Gianni Schicchi* was based on the poem, though some scholars believe the three operas of *Il trittico* correspond to the three "realms" of hell, purgatory, and paradise found in Dante's *Divine Comedy*.³ Puccini attended a performance of Didier Gold's play *La houppelande* at the Théâtre Marigny in

¹ Conrad Wilson, *Giacomo Puccini* (London, UK: Phaidon Press Limited, 1997), 165.

² *Ibid.*, 189.

³ William Berger, *Puccini Without Excuses* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2005), 235.

the autumn of 1912 on a trip to France. Puccini described the play as *Grand Guignol*, or a type of graphic, amoral horror entertainment that was popular in Paris at the time. The genre of *Grand Guignol* consisted of short plays of contrasting styles to make a single evening of theater. They normally include a violent horror piece, a sentimental piece and a comedy.⁴

Puccini's publisher Giulio Ricordi dissuaded Puccini from composing an operatic triptych for fear that they would be a box office disaster and the works would be performed separately, or worse, paired with operas by other composers, therefore reducing revenue.⁵ Since the premiere, all of Ricordi's fears regarding the performance of the operas of *Il trittico* have come true. Only after Ricordi's death in 1912 did the composer feel free to proceed with the project. The strained relationship between Puccini and his former librettist Luigi Illica delayed the project until the composer finally found a librettist willing to collaborate on a pre-existing piece.⁶ Ultimately, Giuseppe Adami, the librettist for *La rondine*, provided the libretto to *Il tabarro*. The collaboration between Adami and Puccini proved to be one of the smoothest partnerships of all of Puccini's operas. Puccini began composing *Il tabarro* in October of 1915 and completed the opera in November 1916, a remarkably quick turnaround for a composer known for painstakingly developing his operas through many revisions. By the time he completed *Il tabarro*, Puccini had still not chosen subject matter for the remaining operas in the triptych.

⁴ Andrew Davis, *Il Trittico, Turandot, and Puccini's Late Style* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 67.

⁵ Wilson, *Giacomo Puccini*, 189.

⁶ Julian Budden, "Il tabarro," in *Puccini and His Operas*, ed. Stanley Sadie (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000), 64-65.

Il tabarro (The Cloak) is the first opera of the trio and focuses on the dangerous love triangle between the old barge-owner, Michele, his young wife Giorgetta, and her lover Luigi, who works for Michele. After the death of their infant son, the marriage of Michele and Giorgetta begins to unravel alarmingly fast. Giorgetta, longing for a different, more exciting life than her monotonous life on the barge, falls for the young stevedore Luigi. Their affair is one of passion and danger, constantly avoiding the watchful eye of Michele. The lovers develop a plan to run away together after Michele has gone to sleep for the night. Giorgetta will light a match as the signal for Luigi to return to rescue her from the barge. Unfortunately, Michele does not go to sleep and decides instead to light his pipe for an evening smoke. Luigi returns only to be discovered by the enraged Michele, who ultimately kills the young man. Giorgetta returns to find Michele enveloped in his cloak, the same cloak that once protected their family and now covers the evidence of a fatal affair.

Perhaps because it is in one act, *Il tabarro* did not suffer from tedious revisions with regards to the musical structure and form of the opera. *Il tabarro* is the first Puccini opera that rejects traditional set arias in the classic Italian opera tradition.⁷ It is actually an opera made of duets. The few solo moments, Luigi's "Hai ben ragione" (You have good reason), Giorgetta's "E ben altro il mio sogno" (And my other dream), and Michele's "Nulla silenzio" (Nothing but silence) are all extensions of or premonitions of the duets they precede or follow. The few "arias" in the opera do not showcase Puccini as the lyrical tunesmith for which he is often criticized in his earlier works. Luigi's aria, "Hai ben ragione," is decidedly non-melodic. Puccini's use of stable chords in the orchestra

⁷ Leonardo Pinzauti, "Giacomo Puccini's *Trittico* and the Twentieth Century," in *The Puccini Companion*, ed. William Weaver and Simonetta Puccini (New York, NY: W.W. Northon & Company, 1994), 241.

and sustained singing in the upper register for the tenor, forces focus on the words and meaning of the aria rather than a sweeping lyric melody. There is no monologue in the original play that corresponds to Luigi's aria, Puccini insisted on adding the aria in order to call attention to the injustice and plight of the lower class worker. Although it was composed long after the *verismo* movement of the 1890s, it approached literary realism more so than any of its Italian contemporaries. *Il tabarro*, along with *La bohème*, was the closest Puccini came to writing *veristic*, or true to life opera, dealing with lower class characters struggling with jealousy, infidelity and social injustice.

The score of *Il tabarro* represents Puccini's impressionistic influences channeled through a veristic vocabulary. The three primary musical themes are often identified as the water music representing the river Seine, the music of Giorgetta and Luigi's love affair, and Michele's cloak theme. The water music opens the entire opera in a rolling 12/8 and returns throughout the piece in a number of metric variants. It suggests not only the monotony of the dreary life, but also the constant flow of time. The music of the love affair is introduced when Giorgetta describes the dance music she loves "Io capisco una musica sola: quella che fa ballare" (I understand only one music, dance music). It is later sung by both Luigi and Giorgetta in their secret meeting after Michele has left to light the lamps for the evening and develops into a passionate and straining call. The cloak theme is not introduced until very late in the opera, in the final duet between Michele and Giorgetta, and serves as a basis for Michele's final aria before he murders Luigi and wraps him in the cloak. This short motif is echoed in the orchestra and builds on the melodic material of the voice part. In addition to the recurrent thematic material in the score, Puccini vividly paints the atmosphere of life on the Seine through the use of distant

bugle calls, ship horns, organ grinders, and car horns (Puccini was an avid motorist and loved fast cars).⁸

Il tabarro and the remaining operas of *Il trittico*, usher in Puccini's mature style.

Il tabarro tells the primal story of a sordid love triangle set to the lush and complex orchestration from a masterful theatrical storyteller and has earned its place in the operatic canon.

⁸ Wilson, *Giacomo Puccini*, 131.

Chapter 3: Argento's *Postcard from Morocco* and *Miss Havisham's Fire*

Dominick Argento (b. 1927) is one of the leading American composers of opera in the 20th and 21st centuries. Born to Sicilian immigrant parents and educated at the Peabody Conservatory in the United States, Argento studied for extended periods in Italy as a recipient of the Fulbright Grant and later a Guggenheim Fellowship. He began his musical career with instrumental compositions but turned his focus to vocal music after marrying soprano Carolyn Bailey, the muse for many of his projects. Argento served on the music faculty of the University of Minnesota for many years and maintained a close association with Center Opera, now Minnesota Opera. The majority of his operas were written for that company. According to Argento, it was this association in Minneapolis that allowed his musical to career to flourish more so than had he remained on the east coast like so many of his peers.⁹

Among his notable operatic compositions is *Postcard from Morocco*, commissioned by Center Opera in 1971. Argento cut John Donahue's original libretto into strips, rearranged the lines in a different order and assigned the lines to different characters as he wished.¹⁰ *Postcard* utilized many different musical styles, including cabaret and jazz, as well as parodies of bel canto cadenzas, Viennese operetta, and Wagnerian orchestral interludes. Argento combined tonal, atonal, and twelve-tone techniques in his writing.

Postcard is an ensemble opera much like Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, in which the seven characters remain onstage for almost the entire duration of the opera. The

⁹ Dominick Argento, *Catalogue Raisonné As Memoir: A Composer's Life* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 29.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.

characters are known only by the personal possessions they carry with them, for example Lady with a Hand Mirror and Man with Old Luggage. At the end of the opera, Man with a Paint Kit is revealed to be Mr. Owen. This anonymity allows for a fluid transition between characters and scenarios as the players enact various, although temporary, characters. Just as the players transition to different characters, the music modulates and changes to accommodate the new personality of the personages on stage. Man with Old Luggage begins as a member of the ensemble, later emerging as the commentator of the puppet scene, and eventually a bullfighter in the spotlight. In the beginning of the opera, his music supplies necessary harmonic support in the ensemble sections. Later, his music evolves to represent his characters more prominent place in the dramatic structure. In the aria, “Well, I’d never buy new luggage when traveling...” one sees the timid, introspective aspect of Man with Old Luggage. He is cautious, nervous and overly aware of himself and his surroundings, especially of the other people watching him, and more importantly, watching his luggage. Following the aria, Man with Old Luggage, returns to the comfort of the supporting role for the remainder of the opera with the exception of his brief vignettes as the Operetta Singer. In his duets with Lady with a Hand Mirror, Man with Old Luggage reveals himself as a naïve, Alpine youth in the throes of first love with an equally naïve Alpine maiden. The music during the operetta duets is unabashedly lyrical, and perfectly captures the tender style of the graceful Viennese waltz.

Postcard from Morocco established Argento on the national stage and earned him a number of additional commissions, including *Miss Havisham’s Fire* with New York City Opera (1977, rev. 1996).¹¹ *Miss Havisham’s Fire* is based on Charles Dickens’

¹¹ Dominick Argento, *Catalogue Raisonné As Memoir: A Composer’s Life* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 91.

Great Expectations. The libretto by John Olon-Scrymgeour, begins where the novel ends, with the death of Miss Havisham and proceeds to examine the life of the spinster in a series of flashbacks during the inquisition into her death. The titular role was originally written as a vehicle for soprano Beverly Sills, and requires a performer in total control of her instrument, musicianship, and theatrical craft. Miss Havisham's music is incredibly difficult, incorporating twelve-tone techniques (the equal use of all twelve pitches in the chromatic scale) in addition to moments of expressive lyricism. Her music explores all ends of the vocal and emotional spectrum encompassing the entire range of the soprano voice.

Although the other roles are comparatively secondary, their music deftly depicts their station in life and relation to Miss Havisham. The music for Estella, the adopted daughter of Miss Havisham, shows a refined lyricism representing a young woman who has been raised to fill a specific function and role in society. By contrast, the music assigned to Pip, the young orphan selected by Miss Havisham to be the recipient of Estella's torment, utilizes a simplistic approach. Bentley Drummle is the wealthy young man who marries Estella only to abandon her after a fortnight. Estella and Drummle meet at the Assembly Ball, and after introductions and flirting, find a few moments alone together. In a duet accompanied by harp and saxophone, Estella and Drummle antagonize each other regarding the ridiculous nature of love. The duet is reminiscent of a Chopin nocturne or possibly one of Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte* (Songs Without Words), both popular at the time the action takes place. In a conversation with the composer after my performance, Argento revealed that he scored this duet for saxophone because the instrument was brand new to the time period of the story and would help to make

Drummler sound as insincere as possible. In Drummler's scene and aria "Come a truce... What is love but a shadow?" the composer uses jagged and angular writing paired with very high tessitura to illustrate Drummler's high status in society and his unabashed insincerity regarding his beliefs of love and life. Argento also explained to me in a backstage conversation that this aria was modeled on Tom Rakewell's "Here I Stand" from Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*. Like Rakewell, Drummler is concerned first and foremost with climbing the social ladder and remaining at the top of society no matter the cost. Argento ensures that Drummler's arrogance and pomposity remain, regardless of the individual interpretation of the performer, by writing the aria in the upper register of the tenor voice and employing coloratura passages that end with large descending leaps.

The music of Dominick Argento is a true challenge, its complex tonality and extreme vocal writing, defies classification. The composer's choices guide the performer through the complicated score. Argento creates a rich playground for the imagination of the performer. The music captures the essence and humanity of these finely etched characters. Following in the traditions of the Italian operatic masterminds that preceded him, namely Giuseppe Verdi and Giacomo Puccini, Argento composes music where all of his characters, be they noble or common, develop into fully formed veristic beings.

Chapter 4: Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) was born into a musical family and achieved international fame at an early age as a composer and virtuosic performer. He wrote his first full-length opera, *La finta semplice* (1768), when he was twelve years old. In the last decade of his life he created some of the most influential works in the entire genre including *Idomeneo*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Die Zauberflöte*.

Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (1791) tells the story of young prince Tamino and his quest to rescue Pamina, daughter of the Queen of the Night, from the sorcerer Sarastro. Papageno, the bird catcher, discovers Tamino and they encounter Three Ladies (servants to the Queen of the Night) who send Three Spirits to aid them on their mission. The Three Spirits provide Tamino and Papageno magic bells and a magic flute. When the prince and bird catcher reach Sarastro's temple, they are thwarted by Monostatos, who is Sarastro's servant and Pamina's jailor. The characters learn that Sarastro abducted Pamina in an attempt to protect her from her mother, the evil Queen, who plans to kill Sarastro. Once inside the temple, Tamino and Papageno submit to a series of initiation rites testing their allegiance. Papageno is unable to remain silent and abstain from worldly pleasures, and fails when tempted with wine by a flirtatious old lady, who is actually the lovely Papagena in disguise. Tamino and Pamina endure the trials of fire and water and prevail. Finally, the Queen and her cohorts attempt to overthrow Sarastro and raid the temple, but fail and are banished. Tamino and Pamina celebrate with the followers of Sarastro and praise virtue, courage, and wisdom.

Die Zauberflöte is an opera built on relationships. To understand *Die Zauberflöte* one must examine the various musical and dramatic relationships present in the opera. Harmonically, the overarching key of *Die Zauberflöte* is E flat major. The overture begins in E flat major with three sustained chords and the rousing final chorus closes the opera in E flat major. The key of the opera is significant because E is the third pitch in the diatonic scale and the key signature for E flat major is three flats. During the opera, numerology, and in particular the number three, plays an important part in the drama.

Mozart continues to associate the characters with specific key areas throughout the opera. Sarastro's two arias, "O Isis und Osiris" (Oh Isis and Osiris) and "In diesen heil'gen Hallen" (In these holy halls), are both in major keys (F major and E major respectively). These keys are very close to the home key of E flat major and suggest Sarastro's comments in the arias are intended to direct the listener towards the home key and their own understanding and enlightenment. The Queen of the Night's entrance aria, "O zittre nicht, mein lieber Sohn" (Oh tremble not, my dear son), is in B flat major and this is the only occasion she sings in a major key. During this aria she persuades Tamino to join her cause. B flat being the dominant of E flat, one could interpret this tonal choice as the Queen's attempt to dominate Tamino or even the entire opera. The Queen's vengeance aria, "Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen" (The fury of hell burns in my heart), is in d minor, one of the most distant keys in relation to the home key of E flat major. In her final appearance with the Three Ladies and Monostatos, c minor, the relative minor of E flat major, is used as the quintet are banished and defeated. Following the Queen's demise, the music transitions back to E flat major where the remaining characters rejoice in the triumph of goodness over evil.

Mozart also employs formal structures to establish relationships in the opera. Papageno's strophic folk songs, repeated music with different text, are melodically simple, use stepwise motion, and utilize rhythmic motives. Mozart uses these musical devices to underscore Papageno's rank as a servant. In contrast, the Queen's arias stem from the opera seria tradition of high art music and depict her royal status. Her first aria begins with a recitative, followed by a lyric cavatina that is capped off with a dazzling coloratura cabaletta. The second act rage aria has the most complex vocal music in the entire opera with chromatic coloratura and large leaps throughout the entire range of the soprano voice.

The enlightenment ideal of good versus evil is exemplified in the contrasting relationships of the male characters in the opera. Each character is clearly delineated through different vocal, musical and dramatic elements. Tamino and Monostatos are both tenors. Tamino is on a quest of discovery as he attempts to rescue Pamina from her captor. His music is melodic, lyrical and lies predominantly in the upper register. His music represents the lofty and spiritual aspects of his journey to enlightenment. Tamino's first aria, "Dies bildnis ist bezaubernd schön" (This portrait is enchantingly beautiful) is in the opera's home key of E flat major and is full of long arching phrases in the upper range for the tenor. Monostatos is intent on fulfilling his carnal desires by taking Pamina by force, and he cannot fathom why his attempts at courtship are unsuccessful. His music is motivic, declamatory, and lies predominantly in the lower register. Monostatos is an earthly being with no interest in personal enlightenment; his only interest lies in material and physical gain. His music is simple, common and repetitive. His only aria, "Alles fühlt der Liebe Freuden" (Everyone feels the joys of love), is in C major, a minor third lower

than the established home key of E flat major. The orchestration for this aria includes winds and strings, and notably a piccolo. The use of the piccolo suggests Turkish music, which was fashionable in Austria at the time due to its exotic sound, and it also reminded listeners of the superiority of Western Europe over other nations. The instrumentation and key relationship imply that Monostatos is a lesser man and cannot rise to the occasion like the other male characters of the opera. There are no harmonic variations in his aria and the declamatory patten style is reminiscent of opera buffo vocal writing.¹²

If Tamino and Monostatos are a total contrast, Papageno and Monostatos illustrate similar characters utilizing different tactics. Unlike Monostatos who schemes and double crosses only to take what he wants by force, Papageno longs for love and ultimately wins the girl with charisma and personality. Papageno and Monostatos are normal men concerned with normal pursuits and their music depicts this. Papageno and Monostatos, sing predominantly in the middle register, giving their music a speech-like quality. In contrast, Sarastro is a wise man that is confident and steadfast in his beliefs and eager to teach new initiates. Sarastro sings lower and Tamino sings higher than any other male soloist in the opera. Mozart's choice of vocal range further stratifies the male characters.

Through the use of key relationships, musical form, instrumentation, and vocal contrast, Mozart clearly delineates the rich and complex relationships found in one of his greatest operatic masterpieces, *Die Zauberflöte*.

¹² Stanley Sadie, ed. *Mozart and His Operas* (New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000), 104-106.

Chapter 5: Mozart's *Idomeneo*

Mozart is revered as one of the most prominent and prolific composers of opera. His operas have been performed all over the world and have remained popular repertory cornerstones since their premieres. In addition to their popular appeal, Mozart's operas were innovative and influential in the development of opera. Regarded as his first mature opera, *Idomeneo* (1781) represented a turning point in Mozart's theatrical compositions utilizing a combination of musical and dramatic techniques, culminating in an opera that sows the seeds for his later masterpieces, such as *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*.

In the middle of 1780, at the age of 25, Mozart was commissioned to write an opera for the Munich court's 1781 carnival season.¹³ The librettist for this project was Abbé Varesco (c.1736-1805). Varesco based his libretto on Antoine Danchet's French text *Idoménée*, which was set to music by Andre Campra in 1712.¹⁴ The original source material for *Idomeneo* is the biblical tale of Jephthah. Upon returning from war, Jephthah made a vow to God to sacrifice the first person he sees, which was his own daughter.¹⁵ Expanding upon the original biblical material, the setting of the story was updated to the end of the Trojan War, and the Greek warrior king Idomeneus served as the principal

¹³ Robin Golding, Notes "An Operatic turning-point Mozart's *Idomeneo*" (CD, The Phillips Complete Mozart Edition, London. 422 537-2. 1991), 27.

¹⁴ Stanley Sadie, Notes to "Mozart's *Idomeneo*" (CD, Deutsche Grammophon, Hamburg. 447 737-2. 1996), 11.

¹⁵ Alfred Einstein, *Mozart His Character His Work*, trans. Arthur Mendel and Nathan Broder (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), 403.

character.¹⁶ Varesco condensed Danchet's five-act French *tragédie lyrique* into a three-act Italian *opera seria* modeled on the libretti of Metastasio (1698-1782).¹⁷

Mozart's *Idomeneo* is not easily classified as either *tragédie lyrique* or *opera seria*, in his letters Mozart referred to *Idomeneo* as his "grosse Opera."¹⁸ Opera seria was a genre of stylized heroic Italian opera usually based on classical or mythological subject matter.¹⁹ In opera seria "most of the dramatic motivation is channeled into arias, assisted by only a handful of elaborately orchestrated recitatives"²⁰ with almost no ensembles and the chorus appeared perfunctorily at the beginning and end of the opera.²¹ The French *tragédie lyrique* was the predominant style of music for the stage in France and owed much of its development to the operatic reforms of Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787). Gluck believed in the dramatic possibilities of opera and felt the music should support these aims rather than merely allow the lead singers a vehicle to show off their vocal prowess. Notable among his reforms were the expanded use of the orchestra for dramatic expression, the increased use of the chorus as a character in the action, and the blurring together of arias and recitatives resulting in continual dramatic momentum. Gluck's influence is evident throughout *Idomeneo*.

A number of significant factors associated with the creation and performance of *Idomeneo* allowed Mozart to explore the new ideals championed by Gluck while fusing them with the traditional elements of opera seria. First, the orchestra of the premiere was

¹⁶ Julian Rushton, "Mozart and opera seria," in *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*, ed. Simon P. Keefe (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 148.

¹⁷ Charles Osborne, *The Complete Operas of Mozart: A Critical Guide*, (London, UK: Indigo, 1978), 150.

¹⁸ Julian Rushton, *W.A. Mozart: "Idomeneo"*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 62.

¹⁹ Golding, Notes "An Operatic turning-point Mozart's *Idomeneo*," 31.

²⁰ Rushton, "Mozart and opera seria," in *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*, 148.

²¹ Osborne, *The Complete Operas of Mozart: A Critical Guide*, 156.

the Mannheim orchestra, famous throughout Europe for their innovation, virtuosity and brilliance.²² Mozart was familiar with their playing and was confident in their ability to support the singers in the overall dramatic mission of the opera. With such accomplished players at his disposal, Mozart wrote more demanding music for the instrumentalists. *Idomeneo* marked the first time Mozart wrote for clarinet in an opera orchestra and his use of trombones in the oracle's speech is particularly menacing.²³ In addition to the orchestra, Mozart was familiar with most of the singers who were to create the roles in his new opera allowing him to compose the majority of the opera in order, with a considerable amount of work done prior to arriving for rehearsals.²⁴ The title role was written for the aging tenor Anton Raaff, a famous singer known for his vocal beauty and bravura performing style. In letters to his father, Mozart claimed he would have "composed the part of Idomeneo differently if he had been offered a different singer other than the fairly aged Anton Raaff."²⁵ Idomeneo's music tends to have a lower tessitura and requires less virtuosity, with the exception of the bravura aria "Fuor del mar" (Outside the sea).

The use and function of the chorus in *Idomeneo* clearly derives from the French tradition. In earlier opera serie, the role of the chorus was formal and had little to do with the actual action of the opera. Like Gluck, Mozart elevated the chorus to equal musical and dramatic contributors to the action. The chorus sings during the course of the opera and their music is crucial to the storytelling.

²² David Cairns, "A dramatic marvel", Notes to *Idomeneo*, (CD Phillips, London. 420 130-2. 1968), 15.

²³ Stanley Sadie ed., *Mozart and His Operas*, (New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000), 51-52.

²⁴ Sadie, Notes to "Mozart's *Idomeneo*", 14.

²⁵ Joachim Kaiser, *Who's Who in Mozart's Opera: From Alfonso to Zerlina* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1986), 103.

Perhaps the most striking reform technique evident in *Idomeneo* is the treatment of the different types of music within the opera. In an attempt to maintain momentum during the opera, Mozart blurred the boundaries of recitative, aria and ensemble.²⁶ Many of the arias do not end in the traditional “numbers opera” model, but continue with linking musical material.²⁷ For example, the motif played by the obbligato woodwind quartet at the end of Ilia’s “Se il padre perdei” (If I lost my father) is immediately taken over by the strings at the start of Idomeneo’s accompanied recitative “Qual mi conturba i sensi” (What disturbs my senses?). Mozart’s use of “motivic allusion, anticipates leitmotiv technique in its continual thematic cross-references.”²⁸ This technique heightens the dramatic importance of the recitative that aids in character development and allows for a near seamless transition from the recitative to the arias and ensembles. In addition to the new use of recitative, the significant use of ensembles in *Idomeneo* signals a drastic shift in operatic composition. The Act III quartet “Andrò ramingo e solo” (I go wandering alone) is the first quartet in the history of opera seria²⁹ and is the dramatic climax of the opera. In the quartet, Idamante resigns to wandering alone until death and Ilia assures him she will be with him always. Elettra yearns for vengeance and Idomeneo pleads for death and an absolution. Every character has a unique voice in the ensemble and the melodic material is highly developed. Eventually, all four sing of their suffering and heartache. During the ensemble, Mozart modulates to very distant key areas before returning to E flat major via a circle of fifths progression. Next he uses a string of deceptive cadences that are followed by silence from three characters, leaving only

²⁶ John Eliot Gardner, “Idomeneo: A Reappraisal”, Notes to *Idomeneo* (CD, Archiv, Hamburg. 431 674-2. 1991), 13.

²⁷ Cairns, “A dramatic marvel”, Notes to *Idomeneo*, 20.

²⁸ Rushton, “Mozart and opera seria” in *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*, 153.

²⁹ Einstein, *Mozart His Character His Work*, 406.

Idamante to restate the opening melody of the quartet. The daring choices Mozart makes in the quartet set the precedent for the ensembles, and in particular the finales, later composed for his operatic collaborations with librettist Lorenzo da Ponte (1749-1838).³⁰

In *Idomeneo*, Mozart builds upon the Italian tradition of opera seria, utilizes many of the operatic reforms associated with Gluck, and modifies the two to create an opera of musical brilliance and dramatic clarity that defies classification and demands recognition as the first mature work of one of opera's greatest masters.

³⁰ *Le nozze di Figaro, Don Giovanni and Così fan tutte.*

Chapter 6: Conclusions

The five different roles that comprise the performance component of this dissertation project offer a glimpse of the varied techniques, styles, and developments that composers of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries utilized when creating operatic roles for tenor. The operas in this project are presented earlier in this document in the order in which they were performed. For the purpose of following historical, musical, and dramatic developments, various musical elements are traced chronologically beginning with *Idomeneo* and *Die Zauberflöte* by Mozart, followed by *Il tabarro* by Puccini, and ending with *Postcard from Morocco* and *Miss Havisham's Fire* by Argento. I conclude with personal observations from my experience performing these roles.

The impact of Gluck's operatic reforms resonated throughout musical Europe and influenced many 18th-century operatic composers. The music of *Idomeneo* clearly demonstrates Mozart's understanding and support of Gluck's reforms. Mozart elevates not only the chorus, but also the orchestra, to a prominent role in both the music and drama of his opera. New instruments were added to the orchestra, particularly the trombone and clarinet, and his expanded use of the orchestra in recitative increased dramatic potential and added tonal color. The inclusion of the orchestra in recitative allowed Mozart to develop motivic phrases associated with specific characters, situations and ideas. This practice was continued during the 19th century and ushered in the leitmotiv technique often associated with the German music dramas of Richard Wagner. At the dawn of the 19th century and continued into the 20th century, the popularity of

recitative waned as the size of the orchestra increased and compositional possibilities expanded. Puccini and his contemporaries explored the *parlando* style of singing as a modernization of the older recitative style. *Parlando* is a speech-like style of declamatory singing found most often in verismo and other late romantic operas.³¹ Puccini used *parlando* during highly charged dramatic moments to ensure the clarity of the text. When writing *parlando*, Puccini frequently composed for the lower register of the voice with little melodic motion. In the 20th century, composers often looked to the music of the past for inspiration. Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) and other composers employed classical formal structures and techniques creating a renaissance for recitative. Where the veristic composers attempted to capture the guttural reality of their lower class characters through the use of *parlando*, 20th-century composers, like Argento, used overtly formal recitative to elevate their aristocratic characters. These traits helped to solidify the character as well as the dramatic context.

The use of key relationships not only unifies musical ideas throughout an opera, but also established various characters and their interpersonal relationships. Mozart's fascination with key relationships and associations developed early during his compositional career and is evident in *Idomeneo* and reached a zenith in *Die Zauberflöte*. By the time Puccini began composing, the harmonic language of Western music had been so greatly expanded that key relationships were not nearly as crucial to the dramatic clarity. Puccini understood the tonal and harmonic relationships between characters. He frequently used recurring motives, rather than established key relationships. Wagner and

³¹ Such as *Lohengrin* (1850) by Richard Wagner (1813-1883) and *Pélleas et Mélisande* (1902) by Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

then the composers of the Second Viennese School³² expanded tonality and experimented with chromatic expressionism and ultimately twelve-tone serialism. Argento and other composers of the late 20th century had a vast palette of harmonic colors at their disposal. This eliminated the need to firmly establish a key area for any length of time in contemporary operas, and composers today tend to use this device in moderation for special moments and to recall the style of the past.

As musical vocabulary developed, composers had more options when writing for the voice. Mozart's vocal writing was very formal and highly stylized. His soaring, lyrical vocal lines offer many opportunities for the singer to showcase a beautiful voice. The clarity of his musical phrases requires musicality and poise. The romantic composers of the 19th century further developed vocal writing with *bel canto*, or beautiful singing, a style that placed importance on the beauty of the voice and vocal line while demonstrating both technical virtuosity and artistry. Expressive lyricism was paramount and melody reigned supreme in the *bel canto* operas of Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini. This tradition was also passed on to Verdi and Puccini. Composers sought new ways to ensure textual and dramatic clarity. Declamatory styles of vocal writing and singing based on motivic phrases made it possible for singers to project the sung text over louder orchestras in larger opera houses. Since the late 19th century, and continued still today, operas often feature a mix of lyrical and declamatory vocal writing styles.

Only after thorough research and study into the historical context of these roles, operas and composers is one capable of tackling the musical and dramatic challenges present in performing these distinct characters. The extensive rehearsal process for each opera encouraged thorough exploration and collaboration with guest conductors,

³² Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951), Alban Berg (1885-1935), and Anton Webern (1883-1945)

directors, music staff, and fellow singers resulting in five fully staged productions. My goals in rehearsal were to apply the many musical and dramatic devices found in the libretti and scores, and use the tools and techniques available to me as a performer in order to develop and create profoundly unique and intensely human characters that would translate and communicate from the stage to my audience.

Each performance provided valuable insights necessary in evaluating my personal growth and development. The vocal stamina necessary in the emotionally powerful singing required of Luigi in *Il tabarro* is typical of any spinto tenor role in the late Italian verismo operas. The chameleonic facets of Man with Old Luggage in *Postcard from Morocco* forced me to clearly distinguish each character in a short amount of time. In addition to specific musical and vocal gestures, I was able to delineate the many sides of my character through the use of facial expression, body posture, gait, and tempo. The highly stylized and formal music of Bentley Drummle in *Miss Havisham's Fire* perfectly complemented the snobbish aristocrat. Monostatos in *Die Zauberflöte* presented more physical challenges than any other role in the performance series. He is a comprimario, or supporting character, and has limited time on the stage. In his brief appearances, the singer must clearly etch the comedian by way of physicality, gesture, and limited musical interpolations. As the final project of my doctoral studies, *Idomeneo* served as the most demanding and fulfilling role of the series. The titular conqueror required vocal and musical virtuosity, stamina, and nuance. Every technique and tool gleaned during my studies was put to the test during this final operatic challenge.

The different operatic roles in this performance project explored nearly 200 years of vocal repertoire for the tenor. The roles traversed different languages, style periods,

character types and vocal fachs.³³ The diverse nature of this project created many opportunities for personal exploration and discovery. The series of performances forced me to analyze each role and develop interpretations that represented each character as honestly and realistically as possible. Each performance added depth and understanding to my own personal experience as a musician, singer, and actor. For example, the emotional bravado of the charmer Luigi helped maintain the quiet intensity of Man with Old Luggage. The lone scene of Bentley Drummle instilled in me the importance of clarity and direction onstage, which was necessary to develop Monostatos in his brief cameos. The sum of the previous roles informed my interpretation and performance of Idomeneo. As my skills as a performer developed and my voice matured, it became quite clear to me one is capable of a vast array of roles and characters in the operatic canon. Even though the roles in this series were palpably distinct, I came to understand that one is able to grow with each performance. Often young singers are cautioned that singing roles of different fachs can be problematic and often detrimental to the development of the voice. I discovered that the exploration of these roles allowed maximum growth potential and provided me the opportunity to experience the rigors of a professional career in operatic performance. Provided that the vocal range and tessitura are suitable to a given voice, one is capable of performing a variety of characters and roles as one develops.

Composers used many different musical and dramatic techniques and styles in the late 18th century through the early 20th century. I learned through the study and performance of these roles that variety and diversity in repertoire choice does not stunt

³³ Vocal category and classification

the development of young singers, but allows for maximum growth and exploration in preparation for a professional operatic career.

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