

Emergent Media and Opera Circulation in Twentieth-Century North America

by

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Abstract

In North America, opera constitutes both an art form and an industry. Because companies rely on philanthropy and ticket revenues, they respond to a mass audience among the public at large, and yet granting agencies' and critics' influence suggests restricted circulation and in some ways a "high" culture status. Opera's multifaceted performance practices and its contradictory social roles in North America are reflected in the diverse disciplines currently engaging in its study. Critical musicology has, since the early 1990s, increasingly studied operatic texts through theoretical lenses of post-structuralism (Levin, Kramer) feminism (McClary), psychoanalysis (Abbate) and musical dramaturgy (Bianconi). More recently, issues of prominence include digital contexts of performance and composition (Morris, Michaels) and indigeneity (Karantonis, Robinson). Literary scholars have examined issues of adaptation and intertextuality (Lindenberger, Hutcheon, Wiesenthal). Historians have investigated the business of opera (Preston, Dizikes), and social science approaches, especially those related to Bourdieu's formative study *Distinction*, focus on the relationships between the art form and its audiences (Calhoun, Benzecry, Johnson). As a richly multidisciplinary field, opera studies follows, in general, two trends. The first treats the opera score or performance context as its object of study, and the second focuses on political or social circumstances of opera production in specific historical periods or geographic locations. This study investigates the boundaries between these approaches. It takes as its primary archive the circulation of opera in North America in the twentieth century: within live performance, mediated through recording and broadcasting, and adapted into popular contexts far removed from the opera house. It posits contemporary opera circulation as a site of aesthetic and social negotiation in North America, traceable through the intertwined histories of opera and emergent media in the twentieth century.

Using methods of media genealogy (Gitelman, Parikka), circulation (Warner, Povinelli and Gaonkar) and cultural theory (Williams, Appadurai) this study proposes the concept of “operascape” to account for the circulation of specific opera texts, and the impacts of that circulation on the broader public culture of North America. Treating opera as multi-form media frames its musical, dramatic and performance facets in the context of the related, reified social activities that have developed over time. These “protocols” include publics’ investments in celebrity culture, the primacy of the voice, attentiveness, and negotiations around expertise; they are archived in the early histories of mass media throughout the twentieth century. As industries of recording and broadcasting emerged in North America, they relied upon opera in a number of ways to make their new media desirable for potential consumers. This long-standing media-opera relationship impacts repertoire decisions, casting, and communications practices in the opera industry today. It also resonates throughout contemporary cultural production beyond opera.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Brianna Wells. The research project, for which this thesis is the primary output, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board:

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Prologue: Opera on the Phone

What do we talk about when we talk about opera? For many North Americans, operatic experiences occur every day via television commercials, sound tracks, or through scenes in film and television, even if they have never attended (and never plan to attend) opera performances. These everyday experiences are therefore always involved—albeit often implicitly—in public discourses about opera. I contend that, beyond specific academic contexts, opera discussions are deeply invested in how people “do” opera: attend performances, listen or watch at home, laugh at its absurdities, reject it as ridiculous, even argue that it should not receive public funding. And we can better understand the complexities of these activities when we attend to the circulation of operatic music, stories, themes, and iconography both upon operatic stages, and beyond them. This study is an attempt to do precisely that, and it began before I started this degree.

When I was the Communications Manager at Edmonton Opera from 2007 – 2010, I worked closely with all the departments that dealt with our audiences, and public communication in general. Our box office manager was not well versed in the operas we produced, and so she would often forward patron questions to me. In one such phone call, a potential ticket buyer asked what music she’d know in our 2009 production of Verdi and Piave’s *Rigoletto*. I promptly sang for her the famous opening lines of the Duke’s act 3 aria, “*La donna é mobile*” (*La donna é mobile / qual piuma al vento*). She laughed—probably because I sang it in my best tenor impression—and asked to be transferred back to the box office to buy her tickets. I had fulfilled my goal: encouraging her to buy tickets to our show. But what I *didn’t* do in the conversation reveals the tension that underpins this study. I didn’t tell her that this most famous music from the opera is a terrible debasement of women: the line above translates as “woman is changeable / false as the weather” (Porter 308). I didn’t tell her that the catchiness of the tune is intended to

serve the plot of the story, that the repetition of the Duke's aria reveals to the main character that he has failed to murder his daughter's rapist, and has killed his own child instead. And I didn't sing for her the music directly *following* the repeat of "*La donna é mobile*," the storm scene and quartet, the latter of which is acclaimed as a pinnacle of operatic vocal writing.¹ I picked the famous tune over the musico-dramatic, virtuosic, intensity of the opera's conclusion.

Of course, I would have been more than hard-pressed to produce an imitation of a quartet or orchestral storm scene over the phone, and so the aria was an obvious choice.² This patron wanted to understand what would be familiar to her in the production, and the opening line of "*La donna é mobile*" fulfilled that need. But looking back at that phone call, and on so many conversations where I worked to condense persuasive arguments for an opera's power or delight into a single musical phrase or synoptic epigraph, I am struck by what seems to be the irreconcilable tension between the ways that opera becomes familiar in everyday life, and the work that opera companies present on stage. While in-theatre audiences of opera productions experience a more-or-less complete version of the text in performance,³ off-stage circulations are more often visual caricatures of women in horned helmets, overweight tenors, and dying sopranos in video games, drawn and animated cartoons, and any number of television commercials, as well as the sonic citations of excerpted arias, choruses, and overtures. For example, "*La donna é mobile*" alone has promoted Doritos, Axe Body Spray and Cingular Wireless in television advertising since 2000. This circulation fosters broad recognition of certain opera elements in contexts often entirely divorced from the dramatic exigencies of the

¹ The 2012 film *Quartet* is based on a fictionalized recording of this ensemble piece.

² The opening lines of "*La donna é mobile*" are also easier to sing than the descending lines of Gilda's "*Caro nome*" from act 1 for a half-trained singer like me.

³ Cuts to scores are extremely common in Canadian opera production, for both aesthetic reasons, and the financial necessities of avoiding overtime calls for union contracts.

text as a whole.

When twenty-first century opera companies attempt to bring patrons to their productions, they often rely on that familiarity, because recognizable (not to mention catchy, beautiful or energetic) music offers one way to break through other negative stereotypes that function as barriers to engagement with opera: that it's too expensive, too old, too long, and too foreign to be enjoyable. But these excerpted aspects of opera have such extensive circulation that their connections to an opera house experience might be hard to make in any meaningful way. Companies both rely on, and suffer from, the kinds of familiarity with opera that are produced in a wide range of cultural forms. The familiar tune, or the famous singer, proffers a seemingly easy point of entrée, but it also risks flattening the dramatic and musical capacities of operatic performance as a whole into a single or small set of experiences, which will feel impossibly brief and sparse in the context of a whole opera, or may invite negative caricature.

The dynamics of familiarity or recognition expose a dialectic in opera circulation: the becoming-popular (and abstract) of particular operatic motifs drains them of their political and formal complexity while nonetheless creating the conditions of possibility for audiences to encounter that complexity through their own activities. This push and pull both drives the movement of operatic elements around the world, and is in turn impacted by that movement.

I seek a better understanding of the circuits through which the term "opera" comes to encapsulate the meanings and expectations it has today. The original plan for this study was to examine how contemporary opera companies in North America address the expectations of their potential audiences, or rather, how they talk about what they do. But as I undertook fieldwork in interviews, rehearsal rooms, and archives, I began to understand that a synchronic approach to my question fails to take into account the historical connections between industry discourses and

the larger public conversations about opera that have a significant impact on companies.

Therefore, I have turned towards an historical approach that illuminates opera's relationship with other media in the first half of the twentieth century—a period in which sound recording and broadcasting reorganized access to performance, and in which several aspects of operatic circulation seem to have been reified or codified into a kind of fixity. While my focus on contemporary issues remains within the discussion, it is now presented in a more comparative context with historical case studies that form the primary archive of my study. These comparisons operate along both the axis of time—between the early twentieth century and the last thirty years—and the axis of media—how opera intersects with other media, and what possibilities and effects for opera's circulation ensue from those interactions.

My archive spans operatic texts, performances, recordings, broadcasts, and transfigurations in other forms such as film, television, advertising, and video games. All these activities are imbricated in opera circulation and discourse, and I consider them together under the conceptual space I term the North American “operascape.” The idea of opera as a “scape,” discussed below, includes the everyday activities and specific events that frame what counts as “operatic” in North America. It orients analysis towards mobility, instability, and physical and imagined activities, thus proffering a site of inquiry into the problems of operatic recognition, and its consequent (and consequential) discourses.

Introduction

The claim for opera's incipient or long-since past demise is by now a well-worn cliché. *New York Times* music critic Zachary Woolfe offers several variations on this theme: "Monitoring the Metropolitan Opera's Vital Signs" (10 May 2015); "How Hollywood Films are Killing Opera" (17 August 2012); and "Has the Fat Lady Finally Sung" (28 December 2012). Operatic deaths referred to here include company health, and competition within the entertainment industry. The concern for opera's demise also includes long-standing questions about aesthetics. Composer Ernst Krenek, for example, titled a 1936 essay, "Is opera still possible today?" (qtd in Albright 124), and Herbert Lindenberger described the opera house as a "museum" in 1996, suggesting it was a site for storage and display of old relics "in many period styles" (*Extravagant Art* 251). As I will explore in this study, several kinds of "pastness" seem to move alongside the idea of opera in North American circulations. But this pastness is perhaps also part of an operatic vitality that has been misrecognized.

Opera (which translates as "works") was first used in its present sense near the turn of the seventeenth century (Grout and Williams 1). Since then, it has encapsulated an enormous expanse of performance contexts, compositional modes, nationalist ideologies, and assumptions and anxieties around race, colonial identity, gender, social hierarchy, and class. In contemporary North American contexts, it seems to figure extremely specific and fixed musical, dramatic and social traditions while simultaneously being very much up for ontological grabs in public discourses. I contend that understandings of opera in Canadian and U.S. contexts are rooted not solely, or perhaps even predominantly, within the structures of the forms themselves, but within social relationships created by opera producers' anticipated and imagined audiences, and a great array of activities not explicitly linked to opera companies at all. My work thus builds on

Michael Warner to describe these groupings as “opera publics.”

For Warner, the difference between an audience and a public is that a “concrete audience of hearers understands itself as standing in for a more indefinite audience of readers,” which is to say that a concrete audience, such as a co-present audience for a particular performance, is part of a larger public, which shares an imaginative rather than physical relationship to a given text or experience (50). He suggests that “a public might be real and efficacious, but its reality lies in just this reflexivity, by which an addressable object is conjured into being in order to enable the very discourse that gives it existence” (51). In other words, Warner sees publics as existing “by virtue of being addressed,” by a form of some kind (50). Participation in a public includes any form of response, what Warner calls “minimal participation” to a given text or address, even if that response is one of rejection, and even it may occur far from, or long after, an occurrence (53). Publics, for Warner, “lack any institutional being, commence with the moment of attention, must continually predicate renewed attention, and cease to exist when attention is no longer predicated” and they are “increasingly organized around visual or audio texts” (61, 51). The indefinite quality of the public, imagined both by the text and any present or quantifiable audience members, creates a larger social space through which a work or cultural form circulates.

In the case of opera, the indefinite audience anticipated by any operatic performance or citation participates in framing that operatic object, even if that participation is wholly negative. A public for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Lorenzo da Ponte’s 1786 *Le nozze di Figaro* may include both the specific people who purchased a ticket for a particular performance in 2016, and the larger expanse of people who have seen or heard it before, elsewhere, or simply noticed the advertising on busses and billboards in public spaces. I consider “opera publics” to be constituted through the hail of some form of an opera-text *in a number of contexts*, including viewers of

cartoons like Bugs Bunny in “What’s Opera Doc,” or those of the Doritos ad that deploys “*La donna é mobile*” as the soundtrack for sending a baby, via slingshot, through the backyard. These contexts may be serious or irreverent, and the publics formed in relation to them vary widely. All of them, however, participate in the inertia surrounding the concept of “opera,” through activities as immaterial as recognizing a tune, or expecting an opera singer to sound (or look) like Pavarotti. While attention to opera is obviously neither constant nor consistent for any particular person across a long range of time, opera circulation continually addresses a public through its widespread citation off the operatic stage, in addition to more traditional performance contexts. By examining a broad array of circulations in the framework of publics rather than audiences, I include room for the rhetorical and discursive affects of that circulation in an understanding of opera.

In bringing a circulation approach to the study of opera, I attend to the forces that mobilize certain aspects of opera-texts. I treat opera as a part of the “culture of circulation” in Canada and the United States, which is to say that I am interested in the “interactions between specific types of circulation forms and the interpretive communities built around them,” rather than the meaning of a given text or performance in isolation (Lee and Li Puma 192). I consider the material conditions in which opera-texts are mobilized and the reciprocal affects of that circulation on the idea of what “counts” as operatic, or what it means to participate in operatic activities. I reorient Dilip Paramshewar Gaonkar and Elizabeth Povinelli’s focus on the “limits imposed on cultural forms as the condition of the circulation across various types of social space” (387), toward a consideration of which aspects of opera are most effectively mobilized in specific contexts, and what gets left behind. For Gaonkar and Povinelli, circulation analysis functions as a kind of “ethnography of forms,” in which the material available for consideration

is the multitude of iterations (translations, revivals, etc.) in the life of cultural form (391), particularly sites of transfiguration, or, “the refunctioning of a text as such for different demanding-sites” (396). The reflexive nature of publics and texts is functional in most theories of circulation, and Gaonkar and Povinelli in particular call for the study of “regimes of recognition” rather than the regimes of value often used in the analysis of cultural forms and translation (394).

It seems clear that opera in North America constitutes a sprawling set of practices, expectations, and investments mobilized (unequally) through a small set of reified texts and a vast network of lesser-known works. In an exploration of the means by which certain music, performers, composers, companies, houses and visual imagery come to stand in for the idea of opera as a whole, we can better understand not only the inertia of the concept of “opera” in North America, but the ways that publics are hailed by, and participate in reifying, some aspects of that conceptualization. An approach exploring how regimes of recognition form in relation to the various practices of opera also mandates a reconsideration of the interconnections of so-called “high” culture and the media that have benefitted from, while codifying, those definitions in North American contexts. In asking what we talk about when we talk about opera, I am asking not what opera is, but how it comes to be understood, recognized, and experienced through the past century of its circulation.

1. Recognition and Definition

My analysis of opera takes seriously the financial and material considerations of opera production, and therefore rejects easy figurations of opera as “high culture” seemingly impervious to public discourses. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s distinction between restricted and

large-scale fields of production is instructive in considering the position of opera producers in Canada and the United States today. For Bourdieu, this difference rests primarily in the regulatory mechanism for evaluation. Restricted fields are evaluated by insiders: critics, other producers, and artists in the field, whereas large-scale fields of production are evaluated by non-experts and consumers (*Cultural Production* 2). Bourdieu states that, “the autonomy of a field of restricted production can be measured by its power to define its own criteria for the production of and evaluation of its products” (5). Since opera producers in Canada and the United States do not, ultimately, maintain autonomy in defining criteria for evaluation, they operate in a field that is simultaneously restricted and large-scale. It is (generally) a paid expert who writes most opera reviews for newspapers or magazines such as *Opera Canada*, and likewise it is often peers who evaluate grant applications. But since “earned revenue” or ticket sales average only thirty-nine percent of total revenue for U.S. opera (Accomando et al), companies must appeal equally to public ticket buyers, funding organizations, and potential donors (both individual and corporate). Likewise, in a world increasingly dominated by social media, reviews by non-experts operate alongside those in more traditional publications. These various constituencies often have discrete, if not entirely oppositional, valuations for company initiatives such as new works, innovative or experimental staging, and the casting of Canadian or U.S. artists.⁴

As opera companies rely on support from both “experts” and the “public-at-large” (Bourdieu 4), their choices of texts, singers, and productions reflect those responsibilities. Their relationships with the “public-at-large” necessarily include the expectations those publics might

⁴ This paradox has been articulated for European contexts by sociologist Craig Calhoun, who writes in the forward to *Opera in Society in Italy and France from Monteverdi to Bourdieu* that the opera field “is simultaneously structured by art and commerce” (xxi) and that “Opera is popular and high art at once, and a source of insight into the way the distinction itself is deployed both by social analysts and by aesthetes and consumers” (xxiv).

bring with them to live performances, many of which derive from recordings or operatic citations in non-operatic contexts.⁵ If opera companies rely on government / foundation, corporate, and private support in order to stay in business, then the ways that those bodies or publics understand the goals, forms, and affects of opera can be the difference between a thriving company, and one that closes its doors.

Given the high stakes of public recognition and the wide use of opera music beyond theatrical staging, it is no surprise that twenty-first century companies work very hard to explain what it is that they do. Many Canadian and U.S. opera companies' websites maintain pages under subheadings of "Education," "Frequently Asked Questions" or "Visit the Opera," that seek to frame, or reframe, readers' expectations about what happens at an opera performance. In addition to advertising educational events and lectures, these sections frequently include subpages such as "What is Opera," "Opera 101," "New to Opera?" and "Myths about Opera." Some of these pages compare opera to other forms of music theatre (Dallas Opera, Seattle Opera), some target newcomers' expectations (Minnesota Opera, San Francisco Opera), and some do both.⁶ While these discourses are by no means uniform across opera companies' sites,

⁵ Take, for example, the 2008 James Bond film *Quantum of Solace*, in which the hero scales the spectacular set of Bregenz Festival's 2008 production of *Tosca* to spy on the villains who are holding a secret meeting during the performance via teleconference in their seats. The performance-within-performance of *Quantum of Solace* is an example of the many ways in which opera repertoire is mobilized, and framed, by other forms and texts.

⁶ For example, Seattle Opera offers a "First Timer's Guide" page under its "Plan Your Visit" subheading. This page is divided into two kinds of information: the first imagines the position of the first-time attendee asking the questions: "What Do I Wear?"; "How is an Opera Different from a Musical?"; and "Will I understand What's Happening?". The next three subheadings take the position of the company, using the imperative to offer instructions: "Don't Be Late!"; "Share your Enthusiasm!"; and "Be Courteous." Here, information about form and performance expectations is interspersed with instructions on how to behave appropriately. The conversational tone acknowledges that issues like the difference between operas and musicals are "complicated,"

they present a clear trend in explaining opera both in terms of form and in terms of activities.

In opera company websites' definitions of opera there exist two major narrative trends, both of which have specific historical roots and contribute to an over-arching narrative of "looking back" that dominates a great deal of public language regarding the art form today. The first narrative is one of historical origins and the Florentine Camerata. The Florentine Camerata is often described as a group of like-minded Italian artist-philosophers who sought to recover the energy and spirit of ancient Greek theatre by integrating dramatic (often mythological) texts with music in the late-sixteenth century. Their experiments were, according to Michel Poizat, "always a matter more of assumption than of actual fact, [and the Greek theatre ideal] served as a call to arms against the polyphonic style of music then at its apogee . . . and for a return to monodic singing" (51). The Camerata was invested in presenting the stories of texts through *recitativo* and monody. Their work developed from popular and spectacular *intermedi* into longer works devoted, primarily, to mythical subjects, as exemplified in two of the works generally listed as the first operas: Jacopi Peri's *Dafne* (1597) and *Euridice* (1600).

Today, the Camerata is understood to have been the epicenter of operatic origins in both popular and academic writing. In less academic contexts, Robert Levine's guide to "loving opera" entitled *Weep, Shudder, Die*, includes the following explanation for the beginnings of opera:

Opera, simply, is sung drama, with the story told through both voices and instruments and often involving costumes and sets. It is like theatre, in other words, except that the characters sing rather than speak. A group of late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century Italians with money, status, and ideas believed that the plays of Greek antiquity,

while offering the short answer that in opera, everything is sung, and that operas do not use sound amplification.

to which they aspired . . . had been sung rather than spoken. In fact, this belief was incorrect, but by the time everyone found out, opera had already taken hold, and an entirely new art form—and form of entertainment—had been invented. (2)

This description uses plain language to offer a historical link between the Camerata's investment in Greek theatrical traditions, and the sung drama common on operatic stages today. On the academic side, Donald Jay Grout and Hermine Weigel Williams's tome *A Short History of Opera* offers essentially the same narrative, albeit with carefully nuanced articulation of operatic development as a response to older traditions in the mid-sixteenth century, and with far more detail. They describe how the Florentine Camerata articulated a theory of "new music" that rejected polyphony and counterpoint in composition, in favour of a "union of words and melody" (41), attributed in somewhat apocryphal fashion to ancient Greek theatre (40-41). Grout and Williams credit the Camerata with the theories of musical monody and musico-dramatic unity that fostered the creation of early operas in 1600 (43, 49). Opera companies' online definitions often tend towards some sort of comment about opera being a drama "set to music" (Opera Colorado) or being "sung rather than spoken" (Opera San Diego) as a means of delineating the art form from others, and in this regard echo the goals attributed to the Camerata, often in the same simple language as Levine above.⁷

The origin narrative of opera and the Camerata history has been reframed by recent music scholarship on the subject. For example, Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker observe that the Florentine Camerata was an only one example in "a huge, centuries-old series of experiments

⁷ To be fair to Opera San Diego, their site acknowledges this definition as narrow, and the explanation continues that "there are many forms in Western art, and even more forms of sung drama outside of the Western canon, particularly in Asian and Southeast Asian cultures as well as in some Native American cultures." Despite the caveat, the primary language associated with definition remains linked to the ideals associated with the Camerata.

devoted to combining drama, dance, song, and instrumental music” (39). The Camerata’s experiments are historically visible via the extant lists of works and the public affiliation they built, as well as their commitment to a completely sung drama (Abbate and Parker 40),⁸ but such commitments are by no means a complete origin story. Nor are opera’s origins located solely in the combination of singing and drama. Abbate and Parker note, for example, that around the 1600s, spectacles associated with the Medici family were in part designed to join “the latest technology” available for the stage “with music and poetry to project an overwhelming sense of power that could impress supporters and put fear into the minds of opponents” (40). But the persistence of the tightly focused origin of the Camerata and the emergence of a new music form with links to the Greeks persists in many company websites, thus mobilizing the idealized and imagined past traditions of sung theatre in Ancient Greece as the forebear of opera that was articulated by the Camerata.

In addition to (contested) origin stories about the Florentine Camerata, opera company website definitions are frequently rooted in the theories attributed to Richard Wagner. As a composer in late-nineteenth century Germany and France, Wagner was one of several musicians interested in reforming music in general and opera in particular.⁹ It is his writings *on* opera, as much as his operatic writing, that cemented his position as the modern philosopher of opera, for both many of his contemporaries and fans today. His polemics sparked a great deal of controversy in European music and aesthetic circles, and of interest here is Wagner’s mid-nineteenth-century articulation of other composers’ failings, and of what music drama should be.

⁸ Abbate and Parker also note the Camerata’s interest in Aristotle’s *Poetics* as a source for the Greek connection, in particular the evocation of catharsis in tragedy (43).

⁹ Dizikes, for example, notes that “it would be misleading to pick out Wagner’s music and emphasize its reception apart from that of the other ‘modernists’ of the mid-nineteenth century, like Liszt” (234).

For Wagner, “opera” meant those early nineteenth-century Italian (and to a lesser extent, French) forms and practices associated with composers such as Gioachino Rossini, which he saw as devoid of artistic merit and invested in the virtuosic vocal display of singers at the expense of drama and the other arts.¹⁰ As an alternative, Wagner proposed a new form he called *Musikdrama*, in which “special, separately developed branches of art . . . might finally be brought out and heightened by great geniuses,” and which would, among other things, elevate the status of the librettist/poet in the creation of new works (“Music of the Future” 146).

For Wagner, art forms can only exceed their individual effects as an “all-powerful work of art, which was only possible through a union of their forces” (146). This unification can achieve a religious and ceremonial power that constitutes an “ideal relation . . . between the stage and the public,” not unlike

the theatre of ancient Athens; — there, where the theatre only opened its doors on special and hallowed festivals; where there was united with the enjoyment of art a religious celebration, in which the most distinguished men of the state took part as poets and actors, appearing, like priests, before the assembled populus of the city and country, which was so imbued with high anticipations of the dignity of the work to be performed, that an Aeschylus and a Sophocles could bring the most sublime of all creations before the people, certain of their full understanding of it. (145)

Wagner’s articulation is not entirely discrete from that of the Camerata in combining the arts,

¹⁰ Wagner claims that “in Italy . . . no other task has even been set before the musical than to write a number of airs for special singers, in whom dramatic talent was entirely a secondary consideration; — airs that should give these *virtuosi* an opportunity to bring into play their several specific vocal powers” (135). The connections between French and Italian operatic culture are closely tied in the nineteenth century, most prominently in the rich movement of composers between the great cities of countries across Europe.

and turning to the (partially imagined) model of the ancient Greeks. Also like the Camerata, who were resisting the popular polyphony of the time (Grout and Williams 41), Wagner works to define his innovation against his contemporaries and immediate predecessors. But he adds the spectacle of religious ceremony to elevate his *Musikdrama* and its mythological subjects to elevate the form, as historian John Dizikes frames it, “far above mere entertainment” and into “a new religion” (236-7). Wagner’s idea was that all the arts would be combined together “indissolubly” and would thus be indistinguishable as separate entities (237). His operatic compositions, most famously his *Ring* cycle, sought this integration, and are today hailed by many as the zenith of operatic, if not musical, unity.

Poor Wagner. While his influence on Western music cannot be understated, and while his theories about uniting all the arts under the banner of *Musikdrama* were explicitly written in reaction to what he saw as the decline of the operatic art form as embodied by Rossini, Meyerbeer, and anyone influenced by them (*Opera and Drama* 70, 166), his own terms have become in many cases the basis for describing the works he sought to separate himself from. Opera companies’ articulations of the term “opera” often reflect this conflation: some opera company websites describe opera as bringing “all the art forms together” (Opera de Québec), or experiencing the arts “all in one” (Seattle Opera). They collapse the distinctions that Wagner was so fervent about making. Deployments of Wagnerian theory in contemporary opera industry practices indicate that the term “opera” has consumed even the definition that was intended to separate out a new form from the works that preceded it in the eighteenth, and particularly early nineteenth, centuries.

Today, articulations of “opera” build variously on narratives of hybridity, of certain forms of elevated spectacle, and most of them do so through connection to the Camerata,

Musikdrama, or a combination of both. Most opera companies in North America produce work from both Italian and German traditions (among many others), so it is perhaps not surprising that the niceties of such differences are collapsed in the service of presenting the idea of opera as accessible. What strikes me about this dual (even duelling?) history, however, is the explicit engagement with imagined time in the service of articulating traditions.

The rhetorical frameworks of operatic discourse have a circulation that is both inherently connected to, and discrete from, any specific opera-text or operatic event. The conceptual inertia produced by these frameworks seems deeply imbricated with a kind of imagined temporality. Both the Camerata and Wagner invoke ancient Greek theatre as a means of proving their own innovations, and in his observations on the art form, Mladon Dolar has noted that “opera *never* was in accord with its time—from its very beginnings, it was perceived as something outdated, as a retroactive solution to a certain inherent crisis in music and as an impure art” (viii). Certainly, the philosophical turn to ancient theatre constitutes a “persistent revival of the past, a reflection of the lost aura” (3), in addition to the hybridity of form noted above. Wagner articulated his *Musikdrama* as new against the idea of “opera,” and the force of his legacy seems to reproduce tensions of valuation in composition and production practices well into the twentieth century. And as we shall see, over the course of expanding distribution via mass media in the first decades of the twentieth century, opera is increasingly located in an immediate and distant past for rhetorical effects intrinsically bound up in the social discourse of emergent media.

The prominent cultural and music critic T.W. Adorno neatly illustrates the tension of operatic temporalities in his manifesto for modernist music. He says in *The Philosophy of New Music* that “the comportment of new music makes problematic what many progressives expect from it: finished structures that can be gazed on now and forever in the museums of the opera

and concert hall” (33). Here, Adorno considers opera as an institution, a location with expectations that conflict with musical innovation. Adorno’s observations on music are rooted in his critique of mass culture, and thus reflect a central issue in opera circulation: operatic art forms, composers and artists are constantly framed, in some fashion, by cultural producers (mainly companies or impresarios) who are never completely within, but neither free from, social and economic structures that dominate European and North American life. Opera’s backward look is not an isolated aesthetic ideal, but one that is located structurally in the make-up of cultural production more broadly.

Indeed, we might consider opera’s ongoing “pastness” as an indication of its negotiation between what Raymond Williams has articulated as “residual” and “dominant” culture. For Williams, analyses of cultural processes demand attention to “oppositional” or “alternative” systems to dominant ones in any given epoch (121). He distinguishes between the “emergent,” “dominant,” and “residual,” describing the latter as “effectively formed in the past, but ... still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past” (121-122). The residual is not wholly in the past, or “archaic,” but is in some way oppositional or alternative to the dominant forms of a cultural epoch (such as late capitalism in Canada and the United States). Williams argues, “it is the incorporation of the actively residual—by reinterpretation, dilution, projection, discriminating inclusion and exclusion—that the work of the selective tradition is especially evident” (122). In other words, opera’s incorporation into so many other forms of cultural production demonstrates its paradoxical status as residual within the dominant. Opera, as an idea, seems to always be already residual, and therefore its aesthetic and financial investments seem, in some way, to contradict ideas of “now.” This tension is, I will argue, one of the reasons why opera is such a rich source of citation in cultural production outside of opera

companies and artists. It also presents opera producers throughout the last century with the thorny problem of proving its urgency as an art form, as a public service, and as a recipient of large amounts of government, foundation, and private funding.

Another issue that frames opera's regimes of recognition is that of inclusion. Over the last four centuries, an enormous array of musico-dramatic compositional and performance modes have been created, recreated, and circulated. But what actually counts as operatic? A common, if somewhat teleological, approach organizes the operatic around the works that have been already accepted into the operatic canon (itself a thorny issue that I will discuss at length in chapter 3).

Guy Marco's 1984 *Opera: A Research Guide* demonstrates the pitfalls of this approach:

I have taken the term "opera" in its usual sense, as a dramatic action in which the dialogue is primarily sung rather than spoken. Operetta and its parallel genres like *Singspiel* are considered selectively; the American musical is omitted. Only the European tradition is covered, together with its North and South American manifestations. (xvi)

Marco's exclusions contort around the complex *oeuvre* of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to include the singspiel *Die Zauberflöte*, while rejecting works by W.A Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, for example. Much of the work done by North American Opera producers today would not fit within Marco's definition. Vancouver Opera produced *Sweeney Todd* in 2015. San Francisco Opera staged *Show Boat* in 2014. Gilbert and Sullivan are not infrequent guests on stages in Edmonton and Calgary. These texts don't exactly "count" in the schematic laid out by Marco, nor do concert and semi-staged productions of accepted operatic works produce the elevated spectacle that is a common expectation for many North American opera supporters. Along similar lines, a great deal of interest and tension has arisen in recent years about micro- and independent opera

companies that produce both new works, and radically re-imagine canonical ones.¹¹ The performance idioms of opera production today include everything from *a cappella* and chamber ensembles, to eighty-piece orchestras, simulcasts into movie theaters and football stadiums, to site-specific productions in parking garages, swimming pools, and open space venues. How, then, can opera producers and their publics engage in a common understanding that is both inclusive of all these activities and texts, and yet differentiates opera as discrete from other forms of musico-dramatic experiences? And the more drastic question that follows is that if these opera companies are not exactly producing “opera,” then what are they doing?

As an alternative to articulations of opera via the historical precedents of the Florentine Camerata, Richard Wagner, or the canon reification demonstrated above, some producers locate the concept in terms of practices rather than forms. In my interview with him, David Devan, General Director of Opera Philadelphia, defined opera as “stories that are sung by classically trained voices.” This understanding links the language historically rooted in the Camerata with a focus on the present moment of singing by artists trained in specific vocal techniques. Devan’s articulation therefore refers effectively to what Opera Philadelphia does as a company, rather than what formal elements might actually be found in the opera-texts they produce.¹² The delineation of practice through a type of vocal production (Western art music) resists categories of inclusion based on compositional mode or genre.

My sketch of the historical antecedents for opera definitions and the counterpoint

¹¹ A prominent Canadian example is Against the Grain Theatre, which offers what Artistic Director Joel Ivany terms “transladaptions” of canonical works by producing new libretti and performance contexts. In 2013, their production of *Figaro’s Wedding* translocated *Le nozze di Figaro* to a Toronto warehouse, and attendees were treated as guests at a wedding reception.

¹² Opera Philadelphia has built a tri-partite season based on location: Opera in the Academy, Opera in the City, and Opera in the Lab each offer a different series of works performed in different kinds of productions.

presented by Opera Philadelphia foreground the deeply connected and highly fraught history behind the term “opera,” including political and aesthetic debates that are centuries old. It is also intended to illuminate the high stakes of definition and recognition for contemporary opera producers. Inspired, in part, by Opera Philadelphia and driven by my own experiences at Edmonton Opera, I present in this study an approach to understanding opera that attempts to hold together the material conditions and concerns surrounding opera production with the more abstracted aspects of opera circulation as a concept, as citation, and as it participates in the broader cultural and media landscapes of North America. In articulating the operascape as my realm of inquiry, I offer a conceptual space for exploring the activities undertaken by opera producers, by opera publics, and other forces mobilizing opera circulation. In this vein, I adopt a deflationary model of exploring opera not unlike the approach taken by media theorist Lisa Gitelman in *Paper Knowledge*, in exploring opera not only as a site of the extraordinary, but also as part of everyday circulation as well.

2. A Media Archive, an Opera Genealogy

My questions about opera circulation, recognition, and discourse necessitate an interdisciplinary method. I locate my work within the interdisciplinary field of opera studies, which draws on methods attendant to aspects of social history, drama, aesthetics, music, literary studies, and cultural theory to explore operatic objects of study. Opera studies’ highly varied scholarship in the past two decades reflects the vast range of activities that can reasonably be grouped under the idea of the operatic in both contemporary and historical contexts, and provides a foundation for a comparative method working across both temporal distance and a variety of forms.

The past fifteen years have seen a groundswell in interdisciplinary scholarship on opera.

The 2006 collection of essays titled *Operatic Migrations: Transforming Works and Crossing Boundaries* (edited by Roberta Montemorra Marvin and Downing A. Thomas) takes up the issue of disciplinarity explicitly, arguing that differing perspectives could open new opportunities for opera,

including intersections between stage representations and social contexts, realisations of aesthetic ideals within opera, transformations of single works for different venues of audiences, and operatic or other works . . . as well as reception issues that bear on historical and contemporary comprehension of the genre as a mode of communicative model of utterance and representation. (2)

Contributions to this volume vary in focus, with two focused specifically on North American phenomena: David J. Levin's "Operatic School for Scandal," which addresses directorial and mediated innovation in late twentieth-century production, and Robert L. A. Clark's analysis of representations of race in both *Carmen* and the 1954 film based on the opera, *Carmen Jones*. Additionally, 2015 saw the first of a proposed biannual "Transnational Opera Studies Conference" in Bologna, which, while hosted by a musicological association, welcomed interest from other disciplines as well.

The majority of opera studies scholarship has its roots in music scholarship, but in the past forty years, music scholars have shown an increasing willingness to engage with inquiry and objects that are not unique to music. New, or critical, musicology focuses on situation as much as form in relation to music texts. For example, Lawrence Kramer investigates the idea of the "profane" in Strauss's *Salome* from the perspective of nineteenth-century social construction of gender in *Opera and Modern Culture* (2004). The turn to broader analytical frameworks, including feminist theories, deconstruction, and social and power formations, offered music

scholars a richer and more responsive framework for the consideration of operatic texts. One proponent of this turn, Susan McClary, has written extensively, although not exclusively, on opera. Feminist musicologists Catherine Clément as well as Corrine Blackmer and Patricia Smith critique the elision of overt misogyny and powerful music in operatic texts (*Opera, or the Undoing of Women* 22), and trace the shifting roles of transgressive gender play on the operatic stage in the context of prevailing political ideologies (*En Travesti* 139-145). Mary Ann Smart reads nineteenth-century opera through a history of movement in her book *Mimomania, Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera*. Naomi André, Karen Bryan and Eric Saylor's edited collection *Blackness in Opera* explores race and gender in opera from both academic and industry perspectives, and the 2016 collection *Opera in a Multicultural World* edited by Mary Ingraham, Joseph So, and Roy Moodley frames operatic analysis through issues of race and racialized practice.

Humanities-based opera scholarship has also demonstrated an emerging interest in opera as a cultural form in the last twenty years. Focusing on a specific historical period as a point of departure for a larger analysis of the supreme and the debased in opera-texts, Lawrence Kramer characterizes the term "opera, capital O" as "a certain cultural fiction with an important role to play at a formative but limited moment in modern history characterized by the triangulation of normality, supremacy and debasement" and which was inaugurated by Wagner and concluded by Richard Strauss (3). Literary scholars Herbert Lindenberger and Linda Hutcheon both wrote in 2006 about the rise of opera studies as a field, with Hutcheon describing the development of key questions and disciplinary boundaries that suggest the rise of the field ("Interdisciplinary Opera Studies" 805), and Lindenberger noting that opera studies is, in essence, an orphan that "cannot claim a natural home in the any of the existing humanistic disciplines" ("Opera Studies?" 254).

Humanities-inflected psychoanalysis has found rich ground in drawing parallels between operatic performance histories and the analyses of the works themselves (especially the works of Mozart, Wagner and Strauss). For example, in their collaborative study, *Opera's Second Death*, Mladen Dolar and Slavoj Žižek argue that an operatic death drive moves toward not physical death but an endless “repetitive cycle of wandering around in guilt and pain,” both in its fictive space and in its material production (106). In *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, Michel Poizat analyzes the intense connection opera fans have with the voice, and argues that the distinct forms of aria and recitative parallel the loci of *jouissance* and the mastering word, respectively (53).

Localized studies of opera's historical situations and social contexts offer specificity and historical detail to opera studies scholarship. Katherine Preston's *Opera on the Road* (2001) traces the beginnings of opera in the United States as a travelling variety show, and John Dizikes's *Opera in America* (1993) contains a plethora of material detail about the factors that impacted opera as a business from its American origins in the mid 1700s through to the death of iconic soprano Maria Callas in 1977. Specific historical studies of opera as a business, such as Glixon and Glixon's *Inventing the Business of Opera: The Impresario and His World in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (2005), and the 2010 European and United States comparative study *The Management of Opera*, likewise demonstrate an increasing interest in considering operatic practice from historical and material standpoints. I draw in particular on the work of Preston and Dizikes to frame the historical contexts for opera and media convergence throughout this study.

Like historians, sociologists are increasingly approaching opera across and through its various periods of production. A collection of essays entitled *Opera and Society in Italy and France from Monteverdi to Bourdieu* (2007) introduces the claim that opera is “a field embedded

in general changing contexts as far beyond the opera hall as nationalist politics and globalization, changing media and class structure, and shifting structures of patronage” (Johnson and Fulcher xxi). The essays in this collection treat opera as a source and symptom of various forms of power and resistance in European contexts. Citing Bourdieu as the figurative endpoint of this study is not surprising, given his influence in the work of cultural production and his oft-cited concepts such as habitus, symbolic and cultural capital, fields of cultural production, and of course, symbolic goods. However, his reflexive sociology is rooted primarily in France, and studies taking up his work outside the European continent have encountered some intriguing limitations. For example, Claudio Benzecry’s *The Opera Fanatic* (2011) presents a sociological study of opera fans in Buenos Aires, and argues that opera fanaticism works inversely to Bourdieu’s claims for opera patronage resulting in the accumulation of cultural and social capital (123). Benzecry’s observation illuminates the crucial role that regional identification plays in operatic circulation, and gestures toward a sociological framework that includes various levels of intensity in engagement with opera, rather than the more structural measures of cultural consumption often taken up in sociological study (110). Benzecry asks how opera is recognized in a time and place wherein it “has lost both its popular and distinguishing characteristics” (2), which begs the question of what, exactly, constitute the characteristics of distinction for opera in any particular locality and temporality. Sociological interventions in opera studies illuminate the activities of non-performing participants in the operascape, and therefore offer a helpful framework for my own inquiries into opera circulation.

In terms of interdisciplinary inquiry, humanistic and music inquiry frequently turn to the idea of performance. Carolyn Abbate argues against the “text-oriented stance” toward music and claims that works are the “souvenirs” of performance and not the other way around (*In Search of*

Opera 50, 51). Meanwhile, Lawrence Kramer claims that musical meaning is contingent upon, and operational primarily through, the spectator or listener (*Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* 8). David Levin takes the reading of a “performance text” as central to reading the ways that “opera-texts” are unsettled by production contexts (*Unsettling Opera* 11). These music-based questions about the relationship of opera-text and opera performance frequently turn to the work of performance theory as a means of orienting analysis in activities.

Performance theory privileges lived and embodied (if not necessarily technologically unmediated) experiences, thus resisting the treatment of opera as the sum of a score, libretto, and sometimes its performers. A performance lens maintains focus on specific experiences inherent within repertoire reification, audience expectations, and the metaperformative modes by which opera events exist. In North America, performance studies and its theories have constituted a productive site of intellectual dissensus since Richard Schechner began articulating the necessity of turning away from aesthetic valuation and towards socio-political critique in the 1970s (*Routledge Introduction to Theatre and Performance Studies* 14). A significant difference between German and Anglo-American traditions in performance studies relates to the formative questions of inquiry. Erika Fischer-Lichte traces the rise of Germanic performance theory in conjunction with the emergence of Theatre Studies departments at the turn of the twentieth century (*Performance Studies* 12). She cites Max Hermann’s call for the “shift in [treating] theatre as a work of art to theatre as an event” (*Power of Performance* 4), as a significant performative turn, and notes that German performance studies retains an interest in the dramatic text in its relation to the embodied performance.¹³ Conversely, U.S. performance studies,

¹³ Fischer-Lichte cites Hermann’s observation that “drama is the literary creation of one author, while theatre is the accomplishment of the public and those serving it” (*Power* 12).

following Schechner, was intended to operate discretely from theatre studies and works towards a more interdisciplinary exploration of “live embodied performance as it occur[s] both in art and in other social contexts” (*Performance Studies* 15). Both fields, however, are interested in the autopoiesis linked with the body in motion, language and sound, and the relations among all participants in the context of performance.

Performance approaches can productively trouble some of the ways that opera terms sublimate complex activities into seemingly singular fixities. I think here of the distinction made by Joseph Kerman between a “performance repertory” as a reflection of the works produced by companies in a given time and place, and a “canon of great works” as based in scholarly approbation and interest (“Canonic Variations” 184). While Kerman’s distinction is immensely helpful in understanding institutionalized influence in operatic circulation, an approach to repertoire built in a performance-centric framework would privilege the imaginative and collective participation of audiences and publics. For example, Diana Taylor’s *The Archive and the Repertoire* conceptualizes repertoire as exceeding sets of texts, and functioning through sites of ongoing negotiation in contrast with an archive comprising knowable and “supposedly enduring materials” (19). For Taylor, “the repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by ‘being there’, being a part of the transmission The repertoire both keeps and transforms choreographies of meaning” (19-20). While her book is not focused on opera, Taylor’s emphasis on the embodied knowledge transmitted through performance contexts is foundational for me in building localized and case-specific understandings of what counts as opera.

Repertoire is not simply the selection of certain opera-texts that have remained popular, but the lenses through which they have become recognized as popular, and what that popularity

constitutes, in terms of expectation, for the producers and publics of any given performance.¹⁴ “The opera repertoire” in North America is often imagined as a fixed list of “warhorses” or “evergreen” texts guaranteed to sell well: Italian, German, and French opera-texts predominantly composed in the nineteenth century. In the sense of fixity this grouping of opera-texts constitutes what Taylor would call an archive and I urge a reconsideration of this formation along the lines of Taylor’s articulation. Conceding a common set of texts as a “fixed” repertoire does not foreclose further analysis. It demands it. I explore “the process whereby [an archive] is selected, classified, and presented for analysis” (19) as one effect of opera circulation. In doing so I frame a means of evaluating not the popularity or endurance of a given opera-text, but the numerous forces impacting that text’s circulation. These considerations both expand and diffuse the kinds of archives available for examination, and I turn to the ways that opera functions as a medium with which to frame the specific objects of my study.

Performance theorists have a long-standing relationship with questions of mediacy and mediation, issues central to understanding the circulation of opera in North America. Performance theorist Freda Chapple suggests that the performer in opera is a *medium* and that operatic performance is, essentially the remediation of music and text through the performer, thus constituting an experience of intermediation (“Digital Opera: Intermediality, Remediation, and Education” 81). While this reading aligns neatly with the performance elements of “bodily co-presence” and consequent experience of embodiment articulated by Fischer-Lichte and others

¹⁴ In addition to considering the communal meaning-making contextualized in the performer / audience relationships in performance events, I read the meaning and impact of the term “opera” through the accumulation and sometimes contradiction of various iterations of an opera-text and the kinds of autopoiesis they foster as a collective genealogy. For example, *Madama Butterfly* has functioned as a standard-bearer for several companies, in part because the visual language of early productions is regularly reproduced not only in company anniversary celebrations, but in the broader identity of the company.

(*Power of Performance* 3), Chapple's reliance on the definition of remediation posited by Bolter and Grusin (discussed below) also indicates the unsettling of concepts like "co-presence" and "embodiment" in the age of virtual spaces and digital liveness. Like all modes of performance, opera is affected by emergent digital capacities in a number of ways.

Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin conceptualize "remediation" as the condition of new technologies defining themselves "in relationship to earlier technologies of representation" (3). Chapple employs their concept in her argument that "opera is an *intermedial art form* that has remediated the *medium of music* (instrumental and vocal) with the *medium of dramatic literature* (libretto) at various times in history" (italics original, 81). I agree with Chapple's assessment of the performing operatic body as intermedial, but believe that opera's genealogical relationships with mediation present a second kind of intermediality: one imbricated in the media genealogies and forms of cultural production that have mobilized the concept of opera in North America for the past century.

My own interest in opera's relationship with other media was sparked by the suggestions made by musicologist Nicholas Cook that many musical genres can be read through their interrelationships with other media without subverting one or the other (67). He sketches a method of reading for conformance, complementation, or contest between music and other media within a given instance of musical multimedia (ix), and names instances of interaction between media as "intermedia" (106). Cook's argument for reading instances in context is compelling, but ultimately his description of media falls more along the lines of generic boundaries of film or television than the interdependent activities relating to social protocols and forms of media. More recently, *Opera Quarterly* produced a special edition in 2010 dedicated to questions of opera and mediation. Special Editor Melina Esse identifies two key questions in the introduction to this

issue: “What might it mean to “mediate” opera? Also, how might opera act as a mediator in other channels of communication?” (1). Essays from this issue explore key questions of liveness, remediation, and live opera through particularly mediated contexts such as those on film or television. They anticipate my own focus on exploring opera as a medium in specific historical cases of media change in North America.

My approach blends the interdisciplinary treatment of opera—particularly those approaches rooted in cultural studies and performance theory—with a concerted focus on the mediacy of opera. While I treat the considerations of liveness and performance as central to understanding many aspects of operatic circulation, the many networks through which opera’s texts, music, visual iconography, celebrity and reputations travel mean that a form-sensitive analysis will also align with work done in sound and media studies. While the enormous diversity of work done under the aegis of sound studies cannot be fully glossed here, some sound scholarship employs interdisciplinary methodologies in relationship to research objects in both material and discursive contexts, not unlike some of the approaches common in opera studies. In treatments of music, many sound studies approaches resist a Western-centric, naturalized understanding of European music, and explore the construction of those assumptions. Jennifer Lynn Stoeber, for example, conceptualizes the “listening ear” in her examination of “how dominant listening practices accrue—and change—over time, as well as a descriptor for how the dominant culture exerts pressure on individual listening practices” (7). For scholars such as Jonathan Sterne, the exploration of transformation, transduction, and reproduction of sounds overlaps with issues of circulation and the study of media. In *MP3: The Meaning of a Format*, Sterne articulates the concept of “format theory,” which illuminates registers of media objects that are often overlooked. These include corporate practices, operating codes, and larger

infrastructures that organize the ways that media such as MP3s function (10-11).

While this study does not focus explicitly on the intersectional movement of sound, I examine opera in terms of its transformations, the accrual of dominant practices and the discourses surrounding both as constitutive of operatic ontology. Opera is both a signal for music-drama in performance contexts, and part of North American everyday experience in a variety of public contexts. Sound is a primary (though not sole) register for operatic experience, and my work traces those experiences in a comparative framework along two axes. I use a comparative model to analyze effects of operatic circulation in the early-to-mid-twentieth century upon late-twentieth and twenty-first century engagements with the idea of “opera.” My historical archive is a series of case studies in emergent periods for commercial media: phonography, and radio and television broadcasting.

I see my research as a genealogy that frames opera as a medium unto itself, and thus allows us to consider practices surrounding its circulation in North America through the lens of what Lisa Gitelman has termed “social protocols” (*Already New* 7). Media studies, also a broad and diverse collection of scholarship, demonstrates two distinct trends in approaches to history. The first, affiliated with German theorist Friedrich A. Kittler, prioritizes the physical and technical aspects of media, especially the issues of storage and transmission. For Kittler, “what counts are not the message or the content with which [media] equip so-called souls for the duration of a technological era, but rather ... their circuits, their schematism of perceptibility” (x1-xli). Building on the work of scholars in the late-twentieth century such as Kittler and Marshall McLuhan, Bolter and Grusin use a technology-centred frame for exploring the interconnections of technologies and human activities in a range of formats, periods, and philosophies in their aforementioned concept of remediation.

A second area of media histories is focused on the social interactions that produce and make legible the technologies of media. Prominent among such scholars in the United States is Lisa Gitelman, who traces media genealogies as histories of social and technological negotiation that fostered, for example, the rise of music recording and the Internet. For Gitelman, media histories are more clearly articulated through “modes and habits of perception” than through “technological methods and devices,” although of course these rely upon one another (*Already New* 3). Along similar lines, Jussi Parikka describes media archaeology as a “way to analyse the regimes of memory and creative practices in media culture—both theoretical and artistic” (3). A starting point for this kind of inquiry is neither a purely historical standpoint, nor an analysis of current digital culture, but begins “from the middle – from the entanglement of past and present” (Parikka 3), thus accepting the complexity of influences operating, as Bolter and Grusin suggest, between the “old” and the “new.”

Gitelman describes the activities of media use as “social protocols,” or the shared ways that users participate in a medium. She argues that one way to trace the acceptance of a medium is to identify the extent to which its “social processes of definition and dissemination are separated out and forgotten, and as the social processes of protocol formation and acceptance get ignored” (7). They are not static, of course—the protocols around telephone calls and texting changed with the introduction of smart phones—but they “possess extraordinary inertia” (8). I reorient the distinctions between media forms and protocols towards a reconsideration of opera *as* a medium, and I focus on tracing its genealogies through the codification or reconsideration of its protocols rather than its musical, dramatic, or performance forms. I identify three protocols that seem central to operatic circulation in twentieth-century North America and that have become so familiarized that they are rendered nearly invisible in many opera discourses today.

2.i. Privileging the Voice

Opera privileges the voice as an organizing principle over orchestral, visual and dramatic concerns. Michel Poizat's psychoanalytic analysis of operatic *jouissance* and the voice connects operatic performances with the anticipations of their audiences, suggesting that it is this connection that makes opera so dear to its patrons. He opens with a case study of opera fans in Paris who wait all night for a chance to purchase inexpensive tickets for an upcoming production of a Wagner opera. One respondent observes the desire to mimic the performance he's just seen, observing that, "there's something deeper in this mimicry. There you are imitating this soprano or the aria that some other singer has fluffed, but it seems to me it goes much deeper than that. There's a need for song, a need to feel the vibrations in the ear canal, to feel it in your throat" (27).

The non-verbal, non-semantic experience of singing (especially the "pure cry" that is neither semantic nor musically scored, such as Don Giovanni's last utterance) is, in Poizat's view, foundational in framing opera's effects:

The collapse of the visual order in these instants, or its transfiguration under the alluring influence of voice and music, is not a secondary or accessory phenomena of the operatic genre. Quite the contrary, in a sense it is constitutive of opera. For it is the radical autonomization of the voice, its veritable transformation into a detached object that lays claim to the listener's entire receptivity, that has made possible the very apparatus that is opera. (34-5)

Poizat's observations stem from his local research in France, but his work offers some insight into a long-held but perhaps under-theorized link between the audience and the voice(s) in opera

in a more general sense. While certainly the visual presentation of works on highly public stages such as the Metropolitan Opera is part of the public discourse, opera fans' dedication to particular singers, and the race to recreate the "live" experience on home recording devices in the early twentieth century attests to the kind of connection the research participant above noted. The dubious qualities and "immorality" of operatic stories, and the extreme costs of producing and (often) attending operatic productions are qualified by this search for the *jouissance* of the operatic voice—and the stakes for both singers and audiences are high. Poizat sums up this phenomenon with the claim that "everything in operatic history attests to the fact that that the supreme value in opera is the voice, the vocal aspect by far surpassing all anecdotal, ideological, and even moral considerations as they beat out the significance of the dramatic representation" (122). While the voice in operatic contexts takes on a special status and even in some cases, agency, the attention it demands is also central to the social protocols of opera—especially, though not only, in relation to the non-live circulation that redistributes the voice separately from the body of the singer.

2.ii. Attentive engagement

Experiences of opera are frequently articulated along the logic of extreme attentiveness, and the rewards that attentiveness delivers to its audiences. In sound studies contexts, we could treat attentiveness as analogous to "listening." Tom Rice distinguishes listening from hearing on the basis that "listening is understood to involve a deliberate channelling of attention toward a sound," an activity that invests in acoustic agency and, importantly, signals the allocation of attention or awareness in non-auditory ways (99-100). While for Rice, these non-auditory ways constitute metaphorical uses such as "listening to customers" in corporate messaging, I take the

analogous use of “listening” and “attention” to focus on the demands and rewards of opera in both visual and sonic contexts.

One of the promises articulated by written guides to opera from the past hundred years is that opera will give you the experience that you deserve, based on the attention you give it. If you let yourself be swept away by the music, voice and staging, if you learn the libretto before you attend, you may experience the transcendence offered by that all-encompassing art form (returning again to Wagner’s collation of music, drama, and spectacle into something nearly, if not actually, spiritual). William Ashbrook’s assessment of the famous sextet in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, for example, explicitly frames attentiveness as a value. He writes that “the second section is repeated exactly, and the sextet closes with a brief coda. So salient are the outer melodies that only an attentive listener hears the full richness of texture” (*Donizetti* 367). The right kind of listening will produce, according to Ashbrook, a richer experience.

The calls for attentiveness carry with them the implicit value judgment that opera is worth the effort. As I will discuss in chapter 1, all opera-texts have not always “counted” as the kind of serious music linked to the symphonies of Beethoven and the *Musikdrama* of Wagner in Canadian and U.S. contexts. But in the past sixty years, and in part through the public discourses associated with recording and broadcast industries, operas in general have been aligned with so-called “classical music,” and therefore with “an archetypal example [of] the silent, reverent listening of classical music audiences, where obedience to a convention of stillness and the suppression of coughing, talking, and laughter are markers of cultivated musical sensibility and social respectability” (Rice 102). Thus the listening/attentive protocol is at once a sonic and possibly visual experience relating to a particular opera-text and performance in a particular situation. It reflects the almost imperceptible redistribution of which kinds of engagements

“count,” as new media reframe the circulation forms of opera throughout the twentieth century. It is also a protocol understood as a marker for entry to membership in opera sociability. This brings me to the last, and perhaps most abstract, protocol, that I see as central to understanding opera in embodied contexts.

2.iii. Apprehension

The “rules of engagement” for opera seem to be an enormous barrier to entry for newcomers. The industry preoccupation with describing what to expect and what to do at performances is visible, for example, on opera company and arts-focused websites. The numerous opera guides and “Opera 101” publications also indicate that opera is understood as having codes of behaviour that one cannot simply pick up through observation. For example, National Public Radio ran a blog from 2011-2012 entitled “How to talk like an Opera Geek” which “attempts to decode the intriguing and intimidating lexicon of the opera house.” While the specifics of these codes (black tie at the Met on Mondays, for example) vary by company and period, the sense that there *is* a set of rules seems to remain steady. These examples suggest a sense of “fear as to what may happen” or “dread” that accompanies a lack of information or familiarity (“Apprehension”).

By apprehension, however, I also include a hierarchy of participation. In addition to the sense of fear or dread, apprehension implies a taking hold of or possessing, in which opera participants access knowledge about, and build familiarity with, aspects of opera with particular intensity. One example linking this “taking hold” of knowledge is the idea of initiation. Cultural critic Wayne Koestenbaum describes listening to his first opera record as an “initiation” (10). Cultural theorist T.W. Adorno likewise distinguishes between kinds of listening using that term: “It may well be that the uninitiated listener, whose reaction to one of the Wagner’s mature works

is one of boredom, does not simply reveal a pedestrian consciousness incapable of responding to Wagner's claims to be sublime. This failure may instead be caused in part by the flawed nature of the experience of time in the music itself" (*Wagner* 37). Adorno's excusing the uninitiated listener signals not his own valuation of Wagner, but the resonance of this differentiation. These examples range sixty years in publication, and suggest that the investment in the "right" way of doing opera, and therefore becoming an initiate, have proliferated throughout the twentieth century. This aspect of apprehension also deploys the more arcane use of the term as related to deeply sensorial affect (in the case of opera, particular of listening) that connects participation closely to the primacy of the voice and attentiveness. Indeed, the primacy of the voice and attentiveness could fit within this protocol, but I distinguish it through its particular focus on the self-reflexive activities of opera publics.

These operatic protocols resonate in the many different contexts in which publics engage in operatic activities (including consciously rejecting them in word or practice). But as is the case with most media, social protocols are exposed in new ways when media interact. Opera has historically been called upon by a variety of "new" media—the phonograph, the radio, and television—to authenticate and authorize emergent practices in North America from the 1900s through the 1950s.¹⁵ Not all new media necessarily fit within Williams's concept of "emergent," by which he means "new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationships" that are alternative or oppositional to dominant practices in some way (*Marxism*

¹⁵ The focus in this work on emergent media practices foregrounds the fluid national boundary between Canadian and U.S. circulation of opera, particularly in the geographic region of the Northeast. While I am sure a similar relationship exists in U.S. / Mexican contexts, the media histories of broadcast and record circulation are discrete. I therefore refer to Canadian / U.S. contexts in my use of the term "North American" throughout this study, and acknowledge that limitation.

and Literature 123). While a new medium may not demonstrate emergence in the sense of Williams's formation, the periods in which new media appear are marked by the possibilities of change and opposition. In North America, opera traditions and protocols authorize and make legible new media formats in times of media change. They are periods of what Henry Jenkins calls "convergence" (*Convergence Culture* 2), in which one medium's protocols, rendered invisible by history and inertia, may be called into view, and even challenged or changed, when that new medium calls upon the old to become legible, or recognizable, to their publics. Because protocols are most legible in these periods of convergence, and because commercial recording, radio, and television broadcasting all turned to opera in their earliest years in North America, I organize my analysis of opera protocols around these three case studies.

3. The Operascope: Analyzing Opera Across Media

In offering an approach to understanding opera as a medium rather than a musical form, I attempt to create an analytical bridge between scholarship on operatic forms and history, and theoretical considerations of mediation, performance, and circulation. Operatic protocols cannot be circulated, of course, without some version of a score, a text, performers, and publics, and they are most easily interrogated in instances wherein existing protocols come into contact with emergent or conflicting ones related to another medium. In using convergence cases as my objects of study, I also hope to bring opera scholarship more closely into contact with the media genealogies and cultural analysis of public culture in Canada and the United States. Because this analysis oscillates among realms of human activities, including imagination, the multi-media forms of opera-texts, and their circulation and performance contexts, I turn to Arjun Appadurai's concept of "global flow" as a model for my own concept of the North American

“operascape.”

In his study, *Modernity at Large*, Appadurai articulates five dimensions of cultural flow: ethnoscapas, mediascapas, technoscapas, financescapas, and ideoscapas, each with a fluid and irregular, rather than stable and fixed, shape. Appadurai considers the cultural flow through these scapes as fundamentally imagined, which is to say they are formed through the “image, the imagined, the imaginary” (284) rather than founded on primordial truths. For Appadurai, the mediascape is a twofold dimension of global cultural flow, in that it refers “both to the distribution of electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information . . . which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by the media” (286). While Appadurai is primarily interested in the relationships between information flows and the imagined world created through that flow (and its intersection with other flows), he stresses that the most significant aspect of mediascapas is how “they provide (especially in their television, film and cassette forms) large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and ethnoscapas to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed” (287). Ethnoscapas are, for Appadurai, the movement of people—both imagined and physical—through the world, and they are fundamentally linked to mediascapas. In the prioritization of such a repertoire, self-constituting in its circulation, I see a correlation between the dynamic of media- and ethno-scapes, and the complex forms and protocols I consider under the idea of “opera.”

The relationships between mediascapas and other -scapes allow Appadurai to frame a global analysis based on movement and shifts, rather than resolution or fixity. In my formulation of the operascape, I also attend to movement and circulation as a primary focus of analysis, rather than fixity, but I focus on activities we might organize as social and aesthetic rather than

primarily rooted in institutionalized media (i.e. news, advertising etc.). I see the constituencies of the operascape as including the imagined and real movement of people (both performers and publics), as well as the sounds, sights, and narratives more typically associated with opera as a form. The operascape comprises the many media of opera composition and performance, as well as those not native to its genesis, such as sound recording, radio and television broadcasting, and serialized and promotional print objects. It therefore offers a space for exploring occasions of convergence and the ensuing exposures and negotiations of opera's protocols. This study is concerned with the formal elements of individual operatic texts, productions, or citations, only to the extent that they can be understood as participating in the formation and reification of, or resistance to, opera protocols. These protocols are powerful in the ways that they circulate without notice or comment, and it is my intention to bring them into focus as a driving force behind, and one affected by, opera's multitude of circulations in North America.

In an attempt to corral the admittedly unwieldy archive that I have identified, I treat two opera-texts, *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786) and *Madama Butterfly* (1904), as *leitmotifs* for the dissertation, and I turn to their circulation regularly (though not exclusively) in my analysis of media convergence and protocols. W.A. Mozart and Lorenzo da Ponte's *Le nozze di Figaro* is a comedy composed in the eighteenth century, it works in the classical music form, it relies on intricate ensemble performance, it enjoys near-universal critical acclaim and is regularly repurposed sonically (rather than visually) in non-operatic contexts as diverse as the films *Zombieland* and *The Shawshank Redemption*. Giacomo Puccini, Luigi Illica, and Giuseppe Giacosa's *Madama Butterfly*, is, in terms of form, the operatic opposite of *Figaro*. It was composed in the first years of the twentieth century, its narrative follows a dramatic or tragic structure (depending on who you ask), it operates musically on the borders of romanticist and

modernist composition, relies predominantly on the vocal performance of the title role, and has been critiqued as being both “saccharine” (Krysa), and racist, especially in its stagings. Its most frequently cited excerpt, “Un bel di,” has enjoyed a history of adaptation into other musical idioms (as discussed in chapter 1), and the intense focus on Cio-Cio-San’s isolation has fostered a kind of visual iconography for the figure of a tragically doomed soprano.¹⁶ While in many aspects these two operas stand as contrasts in form, their circulation often foregrounds the operatic protocols I have noted above. They are also, in terms of contemporary industry and public discourses, treated as ontologically the same under the moniker of “opera.”

4. Chapter Breakdown

Chapter 1: Opera on Record

The first chapter traces early commercial phonography investments in operatic protocols through celebrity culture, user autonomy, and repetition, particularly in the Victor Talking Machine Company’s “Red Seal” label. Using the historical comparison of Caruso and Pavarotti, as well as contemporary examples from *The Shawshank Redemption* and a 1998 dispute at the Metropolitan Opera regarding Cecilia Bartoli’s decision to sing “insertion arias” in a production of *Le nozze di Figaro*, I argue that the ways in which early recording companies relied upon opera to make claims about the value of records amplifies a kind of “aria culture” deeply imbricated in forms of celebrity attached to both performers and certain opera music.

¹⁶ A production photograph was, for example, the web banner for the national advocacy organization Opera America’s new website in 2012. Cio-Cio-San has also been central in debates about “yellow face” and racism in staging Asian characters on North American stages. See theatre producer and arts advocate Howard Sherman’s blog post, “Yellowface Bait-and-Switch” for an analysis of the gap between marketing and casting in Fargo-Moorhead’s 2015 production of *Madama Butterfly*.

Chapter 2: Opera on the Airwaves

The second chapter focuses on the rise of radio and television broadcasting, as primary drivers of operatic dissemination across North America beyond the stage. I trace early series and special broadcasts of the CBC (1933) and WEA/NBC (1922-36) as evidence of the ways that broadcasting promised, through opera, to bring the “live” experience of great “quality” into homes. Beginning with a reading of *Mad Men*’s deployment of *Le nozze di Figaro*, I investigate the ways that contradictions of liveness and mediation are refracted through opera broadcasting. The heart of the chapter focuses on the Metropolitan Opera radio broadcasts and NBC’s television Opera Theater (1949-1964). I argue that the gradual codification of radio and television broadcasting practices mirrors the reification of an operatic repertoire focused predominantly on grand Italian and German opera, with significant consequences for the recognition of opera as rooted in the past, even as new works were commissioned and broadcast on both radio and television. The emerging practices of broadcast hosting also had significant impacts on protocols of apprehension and attentiveness. Moreover, because the emergence of nation-wide television networks coincides with the post-war opera boom of the 1950s and ‘60s, many regional and civic opera companies in existence today developed practices in response to the nascent popularity of television broadcasting.

Chapter 3: Opera in Print

While the first two chapters explore specific media that emerged in the twentieth century, this last chapter explores a case of print participation in the operascape. The thirteen editions of *The Victor Book of the Opera* published from 1912 - 1968 span the cases of media convergence examined in chapters 1 and 2, and therefore offer a multivalent archive. They present a metatext

for media emergence and change throughout the publication period generally, and for the phonograph in particular, because they were created to advertise Victor's opera records. They track changes in opera-text circulation and the discourses of evaluation connected to these changes. The books invite a consideration of how a print form—by no means emergent in the twentieth century—deploys invitations to sensual, sonic pleasures, nostalgia, and education through shifting frameworks of image and text. The internal shifts in the book's content throughout the publication history also track an increasing focus on education in opera's protocol of apprehension, and prefigure the generic markers of familiarizing opera now common in both guide books, and on opera company websites.

Chapter 1: Opera On Record

In North America, opera-texts currently circulate in excerpt as much as, if not more than, in complete performances. Choruses, overtures, *intermezzi*, duets and especially arias constitute more than the musical and dramatic units commonly understood as the building blocks of opera. They function as the markers of compositional style (what's a Verdi opera without the big chorus?); as formations of intense drama (done well, the Humming Chorus of *Madama Butterfly* pairs effervescent sound with a scene of unbearable waiting); and the currency of stardom (a good "Der Hölle Roche" is hard to find). Even through-composed works cannot escape the inertia of excerpting culture. Richard Wagner may be turning in his grave with every cinematic/helicopter "Ride of the Valkyrie," but for the vast majority of North Americans, opera experiences are nonetheless found outside the realm of live opera production and its opera houses: in living rooms and moving vehicles; in CD collections and on *Youtube*; on turntables and in movie theaters. This is certainly the case for "*La donna é mobile*," which, as I indicate in my introduction, has been mobilized in a dizzying array of contexts (including my own 2008 telephonic rendition to an audience of one). In light of these circulatory contexts, the mobility and transfigurations of opera excerpts are vital to understanding the interplay between what opera companies produce and how their publics recognize that work. The concept of the operascape invites a focus on the ways that regimes of recognition cross media boundaries and gain inertia over time. Keeping that larger frame in mind, I oscillate my focus in this chapter between a key site of amplification for opera excerpting practices, namely, the early commercial recording industry at the turn of the twentieth century, and recent examples of opera circulation illuminating the longevity and influence of this convergence throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. In short, I argue that opera owes much of its contemporary

familiarity—in terms of celebrity, music, and even modes of behaviour—to modes of circulation that were in many ways framed by the period of early commercial phonography.

Excerpting is a long-standing tradition in opera cultures, dating to eighteenth-century keyboard transcripts, concert and band culture, and later Vaudeville programs in the nineteenth century.¹⁷ In one sense, sonic recording of opera is a continuation of this normative mode of circulation, and has had significant impact on the industry of opera production in North America throughout the past hundred years. In the early twentieth century, as commercial phonography experienced a groundswell in production and consumption, the protocols linked with excerpted opera circulation—star power, star selections, and the primacy of the voice—became foundational for the ways that early record producers introduced both their own products and the very idea of phonography to their audiences. In my view, this period of convergence had significant and lasting impact upon the cultural value affiliated with phonography (including later developments in the 1920s and 1940s), and the ways that opera has been reified as particular kinds of listening practice.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, sound recording and playback practices became an increasing part of public and private life in Canada and the United States. Phonographs and records became available for home sale by Emile Berliner (whose company was later merged with the Victor Talking Machine Company) in 1894, and competition between Thomas Edison's National Phonograph Company, the Columbia Phonograph Company, and Berliner was fierce (Gitelman "New Media" 61). Whereas the Edison cylinder-shaped phonograph was given highly public presentations and demonstrations in the 1890s, the Victrola

¹⁷ See Katherine Preston's *Opera on the Road* and Lawrence Levine's *Highbrow / Lowbrow* for detailed work on nineteenth-century circulation in these contexts.

was created after the Victor Talking Machine Company had been incorporated by Eldridge Johnson in 1901, and used a flat disc, rather than Edison's cylinder, for recording and playback. In this period of intense competition, producers sought to set their work apart in terms of quality, accessibility, and desirability. Victor in particular drew upon operatic circulation to promote phonography and recording as extraordinary both in terms of technology and artistry. Scholars such as Lisa Gitelman, Tom Gunning and Mark Katz have explored the connections of recording technologies and what Gitelman describes as the "protocols" associated with phonographic media. Building on their work, I argue that the protocols of opera and those of recording in this period had significant effects on both the excerpting practices familiar to opera circulation, and the culture of celebrity imbricated in those practices.

Media theorist Tom Gunning has argued that early recording is an instance of the "technological uncanny," which poses "challenges to basic categories of experience" such as space, time, presence and absence, particularly though not exclusively in the years of its emergence (Gunning 48). For Gunning, phonographic confrontation with these experiences is embedded in the capacity for representations and re-presentations "which create simulacra so intense they appear to double the original" (48). While these effects may diminish over time, the uncanny permeates a cycle of wonder because new developments and possible failures continually reassert the experience of doubling. The musical and social legacies of emergent recording are so pervasive that musicologist Mark Katz employs the term "phonograph effect" in a study of recorded music in the twentieth century, to frame "any change in musical behaviour—whether listening, performing, or composing—that has arisen in response to sound-recording technology" (2). For Katz, these effects are closely linked to the fundamental differences in time and space embodied by live and recorded music, respectively: "when performed live, musical

sound is fleeting, evanescent. Recordings, however, capture these fugitive sounds, tangibly preserving them on physical media Once musical sound is reified—made into a thing—it becomes transportable, saleable, collectable, and manipulable in ways that have never before been possible” (4). I place the slippages of experience mentioned by Gunning at the centre of understanding emergent recording and its “phonograph effects” relating to opera.

The range of activities that we might understand as participation in the operascape has been framed in a number of ways by the phonographic experience at home: an experience that is at once privatized and achieved through a distance and temporal disconnection from the performance of opera itself. Mechanically reproduced sound meant that great works or famous musicians’ performances were in a sense doubled, made material through technological reproduction. In addition to these uncanny effects, then, musical access to artists and works was no longer restricted to the bodily co-present audience or the descriptive writing described by Stoeber as a kind of recording (71): that in turn meant that class and space were no longer necessarily restrictions on sonic access to certain types of music.¹⁸ As such, some of the “phonograph effects” studied by Katz may also be considered products of the operatic protocols that early phonograph experiences amplified, codified, and consecrated in their circulation.

In her analysis of early recording, Gitelman argues that sonic inscription challenged nineteenth-century ideas of ephemerality, permanence, and reproductive capabilities in different kinds of registers. The word “record” itself underwent a significant ontological shift, especially relating to a sense of its public deployment: “whereas the word had long meant ‘an authentic

¹⁸ Economic capacity of course remains a demarcation for this kind of access, but as several media historians have noted, the advent of the phonograph and later the television set saw enormous and widespread popularity in spite of the sometimes-extreme proportional cost between new objects for sale and average salaries. See for example Stephen Cole’s description of Canadian television use in the early 1950s (8).

register,’ including the abstract, immaterial, and impersonal register of public purview, it was now ‘perverted’ to refer to a person’s past performance” (*Already New* 44). The sense of rendering a person’s activities permanent echoes Gunning’s engagement with the concept of the uncanny in recorded sound—that a person (or persona) is “registered” through the stamping process and becomes a kind of double on the disc or cylinder.

Permanence and reproducibility cut conceptually across recording technologies—the stampers, matrices, cylinders and discs—and human experience with that technology, including singing for, listening to, winding the machinery, “playing”, and buying records. Gitelman recalls Jonathan Sterne in observing that recording was, from the outset “A complex ‘studio art’” in which “both the copy and original are productions of reproducibility” (*Audible Past* 236, quoted in Gitelman 3). Opera is likewise a medium that invests in vocal virtuosity and the reproduction of intense sonic and dramatic effects. It is in a way marked by a retrospective aesthetics, in which the uniqueness of individual performances is constantly positioned by systems of reproduction, including legacies of performance interpretation, and stardom of artists (and, to an extent, composers).

Both the recording of a performance and its pressed copies are known by the term “recordings” or later “records,” which refracts the individual, unique voice and moment of performance against the mass production, distribution, and user engagement with that performance-rendered object. Walter Benjamin’s foundational essay on cultural production and mass production iterates a concern over the ontological shifts in the production of art introduced by mechanical reproduction: notably, he acknowledges that the “original” work can be transposed from its time and place via reproduction, and that “technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself” (220).

Thus, while the ritualistic value and “aura” of an original work depreciates as it “leaves its locale to ... resound in the drawing room,” it also, for Benjamin, is an instance of art meeting “the beholder halfway” (220-221). The differentiation between “original” and “reproduction,” becomes, in the matrix of opera and recording, intertwined with social protocols that reinforce the effects of celebrity for both performers and the operatic excerpts they mobilize.

According to Lisa Gitelman, media are “socially realized structures of communication, where structures include both technological forms and their associated protocols, and where communication is a cultural practice, a ritualized collocation of different people on the same mental map, sharing or engaged with popular ontologies of representation” (*Already New* 7). I read opera in much the same way she does media: any work circulating under the moniker “opera” does so in contexts that are both ephemeral, leaving no specific trace or inscription, and also fixed within cultural practices that are in some ways also ritualized or set in protocols. In my conception, however, protocols are sites of constant negotiation because they circulate alongside material, imaginative, and discursive instantiations of opera. Even if they are not explicitly articulated, and especially when they become calcified into seemingly timeless truths, they organize both participation and circulation in the operascape. One way of mapping these social protocols in historical contexts is by turning to the metadiscourses concurrent with an emergent medium. I adapt Gitelman’s analysis of media and social protocols to explore not only technological capacity, but also the uses of new media as a lens for understanding how mediation both relies upon and, in a sense, organizes public understandings of opera.

Recorded sound technologies became recognizable, I argue, in part through their echoing of protocols already associated with operatic forms. In the early twentieth century, operatic forms and experiences were increasingly remediated through phonography and its various

technologies. In this site of convergence, we can observe the protocols of vocal primacy interacting with the concept of reproducibility, and better understand how these relationships foregrounded the capacity for certain forms of stardom to gain prominence in the operascape. In comparing early phonography with contemporary examples of opera's circulation, we can see the legacies and impacts of this convergence at work: in the formation and reification of operatic celebrity, in the ways that attentiveness organizes participation in the operascape for audiences and publics, and finally, in the ways that the first two come to bear on forms of opera as they are realized by producers and artists.

1. Vocal Celebrity: Pavarotti and Caruso

On February 10, 2006, a television audience estimated two-billion strong tuned in to watch the opening ceremonies of the Turin Olympic games. After the display of regional and national pride nestled amongst the parade of nations, the lighting of the Olympic Flame, and other generic indicators of the modern Olympics, the ceremony concluded with a grand finale featuring arguably the most famous operatic tenor of the twentieth century: Luciano Pavarotti. Pavarotti, in what would become the last public performance before his death, sang the aria that had brought him crossover fame with the "Three Tenors" and performances on non-operatic world stages, "*Nessun dorma*" from *Turandot* (Giacomo Puccini, Giuseppe Adami and Renato Sinoni, 1926).

Pavarotti's career spanned three decades and included television, recording and live performances in both traditional opera performances and a crossover settings with non-classical artists.¹⁹ The ceremony's production values played up this crossover appeal by juxtaposing the

¹⁹ His "Pavarotti and Friends" charity concerts and TV specials were the primary space of these crossover performances.

Olympic venue with operatic iconography, including an enormous red curtain reminiscent of nineteenth-century proscenium theatres as the backdrop for the finale, and the man himself wearing a tuxedo and black cape. Pavarotti's voice was past its prime, but his Turin performance still rehearsed the affective experiences of Italy's *bel canto* traditions, the triumphal mood garnered by a similar performance sixteen years earlier during the World Cup in Rome, and the conjunction of the above in the bodily, celebrity presence of the artist himself.

The Italian Olympic Committee's decision to conclude its opening ceremonies with an operatic aria by the most recognizable opera singer in the world operates along a number of intersecting goals. First, Italian cultural production receives the literal "last word" on the Olympic stage, showcasing the work of the last "great" Italian composer, Giacomo Puccini, with his last, unfinished opera, *Turandot*, performed by the best-known operatic singer of the twentieth century. Second, the precedent of the performance recalls the 1990 World Cup in Rome, which was also marked by this artist and this aria in both the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) coverage and the first "Three Tenors" concert, staged during the eve of the final game.²⁰ Third, the sentiment of the character in the aria, Prince Calaf, fits tidily into the mood of anticipation, competition, and nationalism, with its final lines vaulting up the vocal register with the repeated line "*Vincerò! Vincerò!*" which translates as "I will win". Finally, the consecrated performance of celebrity (discussed below), a long-standing tradition in operatic culture, is both amplified and exported to the world of nationalistic sporting culture.

There are logics operating invisibly alongside the others mentioned above: those of mediation and liveness. Pavarotti did not actually sing that aria on that stage at that moment. In

²⁰ See Jonathan White's essay "Opera, Politics and Television: *bel canto* by Satellite" for a detailed description of the first "Three Tenors" concert in Rome.

fact, according to Pavarotti's long time colleague, Leone Magiera, the *Radiotelevisione italiana* (RAI) orchestra recorded the accompaniment in a number of different *tempi*, one of which was selected by Pavarotti for his own vocal recording, a few weeks before the event. The recording was then played to an orchestra that "mimed playing" while Pavarotti "mimed singing" (183). Magiera describes the effect as "superb: no one was aware of the technological trick that had been played, neither the television viewers, nor even the audiences at the event who were seated at some distance from the stage" (183). In this instance, recording made possible the bodily co-presence of an ailing singer, and it engaged the opera protocol of the primacy of the voice and the reification of the star aria to create its effects.

While this phenomenon is no surprise in the twenty-first century's debates over "live" singing at public (and especially outdoor) events, it is historically rare in the opera world, which, as I have mentioned, places intense scrutiny and reward on vocal performance—even for a seventy-one year-old artist.²¹ The near-erasure of the line between liveness and recording is possible through the concatenation of the immediacy of the mediation (it was so well done that it was nearly impossible to notice), and celebrity circulation, which foments the celebration of an aging singer over other considerations. In response to the performance, however, posts to the *Opera-L* listserv, an active online community since 1995, debated the merits of the performance along the division of vocal quality versus overall effect in the days following the ceremony. They also demonstrate that Magiera was incorrect in claiming that viewers hadn't noticed the "technological trick" (183).

²¹ Consider, for instance, that in 2014 soprano Renée Fleming sang the national anthem at the National Football League's Superbowl, and mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato did the same for Major League Baseball's World Series, both live and to the great delight of opera fans. Of course, neither singer is even near the age of seventy.

Amid concerns over Pavarotti's breath support, unsteady tone, and the all-important transposition down "at least" a half tone, one person writes that it was moving despite the agreed-upon "wobbly" tone, arguing that it "was great that they chose to end the ceremony with opera" (Anderson). Another remarks that while indeed Pavarotti's breath control may have been lacking, "who else but an icon like Pavarotti should sing, no matter WHAT the key" (Edwards). Pavarotti's performance, then, offered his publics what turned out to be the last display of his (albeit disconnected) voice and body. In their responses, the *Opera-L* writers display a kind of nostalgia linking the singer's former career, the aria, and the idea of opera being significant in a sporting event and a global performance. They also display participation in the protocol of attentiveness that is closely linked to the affordances of sound recording, as I will discuss further below.

The reflexive impacts of media circulation and operatic celebrity are evident in this Turin performance/broadcast, because while Pavarotti was already an international opera star before the "Three Tenors" phenomenon of the 1990s, it was his star-studded concerts and numerous recordings that vaulted him into the very celebrity sphere that garnered his inclusion in the Turin ceremony. And "*Nessun dorma*" has circulated alongside that celebrity for decades. Consider Aretha Franklin's Italian- and English-language rendition at the 1998 Grammy awards, when she subbed in for an ailing Pavarotti. Her performance, sung in the same key as Pavarotti typically chose, relocates the sonic association of the ringing tenor voice to her husky chest voice. Her vocal embellishments transpose the familiar melody to the genre of soul, rather than Western art music tradition. In sharing the stage and crossing to the performance style of Franklin, "*Nessun dorma*" tracks a circulation path both inseparable from and responding to the personal cult of Pavarotti: not his voice but in his preferred key, not quite his performance but neither entirely

separate from it. The aria recalls Pavarotti's iconic connection wherever it goes, be it at the Grammy awards, or on reality television shows. The brief but intense phenomenon of Paul Potts on the television show *Britain's Got Talent* in 2007 is one such example. This amateur singer won the first season's competition with his rendition of "*Nessun dorma*," which purportedly captivated audiences and judges alike.²² I suggest that, post-1990, this aria is saturated with Pavarotti's fame, and that this is part of why renditions such as Potts's garner such attention.

It is perhaps fitting that when Pavarotti was no longer able to sing live, his last public performance would be mediated through the technologies and protocols that had helped make him a star. Pavarotti's celebrity has some of the longest reach and widest influence of any singer in the twentieth century, even after his passing in 2007. However, the conditions for that celebrity are founded in some of the structural modes of operatic circulation and media change that marked the early twentieth century. These intersections warrant closer examination of the conventions through which both opera and phonography have become and remain legible to North American publics.

I contend that the protocols of early sound recording responded, in part, to opera's long-standing negotiations regarding the primacy of the voice and attentiveness, and that the "phonograph effects" described by Mark Katz below had a reciprocal impact on the affordances of operatic celebrity, excerpting practices, and the consequent investments in specific interpretations, performance practices, and repertoire curation that remain visible in the contemporary operascape. In short, I consider Pavarotti to be an inheritor of the long-held intersections between (opera) celebrity and recording culture. This connection is as old as commercial recording itself in North America, and it is most easily explored in the extraordinary

²² This performance has been made available by *Britain's Got Talent* on [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9311111111).

relationship between another famous tenor, Enrico Caruso, and the Victor Talking Machine Company.

In the early 1800s, several opera touring companies travelled extensively throughout the United States and Canada. As Katherine Preston has noted, during the antebellum period many British stars toured as celebrities in the United States and “played a crucial role in the success of the full-fledged opera troupes” that followed in the 1840s and ‘50s (7).²³ Lawrence Levine observes that it was the stars, singing both popular and art music, that filled the opera houses and concerts halls of the mid-nineteenth century, and that only in the later nineteenth century did “classical” and “popular” repertoire really find differentiation (*Highbrow / Lowbrow* 101). Thus, from its touring days into its institutionalization in the confines of the opera house, opera circulation in the United States was rooted in the recognition of its stars. In a 1902 account, Henry Charles Lahee wrote “it has always been the case in America that the name of the singer rather than the names of the opera will draw the audience” (145).²⁴ The star culture surrounding both tours and opera houses has been well documented, with high drama both on and off the stage. It is perhaps most visible in the popular press’s “puffing” practices and in some of the claquees that volunteered or were hired, variously to cheer or boo a particular artist, both of which have been examined at length elsewhere.²⁵

The star system was not unique to opera, of course, and Levine notes that classical

²³ Susan Porter also notes that the circulation of star performers intensified significantly in the United States after 1800, which in turned fostered a shortened rehearsal period for music theatre performance, since stars would be in each city for a short time (197).

²⁴ The general consensus is that this differs from continental Europe, which had long histories of regional and local opera histories, but of course an intensive comparison would be the focus of a different study.

²⁵ Max Maretzek, a nineteenth-century U.S. impresario, details these experiences in depth in his entertaining and self-aggrandizing memoir *Crotchets and Quavers, or, Revelations of an Opera Manager in America*, originally published in 1855.

English actors likewise undertook well-publicized and lucrative U.S. tours in the early nineteenth century. But opera stardom had a significant impact on the texts it circulated, particularly those arias or musical selections that were seen as indexical to the star persona. For example, Katherine Preston tracks the rise of Teresa Parodi to U.S. acclaim in her roles as Norma and Lucrezia Borgia for Max Maretzek in the 1850-1851 season at Astor Place, in spite of scheduling competition from the infamous Jenny Lind tour promoted by P.T. Barnum that same year (161-164). This link to specific roles and arias no doubt added to the comparative practices of claquees and critics alike. For example, any new-comer to roles like Marguerite in *Faust* might have to contend with not only a previous performance, but with the association of a role with the considerable clout of a star's reputation on the operatic stage. Individual arias' and characters' semantic links with the famous artists that performed them creates a condition necessary to what I see as a kind of aria culture, in which musical excerpts or scenes circulated beyond a fully-staged production, and thus indexed a piece with a certain performer as much, if not more than, with the operatic text for which it was composed.

Stars toured extensively, thus bringing their name recognition to bear on their famous roles and arias throughout Canada and the United States. The circulation of stars and their repertoire was a well-established mode of production in North America before the advent of the recording industry in the twentieth century. The rise of recording, however, offered fixed archives for these relationships, and mobilized them in a network of circulation that extended into the home, and offered new, repeated access to interpretation and performance.

In the early years of commercial record sales, the Victor Talking Machine Company and its British affiliate, the Gramophone and Typewriter Company, were quick to begin demarcating visually the different kinds of music they were selling on records, and the Red Seal label is the

most distinctive of these choices. These particular labels date to 1901, when a Deutsche-*Grammophon* dealer affiliated with Gramophone and Typewriter suggested that a red label would “achieve the proper patrician air” affiliated with the artists from the Russian Imperial Opera whose records he was promoting (Gelatt 112). Many of the first Red Seal artists, such as Enrico Caruso, Francesco Tamagno, and Nellie Melba, were opera singers.

Enrico Caruso was a Neapolitan tenor who had early success in southern Italy before performing in the world premieres of Umberto Giordano’s *Fedora* and Giacomo Puccini’s *La Bohème* in Milan in the 1890s (*American National Biography*). At the turn of the twentieth century he was a well-known European star, and was chosen by Gramophone and Typewriter to record some of the earliest Red Seal offerings (Bolig, *Caruso* 3). His voice was well suited to the acoustic horn, and therefore despite his “round face, portly build, and ungainly acting” (*American National Biography*), Caruso became a star on both sides of the Atlantic—and his records came to North America before he did. Caruso’s Metropolitan Opera debut in New York was in 1903, a year after those first Milanese recordings were pressed and sold. Bolig describes the enormous publicity campaign undertaken by Victor prior to Caruso’s American debut and notes that the singer “was reportedly surprised to discover that he was a celebrity when he arrived in New York in October of that year” (*Caruso* 11).

According to Bolig, Caruso’s first records “created an unprecedented sensation, and in the six months following their release, the records also created a huge demand for gramophones throughout Europe. Their importance cannot be understated” (*Caruso* 3).²⁶ The value that Victor

²⁶ A note on terminology: while the term “gramophone” is technically discrete from “phonograph,” which was patented by Edison, I use the term “phonograph” to indicate the variety of recording technologies in North American circulation at the turn of the twentieth century, because it is this term that becomes the dominant nomenclature in U.S. contexts. The

saw in famous artists is demonstrated, in part, by the royalty contracts they created for the most illustrious of the Red Seal catalogue artists, and that have become a staple of the recording industry (Gelatt 119). These contracts inflated the cost of the Red Seal labels: one of Caruso's early contracts with Victor offered him fifty cents for every record sold (Bolig, *Caruso* 12) and ensured his exclusivity in recording with Victor. The records started in price at \$3.00, which means that Caruso's percentage was as high as sixteen percent of each unit sold, in addition to his initial \$2000 fee.²⁷ But the cost itself was only part of the equation.

As Bolig notes, "because the cost of his records was more than most people could afford, Caruso's value to the Victor Talking Machine Company was as much for the prestige that his name lent to their catalogue as it was for the income that his records generated" (*Caruso* 15). Victor's dependence upon and inflation of Caruso's fame constitutes a sales model contingent upon the material production and circulation of celebrity records, supported substantially by what Gérard Genette describes as paratexts, or "discourses that [are] fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary, and dedicated to the service of something other than themselves" (12). Many opera singers entered Victor's "galaxy of stars" in the next forty years, but the relationship with Enrico Caruso was one of Victor's longest and most highly exploited.

Caruso made 496 recordings between 1900 and 1920, most of them operatic, the majority of which were released by Victor or its European affiliates (Bolig, *Caruso* 4). The timing of his

patent fights are, in part, why Victor named its most successful phonographic device the "Victrola."

²⁷ For comparison purposes I note here that during these years a (presumably white) middle-class family in the United States earned, on average, \$15.00 per week (Bolig, *Caruso* 12). It is perhaps also important to note here that these records predate long-play albums. Most early Red Seal records only played one selection—both sides were not used until long after other labels were produced double-sided (Gelatt 154). A typical 12" disc at 78-rpm had a playing time of about four minutes (162).

onstage U.S. premiere with the circulation of his recordings also meant that, in terms of North America, there was no clear distinction between his two careers.²⁸ Caruso died before the era of electronic recording began in the mid-1920s, but his powerful voice, clear tone, and the technical quality of his acoustic records meant that Victor could continue to sell them long after the acoustic era ended.²⁹ Caruso's longevity and enormous popularity was in large part due to his circulation on record; it constitutes a specific kind of celebrity linking the primacy of the voice and the technologies of phonography.

Operatic celebrity differs from film or television celebrity in its extreme identification with the vocal qualities of the performing body. Chris Rojek's post-structuralist theory of celebrity builds on the notion that "star images are inflected and modified by the mass media and the productive assimilation of the audience" (44). Rojek adapts the work of Richard Dyer, who negotiates between a text-centric, semiotic understanding of stars as meaning-makers in film, and sociological and ideological construction of stars as combining "the spectacular with the every day" (Dyer 35). Rojek's formulation extends beyond Dyer's focus on film celebrities, and also further into the "para-social" relationship between celebrity figures and their audiences (52). That is to say, relations of intimacy are "constructed through mass-media rather than direct experience and face-to-face meetings" (52). Rojek suggests that this intimacy is inherently linked to commodification, and that celebrity culture "embodies desire in an animate object, which allows for deeper levels of attachment and identification than with inanimate commodities" (189).

²⁸ Michael Sherman offers the following technical description: "A 'record' is a particular *pressing* made from a metal stamper, which in turn was made from a previously made *recording*. The time span between the recording of the selection and the pressing of a particular record may have ranged from a few days to many years" (7).

²⁹ Victor even went to the trouble of recording an orchestra accompaniment for some of his records after his death, so that his works could be re-released and compete with newer recordings in the 1920s and 1930s.

Rojek's analysis delineates between ascribed and achieved celebrity, with ascribed celebrity being inherited, such as along lines of lineage (as in royal or political families), and achieved celebrity having to do with exceptional performance in a field such as sports or artistic performance (17). Operatic celebrity, while certainly constituted along the lines of Rojek's media commodity formation, is significantly invested in a metaphysical construction that is connected to what I identified earlier as the protocol of privileging the voice.

As I noted in the introduction, the voice occupies, quite literally "centre stage" in analyses and considerations of opera, both for academics such as psychoanalyst Michel Poizat and opera fans such as those posting to the *Opera-L* listserv. Poizat employs a Lacanian reading of the symbolic order to construct a compelling case for vocal *jouissance* as constitutive of operatic experiences: opera audiences and fans are (often) rewarded with experiences that exceed the semantic order through extremes of vocalization—particularly but not only in the high voice of the soprano, the tenor, and the (now defunct) castrati. Poizat links this high voicing with the cry of an angel to early modern Church music. He suggests that in opera, the body bearing that voice, the actor, takes on a kind of idol status, both the rejected object of tragedy and the divine object: "The actor is ineluctably bound to become not only the *porte-parole*, the spokesman or bearer of the word, but the *porte-voix*, the bearer of the voice of human suffering" (190). It is no surprise, then, that artists (especially tenors and sopranos) that have occupied the primary roles in operatic repertoire have often been framed in terms of metaphysics, usually through the function of their voice in listeners' experience.

Opera stardom operates in a kind of dual celebrity that seems to oscillate between celebration of achievement and awe of unique inheritance. On the one hand individual performances are celebrated as moments of the extraordinary, catalogued and compared to others,

in terms of achievement. On the other hand, celebrities like Pavarotti also invite discourses that link something inherent, not achieved but bestowed, like a “gift from nature” to particular voices (Rojek 30).³⁰ While vocal talent is not technically “ascribed,” to use Rojek’s parlance, via lineage, there is an investment in inherited, or transcendent gifts about it that reaches back to an understanding of celebrity that predates the mass media of Rojek’s formulation. P. David Marshall, in his study of celebrity and power, notes that in the early modern sense, celebrity was linked to solemnity and an affinity with “piety and religion” (Marshall 4-5), and the quasi-religious and even metaphysical association with certain voices is a common trope in operatic celebrity. For example, *New York Times* reviewer Harold Schonberg claimed in 1972 that Pavarotti’s “vocal chords were kissed by God” (22).³¹ Celebrated opera singers have even discussed their voice as having agency unto itself: Pavarotti has mentioned that his “voice likes Donizetti” and other *bel canto* repertoire (Pavarotti and Wright 136). Similarly, when announcing her retirement from singing in 1978, Beverly Sills commented, “my voice had a long, nonstop career. It deserves to be put to bed with quiet and dignity” (Henahan 1). In both these examples, the singers treat their voices as agential objects, with feelings and rights that are discrete from the rest of the performer. While both comments may be read as tongue-in-cheek, the status of the voice-as-subject is taken seriously, especially in discourses of diva worship and fan culture.

³⁰ For Rojek, an analysis along the lines of inherent qualities is a “subjectivist” approach to understanding celebrity, one that claims a logic of unique, unknowable quality for the status of certain individuals (33).

³¹ For anyone keeping track, this review was of the first Sutherland/Pavarotti performance of Donizetti’s *La fille du Régiment* at the Metropolitan opera in 1972. This role and his association with the already world-famous Sutherland vaulted Pavarotti’s career into international stardom and earned him the moniker “King of the High Cs” for his seemingly effortless performances of “*Ah, mes amis!*”

The primacy of the voice in operatic protocols creates the conditions for a particular kind of celebrity in the modern era that turns to the unknowable uniqueness of the operatic voice, and then commodifies it for mass circulation. Part of that commodification, in terms of phonographic effects, renders the unknowable magic of the celebrity voice available for users through immediate, repeatable access. Within this matrix of vocal celebrity, the kind of vocal immediacy promised by early record advertisements deploys the language of the voice standing in for the artist, and frames it as a commodity available to individual consumers through the mediation of the phonograph. The near-transcendent quality attributed to the celebrity operatic voice is symbolically vested, through the recording process, in the arias and duets available, starting in 1902, on 78-rpm shellac discs. Rendered material in this way, the celebrity record is both an archive of individual achievement and a musical selection imbued with a kind of celebrity aura itself. Operatic celebrity, focalized within the voice in conjunction with particular roles and arias, is framed and exercised in concert with the circulation of recordings.

Operatic celebrity was deployed to elevate nascent recording to claims of serious art, and that celebrity was, in turn remediated and amplified by mass distribution and home listening protocols associated with phonography. When knowing opera through its stars and its excerpts became possible for those without access to an opera house, the term “opera” increasingly referred to a broader set of experiences, but those were, in turn, stratified by types of access and kinds of knowing. Use of terms like initiates, neophytes, fans, cognoscenti, experts, and outsiders demonstrate these divisions in discursive contexts, as I will discuss at length in chapter 3. The pull of celebrity’s para-social intimacy was certainly something that Victor attempted to capitalize through their advertisements in the 1900s and well into the 1920s.

2. Advertising and Ontological Slippage

In its tendency toward celebrity branding, the American opera star system participates in what Elizabeth Povinelli and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar understand as a regime of recognition: “the entailing, demanding, seducing, and enticing intoxications that produce the various surfaces of a recognizable form as such” (396). While Gaonkar and Povinelli’s interest is rooted in vectors of political power within cultures of circulation, I see celebrity recognition as an important aspect of opera public formation that continues well into the current climate of cultural expression—and one that is deeply rooted in commercial media forms from their early roots in Canadian and U.S. contexts. Opera excerpts, operatic conventions, opera artists and opera’s social protocols are all marked by regimes of recognition. The U.S. opera star system, in which the cachet or “aura” circulating around individual artists can be productively exploited to draw audiences for any number of events, makes operatic texts legible under the regime of that particular star figure. Therefore, it participates in the logics understood in other fields under the term “celebrity,” the discourses and protocols of which become part of the foundation upon which the American recording industry built (and lost) various empires in the twentieth century.

Operatic celebrity helped forge the recognition of the Red Seal label in terms of aesthetic and class distinction in North American circulation. This circulation also participated in codifying those excerpts and artists as markers of such aesthetic and class distinction, thus reifying certain aspects of a heterogeneous nineteenth-century North American opera culture as indicative of the whole. In other words, records like the Red Seal 78-rpms, which boasted a single excerpt or aria per side, helped frame the recognition of greatness in the conjunction of certain singers and certain excerpts. The mobilization of that conjunction via recordings helped frame the broader recognition of what counts as both excellent, and “operatic” in North America.

Like Pavarotti's after him, Caruso's voice is a well-circulated example of operatic celebrity. In fact, celebrity theorist Chris Rojek uses the generic claim that "no one can sing like Caruso" (29) to describe the unique status granted individuals in a structuralist understanding of celebrity in general. Caruso's voice was recognizable, familiar, powerful and pleasant to listen to. It is the locus of his fame, and his recording career objectified both his voice and users' access to it. The operatic music he sang complemented his range and timbre well, and the conflation of these factors is significant in understanding both his celebrity and the importance of his recording. I am not claiming that Enrico Caruso is the first or only significant celebrity figure coincident with the recording industry in the early twentieth century.³² But Victor's use of his image and name, as well as repeated reproductions of his recordings long after his death, stand out for their duration and lasting impact. As Bolig notes, "Enrico Caruso, almost single-handedly, had established public confidence in the fledgling industry, and he certainly ensured the success of the Gramophone Company and its affiliates" with these early acoustic recordings (*Caruso* 3).

Rhetorically, Victor's advertising worked to both elevate Caruso as its brightest star, and familiarize him to potential buyers as the artist whose presence would change a home into a concert hall or opera house. Even though Victor famously maintained its logo of Nipper the dog listening "to his master's voice," (hence HMV) for over fifty years, it also relied heavily on Caruso's voice, name and famous face to promote its listening experience at home in its early years.³³ Advertisements from the 1900s and 1910s make claims that the Victrola is "the only instrument that brings the world's greatest artists into your home" and that the recorded voice

³² Nellie Melba, Geraldine Farrar, and Francesco Tamagno were also early Red Seal opera singers. Victor's efforts in this regard are noted by Bolig and Fabrizio and Paul.

³³ Tom Gunning offers a reading of the original Nipper painting, upon which the logo was based, as a representation of the "primal astonishment" of the dog, and unspoken rhetorical posture of the technological wonder of the Berliner, and later Victrola machine produced by Victor (50).

“actually is Caruso,” which can bring into the home both his art “and his personality” (in Fabrizio and Paul 171).³⁴ John Bolig offers several other examples of this circulation:

Caruso figured prominently in Victor advertising campaigns, and his image—in and out of costume—graced countless full-page ads in the better magazines of the day. One of the most sought-after advertising pieces to feature Caruso was a die-cut jigsaw depicting him and other Red Seal stars, which Victor sold to its dealers for a nominal cost. It was also possible to buy record dusters and small pocket mirrors bearing the likeness of Caruso or of his records. Many dealers hung a 29-inch replica of Caruso’s “*Celeste Aïda*” [catalogue number 88127] outside of their shops. (*Caruso* 44)

Caruso’s role, taken here as symptomatic of more general connections among opera, celebrity, and early phonograph marketing, was to both separate Victor records from competitors, and to render familiar the experience of phonograph or Victrola listening in the home.

The message circulating along with these uses of Caruso’s likeness and fame is twofold: first, that users could turn their homes into the Metropolitan Opera by bringing home Caruso (and a Victrola), and second, that Caruso’s recorded voice is ontologically the same as hearing him live.³⁵ One advertisement even positions Caruso in his *Aïda* costume beside a record of “*Celeste Aïda*,” and carries the tag line “Both are Caruso” (Sherman 118). In this sense Caruso’s

³⁴ The full text of the advertisement reads: “The Victor Record of Caruso’s voice is just as truly Caruso as Caruso himself. It actually *is* Caruso—his own magnificent voice, with all the wonderful power and beauty of tone that make him the greatest of all tenors. Every one of the hundred and three records brings you not only his art, but his personality. When you hear Caruso on the Victrola in your home, you hear him just as truly as if you were listening to him in the Metropolitan Opera House.”

³⁵ One folded advertising card shows a dinner party on the outside, and a formal salon on the inside, the only difference being the Victrola taking pride of place at the center of the room, and Enrico Caruso standing nearby. The metaphorical transformation of the home via Caruso and the Victrola is rendered visible on the card.

musical recordings and their paratexts function both as an archive of early nineteenth-century operatic repertoire and as an example of celebrity circulation.

Victor's Caruso advertisements demonstrate the company's efforts to nominate a kind of celebrity intimacy between Caruso and their potential customers, one that was transferable to the objects of the Victrola and its record collection.³⁶ Advertisement cards such as these combined the visual familiarity of Caruso's face and name with the anticipated pleasure, both social and musical, of playing his records in the home. Caruso's famous voice is brought, rhetorically, into the realm of the everyday, and the medium of recording made that connection make sense in a new way, because of course those users who owned a Victrola could hear Caruso's "actual voice" in their homes, whenever they chose. These campaigns exemplify the para-social relationships that Rojek suggests form the basis of celebrity identification, especially through mass media. The Caruso campaigns depict the disembodied voice-on-record as the original, transcendent voice and also place the reproducible experience in the hands of users. These advertising examples illustrate the extent to which Victor was capitalizing on the fascinating slippage between the bodily experience of Caruso in concert, and the para-social intimacy of celebrity fascination to secure its market share in the emerging record industry.

In my view this kind of celebrity presents both rhetorical and ontological slippage, because in the above-mentioned examples, the celebrity of Caruso oscillates between the animate body and the inanimate object, and the exercising force becomes that of the person who plays the record. The user's physical connection of "playing" the Victrola, especially when they were operated manually by hand, links the activities of the user and the machine or instrument in a

³⁶ Reproductions of these advertisements are collected in Fabrizio and Paul's *Antique Phonograph Advertising*.

manner that constitutes a kind of performance involving both the music and the celebrity figure. Opera's prioritizing of vocal performance over, at times, dramatic integrity (or in some cases, any pretence at characterization) in the nineteenth and early twentieth century is thus transfigured into the circulation of the celebrity as ontologically indistinct from vocal reproduction on the Victrola. Lisa Gitelman notes ontological slippages in recording discourse in such terms as "original", "true", "natural", and "living" as played out in home-listening through the logics of both the emergent media and the celebrity culture attendant upon it (*Already New* 71). When Victor argued that the Victrola was "the only instrument that brings the world's greatest artists into your home" (in Fabrizio and Paul 171), they were anticipating that slippage, drawing on celebrity cachet, and framing the machine as a musical instrument. Later celebrities, such as Pavarotti, likewise circulate in para-social and object-oriented ways that were pioneered by Victor and Caruso.

As an "instrument," the Victrola frames its users as both audience and musicians. The home audience has the capacity to choose and "play" celebrity artists, thus bringing music such as familiar opera excerpts into the home, but this time with the "greatest" voices in the world, and thus demonstrating the elision between machine and musical instrument.³⁷ These claims also demonstrate a move from the novelty and astonishment theorized by Gunning towards a protocol of everyday attentiveness that I link to Gunning's idea of cyclical wonder. The "greatness of the artists," mediated through the Victor Talking Machine, may initially produce astonishment linked with new technologies. While this fascination fades with the passing of novelty, a sense of the uncanny remains with technologies such as the phonograph: "a feeling that they involved

³⁷ Note, for example, Gitelman's observation that phonographs and records were sold variously in the 1900s by music, hardware, department, and bicycle stores ("New Media" 50).

magical operations which greater familiarity and habituation might cover over, but not totally destroy” (Gunning 47). As opera celebrities aged or passed away, their records remained and users could thus in a sense call them into being from a particular moment in their careers through recordings—an issue I will discuss at length in chapter 3. In this case, the celebrity voice on record produces a sense of mediated intimacy for the home user, but that very intimacy is rooted in the double of a voice, one which both is and is not the celebrity body itself.

Caruso’s recordings have long outlasted his life, and their ongoing circulation continues to reflect his status among opera artists for the past century. For example, the significance of his records is highlighted in David Hall’s guide to collecting records, published in the 1940s. Hall suggests that, for nascent collectors, it could be the purchase of a new phonograph, the local symphonic hour on the radio, or “a few dusty Caruso discs brought to light in the attic during the course of a spring house cleaning” that “whet the appetite to the point of purchasing a few discs” (1). Here, Caruso’s records, understood as outdated, are still identified as a positive provocation for the purchase and collection of records in general. The ubiquity of Caruso on record, either as a bright new star or as a dusty disc from the attic, is inextricable from early phonograph history, and especially from Victor’s early success with the Red Seal label.

Today, Caruso’s recordings continue to situate him among the “best” singers affiliated with a given operatic excerpt. For example, user-curated opera mashup videos on *youtube.com*, known under the heading of “Opera Cage Match,” pit several opera recordings of the same aria, passage, or even note against each other, and Caruso is often included among the contenders. In a 2008 Cage Match video for “*Celeste Aïda*,” one of Caruso’s most famous arias, his recording is even voted best by some of the commenters, none of whom could possibly have heard him perform live. Here the recorded circulation of opera’s vocal celebrity is remediated in digital

contexts, reinforcing the connection between celebrity voice and the famous aria in contemporary opera circulation. Caruso's is clearly one of, if not the most, outrageously long-lasting celebrity opera voice, but this longevity also presents a symptom of the recording industry's long-standing reliance on creating and sustaining individual stardom (both in the opera and other genres).³⁸

The crossing of operatic and non-operatic endeavours by opera singers dates to the earliest days of performance in North America, including performance tours as well as early sound and film recording. The music that accompanies these crossovers and celebrity fame, as in the case of Pavarotti and "*Nessun dorma*" or Caruso and "*Celeste Aïda*" is imbued with a kind of aura unto itself, as its connection to specific operatic stars has amplified circulation and broadened the horizons of familiarity for certain operatic arias. Arias such as these operate in many ways discretely from their dramatic and musical contexts, taking on a life of their own and often finding their way into other cultural registers such as television advertising and sporting events. They also find ongoing investment from users, listeners, and content-creators in online contexts.

User experiences of opera have been, I think, fundamentally framed through the phonograph practices and effects of the early twentieth century. The production and promotion of celebrity records offers one perspective into this circulation. The "intensive" listening that

³⁸ While Caruso enjoyed what is possibly the first and most concentrated celebrity status "on record" in North America, the phonograph effect of the disembodied and excerpted opera celebrity resonates in a number of registers throughout the twentieth century. For example, Caruso's contemporary, Geraldine Farrar, was known for her dramatic innovations on the stage, and brought her operatic fame into the world of feature film. She is credited with helping to legitimize the nascent industry in 1915 with her film portrayal as Carmen (Nash 97). Farrar also recorded eighty selections from eighteen operas for Victor (49), and amassed one of opera's most famous fan clubs, members of which were known as "gerryflappers" (125).

Gitelman links with emergent phonograph culture is another (*Already New* 63). Phonography amplified the circulation not only of star singers, but offered a kind of celebrity for famous opera excerpts through the protocol of attentiveness converging with the user autonomy of home listening. Building on the work of Gitelman and Gunning, I turn now to novel and uncanny sensations connected with early phonography; its engagement with (and resistance to) celebrity culture; and finally, its function as a point of entrée for participation in the operascape.

3. Attending Opera at Home

Whereas the Edison phonograph was given highly public presentations and demonstrations in the 1890s, Victor's internal horn phonograph, dubbed the "Victrola," was marketed primarily for the home experience.³⁹ The first model, released in 1906, had a mahogany finish, designed to decorate the home both sonically and visually. When the machine became available for home purchase, the Red Seal label records had been on sale for five years already, and the Victrola was promoted as the best, indeed the only appropriate "instrument" to play the already-circulating records. The activity of listening to records was likened to both attending, and presenting a concert. For example, an early Edison advertising record speaks in first person voice about its own qualities, claiming that, "When your day's work is done, I can bring the theatre or the opera to your home. I can give you Grand Opera, comic opera or Vaudeville. I can give you sacred or popular music, band, orchestra, or instrumental music..." (Sherman 118), while Victor's contemporaneous claims focus on the ways in which a Victrola (and Caruso) change the home

³⁹ The Victrola was produced until 1929, when Victor merged with the Radio Corporation of America (RCA). While most Victor marketing was directed towards home use, public "concerts" using the Victrola also occurred, for example, on train runs between Chicago and Colorado, which had listed performance times, just as a live singer or orchestra would have been (Fabrizio and Paul 103).

experience itself. These claims reflect new music-making protocols that drew, concurrently, on amateur music making and public concert attendance protocols (including the primacy of the voice, and the rewards of attentiveness) even as they were renegotiated in terms of sonic reproduction.

Common forms of public concerts in the United States in the late nineteenth century included band music and orchestral arrangements of many forms of music. The ideological drives behind late nineteenth-century concert culture in the United States are many, and include the nationalizing energies stemming from band formations during the Civil War era, as well as the musical politics of new European immigrant cultures, German in particular. As scholars such as Karen Ahlquist and Lawrence Levine have noted, operatic excerpts were common in concert settings throughout the nineteenth century, both as arrangements for band and as programming for touring singers in a range of performance styles (*Democracy* 183). In the decades leading up to the introduction of the phonograph especially, operatic performances on the concert stage participated in the public debates over moral and uplifting art, and arias written for characters such as prostitutes, lechers, and murderers were conveniently divorced from their dramatic exigencies and presented more abstractly as beautiful music (183).⁴⁰

In the widely variant concert culture in late nineteenth-century United States, musical selection participated in the growing distinction between uplifting, “good” music, and other forms. This “good” or “serious” music aligned more or less with the turn to complex harmonies and greater abstraction in German composition, the most prolific and prominent composer of which was Richard Wagner. Leading musicians Leopold Damrosch and Theodor Thomas, both

⁴⁰ As Larry Hamberlin notes, opera music was also enjoying lively circulation on the more bawdy stages of Vaudeville, usually as parody (3).

German immigrants to the United States, were influential in the increasing circulation of new German music, particularly that of Wagner, in public concerts and other musical programming (Dizikes 239). One of the means by which modern, “serious music,” was promoted over forms that were deemed “superficial,” like Italianate *bel canto* traditions (Ahlquist, “Authority” 30), was free or low-priced public concerts. As Karen Ahlquist notes, the concerts of modern music in particular were designed to better the audience, through careful attention (“Authority” 44). Thus, the circulation of both band performance, which included arrangements of popular tunes from Italian operas like *Rigoletto*, and the more “serious” music performed by organizations such as the Germania Musical Society, formed a significant part of cultural and public life throughout the U.S., and particularly areas of the East Coast and Midwest that saw the massive influx of German immigration in the middle of the century (Dizikes 234, 231).⁴¹ Those concerts in turn helped to codify expectations for an attentive audience that would be either delighted by the familiar, or “bettered” by the experience. Ahlquist notes, for example, that George William Curtis used his publication platforms in *Harper’s Weekly* and *Harper’s Monthly* both to support the Thomas concerts, and to “mock the box holders” for their poor behaviour (44).⁴²

Attending Western art music concerts was one significant aspect of musical life in the

⁴¹ Dizikes states that “between 1846 – 1855 more than one million Protestant and Catholic Germans came to the United States. They settled everywhere, especially the cities of the East Coast and the Midwest, Louisville, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Milwaukee” (231).

⁴² Ahlquist’s analysis differs significantly from Levine’s on the question of sacralizing opera. She argues that the social sphere associated with opera was consecrated but that the aesthetics remain decidedly separate from the consecration of symphonic, abstract music, which was attributed to operas from composers like Wagner than, for example, those of Verdi. Eventually, she claims, opera ceases to be associated entirely with “edifying music” associated with composers such as Beethoven and other European masters of symphonic composition (*Democracy* 200).

early 1900s; another was music-making in the home, particularly with the piano.⁴³ The styles of music played on family pianos varied widely and included folk, and later jazz and Broadway songs, but certainly also involved “piano reductions of operas or symphonies, sing[ing] arias with piano accompaniments, or . . . chamber music,” especially in middle-class homes (Leppert 62). As Lawrence Levine has observed, parlour songs were often sung as encores in the opera house, and

operatic songs were sung in the parlour, the *bel canto* adapting itself easily to the intimacy of the homes. Sheet music of songs by Bellini, Rossini, Donizetti and others sold side by side with the music of such perennial favourites as Henry Russell, the Hutchinsons, and Stephen Foster. (96)

The piano made it possible for opera-texts to be adapted and transcribed for home music-making before and throughout the nineteenth century, and many such renditions would therefore have been a familiar sound in many different homes before the advent of records. For example, a 1946 collection of transcriptions, entitled *A Treasury of Grand Opera*, contains music from *Don Giovanni*, *Lohengrin*, *La Traviata*, *Faust*, *Aïda*, *Carmen* and *I pagliacci*. In the preface, editor Henry Simon notes that he owned a less-carefully-transcribed collection of a similar nature the 1910s, which sparked his life-long love of opera. Amateur and home music-making, especially with the piano, was a familiar activity upon which early record producers relied upon to advertise the new invention of the phonograph in the 1900s.

Victor explicitly linked its opera records with edification, education, and already-familiar modes of music-making in the home. They published a 1916 collection of piano transcriptions

⁴³ See Richard Leppert’s essay “Sexual Identity, Death, and the Family Piano,” for an analysis focalizing gender within the history of the piano.

entitled *Grand Opera with a Victrola*, which included not only brief synopses and familiar operatic excerpts in piano reduction, but listed alongside the musical selections pertinent catalogue information for records of those same selections available for sale.⁴⁴ Implicitly, the book invites readers to purchase a record of a selection and learn it both by listening carefully and imitating the artist's voice, as much as by reading the music and forming one's own interpretation. Amateur music-making is thus brought closer to ideas of a "Galaxy of Stars" and "Grand Opera" by the availability of a listening experience alongside the score. Concurrently, however, *Grand Opera with a Victrola* delineates its users as amateurs through the anticipated attentive listening to professional records as a musical learning experience, rather than through other forms of learning like experimentation or interpersonal instruction. Whether played for pleasure or edification, Victor's records and piano reductions offered access to the operascape through the convergence of attentive and intensive experiences.

In the early 1900s, phonograph companies in the United States claimed that the experience of home listening was intrinsically, if not indistinguishably, linked to attending a concert. These claims exercise the topos of "serious music" and concert-going as a means of enlightening and uplifting attendees while simultaneously proffering the enjoyment of celebrity in recordings such as those made by Caruso. These two logics operate through an anticipated user experience of intensity, which Lisa Gitelman notes is linked with the capacity for user-agency and repetition (*Already New* 63). Phonograph listening contributes to the ongoing contested delineation between "good" and "popular" music, both within operatic genres and in music production more broadly, and the choices and experiences of users are central to those

⁴⁴ I have not been able to ascertain whether or not Victor's *Grand Opera with a Victrola* is, in fact, the "shoddy" collection of transcriptions mentioned by Henry Simon in his preface to *A Treasury of Grand Opera* in 1946.

debates. I am not interested resolving that binary, but rather in tracing how the intertwined histories of record listening and opera circulation create the conditions in which those debates occur, and the ways in which listeners, audiences, and publics participate in the operascape by offering their own evaluations of listening experiences. To do so, I offer a cinematic example that imagines an extraordinary version of such a “concert experience” in the 1950s, from a 1990s perspective.

In the 1994 the Frank Darabont film, *The Shawshank Redemption*, inmates in the brutal world of the Shawshank prison are treated to a brief reprieve from their carceral routines when protagonist Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins) locks himself in the Warden’s office, and plays a recording of “*Sull’aria*” from *Le nozze di Figaro* over the prison PA system. Andy drops the needle on the record and flips the system on, and then sits in the Warden’s chair as the diegetic music swells. The camera pans slowly over the cord of the microphone, which is stretched across the room in order to pick up the sound from a record player that has been placed on the Warden’s desk. Then in a series of cross-cuts to familiar areas of the prison—the shop, the infirmary, and the prison yard—the camera catches the uniform response of everyone hearing the broadcast. Their attention is completely arrested; all activity stops and in the prison yard we see a scene of complete stillness as the inmates and guards alike focus on the speakers.

This scene does not appear in the Stephen King short story that is the source text for the film, “Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption.” An invention of director/screenwriter Frank Darabont, it illuminates several aspects of Andy’s character: his appreciation for “Mr. Mozart,” his generosity, and his defiance. Andy’s small act of rebellion is, in many ways, a central scene in the film. This “operatic misdemeanor” (Chua 349) lasts only a few moments and ends a few measures before the aria’s conclusion, when the office door is broken down. It

constitutes one in a series of escalating moves that Andy makes in bettering his, and other prisoners' situations. Andy's action in this scene is significant in the arc of his relationship to the prisoners as a group, because unlike other efforts (the beer he negotiates for a small work gang, for instance, or doing taxes for the guards), the opera broadcast reaches everyone in Shawshank. The extended close-up on him at the close of the scene illuminates a mixture of pride, peace, contentment and rebellion—and frames his presentation both for his fellow inmates and for viewers of the film. He becomes, then, a kind of music producer for Shawshank prison as a whole, with the help of the PA system, the phonograph, and, of course, the recording of “*Sull'aria*” from Mozart and Da Ponte's *Figaro* on a 33 1/3-rpm record. He schedules the “concert” and chooses the selection to share, and the event arrests the attention of all those in earshot of the PA system. For the roughly three minutes that the aria plays, the entire prison is tuned in to the operatic in a makeshift broadcast concert.

Andy's phonograph concert displays his courage, compassion, and of course his musical taste. For the prisoners (and perhaps also for the guards), hearing the phonograph offers a glimmer of freedom, which is a central theme of the film. Daniel Chua has compared this scene to the “*freier Luft*” moment in Beethoven's *Fidelio*, and argues that the Shawshank prisoners “are stunned into a hushed moment of musical stillness by the thought of freedom” (349). I agree, and stress that it is a sonic, rather than textual experience that transports the prisoners. As Red (Morgan Freeman) comments in the voiceover:

I have no idea to this day what those two Italian ladies were singing about. Truth is, I don't want to know. Some things are best left unsaid. I like to think they were singing about something so beautiful it can't be expressed in words, and makes your heart ache because of it. I tell you those voices soared, higher and farther than anybody in a gray

place dares to dream. It was like some beautiful bird flapped into our drab little cage and made those walls dissolve away. And for the briefest of moments, every last man in Shawshank felt free.

If we take Red's response as representative, then the specificity of Mozart and da Ponte's dramatic complexity is subsumed by the affective qualities of the phonograph concert. It does not matter that, in the duet, Susanna and the Countess are planning to trick Almoviva and then punish him for his abuse of them both. What matters is that the two women's voices (Edith Mathis and Gundula Janowitz) trade off and intertwine, that their voices float lightly, like the letter they are describing, as if "*sull'aria*" or "on the air." The sonic qualities of the performance symbolize the feeling of transcendence described by Red. The cinematography reinforces this sense by cutting to several scenes in the prison where everyone is still, thus inviting a consideration of what the music calls up in the minds of its attentive audience, as well as linking the specific experience to a more general theme of beautiful music uplifting its audiences.

The attentiveness of the prison audience reinforces Red's claim about the symbolic freedom offered by the music, but it also displays a kind of fascination that Tom Gunning links to the novelty of new media in general and phonographs in particular. He suggests that "a discourse of wonder draws our attention to new technology, not simply as a tool, but precisely as a spectacle, less as something that performs a useful task than as something that astounds us by performing in a way that seemed unlikely or magical before" (45). While for Gunning there is a cycle of amazement and explanation, wherein new technology becomes normalized but continues to offer experiences of the uncanny (such as hearing the voices of the dead on a phonograph), in the case of the Shawshank prisoners there is no repeat performance in the film, so this event retains the sense of wonder and spectacle in juxtaposition with most other scenes in

the film. The fixation of the prisoners presents a kind of “phonography effect” noted by Katz, built around the coalescing of attentiveness, the wonder of novelty, and the intensity that Gitelman links with autonomy in listening.

Several factors contribute to the astonishment of the audience for Andy’s opera concert. First, the gender homogeneity of the film suggests it is likely that hearing women singing may have been an extremely rare occurrence in the lives of the Shawshank prisoners. Second, given that Shawshank is host to several prisoners serving long-term sentences, it is probable that many of the men inside would have had little, if any, experience with band or musical performances in several years. Third, and most importantly for my purposes here, given that several prisoners are serving decades-long, if not life, sentences, and this scene takes place in 1955,⁴⁵ many prisoners would have been unlikely to have even heard a high fidelity recording, or even an electronic recording ever before.⁴⁶ The wonder, attentiveness, and spectacle of the opera scene, in terms of the film, is as much created by the audience fascination and stillness as by the audacity of Andy Dufresne.

The concert in Shawshank prison constructs opera as a transcendent experience, almost a stoppage of time—at least for the length of the duet. The film’s staging of the attentive audience codifies a narrative of operatic transportation via listening or watching closely. Similar cinematic examples of this experience occur in *Pretty Woman* (1990) and in *Philadelphia* (1993). In *Pretty Woman*, prostitute Vivian Ward (Julia Roberts) experiences a personal epiphany at a live

⁴⁵ The date is indicated in the film’s shooting script.

⁴⁶ It should also be noted that this recording is an anachronism, as it is from 1968. Chua also notes the discrepancy between the diegetic and non-diegetic musical experience: while the film audience experiences the recording in the high-fidelity soundtrack format common to film in the 1990s, the prisoners would have actually heard the recording over the PA system. The film’s hi-fi presentation of the opera recording is perhaps part of its project to present the opera scene as transcendent in a number of different affective registers (343).

performance of *La Traviata*, while simultaneously offending other opera patrons with her enthusiastic-yet-crass exclamation that “it was so good I almost peed my pants!” In *Philadelphia*, Andrew Beckett (Tom Hanks) interrupts a discussion with his lawyer, Joe Miller (Denzel Washington) to enjoy his favourite Maria Callas recording—and to instruct his companion in his listening practice. The lighting changes as Beckett describes both the text of the aria (“*Mama Morta*” from *Andrea Chenier*) and his intense pleasure in listening to it. Miller sits still throughout the scene, attending, it seems, as much to Beckett’s experience of the aria as to the music itself. The experiences portrayed in these films frame opera as capable of producing a listening experience that interrupts norms of both decorum and time with its intensity.

The awed audience experience portrayed on film is more closely linked, rhetorically, with the symphonic form associated with Beethoven than the Italianate operatic texts that were censured by proponents of “serious” music in the late nineteenth century. Concert culture, which in the late nineteenth-century United States and onward increasingly treated certain musical events as a sacrosanct, rather than primarily social, activity (Levine 139), championed attentive listening to uplifting music as a means of education and self-betterment. By promoting records as a “concert at home,” and by grouping many operatic genres under general terms like “treasury,” companies like Victor collapsed distinctions such as public/private, producing/consuming music and good/ familiar. Concurrently, this positioning of opera on record created conditions in which private users could become participants in evaluating and distinguishing certain operatic excerpts, works, and stars from each other as had not been possible before.

When phonography became part of common domestic experiences, record-listening offered home-users increased control over the frequency of their experience. Gitelman notes that “part of the habitual intensity of using recorded sound is repeated play . . . [p]art of the practice

of ‘merely’ playing records is playing them again and again” (*Already New* 64). Rather than being subject to the curatorial practices of orchestras, band leaders, or other live-music producers, home-users could purchase and play a record as frequently as they liked—or at least until the grooves or the needle wore out. Gitelman suggests that “playing recorded music at home mediated between at home and in public in ways that seem to have offered . . . listeners a sense of autonomy, however fleeting, that greatly contrasts with later, Adorno-like assessments of the media as an instrument of social control or collective torpor” (“New Media” 71). Andy Dufresne’s opera concert is an extreme example of this autonomy, as his Shawshank concert functions as a kind of declaration of agency within the oppressive prison matrix. While Andy’s capacity for repeating his phonographic concert is limited by the prison guards, viewers of *The Shawshank Redemption* may choose to repeatedly watch the scene, creating a remediated experience of phonographic repetition.

Mark Katz likewise discusses the role of repetition in record-listening, and observes that repetition creates a form of distinguishing “good” music for all kinds of listeners: “in the age of the phonograph, repeatability became a criterion for evaluating music: it was frequently remarked that the best works reward numerous hearings, whereas lesser pieces paled upon repetition (61). Both Gitelman and Katz frame repetition as part of the intensive listening experience, and I would add that phonographic intensiveness links the operatic protocols of privileging the voice and attentiveness. Listeners’ abilities to listen closely, again and again, to particular recordings offers many kinds of pleasure, including learning about interpretation, *Fach*, musical structure or any number of factors in a way that were not previously accessible. In short, opera on record offered new modes of engaging in evaluation.

One example of this kind of experience can be found in the early life of Canadian opera

director Irving Guttman (1928-2014), who as a young man in the 1940s saved his money to purchase a fourteen-record album of *Il Trovatore* on 78-rpm shellac discs (Watmough 18). Mr. Guttman recalled that his early experiences of opera performances in Montreal and New York were amplified in every sense of the word by his obsessive record listening. Guttman's experience oscillated between the freedom and privacy of the home-listening and the anticipation or recollection of the very public world of opera performance: he would listen repeatedly to his opera records and imagine either a performance he had seen or one that he hoped to be part of in the future (his initial plans to be a conductor were thwarted by his apparent lack of musical talent).⁴⁷

By his own admission, Guttman's career was bolstered, in large part, by his capacity to remember singers he had heard and cast them effectively in roles that they had not yet performed. He built his listening practice and early repertoire of voice-familiarity in his room, with his records. In my view, the career he would later build across Western Canada (and indeed North America) is based in part on these listening practices; the affordances of repetition, autonomy and intensity intersected with his own attentiveness and an ear increasingly tuned to imagining the voices he knew singing repertoire they hadn't yet performed. Guttman's career trajectory is perhaps an extreme example of the repetitive and intensive listening protocols, but his obsessive, repetitive and attentive listening practices are by no means the sole purview of burgeoning or would-be opera professionals. Indeed, as phonography expanded into longer-playing discs, intersecting discourses about technical and artistic quality, opera, repertoire and stardom cycled into a new period of convergence, albeit this time with the opera-text as a more-or-less whole

⁴⁷ On a personal note: when I had the privilege of meeting with Guttman in his final years, he often insisted that we pause our conversation to listen to a relevant recording (often a private one) he had of a certain performance or artist.

now available in the comfort of one's own home.

4. Enter The LP

Nearly fifty years after Victor first began selling Red Seal records in 1904, a further period of phonographic / operatic convergence was predicated on the emergence of long-play (or LP) records. As I discussed above, Victor's extensive advertising campaigns⁴⁸ linked the Victrola, the experiences available in the opera house, and the home-user together in the 1900s-1920s through celebrity figures like Caruso. Improvements such as electronic recording, higher fidelity (via new materials and higher-quality shellac) were introduced, but it wasn't until Columbia introduced its "long-play" microgroove format in 1948 that the public discourses around records were again dominated by tropes of novelty.⁴⁹

Prior to the development of Columbia's long-play microgroove record (1944-1948), 78-rpm records varied in diameter but not really in playing time, with an average length ranging from three to five minutes. Thus, even though "entire" symphonies and operas had been recorded in the 1910s (Gelatt 186), they were collected in units of roughly four minutes per side, which meant that an opera such as *Carmen* required eighteen records to produce a full album in 1908

⁴⁸ For example, Gelatt notes that, according to company sources, Victor spent \$5 000 000 in advertising by placing over "one billion full-page Victor messages" in U.S. newspapers and magazines in 1924 (224).

⁴⁹ The Columbia Phonograph Company was the largest competitor to Victor Records for most of the early years in the recording industry in the United States. For a number of reasons it experienced financial precarity in the 1920s and was sold several times, eventually becoming a part of the Columbia Broadcasting System, or CBS, in 1938 (Gelatt 274), and thus combined forces with a radio broadcaster, much as Victor had done with the Radio Corporation of America in 1929 (Gelatt 247). The relationship between radio broadcasting and phonographs will be discussed in chapter 2, but suffice it to say here that the questions of direct competition between recording and broadcasting were more or less put to rest by these two significant mergers. What Columbia began working on shortly after this merger was an expansion of the electronic recording processes launched in the mid-1920s into the development of records with significantly longer playing time.

(Gelatt 186). Even when Victor began producing records with extended listening time in 1931, they simply strung together masters of four minutes each, which reproduced the frequent cuts commonly found on shorter play records (Osborne 91). Additionally, most early opera albums were compiled from recordings by several different artists. For example, Gelatt notes a 1906 recording of *Il Trovatore* that was recorded over a long period of time and employed “sixteen singers . . . to perform music that Verdi had written for five principals” (187). In 1948, Columbia introduced new long-play records made from acetate transcription blanks, so that each side of a record could play up to twenty-five minutes on a 33 1/3-rpm disc (Osborne 88). Victor resisted setting a new standard in collusion with their competitor, and introduced a 45-rpm extended play disc of their own in 1949. As was the case in the early years of the twentieth century, media emergence fostered a contest for commercial dominance that was fought along lines of anticipating and influencing consumer expectations.⁵⁰ For perhaps the first time in the industry’s history, Columbia decisively won the battle for supremacy, and they did so in large part by affiliating longer playing records with the desire to hear, on record, longer classical works such as symphonies and operas with far fewer interruptions.

In the end both speeds became industry standards, but Columbia’s LPs were linked to classical music (including both symphonic and operatic compositions), and Victor’s 45s to popular music’s deployment of “singles” for use in radio and by home users (often youth). Vinyl historian Richard Osborne notes, “it was believed that [orchestral and operatic recordings’] rich cultural associations would lend both the product and the company esteem” (123). Further, the

⁵⁰ The “Battle of the Speeds” is described extensively by Gelatt in *the Fabulous Phonograph*, in which he indicates that Victor’s massive advertising campaign for the 45s resulted in a consensus that they were the best speed for popular music, which of course didn’t require long-play formats until the concept of rock albums in later decades (296).

“LP favoured domestic, sedentary listening. The single, with its short playing time and popular repertoire, existed in the social world” (124). Thus, not unlike the visual difference of the Red Seal label in the early 1900s, the physical form of the record produced not only a mechanical difference in user experience (longer playing time and a different speed), but a difference of distinction in type, and perhaps even in perceived quality of the music on the record (or at least its makers assumed this would occur). Additionally, the longer-playing record demanded longer attention from its listeners, thus raising the stakes for an individual experience, because a longer record was a larger investment of both listening time and money.⁵¹ Two significant aspects of the long-play record impacted opera circulation: the first, that “complete,” even “definitive” recordings were now much more accessible; the second, that curated albums (today we recognize them as “best of” or “greatest hits” albums) would frame different agents of authority in evaluating and producing access to the idea of opera through recordings.

As operas began to circulate as “complete works,” the sense of a composer’s *oeuvre* or an operatic text as a whole became available for enjoyment and evaluation in a new way. This change offered a mode of operatic engagement in phonography discrete from excerpt and aria culture. The novelty of an entire operatic or symphonic work on a small number of records shifted public discourse regarding these forms of music towards experiences of the work as a whole, rather than of an individual performer or selection.⁵² From the 1940s onward, opera albums were made from discrete performances in the opera house or the studio, rather than a

⁵¹ In his highly personal account entitled *The Queen’s Throat*, Wayne Koestenbaum recounts an early memory of his mother rarely playing her LPs and keeping them “in the closet” for “fear of dust” (12), which he argues relates to his perceptions about their value as a child and later as a young man.

⁵² Ahlquist notes that the critical discussions about composers became prominent in concert with calls for modern canon-formation, particularly around symphonic, abstract and “good” music (*Democracy* 183-192). Further discussion of “canon” versus repertoire is taken up in chapter 3.

collection of arias, duets, and choruses strung together from the matrixes a company had available. Precursors to the trend are the Fritz Busch / Glyndebourne recordings of *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* in the 1930s.⁵³ These albums, not fully “complete” for lack of recitatives and a number of other cuts, are judged by several contemporaries to be the “best” recordings of these operas available; phonograph historian Roland Gelatt used the term “incomparable” in 1954 (261).⁵⁴ They were re-released multiple times on LP, and later in CD format on a variety of labels; they have been celebrated for being both the first “nearly complete” recordings of the opera-text, and for their long-standing status as outstanding in artistic quality. In 1983, for example, Lloyd Schwartz wrote in *Opera Quarterly* that, even five decades after their initial release, the 1930s Glyndebourne Busch recordings are the “most thrilling Mozart ever commercially recorded” (135). These early endeavours fostered a long-standing practice of recording at Glyndebourne, including the much-vaunted 1955 production of *Figaro* conducted by Vittorio Gui (Porter 81). The circulation of these recordings have, in turn, participated in normalizing decisions over production: for example, the “common” cuts made in the 1935 recording to Marcellina’s, Bartolo’s, and Barbarina’s music (Schwartz 136) are frequently echoed in North American productions over the last twenty years.⁵⁵

The Glyndebourne *Figaro* recordings prefigure the convergence of attentiveness, apprehension and long-play technology: the capacity to produce a full album offered users access

⁵³ These Mozart recordings were funded by subscription from the Mozart Opera Society, a patronage practice in England dating to the 1700s that was transfigured for the purpose of sponsoring early recordings of stage productions (Porter 80; Gelatt 261).

⁵⁴ Glyndebourne’s reputation for excellent recordings derived from actual productions bears out in the disappointment noted for occasional failures. Edward Greenfield, for example, notes with disappointment in 1959 that “the Glyndebourne *Idomeneo* is very fine but not quite the definitive reading one had hoped for” (142).

⁵⁵ In recent Pacific Opera Victoria and Calgary Opera productions of *Figaro*, Barbarina’s *cavatina* at the beginning of act 4 was retained, while Marcellina and Basilio’s arias were cut.

not only to the greatness of Mozart but to a highly-exclusive performance venue and the expertise of artists that may not ever perform live in North America. Operatic protocols had been called upon to participate in distinguishing an emergent medium (in this case the longer-playing record), and in turn, the emergence of long-play records continues to reverberate today, both in the ways that opera is produced, and the ways it is attended (to).

One such listening practice is articulated at length in Wayne Koestenbaum's study of opera and gay culture, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire*. Koestenbaum, an English professor by trade and an "opera queen" by self admission (2), recalls buying a nine-dollar *Rigoletto*, starring Anna Moffo, when he was in college: "that summer I listened to her 'Caro nome' repeatedly after my nine-to-five typing job. Also I had sex almost every night in a bedroom whose door wouldn't properly close, so I played music to disguise the sounds of two men in process" (19).⁵⁶ For Koestenbaum, this recording marked the beginning of his diva worship, and self-identification as a gay man. As the above quote indicates, Koestenbaum's after-work experiences of opera listening and having sex are linked as parallel in intensity in his recollection, suggesting a lasting impact in a number of personal registers. In his identification with a particular singer through her voice, Koestenbaum's intensive and repetitive listening experience produces precisely the kind of *jouissance* that Poizat identifies with opera and its fans in the intense experiences either at home or in the opera house: "these moments are not exactly moments of jubilation, or are so only very rarely; rather they are moments of physical thrill, of stupefaction, as the listener seems on the verge of disappearing, of losing himself, of dissolving in this voice" (3-4). While I certainly do not assume Koestenbaum's account to

⁵⁶ He also notes being unable to afford, though he desired, the "*Deutsche Grammophon* red boxed set [without] know[ing] why," which may reflect the ongoing prominence of Victor and affiliates' Red Seal label for over seventy years (19).

indicate a common experience in all fans of Anna Moffo, *Rigoletto*, or opera LPs in particular, I do think that his recollection of intensity links the idea of opera, the diva, and personal agency in the matrix of phonography and in particular, with the LP. Intensive listening also figures as a kind of creative inspiration in non-musical contexts.

Frank Darabont, the screenwriter and director of *The Shawshank Redemption*, notes in his commentary on the film that Andy's operatic rebellion, "which has become the signature scene for the movie" is entirely his own invention. Darabont mentions that during the intensive eight weeks in which he wrote the script for *Shawshank*, he was "getting into opera" and listened to the *Figaro* recording featured in the film incessantly. Feeling sometimes "trapped in the movie," Darabont would "listen to this one duet and feel [his] heart uplifted," which is the experience he builds for the inmates of Shawshank prison in the concert scene discussed above ("Director's Commentary"). Darabont was so closely connected to this particular recording that he insisted it be exactly the *Deutsche-Grammophon* recording he had at home for the soundtrack, even though the 1968 recording creates an anachronism in the scene, which takes place in 1955.⁵⁷ In this description the repetitive operatic listening experience becomes a kind of muse for further artistic endeavour, regardless of more general operatic familiarity.

While the experience described by Darabont is by no means unique to opera music, I suggest that the primacy of the voice, combined with the development of 78-rpm records, and the later turn to "whole works" in conjunction with the development of LPs, links the capacity of recorded repetition with the history of opera circulation in North America. In turn, repetitive listening practices could produce intimate familiarity with both opera-texts and the artists who

⁵⁷ The record used on film is also clearly a 33 1/3-rpm, which while technically possible in 1955, would have been an expensive and new album, which makes it rather unlikely that it would be donated to the prison.

interpreted them. Koestenbaum and Darabont offer personal recollections of repeated listening experiences that became imbricated in other aspects of their lives, suggesting that the connections among repetition, recording, and opera circulation resonate far beyond the opera stage, recording studio, and the private home.

In addition to promoting the concept of “complete” listening experiences through full album recordings, long-play records also offered a new mode of excerpt circulation through compilation albums. As I will discuss at length in chapter 3, Victor produced an enormous number of “Highlights” records such as “Mozart Duets and Arias” in the years directly following the introduction of the LP. These records offered a curated listening experience based on commonalities such as the fame of a certain artist, as we have seen with the popularity of Caruso and Pavarotti; or the composer, as is the case with curated albums of music from Mozart. These highlight albums implicitly promise inclusion of the “best” excerpts from a genre, composer, or performer. In a kind of parallel to the LP experience, highlight albums illuminated the curatorial hand of an expert—although not a visible one, as was the case for conductors in the LP era. In my view, the newly-public role of curating opera records in the early LP era illuminates the protocol of opera apprehension—in this case specifically in the sense of attaining and holding appropriate knowledge. As reviewers raced to evaluate the choices of conductors and record companies, they also framed a particular kind of expertise about opera as a mode of participation in the operascape that had not previously been available to many people. Consider, for example, the ways that aesthetic authority is attributed in reviews from *Opera Annual*, a yearly periodical published in both New York and London starting in the 1950s.

The 1955-6 issue of *Opera Annual* opens with the bold claim from Irmgard Seefried that “in 1956 Mozart’s genius knows no narrow confines” (7). It boasts a twelve-page review of

“Mozart Complete Opera Recordings” by Andrew Porter, which opens by honouring Fritz Busch, via the Glyndebourne recordings mentioned earlier, as the master interpreter of Mozart pre-World War Two (71).⁵⁸ In a later edition, Edward Greenfield’s review of opera recordings from 1957-59 refers to recordings by company as much as by conductor: it is “Toscanini’s unique *Otello*” but also “the R.C.A. *Tosca*” under consideration in his reviews (144-5). Obviously, individual singers remain a central focus of advertising and fan culture, but the composer and conductor similarly become, in light of the long-play record’s potential, another kind of figure that one can “play” in the home. Further, the producer becomes an implicit curatorial agent, especially in cases of studio albums that would be both programmed, and cast, by recording companies.

Distinctions between complete recordings and excerpt albums frame opera-texts and their excerpts as two kinds of commodities that might reflect upon the financial or aesthetic investment made by a particular listener.⁵⁹ User autonomy and its realization in selection and repetition remain part of the “home concert” today, of course, but especially after the introduction of LPs, the variety of listening choices participate in delineating types of participation in the operascape. The kind or quality of collection any given listener possesses—be it materially, aesthetically or intellectually—implies a certain focus on the part of the collector or listener. The two kinds of albums fostered the conditions for participation stratification in both the operascape and the recording industry in general. The *kinds* of knowledge and intimate familiarity promised by compilation albums and complete recordings are fundamentally discrete.

⁵⁸ This entire edition is focused on Mozart, most likely because 1956 was the two-hundredth anniversary of his birth. These celebrations of centennials remain a common practice with opera companies today.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Cecilia Bartoli’s 2010 two-disc album, *Sospiri*, which includes selections ranging from those by Handel to those of Fauré.

Both modes of circulation have an impact on the recognition of opera music, stars and repertoire, but while the 78-rpm recordings and the compilations foster a kind of pedestrian, or even unacknowledged familiarity, complete recordings invite knowledge about the organization of opera-texts. Both modes of circulation reflect Gitelman's idea noted earlier about recording doubly referring to a kind of sonic transcription, and the ways that those transcriptions can archive a moment or a musical interpretation. In my view, operatic records produce a record of opera that may come to impact the practices of contemporary opera production both on and off the stage through logics of historical or artistic authority.

5. Recognition and Recording: Consequences of Opera Phonography

Records mediate the circulation and positioning of opera-texts among their publics. The circulation of opera-texts in both productions and recordings over time fosters discourses of evaluation, but because recordings are less expensive and far more mobile than live opera productions, their potential reach far exceeds the efforts of any single opera company (even a touring one). Additionally, the potential familiarity produced through intensive, repetitive listening experiences, as well as with records' attendant paratextual materials—labels, advertisements, and later, liner notes and album covers—also helps form the conditions under which both users and publics might evaluate recordings, artists, and later, entire operatic texts, regardless of physical access to the opera houses in which the works are staged. Whether through diva worship, fascination with a favourite aria, or canonical valuation of operatic texts as a whole, phonography offers access to a range of performances and productions that make this kind of evaluation possible.

In their essay "Cultures of Circulation," Benjamin Lee and Edward LiPuma argue that a

performative model of circulation creates space for understanding that circulation and exchange can function as “constitutive acts” rather than simply occasions of transmitting meaning created elsewhere (“Cultures of Circulation” 192). Similarly, Michael Warner assigns a temporal dimension to the legibility of publics, suggesting that publics are “intertextual frameworks for understanding texts against an organized background of the circulation of other texts” (16). Recordings participate in building a regime of recognition for a performance or format through their circulation and the relationships that users might build with them.⁶⁰ These are varied and may in many ways resist (or even subvert entirely) the dominant discourses that constitute so much of the operascape.⁶¹ In my view, the circulation of opera on record participates in the extant star system already functioning in the United States prior to the 1900s, and also in framing which type of voicing, which *tempi*, order of performance, and other formal considerations are “best” for individual works. The widespread circulation of opera records throughout North America participates in constituting the operascape not only in terms of participation, but also in terms of recognizing and evaluating performance and production practices.

The “mad scene” of Gaetano Donizetti and Salvatore Cammarono’s *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835) offers one example of the intersection between phonography and performance practice. According to Romana Margherita Pugliese’s study of performance scores and public reviews, Nellie Melba premiered the cadenza with flute *obbligato* (written by her

⁶⁰ This is of course not restricted to operatic recordings: histories of label appropriation of black artists’ work that then became popular and re-figured as the artistic property of white performers has been well-charted. See, for example, Stoever’s articulation of the relationship between Huddie “Leadbelly” Ledbetter and John and Alan Lomax (141-143).

⁶¹ The example of Koestenbaum entering the extreme fandom of diva worship and the identity of an opera queen from the privacy of his college bedroom is one such example. Today, the stereotype of the overinvested and under-educated opera fan or “queen” is often part of operatic citations, such as the example I will explore in the conclusion to this study.

teacher Mathilde Marchesi) in 1889, more than fifty years after the opera's premiere (32). Naomi Matsumoto takes issue with Pugliese's claim, offering historical evidence for the creation of flute *obbligato* practices thirty years before that of Melba/Marchesi. Matsumoto uses this flute-cadenza as a case study for examining the "transmission lines of the various versions" in both early recordings and artists' pedigrees (299, 303); her analysis focuses predominantly on the genealogies of instructors and pupils, and she observes that the Marchesi/ Melba cadenza eventually supplanted the single-voiced version (304). Matsumoto offers a careful analysis of this cadenza and its variants, but although she relies on recordings to trace these differences, she does not acknowledge the constitutive properties of recording in popularizing or codifying any particular version.

Nellie Melba was one of Victor's first "Red Seal" artists, and while in the 1900s she was nearing the end of her stage career, she still recorded the Lucia "mad scene" three times. Matsumoto terms this cadenza "C1" and designates others in terms of variation from it, noting Marchesi's publication of it in 1900 (307). Certainly the publication of the score would have had an impact on singers preparing the role or the piece, but the enormous fame of Melba and the consistency of her interpretation on record—three recordings of essentially the same cadenza in 1904, 1907, and 1910 for Victor and its affiliates—would no doubt have participated in normalizing that performance tradition.⁶² To be clear, I take no issue with Matsumoto's argument that the importance of the Marchesi-Melba cadenza lies "in its role in producing the standardisation" for the flute-voice pairing. Rather, I suggest that Melba's phonographic circulation be considered as significant evidence for tracing transmission and codification of

⁶² Matsumoto notes that other singers using the C1 cadenza include Maria Michailowa, Elise Elizza, Grete Forst, Marcella Sembrich, Selma Kurz, Ellen Beach Yaw, and later, Joan Sutherland (304-307).

performance practices, in addition to “Marchesi’s rigid control over her singer-pupils” and her score publications (304).

In addition to the historical example of early 78-rpm recordings participating in normalizing artistic interpretation of a particular aria or excerpt, the legacies of recording are visible in terms of the relationship between long-play records, and the conception of what should be included in the performance of an opera-text as a whole work. A contemporary example is the public controversy surrounding a 1998 production of *Le nozze di Figaro* at the Metropolitan Opera, and the issue of which arias soprano Cecilia Bartoli would perform in the role of Susanna.

Prior to the late nineteenth century and the rise of recording, it was not uncommon for artists to substitute arias in a particular opera for those that best suited their voices or performance goals. This was certainly true in many of Mozart’s works. As Nicholas Till notes in the case of *Figaro*,

Mozart also substituted arias in his own works, as with Susanna’s two arias in *Le nozze di Figaro* when the opera was revived in Vienna in 1788. These performances had a singer performing the role of Susanna who had very different vocal characteristics from the original Susanna, Nancy Storace: Adriana Ferrarese, who was shortly to create the role of Fiordiligi in *Così*. (231)

While Mozart actually wrote different arias for Ferrarese, who took over the role in a later production, recordings of the opera have predominantly included the arias composed for Nancy Storace—“*Venite inginocchiatevi*” and “*Deh vieni, non tardar*”—rather than the Ferrarese arias “*Al desio*” and “*Un moto di gioia*.” Both the Storace arias are known for their beauty, wit and

technical difficulties.⁶³ The Ferrarese arias were seen, in 1998 at least, as “frivolous ... star turns” that serve the artist more than the work (Tommasini E3), and “a bit of fluff where *Venite inginocchiatevi* is supposed to be” (John W. Freeman in Parker 50). However, the idea that the work itself should necessarily take priority over the exigencies of a production or its stars was obviously not intrinsic to Mozart’s compositional practice.

The controversial choice to use the Ferrarese arias in a modern production reveals several tensions at the heart of opera circulation. Roger Parker argues that, for Mozart, “*all* operatic contexts were ephemeral” rather than fixed (51). But when superstar soprano Cecilia Bartoli planned to perform the Ferrarese arias in the 1998 production at the Metropolitan Opera instead of the well-known Storace pieces, a furor ensued. While Maestro James Levine and Bartoli expressed interest in a kind of musicological experimentation, stage director Jonathan Miller protested on the grounds that the insertion arias were not as dramatically effective as the originals (Lebrecht 22).⁶⁴

The alternate arias, sung on only some of the performance nights, were the topic of debate in a variety of publication venues. A few weeks after opening night, an article in the *Telegraph* quoted Bartoli and Miller, each of whom staked their position on artistic integrity. Miller quipped that the fourth act of *Figaro* without “*Deh vieni*” is “like *coitus interruptus*” (qtd in Lebrecht 22), and Bartoli, whose contract indicated her right to the insertions, insisted that Miller attempted to override her and thus disparage “Mozart’s honour” (qtd in Lebrecht 22). At

⁶³ My field research has revealed that the staging exigencies for “*Venite inginocchiatevi*,” in which Susanna must dress Cherubino up in drag, while he flirts with the Countess, are the bane of contemporary Susannas and the Cherubini whom they dress. The text comprises physical instructions that only make sense when the staging follows the words, and does so in pace with the quick music (Khalil).

⁶⁴ Miller suggested in one interview that he eventually agreed to Bartoli’s proposal “rather in the way that France had agreed in 1939” (Miller in Parker 43).

the heart of the controversy are both the politics of star power, and the demonstrable public interest in how *Figaro* “should” be performed. The controversy also reveals the tensions arising from familiarity with a well-known opera-text. Without the extraordinary number of productions and recordings that include “*Deh vieni*,” circulating in North America (include the Glyndebourne recordings noted above), audiences and critics alike would be far less likely to notice the replacement.

The simultaneously-stated connections to the “honour of Mozart,” the demand for dramatic integrity, the curiosity of experimentation and the expectations regarding a well-known work all participate in constituting the idea of both *Figaro*, and in a broader sense, of what “opera” might rightfully include in its performance contexts. As Lawrence Kramer observes in *Opera and Modern Culture*, much of this kind of valuation is rooted largely in the nineteenth-century ideology of through-composition and *Gesamtkunstwerk* embodied in the works of Richard Wagner. Even operas much older than Wagner’s are, in the late twentieth century, understood through the lens of “Opera, capital ‘O’” that Kramer sees as “an ideal type” and a “social fiction” formulated on symbolic investiture linked to several aspects of late-nineteenth-century European culture (*Opera and Modern Culture* 2-5). But this formulation occurs as opera-texts are inscribed upon and remediated through records and their attendant protocols and paratexts. As mentioned above, until the advent of the long-play record in 1949, the vast majority of opera recordings circulated as isolated excerpts of arias, duets, overtures, and choruses because the discs held, on average, a three or four minute playback time. So, while “Opera, capital O” and its ideological investments in Romantic ideals may have been a dominant critical discourse, the excerpted record, reduced musical scores, and later the more-or-less full album on LP, were in many cases the primary means by which opera reached its publics, particularly in the

large expanses of North America without a touring or civic company in residence. One might argue that the symbolic capital of opera that has been achieved through the circulation of recordings paradoxically feeds the fetish of the live art form. The example of Bartoli and her reviews go so far as to suggest that rather than liveness giving rise to recording, recording itself sets the standard by which live performance is assessed.

The material experiences linked to phonography are mapped retrospectively through the nineteenth century onto works that precede both, laying the groundwork for intense controversy surrounding alterations or substitutions to those markers of compositional style, star turns, and dramatic effect. When Cecilia Bartoli insisted on singing the Ferrarese insertion arias at the Metropolitan Opera in 1998, she was participating in a performance practice coincident with *Le nozze di Figaro*'s composition in the 1780s (including its star culture), but she was eschewing the immense inertia of the definitive—which is produced, in part, through operatic circulation on record.

In addition to formal venues of publication such as newspapers, the controversy was well charted in an online community of opera fans. The *Opera-L* listserv has numerous entries about the 1998 *Figaro* production at the Metropolitan Opera, and almost all of them comment on the debate around the so-called “insertion arias” that Bartoli performed. At one extreme, posters suggest that the insertion arias “disfigured the score” and produced a “novelty” of a classic work (Rosenberg). Another poster notes that while he will likely prefer the original arias when he attends the opera, he welcomes the opportunity to hear the insertions being given a try, so that he can “decide for [him]self” (Drake). A number of satiric responses joke that other singers will simply begin subbing in whichever pieces, in whatever languages, please them most (Klarreich).

I consider the *Opera-L* posts to be an example of an opera public deeply familiar with the

Figaro opera-text, as well as with the reputation of Bartoli. The posts also indicate an interest in acquiring new operatic experiences, and all of them demonstrate both the posters' attentiveness, and the negotiation of apprehension (in this case acquiring unique or rare experiences versus knowledge of performance traditions). Access to such debates around artistic integrity, dramatic exigency, and fidelity in live production are predicated on phonography and its intensive listening experiences, because it both curates and fosters particular modes of familiarity and recognition. Curated LPs offer the user (who takes the time to listen) familiarity with a composer's *oeuvre*, a star's favourite arias, or definitive recordings as interpreted by a particular conductor. Whether it is an aesthetic judgement on a particular composer, opera-text, or interpretation, or perhaps a debate about the best or most "authentic" performance order of an operatic text, participation in the world of opera is very often marked by some form of engagement or investment in discussions of the definitive recording, performance, portrayal, regarding an aspect of opera.

Opera publics are formed in response to the circulation of various kinds of texts, and their relationships to those texts are frequently linked to modes of evaluation: those who are willing or even eager to compare and judge denote themselves as part of an inner circle capable of judgment (whether in diva worship, music scholarship, or public culture more generally). This is not entirely legible along lines of class or cultural capital in the Bourdieusian sense: as Claudio Benzecry has shown, certain kinds of fandom or "insider status" carry very little investment in so-called "high culture attachment" (7). But the bracketing of class from a sphere of initiates is, in itself, imbricated in phonographic circulation, because of course until records were being mass-distributed via catalogue, in schools, libraries, record stores, or the *Victor Book of the Opera*, which I will discuss in chapter 3, only those with financial, temporal and geographic

access could participate in this kind of comparative debate.

While Victor and Columbia are by no means the only significant record companies complicit in the practices and consequences of opera circulation, their long histories and various roles as the innovators and primary movers of emergent recording practices make them good archives for examining the remediation and ongoing negotiation of operatic protocols in new media contexts. In the case of the phonograph, opera's long history of privileging the voice over other performance elements participated into the sonic recognition and distribution of celebrity in the uncanny and novel experience of playing the star in one's own home. Similarly, the social and listening protocols of attentiveness demanded by the privileging of the voice in live concert becomes, in the phonograph era, available at home, instituting a private concert that is selected by the user. Attentiveness becomes linked, therefore, with repetition, and this possibility for user investment gives rise to the complicated experiences relating to opera knowledge and participation in the operascape. Because records can be compared to others, and because listeners can "learn" the nuance of a given interpretation by either singer or conductor, the long-standing operatic protocols of the distinguishing "insiders" or "initiates" expands beyond the opera-going crowds of fashionable theatres. As the examples of Irving Guttman, Wayne Koestenbaum, Frank Darabont, and the *Opera-L* posts demonstrate, intensive listening in the home offers highly diverse experiences, in completely discrete kinds of publics.

Commercial opera recordings promote a broad sphere of debate regarding the qualities of a particular recording, aria, or opera-text; the terms of these debates include what constitutes the "best", the closest to a "live" performance, or perhaps the nearest embodiment of what the

composer may have envisioned.⁶⁵ Participation in such debates could include any number of activities (as readers of newspapers, writers, students, fans, or specific industry publications such as *Opera Annual* or *Opera News* suggest) and has the effect of hierarchizing certain kinds of performance or operatic text over others. Coincidentally, evaluative participation in the operascape relies on certain kinds of knowledge and familiarity, some of which may be built through repeated experiences and close attention. While today these kinds of knowledge might seem natural or intrinsic to opera participation, the periods of convergence I have examined here illuminate some of the ways that opera's protocols are both relied upon, and were challenged by, the developments of commercial phonography. The consequences of that convergence are long-reaching for those who would participate in the operascape, including artists, producers, and audiences.

⁶⁵ These claims could be overtly made as well as accreted over time. For example, the 1907 HMV recording of *Pagliacci*, conducted by Leoncavallo, was framed by sponsors as settling “any question arising in the future concerning the composer’s intentions” (qtd in Gelatt 186).

Chapter 2: Opera on the Airwaves

While commercial phonography fostered the kinds of celebrity appeal that today circulate alongside a small number of singers and opera-texts or excerpts, broadcasting's central site of convergence with opera protocols centers on negotiating the distance between sites of performance and spaces of listening (and later, watching). Radio in the 1910s and 1920s expanded the domestic circulation of opera-texts to a new kind of simultaneously mediated performance distributed over the airwaves. Broadcast television began, in the early 1940s, to reconfigure this access once more by introducing studio *mises-en-scène* to operatic circulation, thus producing both expanded access to the visual aspects of opera, and contracting the scope of that landscape in order to reproduce operatic performance legibly on the small screen. In this way, both radio and television broadcasting participate in a contradictory circulation of opera.

Like the phonograph, radio promised consumers a closer relationship to cultural production, including musical performance, educational opportunities, and political speeches. Unlike the phonograph, radio broadcasting couched this closeness in terms of temporal immediacy. Radio's successor, television, added the visual organization of spectatorship to the concept of broadcast immediacy and therefore offered a more multi-sensorial intimacy, or access, to the event being broadcast. For Philip Auslander, the terms "immediacy" and "intimacy" provide a framework for analyzing the complex idea of "liveness" more generally. He notes that, in its emergent period, "television's intimacy was seen as a function of its immediacy—the close proximity of viewer to the event that it enables—and the fact that events outside the home are transmitted into the viewer's home" (16). The term "live broadcast" privileges the temporal immediacy of liveness rather than physical or spatial proximity to a given event, and qualifies both a kind of liveness and a kind of dissemination that did not exist prior to the radio

phenomenon in the early twentieth century.

In the periods of both radio and television emergence, broadcasting producers co-opted opera-texts and protocols in attempts to make new media legible and desirable to their respective, and prospective, publics. Attentiveness, investment in the voice, and apprehension all find their way into early radio protocols, and do so, in part, through an operatic repertoire produced “on the air.” In other words, particular protocols of operatic intermediality are remediated by radio to produce a mediatized performance that makes both opera and radio recognizable to their publics in intertwining, if contradictory, ways. Emergent television further complicated discourses about operatic traditions, artistic merit and performance scale. I argue that opera protocols transect the technologies and paradoxes of broadcasting in framing what Povinelli and Gaonkar term the “regimes of recognition” that effect both the public perception of a new medium—radio or television broadcasting—and the seemingly-known medium of bodily co-present operatic performance. The consequences of opera-broadcast convergence reverberated throughout the twentieth century, especially in the negotiations between novelty and tradition in opera composition, repertoire investment, and performance aesthetics.

I work chronologically in this chapter to describe and analyze the convergence of opera with radio, and then television, broadcasting, in primarily U.S. contexts. I offer a number of Canadian examples and a few counterpoints, particularly regarding the structural organization of broadcast industries, but I treat programming decisions as influential across national borders—in no small part because, on the east coast, where both U.S. and Canadian broadcasting first formed as corporate interests, Canadian receivers could certainly pick up U.S. broadcasts from the earliest days of radio. Throughout this chapter, my aim is to defamiliarize connections between broadcast media and opera circulation, so as to better understand the material conditions under

which opera came to help frame broadcasting, and the ways in which broadcasting continues to cast a shadow over participation in the operascape today for both producers and publics. My contemporary example for sketching this legacy deploys opera on radio in its representational practices, and thereby rehearses long-standing connections between opera and television in its form.

Picture this: groups of men brag about their various sexual encounters. They play fast and loose with the women who are subject to their social control, both perceived and material, while simultaneously negotiating their own hierarchies of social and economic power. A betrayed wife wonders what her husband is up to, and everyone is simultaneously titillated and disturbed by the single woman who arrives at the party wearing the wrong thing. It sounds like the plot for *Le nozze di Figaro*, the 1786 opera by W.A. Mozart and Lorenzo da Ponte. But it also describes a 2007 episode of Matthew Weiner's sensationally popular television series *Mad Men*—an episode, which in a nicely-crafted reflection on its own metahisory, invokes the opera in thematic, diegetic, metatextual and technological registers. The episode's title is "The Marriage of Figaro."

In the busy marketplace of twenty-first century television series, *Mad Men* distinguished itself through complex and extended plot lines, as well as through carefully-nuanced representations of setting and detailed character arcs. Don Draper, as the anti-heroic central character, functions as a cipher for anxieties of masculinity, "baby boomer" and post-war culture, emerging distinctions between suburban and urban spheres, and the hyper-capitalization of personal life. The series has also been noted for its close attention to historical detail,⁶⁶ which in this episode, foregrounds the circulation of domestic technologies of the 8mm movie camera,

⁶⁶ See Bevan's "Pre-Digital Media in *Mad Men*" for a discussion of the Super-8 mm video camera, the Kodak Carousel, and the Polaroid Camera and the role of nostalgia in the series.

and the radio—both of which circulate the music of *Le nozze di Figaro* to underscore the tensions permeating young Sally Draper’s birthday party.

This scene in the Draper home depicts the birthday party of Don and Betty’s daughter, Sally. Neighbourhood children and their parents are in attendance. At the beginning of the party, Betty works in the kitchen and Don entertains the fathers in the living room. Don tunes the radio station from a news program to a very Milton Cross-like voice announcing that “. . . Opera presents *The Marriage of Figaro*, with Robert Merrill and Joan Sutherland” (Weiner). The music that directly follows is not, as one might expect, the opera’s famous overture, but rather the first vocal lines of the opera: Figaro and Susanna’s playful act 1 “measuring” cavatina, in which the bride and groom literally and metaphorically analyze the pros and cons of their newly appointed living quarters.

The scene introduces the music as being sourced from the radio, thus marking it as diegetic, or belonging to the story (Stillwell 11). None of Don’s guests remark on his decision to change the radio station in the birthday scene, nor does any of the dialogue refer to either the radio or the opera. This absence suggests that the opera broadcast figures as background, rather than foreground music (Stillwell 189), which may be read at the level of sonic perception and cultural circulation. The radio opera broadcast is unremarkable for Don and the other men in the room; it functions as background music not only for viewers of the television program, but also within the social scene developing through the introduction of neighbourhood divorcée Helen Bishop. In other words, the show’s diegesis presents radio and opera as dominant, rather than emergent, media in Williams’s terms, and is thus not likely to produce the kind of wondrous listening experience I described for the prisoners of Shawshank in the previous chapter. However, this background status is almost immediately up-ended by the metadiegetic deployment of

Cherubino's act 2 arietta, "*Voi che sapete*," and the 8 mm camera Don uses shortly after the radio broadcast fades from the soundscape of the episode, a juxtaposition which I will discuss at the conclusion of this chapter.

The multiple layers of operatic circulation in *Mad Men* invite us to consider the series in the broader genealogy of television in North America, while the first overt reference to the opera in the episode, the radio broadcast, invites a consideration of the representation of old media in a fictionalized 1960s as envisioned from a twenty-first century perspective. The radio broadcast portrayed within "The Marriage of Figaro," reflects more than *Mad Men's* complex thematic use of music and its attention to historical detail: it also stages a particular relationship between opera broadcasting and the social world of the private home, which was a central facet of the media change initiated by U.S. radio broadcasting in the 1920s.

1. Before the "Radio Boom"

Wireless technology fostered the emergent radio industry in the second decade of the twentieth century in both Canada and the United States. In these formative years, both individuals and nascent corporations turned to opera to help frame the public conversations about radio in terms of innovation, quality, and the public good. The decades leading up to the "radio boom" of the 1920s are well documented by scholars such as Susan B. Douglas and Michele Hilmes. Douglas, in particular, explains that early U.S. wireless developments were driven by corporate and military, rather than public or entertainment, interests. Governments and maritime businesses were early adopters of experimental technologies for sea-to-land and ship-to-ship communications, and in these arenas, investments in point-to-point communication often treated the radial capacities of wireless technology as a hindrance to privacy. Douglas characterizes

early wireless/radio discourse in terms of its challenges:

It had very particular attributes that made it difficult to control. It sent messages through space in all directions. It was not secret, or even private, and it was subject to interference. Access was at first unrestricted: anyone with an inexpensive homemade apparatus could transmit and receive signals. Establishing financial and technical control over this invention proved problematical. And the invention introduced Americans to an unexplored, mysterious new environment, the electromagnetic spectrum, then known as the luminiferous ether As an uncharted frontier, it inspired fear, suspicion and visions of transcendence and escape. Sending messages without wires was one revolution; coming to terms with this electromagnetic environment was another. (xxviii)

As Douglas describes them, many of the social protocols organizing radio use by the mid-twentieth century were at first characterized more as problems than innovations. These include the physics of sonic radiation out from a central point, which render radio signals impossible to keep private; and the disparities in technological complexity, which made it much easier to receive, than transmit, radio signals. Additionally, the electromagnetic inventions that made radio possible also garnered an era of exploration into the “airwaves” in a way that had hitherto not been possible. Radio discourses were thus, not unlike those surrounding early phonography, imbued with wonder (especially regarding the so-called “ether”), and questions about the rights and best uses for the emerging technological capacities.

Douglas also notes the correlation between radio’s seemingly endless capacity for dissemination and questions regarding rights and regulations. She observes that Western Union and Bell Telephone were private companies that held basic monopolies over telegram and telephone use, but these ran on wires that could be owned and controlled, whereas “it was not at

all clear in 1899 how, or even if, corporations could own or manage the airwaves” (25). These factors supported an emerging philosophy that linked radio to freedom, even as corporations such as the American Telegraph and Telephone Company (AT&T), and later RCA, worked tirelessly to find profit in the medium. Echoing Gitelman’s discussion of media’s social protocols, Daniel Fisher has noted that the discursive considerations of early radio are constitutive of its possible functions: “the imaginings of how radio might or should work are central to how radio does work; they are not just inconsequential glosses on its powers but fundamental to its diverse social constitution” (153). Fisher suggests that throughout its history, radio’s technologies have been “catalyzing and mobilizing new forms of collective subjectivity,” through a view to the future (152), and in the United States, this futurity was necessarily tied to the negotiation of capitalism and public interest.

While corporate competitors and government organizations were debating the merits and controls over wireless use in the early 1900s, it is inventor-entrepreneur Lee de Forest who is credited with early articulations of a radio practice as public entertainment. He was one of the first U.S. inventors to adopt and even exploit the seeming challenges of wireless as the unique capacities of radio: he championed it as one-way, entertainment-focused, and available to everyday, ordinary listeners. His technological and philosophical approach to radio had, as Douglas describes it, “enormous social consequences” (172). And as we shall see, de Forest linked radio’s entertainment capacity explicitly with his experiences at the opera.

Lee de Forest (1873-1961) was a man of unexceptional origins. He was raised in the poor southern town of Talladega, Alabama and lived much of his early adulthood in relative poverty (Carneal 8). His first significant public engagement with radio technology was his broadcast of American yacht races in 1901. De Forest set up a transmission to rival that of the already famous

Giuglemo Marconi, who had previously broadcast the 1899 America's Cup to great fanfare. The competing transmissions disrupted each other, making both incomprehensible, but the press coverage nonetheless heralded the young de Forest as a competitor to the already lionized Marconi.⁶⁷

De Forest produced a number of flamboyant public stunts to support stock sales in his own wireless company in the early 1900s (Douglas 56).⁶⁸ His business practices left a great deal to be desired: he was involved in several patent disputes with Reginald Fessenden, was suspected of selling empty stock to gullible buyers, and was even charged with stealing Fessenden's detector technology in 1906. While in many ways de Forest's technological innovations seem limited in comparison with many of his peers, he *did* invent a gas-filled tube he called the "audion," which could pick up undulations of the human voice and amplify them.⁶⁹ This device is the forerunner of the vacuum tube that would become central to radio broadcasting, and it offered a significant shift from the Morse code signalling that had made Marconi famous in the 1890s. While de Forest lost his fortune several times throughout his career (most notably in 1906, shortly after the patent for the audion was filed), it was this invention that foregrounded the capacity to send music and speech over the wireless, and it made the link of opera music and

⁶⁷ According to de Forest's 1930 biography, since Marconi had an agreement with the Associated Press and de Forest with the Publishers Association (a rival outlet), neither reported the failure of the transmissions. This is also an early example of the emerging need for "tuning" signals – the technology for which had not yet been incorporated into wireless instruments (Carneal 132).

⁶⁸ While Georgette Carneal, de Forest's "authorized biographer" claims that he "simply refused to have anything whatsoever to do with the new speculative scheme of the promoters" (169), letters from de Forest to his associates would seem to suggest he was well aware of building stations more as props for stock sale than for any sort of transmissions (Douglas 93).

⁶⁹ Douglas notes that de Forest based the audion largely on the oscillation valve invented by the UK scientist John Ambrose Fleming, but added "a tiny grid with bars of fine wire supported by a separate connecting wire . . ." which "magnified the currents in motion and amplified the incoming signal enormously" (170).

radio broadcasting technologically possible.

Both Douglas and Georgette Carneal, writer of de Forest's 1930 biography, note that de Forest was an ardent music lover and attendee of the opera. Even in periods of serious poverty, he would attend the opera on a twenty-five-cent ticket, "which bought him a spot to stand at the rear of the opera house" (Douglas 172). Georgette Carneal expounds upon this purported love of music and opera, suggesting that he would often spend his last money on tickets to see the Henry Savage Company in Chicago (113). She describes de Forest as feeling it was unfair that only the wealthy should have access to the beauty of opera, and suggests that he became "convinced that there were thousands of other deprived music fans in America who would love to have opera transmitted into their homes" (172).

De Forest was essentially arguing for transmitting live performances into the homes of anyone with a receiver, and some of his earliest endeavours at vocal transmission were focused on opera. In 1909, he told the *New York Times* that he looked "forward to the day when opera may be brought into every home. Someday the news and even advertising will be sent out over the wireless telephone" ("De Forest Tells of a New Wireless" 1). As a means of both answering his own call to action, and presumably in the pursuit of getting his new company some positive press, de Forest undertook what is arguably the first opera broadcast in United States history. De Forest set up his equipment on the roof of the Metropolitan Opera on 20 January 1910. In anticipation of this event, he advertised that he would broadcast the evening performance of *I pagliacci* and *Cavalleria rusticana*.⁷⁰ His "makeshift transmitter atop the Metropolitan Opera

⁷⁰ Jim McPherson, whose three-part *Opera Quarterly* article series on early radio are foundational for this chapter, wonders how the technologically conservative Giulio Gatti-Casazza was persuaded to allow this ("Overview" 6), but Carneal's account suggest that it wasn't Gatti-Casazza at all who supported the experiment, but his "co-impresario" at the time,

House” reached various “listening stations in Manhattan and as far away as New Jersey” (McPherson, “Overview” 6). As in the case of his early experiment at broadcasting yacht races, the endeavour revealed more than the execution: “the technology was not sufficiently sophisticated: the arcs listed, the microphones burned out, and the receivers picked up a blend of music and dots and dashes [competing signals in Morse code]” (Douglas 172). The *New York Times* reported that, “the warbling of Caruso and Mme. Destinn . . . was not clearly audible to the operators who were summoned to hear it at the headquarters of the inventor” (quoted in Douglas 175).⁷¹ Despite the shortcomings of the broadcast itself, de Forest’s endeavour linked three significant concepts that continue to impact the media- and operascapes in North America today. He exploited the radiating movement of sound waves, in conjunction with his audion and “radio telephone,” rather than attempting to direct them in a point-to-point transmission; he saw this movement as a possible transmission for entertainment purposes; and he saw opera as one such form of entertainment.

Georgette Carneal claims that de Forest is the United States’ first broadcaster, and while her enthusiastic depiction seems at times to border on idolatry, her claims are generally corroborated by both contemporary and historical sources. In 1946, former Vice-President of AT&T William Peck Banning described de Forest as a foundational figure in radio (48). Additionally, in the 2012 *Encyclopedia of Radio*, Michael Stamm suggests that de Forest, “more than any other individual, saw a potential for voice transmission beyond just a wireless

Andreas Dippel (231). McPherson also observes that the *Times* article announcing the broadcast claimed it would be a production of *Tosca* (“Overview” 6), but given the frequent issues facing early broadcasts, it is not difficult to imagine an unforeseen delay that produced a discrepancy between advertisement and the event itself.

⁷¹ Somewhat predictably, the ever-faithful Georgette Carneal writes that the roughly fifty listeners were *all* “lavish in their praises of the reception” (232).

replacement for two-way communication” (442). While de Forest’s technological invention would be fundamentally revised before radio as we now know it became possible during the radio boom of the 1920s, his early endeavour coincided with the generally agreed-upon shift in terminology from “wireless” to “radio;” that is, acknowledging that the radial motion of broadcasting was the central feature of the media, rather than its lack of wires. And this shift is linked, in de Forest’s language at least, to the technological capacity of delivering entertainment and culture to people who could not afford, in one way or another, to attend events like the opera.

In his use of opera as a primary example of the economic disparities that radio would overcome, de Forest also promotes opera as a cultural object *worthy* of advances like broadcasting, as something important enough to bother distributing wirelessly. He implicitly claims to be meeting the desire of a potential (presumed) public, hindered in their operatic experiences only by financial or geographic constraints, and in doing so frames opera as an both logistically exclusive and universally appealing. De Forest’s choice of the Metropolitan Opera House for his broadcast likewise reinforces this producer, over others, as a definitive site of “opera.” It is whatever the Met produces that de Forest wants to send, rather than, for example, the Manhattan Opera Company down the road—and as I discuss below, the Met’s long relationship with radio broadcasting has been foundational for its recognition across Canada and the United States over the last seventy years.⁷²

In addition to framing the Met and its productions as the opera that matters most to the public, de Forest’s stunt participated in transforming wireless technology from an instrument of

⁷² De Forest did broadcast one Manhattan Company singer, Madame Mazarin, apparently, performing an aria from *Carmen* prior to his Metropolitan Opera experiment. But Carneal rationalizes his choice of the Met in his public demonstration as follows: “Since he had learned that is always easier to see the big people, just as it was for him easier to do the big things, he went for his talent [in 1910] to the Metropolitan Opera House” (230-1).

delivering point-to-point information communications to that of, quite literally, radiating performance over the airwaves. In essence, de Forest's escapades and rhetoric are some of the earliest examples of wireless *as* broadcasting. At the same time, of course, de Forest was seeking ways to make his inventions pay, and in doing so he framed opera not only as an index for art that betters a new medium, but as a commercial product available for distribution (eventually via support from advertisers). De Forest's vision was realized, but, alas, never by him. De Forest ultimately sold his patent for the audion to the American Telegraph and Telephone Company (AT&T), a subsidiary of the Bell Company, in 1914. AT&T then used the audion technology as the basis for developing the vacuum tube that became a central technology in broadcasting. While de Forest continued to work in the field, AT&T and its patents quickly become a central hub for radio innovation. Its first radio station, WEAf, took up the position of providing high quality entertainment and edification in their broadcasting experiments. Subsequently, they formed North America's first radio opera company.

2. Early Opera Broadcasts and the NBC National Grand Opera Company

Radio broadcasting had an enormous impact on the circulation of opera stardom, the organization of existing repertoire, the creation of new works, and in some cases even the organizing principles of production. In order to understand the legacies of this convergence, I will briefly make a few observations about operatic composition, production, and circulation in North America in the early decades of the twentieth century. The period spanning de Forest's early radio experiments and the start of the radio boom in 1922 was, in Grout and Williams's assessment, a period of unprecedented diversity in operatic composition (598). At the same time that *verismo* works of the late-nineteenth century continued to be popular in both performance

and recording, Puccini reigned supreme at the Metropolitan Opera (including the world premieres of *La Fanciulla del West* and *Il Trittico*). Elise Kirk notes the brief phase of American-composed operas that imagined Indigenous peoples and stories in the 1910s (*American Opera* 386). These did not achieve lasting popularity. Early works by Richard Strauss including *Salome* (1905), *Elektra* (1909) and *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911) were premiered in the United States in these decades. The compositional genealogy from Wagner is evident in these works, including “personages primarily symbolical and with music in a continuous orchestral texture organized by means of *leitmotifs*, the vocal lines being of declamatory or *arioso* character” (Grout and Williams 598), as well as producing a certain amount of shock value in performance contexts (Dizikes 316).⁷³

In terms of the operascape in North America, however, we must also remember that U.S. stages and tours did not necessarily reflect trends in composition, which were for the most part European. The circulation of opera performance during this time included permanent houses, tours, and of course the phonographic and citational modes discussed in chapter 1. Touring companies such as Fortune Gallo’s San Carlo Opera and the Met’s touring troupe performed predominantly Italian repertoire across the country and in Canadian cities including Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto (Dizikes 317; Cunningham 21). After the First World War, and throughout the Jazz Age, many opera melodies originally made familiar through Vaudeville, the phonograph, and piano books were also then reconceived in the idiom of rag-time.⁷⁴ New companies were founded in Chicago, San Francisco and Cincinnati, while the Boston Opera rivalled the Met for its star power. Otto Kahn had proposed an opera house “for the people” in

⁷³ Grout and Williams stress that Strauss’s later works reflect a shift away from Wagner, even including, to some degree, *Der Rosenkavalier*, in tone if not musical complexity (625).

⁷⁴ See Larry Hamberlin’s *Tin Pan Opera* for a study on this phenomenon.

New York as a corrective to the expense of the Met, but he was defeated by the Met's powerful box owners and no such house appeared (430). The push-pull of tradition and innovation, both on the opera stage and in the means of access for opera publics, was by no means reaching resolution. On the contrary, radio entered an operascope in which varied modes of circulation, performance, and access produced a patchwork regime of recognition in which debates about quality, accessibility, "high" and "low" culture cut across issues of regionalism, class, and of course, emergent media.

According to music critic Jim McPherson, opera broadcasts exploded across the country as soon as the United States federal government began issuing broadcasting licenses in 1920. McPherson notes, for example, an amateur performance of *La Bohème* broadcast by KDYL in Salt Lake City in 1922 and an attempted professional broadcast in Chicago that was thwarted by Ricordi (Puccini's publisher) and its licensing rules the same year (7).⁷⁵ William Peck Banning's 1945 history of AT&T's early experiments suggests that radio broadcasting of music, politics, and sports events were the most frequent kinds of programming, and indeed operatic broadcasts were regularly at the fore in early licensing years. The coincidence of debates around the rights and responsibilities of radio broadcasting and opera on the airwaves invites us to consider the connections between the role of radio and the operascope in this period. Although several stations in the 1920s were exploring the potential of broadcasting,⁷⁶ I will focus here on the case of AT&T's experimental station WEA, based in New York City, because it was the first U.S.

⁷⁵ McPherson doesn't cite specific texts detailing this controversy, but I presume they are located in the broadcaster's archives. Please note that in cases where McPherson cites archival materials that I am unable to corroborate, I make note of McPherson as my source in the Works Cited entry. A comparative study of nascent broadcasters and licensing issues would be a compelling subject for future research.

⁷⁶ McPherson notes WJZ and WEA in New York City, KDYL in Salt Lake City, and KWKY in Chicago as examples of early stations ("Overview" 6-7, 10).

station to build on a commercial or “toll” business model; it is linked to one of the most dominant broadcasters in early radio, NBC; and it invested significant resources in testing and responding to the tastes of its listeners (Banning 112).

After the First World War, corporations began seeking viable business models for radio broadcasting, which until then had operated primarily in the control of naval and government contracts on one hand, and amateur enthusiasts on the other. Early individual entrepreneurs like de Forest were slowly squeezed out of the emerging industry as major cross-licensing agreements consolidated power in manufacturers like General Electric and Westinghouse, whose business interests in RCA and AT&T, respectively, fostered the capacity for radio transmission and reception on a mass scale. Unlike the development of radio in Great Britain and later Canada, which followed a largely nationalized model and some form of government subsidy (at least until the 1950s), U.S. broadcasting interests functioned in four general categories: government, public institutions, private owners, and “toll broadcasting” (Banning 71). AT&T’s WEAFF station was the first “toll” station, and it began broadcasting in 1922.⁷⁷ WEAFF’s endeavour quickly revealed the fundamental difference between point-to-point communications industries rooted in telephony or telegraphy and broadcasting, thus offering a lens through which we can better understand the development of the now-commonplace idea of broadcast programming.

WEAFF’s proposed model was not unlike a telephone service provider, in which the company offered, “the simple provision of communication facilities, operated and maintained

⁷⁷ WEAFF initially shared the airwaves with other stations, such as WJZ, through a licensing schedule (different wavelengths or “stations” in a given region would come later). Michael McGregor notes that it was Herbert Hoover’s intention, in limiting power levels and hours of operation, to “meet all license requests” in the early 1920s, but that his efforts were overturned by the federal government in 1926—the year, incidentally, that NBC was established (862).

according to telephone service standards, to be used by others” (Banning 80). In essence, WEAF would own and operate equipment that would be used by anyone who was willing to pay and wanted to “talk to the public” (Banning xxvi). A station was built in Manhattan and WEAF began seeking corporate interest in buying broadcast time. As WEAF quickly discovered, however, corporations had little interest in developing programming that would capture the public’s attention, especially when “those who owned machines were for a considerable period more interested in seeing how many stations could be located than in listening to any one attraction” (McPherson, “Overview” 8). In order to make their experiment viable, WEAF was forced to begin programming its own material to foster an audience of listeners, and thus attract advertising interests from corporations.

To maintain its scheduled time when no original or live programming was available, WEAF intended to “utilize the player piano and phonograph” and augment its offerings with live performance of some kind for slots that no one had paid for (Banning 78). This practice was quickly discarded and WEAF hired Samuel Ross as its first program director. Ross was also the first author of the *Victor Book of the Opera* (which I discuss in chapter 3 of this study), and his investments in music and opera are evident in some of WEAF’s first major programming choices. For example, on Armistice Day 1922, a concert performance of *Aïda* in the Bronx constituted WEAF’s first broadcast of a full opera-text.⁷⁸ *Aïda* was, in 1922, the recently-retired Enrico Caruso’s most famous repertoire, and its excerpts enjoyed extraordinary familiarity in New York and across the United States, especially through Victor recordings—a clear instance of the way

⁷⁸ The *New York Times* review notes that 600 000 listeners heard it on the radio, and that the “Sounds [were] Reproduced Satisfactorily to an Immense Audience in Radius of 1 000 Miles.” The cast list includes “Mme. Anne Roselle, soprano of the Metropolitan; Mme. Carmella Ponselle, mezzo-soprano; Leon Rothier, French basso of the Metropolitan; Demitri Dobkin, Russian tenor; Giordano Paltrinieri, tenor of the Metropolitan” (“Grand Opera Heard” 20).

in which broadcasting would build upon and amplify existing networks of opera recording and distribution. The event combined the novelty of technological innovation in remote broadcasting with well-established operatic repertoire and the star power of Metropolitan Opera singers (though not Caruso himself). It promised potential listeners the enjoyment of both the familiar and novel.

The *New York Times* review of the *Aïda* broadcast highlights the scale and innovation of the technological endeavour, describing in great detail the number of spectators, the distance of the broadcast radius, and the type of cable used. The article also frames the broadcast as part of a larger endeavour to bring “high class music of all kinds” at “moderate prices . . . to persons who otherwise would find no chance to go to an opera,” especially people like the veterans in attendance at the Armistice Day Musical Festival that day (“Grand Opera Heard” 20). This rhetoric echoes that describing the early phonograph, which as I have noted, Gunning frames in terms of wonder and spectacle (45). While I have no access to records of actual listeners’ experiences, both the corporate account by Banning and the *Times* review above frame the collapse of physical distance between performance venue and listening venue as a spectacular, wonderful experience, and in my view, that wonder is imbued with a presumed familiarity, or at least recognition of some kind of value connected to the opera event in question. Famous excerpts performed by stars of the famous opera house are once again available at home, but in this instance the novelty is simultaneity in spite of physical distance. It is an instance of a radio broadcaster attempting to mobilize existing protocols in order to establish itself as a purveyor of entertainments that were already familiar to its potential audiences.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ WEAf’s *Aïda* was followed by other broadcasters: WJZ produced a broadcast of *Der Fliegende Holländer* from the roof of the Manhattan Opera House in February 1923. WJZ also

The convergence of radio technology and live performance such as that demonstrated in the *Aïda* broadcast discussed above troubled the ontology of both liveness and performance. If we recall the tenets of theorizing performance both in terms of “the accomplishment of the public and those serving it” in theatrical traditions (Max Herman quoted in Fischer-Lichte, *Introduction* 12), and the more “broad spectrum” study of social, cultural and political behaviours and actions (Schechner 8), then can broadcasting also be understood as performance? Broadcasters clearly relied on public expectations regarding both public musical performances, bound as they are in immediacy of time and space, but also troubled them in the example of *Aïda* above. If an opera performance on a stage in an opera house is already intermedial in that the opera performer mediates the opera-text (music, emotion, and words) via her body and especially her voice in a co-present circumstance with an audience, then a “broadcast performance” both eliminates and increases distance between the audience and performer.

The distances are reduced in terms of what Lynn Spigel describes as televisual “intimacy,” or the feeling of a close connection to performers as though they are neighbours, in spite of geography, because a performance in New York can be experienced simultaneously in Seattle or Vancouver (134). But in terms of performance as understood by scholars such as Erika Fischer-Lichte, and Freda Chapple, the mediated distance between broadcast audiences and performers, “invalidates the [autopoietic] feedback loop,” or the self-making circuit of experience “provided in any performance event by the ongoing interactions of performances and audiences,” because listeners at home are incapable of influencing the performative event (Chapple 81; Fischer-Lichte, *Transformative Power* 7). Additionally, opera protocols relating to

included in their broadcast the “on-air commentary” of a twenty-five year old Milton Cross, who would be radio’s “voice of opera” for another fifty-two years (McPherson, “Overview” 11).

apprehension and the primacy of the voice are challenged by the broadcast medium in a manner parallel to that of phonography, because any appreciation of the vocal performance is fundamentally organized by the technical qualities of technological wireless transmission and reception. Beginning with some of the earliest broadcast programming in the United States, negotiations of performativity, technical innovation and opera protocols formed a new matrix of circulation for opera—one that presents ongoing ramifications for operatic regimes of recognition lasting well into the twenty-first century. And *Aida* was only one early example in a nascent trend of opera broadcasting.

WEAF's endeavours from 1922-1925 indicate a growing investment in operatic programming. In 1925, a mere three years after broadcast licenses were introduced by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), WEAF rang in the new year with a gala broadcast sponsored by Victor Records. This event signified two shifts in the burgeoning radio broadcast industry. First, the linking up of seven AT&T stations "embracing roughly a third of the entire country" reached a total audience of over six million listeners across the United States, thus signalling a major development in the scope of networked broadcasting (McPherson, "Overview" 11). The network would expand into Canada through CNRO Ottawa at the end of January that year (Banning xxxii). Second, it featured Victor-contracted artists Lucrezia Bori and John McCormack, which was an about-face from Victor's earlier concerns regarding broadcasting's effect on the sales of commercially recorded music (Banning 259).

The Victor-sponsored performance correlated with an enormous spike in Victor record sales: "more than two hundred thousand assorted Bori and McCormack discs were snapped up in stores" in the days following the broadcast, and the business model of radio play supporting record sales was confirmed as a success (McPherson, "Overview" 11). WEAF's decision to

inaugurate its extended network with opera performances suggests a reliance upon known operatic stars in this well-publicized broadcast, not unlike Victor's earlier use of Caruso to make claims for the experience of the phonograph turning the private home into the Metropolitan Opera house. Like the phonograph, radio remediated the protocols of the celebrity voice in opera, and in this instance, the paradoxical intimacy of the radio broadcast correlates directly to the commodification of the celebrity voice, as evidenced by the spike in record sales.

1925 was a year of radio innovations, including nation-wide networking and cooperation with recording companies.⁸⁰ Newly serialized broadcasts are hallmarks of this year, and in many cases opera stars, opera music, and opera-texts themselves were the means by which these advances reached their listeners. One example of these developments was the weekly *Victor Hour* broadcast on WEAF in 1925. Developed directly from WEAF's sponsored New Year's gala, this program followed a similar format and ran into the spring. The *Victor Hour* appears to have been an early version of the variety show, with a number of singers performing recent "hits" each week, both operatic and popular.⁸¹

It is important to note here that WEAF's involvement is symptomatic of radio investment in opera, but it was by no means the sole opera broadcaster in this period. Roughly a month after the *Victor Hour* began on WEAF, rival New York station WGBS "presented a complete performance of *Cavalleria rusticana* mounted specifically for the listening audience" and according to McPherson, this was the first time, "barring the [amateur] Salt Lake City *Bohème*"

⁸⁰ Victor records would eventually merge with the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) in 1929.

⁸¹ Information on this broadcast conflicts: Banning writes that it was intended to be a ten-broadcast series, while McPherson suggests it was "permanent." The Library of Congress Finding Aid mentions documentation regarding Victor's decision to withdraw its support from the program dated March 10, 1925, suggesting that the plans may have been in flux in the early months of 1925 (Banning 258; McPherson, "Overview" 11; Morris 131). It is listed as a "lost" program by Vincent Terrace (366), with little programming information surviving.

in 1922, that such an event had taken place in the United States” (“Overview” 13). This production inaugurated a bi-weekly series, sponsored by retailer Gimbel’s, of abridged opera performances on Sundays. While WGBS’s series lasted a little over a year, the idea of a weekly opera-specific broadcast seems to have echoed back at WEAF.⁸² On March 31, 1925, only three months after the Victor Gala that year, WEAF broadcast the first performance of its very own Grand Opera Company, in an abridged version of *La Traviata*. This opera company would broadcast more than fifty performances in its five-year life span (McPherson, “Overview” 14).

These programming developments are particularly significant because they reached a quickly expanding radio listenership. Daniel Snowman has noted that “just half a million radio sets were sold in America in 1923; a figure that had quadrupled two years later” (283). Figures such as these are evidence of the so-called “radio boom” of this period, and as audiences across the United States and Eastern Canada began to tune in to broadcasters on a mass scale, they were often confronted with programming of opera in some way. As radio audiences expanded and radio programming took on increasingly cyclical or weekly-scheduled programming, the scheduling, promotion, and generic identifiers became normalized.

The WEAF Grand Opera Company offers an archive of experimentation and normalization for radio protocols as they converged with opera during the radio boom. Headed by conductor/composer Cesare Sodero, who scored, cast, rehearsed, and conducted almost every performance, WEAF produced weekly operas for five seasons from 1925 to 1930 (it was renamed the NBC Grand Opera Company when WEAF became the flagship station of the new National Broadcast Company network in late 1925). Its productions were, in general, abridged

⁸² Sodero conducted the first few WGBS broadcasts before defecting to WEAF, which was, by several accounts, the better funded station (McPherson, “Overview” 13; Douglas 310).

to sixty minutes, sung in their original languages, and comprised casts “of aspiring professionals, complemented on occasion by a seasoned old-timer or two” (McPherson, “NBC” 205). WEAFF’s was the first radio opera company in North America, and its operating procedures reflect the still-experimental protocols of radio broadcasting, both in terms of weekly scheduling and timing of radio slots.

The casting of regular and repeating performers in the WEAFF Grand Opera Company reflects the extremely short period in which artists prepared for each week’s broadcast. The need for such committed singers also precluded successful stage singers with busy schedules from participating regularly, and it gave less well-known artists a chance to expand their repertoires. Weekly slots also meant timing restrictions, and the necessity of abridgement produced a new generic situation for opera production, in which radio exigencies trumped adherence to the text. Cuts needed to be made that presented the opera as more-or-less whole while fitting into the time slotted for broadcasting, and these abridged versions would have been, for many listeners, their only access to a perceived complete production of a given operatic text. In an interview, Sodero himself outlined some of the difficulties in making the cuts:

There are more difficulties and problems than the average listener probably realizes in cutting an opera to an hour’s length The popular arias must be retained, for you know the protest that would arise from listeners if these were killed. The gap must be bridged perfectly without adding a staff or bar In training the singers, we also have a lot of trouble sometimes. We have to be sure they do not miss a note or add one when a gap is approached, for that would set the tempo all awry.” (qtd in McPherson, “Sodero” 209)

Since many listeners at home would have had familiarity primarily with the arias or choruses of a

well-known text through 78-rpm recordings or piano reductions, Sodero's task was to make the story hold (more or less) together without *arioso* or recitative, while still honouring the musical design of a given composer. In essence, abridgers like Sodero curated a given operatic text for the radio audience, deciding what counted most and what was expendable. This is an example of media change occasioning practices of reshaping opera without fully disavowing its previous forms and protocols.

While few programme notes from the NBC Opera Company are readily available,⁸³ we can surmise from Sodero's description above that a broadcast of an opera-text like Giuseppe Verdi and Francesco Maria Piave's *Rigoletto* (1851) would comprise more or less a conglomeration of its most famous arias, duets, and of course quartet and storm scene.⁸⁴ Since NBC was the oldest network with arguably the best established transmission network in the 1920s,⁸⁵ the reach of these broadcasts would have been enormous in comparison with live theatre performance. The choices made in opera broadcasts would have an enormous impact on what became familiar to its audiences as representative of each work, and indeed of the art form as a whole.

The temporal sensitivities of radio broadcasting engendered departures from protocols of stardom and fidelity to opera-texts. The operascope's foundational investments in liveness and

⁸³ The "Finding Aid" to the Library of Congress NBC papers indicates occasional running guides for particular dates of broadcast for both WPAF and NBC, but I did not have an opportunity to examine this archive in person. No mention is made of NBC Grand Opera production notes in particular. McPherson's research is rooted in this collection, however, and he generally extrapolates programming decisions from casting information.

⁸⁴ In a more extreme example, McPherson surmises that a 1929 abridged *Parsifal*, which runs approximately three hours on stage, was entirely Kundry-free ("NBC" 212).

⁸⁵ NBC was a subsidiary of the Radio Corporation of America, which was formed as a government-sanctioned monopoly in 1919 to take over the American arm of the Marconi Company, and to coordinate patent and usage issues with companies like AT & T, who owned the telegraph wire systems along which early networks functioned (Douglas 286).

the voice were also complicated and exacerbated by the new medium. WEAf and NBC operas were studio broadcast, which constituted an extreme version of an unstaged or “concert” performance of a given opera-text. The performance operates in a partial version of the performance feedback loop: first because the studio audience is only a portion of the acknowledged audience made of home listeners, and second because for both audiences, the visual performance of the opera-text is constituted as an absence (either partial or total). That lack amplifies the sonic investment in the production, because the entirety of the audience experience is sonic access to the performance. The privilege of the sonic experience in the 6 March 1930 *Rigoletto* broadcast was preserved in the New York Public Library press clippings for WEAf’s resident conductor, Cesare Sodero, and describes the studio experience of the famous quartet:

There are no wild gestures to indicate the conflicting emotions of the group. Radio eliminates all distractions and permits Verdi’s immortal music to speak for itself. The quartet stands in a row before the microphone, their eyes flying between Sodero’s baton and the printed pages of their music. With this stirring climax, the radio curtain rings down. (qtd in McPherson, “NBC” 215)

This description denigrates the “wild” gesture of staged opera as a means of communicating the dramatic intensity of the scene, and privileges instead a kind of unadulterated attentiveness to Verdi’s “immortal music.” The music, the collaboration with the conductor, and the focus on the vocal performance are all, in this description, responsible for the satisfying performance of a famous operatic selection. The radio experience invests in the event of the performance (as opposed to the repeatability of recording) but the experience of the studio audience is framed in this example as a privileged viewing of nothing-to-view, of a performance fundamentally

focused on the vocal. The length of this excerpt's full text and its title—"Meet the Broadcasters!"—also indicates that the explanation of the radio experience was, in 1929, still of presumable public interest. In many ways, then, radio constitutes the extremities of opera's privileging of the voice: over the ether, the voice is disconnected from the body and circulates solely as a sonic consequence of performance undertaken elsewhere—a relationship later exploited by genres of radio-drama in the 1930s.⁸⁶

The focus on sonic, and in particular, vocal performance reframed the stakes of performance for artists used to singing on theatre stages. As Sodero noted, "in a production on the stage, the scenery and costumes will detract from minor mistakes In radio, it is quite different, for when twenty will escape comment before a visible audience, one tiny detail in a broadcast of the same opera will be noticed. The minds of the listeners, not swayed by the visual beauty of the scene, are acute and attentive to the music alone" (qtd in McPherson, "NBC" 209). All these factors—the curated and abridged text (often, but not always, familiar excerpts), the casting of young and non-star performers, and the vocal valuation and exposure of those performances, framed a significant contradiction in the North American operascape. The broadcast capacity of radio framed a network capable of bringing opera into the homes of millions of listeners (including the fictional Draper residence), even though the spectacular aspects of performance were fundamentally severed from the sonic register.

NBC Grand Opera most often broadcast opera-texts familiar to New York audiences (in the WEAf years), and then to a national audience following 1925; McPherson characterizes

⁸⁶ The American radio-play or radio-drama, which enjoyed a period of prominence in particular from the late 1930s to the post-war period, is often understood through the phrase "theater of the mind," a phrase focalized in the ways that "radio dramatists confronted the caprices of their medium, invented ways to guide listeners in stories, and also spoke to upheavals precipitated by hardship and war" (Verma 3).

these as “*Lucias and Pagliaccis*” made familiar through other forms of circulation (touring companies, concert performances, and records in addition to the few local companies). But the company also ventured into lesser-known repertoire, even commissioning new opera-texts explicitly *for* radio. These included Henry Kimball Hadley’s *Bianca* (1917), Frank Harling’s *A Light from St. Agnes* (1925) and two world premieres: Charles Sanford Skilton’s *The Sun Bride* (1930), and Sodero’s own operatic work, *Ombre russe*, in 1929 (McPherson, “NBC” 218-219).⁸⁷ Many of these were either shorter works that required little or no abridgement, or less familiar works which would then have fewer audience expectations to manage in the abridgement process. As experiments, they would have cost less to produce than a full-scale staging at a professional theatre, and so their fit with radio both offered the promise of innovation, and positioned radio opera as less expensive, lavish and grand than its theatrical counterpart.

Radio’s technologies and protocols offered a new space for operatic experimentation, fostering the conditions for what Jenkins has called as period of “convergence,” or the “earliest phase of a medium’s life,” in which the “power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways,” and which “may be its most artistically rich, as pioneering artists enjoy a freedom to experiment that may be constrained by the conventions and routines imposed when production methods are established” (*Convergence 2; Rethinking Media Change 6*). Producing new or little-known operas was a risk mitigated by their shorter duration and relative lack of production costs, and the evidence suggests that broadcasters were well aware of the need to help radio audiences approach new or rarely produced works. The producers’ acknowledgment that little-known works such as Stanisław Moniuszko and Włodzimierz

⁸⁷ See appendix A for a list of WEA/NBC opera broadcasts from 1925-1932. See Elise Kirk, *American Opera*, for more detail about these texts.

Wolski's *Halka* (1854) would likely be unfamiliar to broadcast audiences is evident in the decision to present a fifteen-minute "summary of its story and music" directly preceding the broadcast itself (McPherson, "NBC" 212)—a decision I will explore further below.

Unfortunately for Sodero, the NBC Grand Opera Company and its roster of artists, the period of experimentation did not last. By 1929 the seasons had been curtailed, and with a final *Pagliacci* in April 1930, the NBC Grand Opera Company ceased its regular operations. What came in its stead was a cycle of six Puccini operas, performed by established casts with experience at the Metropolitan Opera (McPherson, "Overview" 16). Like Sodero's, these opera broadcasts were abridged to one hour, but instead of new works and unknown singers, they featured well-known operas and singers who were also performing at major houses.⁸⁸ These six operas were broadcast monthly from November 1931 to April 1932, which means they would have been direct competitors with Sodero's final season.

It would seem, then, that in 1929, NBC (newly a subsidiary of RCA) had moved away from the period of convergence and experimentation with opera broadcasting and returned to long-standing operatic commitments to stars and popular works that made Victor Records so successful in the first years of the twentieth century. Traditions of investing in the familiar (regarding both singers and particular arias or excerpts) are evident in the Puccini cycle, but these investments are also thrown into sharp relief when understood against the backdrop of experimentation, particularly (though not exclusively) by NBC. Some of this period's legacies for the operascape were the increased general access to certain opera-texts (in abridged form that privileged famous excerpts) over others, and the relationship to purely sonic opera performance

⁸⁸ The operas were *Madama Butterfly*, *Tosca*, *La fanciulla del West*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Turandot*, *La Bohème*; they featured Frances Alda, Mario Chamlee, and Pasquale Amato.

(already in circulation via recordings). When considered alongside early phonography, radio's engagement with both operatic texts and protocols demonstrates a pattern in North American media change, wherein opera is remediated in the service of claiming cultural significance for a new communications medium. The consequences for operatic circulation cannot be overestimated, as the technical affordances and possible reach to a wide-flung public would have an enormous impact on which stories, characters, music and artists that would likely become familiar in the decades that followed. Radio's relationship with opera has likewise continued into the twenty-first century—perhaps most explicitly through the seventy-year broadcast endeavour that began in 1931 when NBC paired its opera broadcasting endeavours with the work of the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

3. Saturday Afternoon at the Opera across North America

The man who directs a broadcasting station must combine the astuteness of P.T. Barnum and the good taste of a Gatti-Casazza (305).

Waldemar Kaempffert

Waldemar Kaempffert, writing for *American Review of Reviews* in the early years of the radio boom, illuminates the intersection of entertainment and artistic exigencies that circulated alongside the development of the broadcasting industry. From Kaempffert's point of view, P.T. Barnum, that world-famous impresario of circus and spectacle indexes aggressive business practices designed to maximize audience fascination. Giulio Gatti-Casazza, General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera, figures as an arbiter of good taste. Kaempffert's quip reflects the dualities of U.S. broadcasting: entertainment drives the commercial viability of radio, but the public nature of the airwaves complicates the business concerns of radio with its responsibilities

to serve the public with programs of cultural quality. Kaempffert also foreshadows, a decade in advance, the emergence of one of radio's longest running programs, and one that delivers the star power of certain opera-texts and performers from the Met to households far and wide, framing itself as high-quality, edifying entertainment for both opera lovers and newcomers. The Metropolitan Opera radio broadcasts, known as "Saturday Afternoon at the Opera" in Canada,⁸⁹ have run continuously since 1931 in the United States (the broadcast was picked up in Canada in 1933), and their early years demonstrate the intersection of not only formal media demands of broadcasting and in-theatre opera performance, but of the intensely economic and social negotiations that continue to frame the North American operascape throughout the twentieth century.

In the lively debates regarding radio's potential for public edification, on the one hand, and entertainment capacity, on the other, the operascape is frequently called upon to signify "quality" programming that would both please and benefit the imagined nation-wide public created by network broadcasting.⁹⁰ For example, *Radio Broadcast* published the following commentary following the Washington WCAP inauguration in 1923, suggesting that radio could bring opera into the homes of those who wouldn't otherwise be able to attend:

if an opera is being broadcast from the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, the artists may be the finest in the world. Why then should people in other sections of the country who enjoy opera, have to listen to some mediocre program from a local station?

Of course entirely apart from the radio, this is actually the case today. We can't all go to

⁸⁹ CBC currently broadcasts other opera companies as well under this program, primarily in the summer months between the regular seasons of Metropolitan opera productions.

⁹⁰ Many of these positions are articulated in publications such as *Radio Digest* and *Radio Broadcasting*, as well as more general interest publications such as the *New York Times*.

the best opera and so we have to content ourselves with something less expensive and less artistic. But right here lies the great promise of radio—it need cost but little more to broadcast to a million listeners than to a thousand, so that the very best programs should be available to everyone . . . it seems to us that the future of broadcasting is intimately connected with the establishment of a wire network covering the country and connected to the best broadcasting station in a given locality. (“March of Radio” 187)⁹¹

This excerpt demonstrates a number of attitudes that bear heavily upon opera production and broadcasting into the present day: that the most expensive productions are likewise the most artistic, that the most famous houses always present the best singers, and that the Metropolitan Opera is both the best house and the most artistic for the above-mentioned reasons. Certainly its budget is demonstrably larger than any other company in the United States, and that budgetary fact has held true for a century now.⁹² In this context, the Metropolitan’s superior status is presumed over “local” producers (here understood as synonymous with “mediocre”), and this superiority is offered as the reason *for* broadcasting across the nation.

The quotation above frames the imagined networked broadcast as offering greater value to listeners across the country than, for example, a broadcast from the Chicago Civic Opera or the San Francisco Opera to their respective local regions.⁹³ In terms of radio’s material developments in the 1920s, this position also privileges the work of the “best” opera houses over

⁹¹ Quoted in Banning (179). *Radio Broadcast* was a periodical that ran from 1922-1930, and contained a variety of material, including technical instructions for building and enhancing receivers, commentary on developments in the field, and contests such as the “How Far Have You Heard” promotion in 1923. There are also advertisements from companies such as RCA, and listings of new and deleted stations in each monthly issue.

⁹² The Met’s 2014 fiscal year operating revenue was \$293.5 million, compared to that of San Francisco Opera, \$37 million, in the same year (*Annual Report* 6; “Audited Financial Results”).

⁹³ McPherson notes that companies in Chicago and Philadelphia also produced opera broadcasts in the late 1920s and early 1930s (“Overview” 17-18).

the more experimental, studio, broadcasts undertaken by WEAJ (in conjunction with WBAC) and WJZ. The country's presumed need for broadcasting is couched in the valuation of one operatic experience over another, and furthermore imagines the quality of Metropolitan Opera performances as somehow universal and fixed, rather than contingent upon the multitude of factors that go into producing opera, and the preferences of any given listener or attendee.

Certainly, in the twenty years between de Forest's early experiments and the first NBC / Metropolitan Opera broadcast in 1931, the Met had established its position as the biggest and most influential opera producer in North America. It had trumped the Vocal Academy and Oscar Hammerstein's Manhattan Company in New York, and outlasted companies in Boston and in Chicago (Dizikes 335, 369, 421). Its stars came from all over the world, and were frequently contracted for recording by Victor and Columbia. Its tours spread across the continent, reaching both east and west coasts, and up into Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver (Dizikes 245). Gatti-Casazza headed the company with such care that he became an emblematic figure for significant cultural production, as evinced by the Kaempffert quip above. But in contrast to the *Radio Broadcast* claim that the Met was a *raison d'être* for radio networking as suggested above, Dizikes posits a different view: that radio broadcasting solidified the Met as a national, rather than local, opera producer (481). And it was not only Gatti-Casazza's "good taste" and visionary aesthetics that inaugurated the radio era for the Met, but financial desperation.

In the 1920s, Gatti-Casazza had resisted overtures from the major broadcasting corporations, arguing that the technological limitations would do a disservice to the art form and its performers (*Encyclopedia of Radio Broadcasting* 938). However, in the years immediately following the stock market crash of 1929, the Met's financial position became increasingly precarious, as the wealthy box owners who owned the company no longer had the finances to

underwrite the company. Financially, this was arguably the most precarious period in the company's history.⁹⁴ Fortunately for Gatti-Casazza and the Met, this period coincided with the fierce competition between NBC and CBS for broadcasting the most popular programming, the biggest stars, and developing the broadest reach for radio in the United States.

One major battle in this war was specifically waged over opera.⁹⁵ There had been several opera broadcast efforts during the radio boom, and regularly scheduled programming was emerging as a significant broadcast protocol across the industry. Weekly, original, opera productions were an immense undertaking for any radio broadcaster, in terms of repertoire development, rehearsal times, and of course casting—especially when broadcasters began seeking out well-known opera stars instead of the “up-and-comers” engaged by Sodero and WEA. The bidding war between William Paley of CBS and David Sarnoff of NBC indicates that the two major broadcast networks in the United States saw immense value in a partnership with the Met, which would take the programming demands entirely out of the broadcaster's hands, while capitalizing upon the opera company's reputation for prestige and quality that were clearly already circulating in public discourse.⁹⁶

The timing of the NBC offer and the Met's financial woes were the crucible from which the Metropolitan Opera radio broadcasts emerged. The correspondence between Gatti-Casazza and his executive secretary Edward Ziegler suggests a pragmatic position rather than a technological excitement on the part of the Met regarding potential radio contracts (Jackson 12).

⁹⁴ Jackson notes that in negotiations with NBC, the contract included a stipulation for the possibility of the company ceasing operations before the 1935-36 Season (73).

⁹⁵ In many ways these radio wars parallel the earlier phonograph battles in the U.S. On one side RCA owned both the Victor Talking Machine Company and NBC in 1929, and on the other, the Central Broadcasting System (CBS) would acquire Columbia records in 1938 (Gelatt 174).

⁹⁶ For descriptions of this fight, see *Saturday Afternoons at the Metropolitan Opera* and the *Encyclopedia of Radio Broadcasting*.

Ultimately, NBC beat CBS and stood as the winner of a two-year, twenty-four broadcast, \$120 000 agreement with the Metropolitan Opera. Regular instalments of cash for the broadcasts bolstered the Met's budget significantly, while NBC gained exclusive rights to Metropolitan Opera productions and its artist roster for the 1931-32 Season.⁹⁷ Following a practice run with *Madama Butterfly* on December 23, 1931,⁹⁸ the first Metropolitan Opera broadcast went out on the NBC Red network (formerly WEAf) on Christmas Day. The opera was Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, and it inaugurated a weekly broadcast that has been ongoing ever since. A young Milton Cross acted as host, while Deems Taylor provided what appears to have been a running commentary throughout (yes, *during*) the performance from Grand Tier Box 44 (Jackson 24).

Just as the agreement to begin broadcasting was far from foregone or organic in nature, the formal and social legacies of the Met broadcasts coalesced slowly and through a variety of factors. When the size of the Met's opera audience expanded beyond its roughly 3500-seat theatre capacity to the millions of weekly listeners that amassed around its weekly radio broadcasts, the stakes of the company's programming and performance decisions likewise multiplied, because what the Met performed on Saturdays constituted access to the operascape for many people across the United States and later Canada. The protocols that were established between 1931-1939 in association with the Met broadcasts demonstrate shifts from emergent to

⁹⁷ Radio also created a new method through which the Met could ease its fiscal woes. In the 1932-3 season, Met artists such as Lucrezia Bori were enjoined to request financial support, "on the air," from radio audiences at home. Donations from radio audiences reached \$100 000, a third of the required guarantee fund that would keep the opera company afloat (Jackson 32).

⁹⁸ Dizikes and McPherson frame the *Butterfly* test as an act of persuasion for the reticent Gatti-Casazza, but Jackson's documentary history reveals that the contracts were signed in July, which supports his claim that the *Butterfly* was a practice run more than a significant demonstration (Jackson 11).

dominant radio broadcasting, as well as the consecration of the Met as a national institution *through* those protocols.

Experiments from the early opera broadcasts of the 1920s were revised by the Met broadcasts over seven decades; today their shared protocols are nearly imperceptible parts of both opera and radio. These protocols relate to the circulatory inertia of certain opera-texts (repertoire), and the uncanny doubling of liveness through both the translocation of the voice and the virtual envisioning of the bodily co-presence. In opera's radio circulation, both attentiveness and apprehension are framed by the sonic, mediated access to performance: technical affordances would affect what could be heard, and therefore understood, known, and enjoyed. New modes of discourse framed the imaginative positioning of listeners, especially through the descriptive and instructional role of a new curatorial figure in the operascape. The consequences for repertoire, performance and production logistics, and the curatorial role of the host are legacies of early opera broadcasting in general, and the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts in particular.

3.i. Radio-induced Repertory Inertia

The significance of regular, repeating opera broadcasts for repertoire formation cannot be overstated. Since the Met retained choice of productions to broadcast in their contract with NBC, and NBC had the broadest-reaching national radio network, it stands to reason that this marriage of radio and opera would showcase the aesthetic commitments of the Met on a massive scale, thus reifying their decisions as national, even international, repertoire.⁹⁹ The case of Giuseppe

⁹⁹ An independent survey in 1939 estimated that 10 500 000 listeners tuned into the Met each week (Jackson 3).

Verdi and Francesco Maria Piave's *Simon Boccanegra* (1857) perhaps best illustrates the impact of broadcasting: the 1932 Met broadcast was the first time that many people would have ever heard this opera because it was not widely recorded¹⁰⁰ and it was rarely staged in North America in the first decades of the century. Jackson observes that through the broadcast, Verdi's opera immediately "gained greater acclaim than decades of earlier performance in the house could have provided" (22); it was broadcast again in December of that year and would eventually be listed in the *Victor Book of the Opera* (discussed in chapter 3) in the 1949 edition.

So what *were* the major aesthetic commitments at the Met in its earliest days as a radio broadcast partner in the 1930s? Perhaps surprisingly, given the Met's financial precarity, this period saw a strong commitment to Romantic German opera, by which (of course) I mean the works of Richard Wagner. Wagner's works boast enormous casts and orchestras, multiple sets and lengthy performances, and the Metropolitan was perhaps one of the few companies in the 1930s capable of presenting full-scale productions of his works—in part because they already had all the sets. The Met's investment in Wagner was borne out in its broadcasts, in which German works (primarily Wagnerian) dominated the early seasons.¹⁰¹ Through the NBC

¹⁰⁰ For example, the *Victor Book of the Opera* doesn't even mention the opera until its 1949 edition, when it lists four excerpts in its recordings available for sale (519).

¹⁰¹ For example, the second-largest company in the U.S., San Francisco Opera, produced a scant amount of German repertoire from its debut season in 1922 to 1932. In the 1931-32 Season, the Met ran a Thursday matinee series dominated by Wagner, and six of those performances are present in the twenty-four opera broadcast schedule (Jackson 22). The next broadcast season boasted thirteen German works, ten of them Wagnerian, constituting almost half the total broadcasts. Jackson notes that the first seasons of broadcasts moved between dates, based on the selection of works by Gatti-Casazza, and we must therefore presume that he felt Wagnerian works were of prime importance in the new broadcasting venture. Gatti-Casazza only included one American work in the first season of broadcasts (Deems Taylor's own composition *Peter Ibbetson*), and is recorded as having deemed other American works, just as Suppe's *Donna Juanita*, not "suitable broadcast material" (qtd in Jackson 19). It should, however, be noted that many of the Wagner sets were built before the Met's financial difficulties arose.

broadcasts in the early 1930s, the Met was branding itself as the national purveyor of opera and, ironically for a period that marked the rise of fascism (linked culturally as it was with Nazism), the opera that constituted that brand was Wagnerian. The dominance of German repertoire would give way to Italian during the mid-1930s, especially as the licensing agreements became more easily negotiated,¹⁰² but the Wagnerian dominance of early broadcasts helped frame the recognition of these particular opera-texts as an index of high quality cultural production, and opera in general. North American publics' responses to the regular presentation of Wagnerian opera on the airwaves doubtless varied, but for better or worse, it was German Romantic and then a blend of Italian traditions that the Met chose to amplify in its first decade as a national broadcaster.

The competing traditions of German and Italian opera dominated the Met, the airwaves, and thus the operascape in the United States in the twentieth century. All other national traditions and composers, including American ones,¹⁰³ were sublimated under this hierarchy, and its lasting influence is evident today in the ways that companies define the art form (as discussed in my introduction). Therefore, the Met's decision *not* to broadcast also impacted the circulatory inertia of specific opera-texts, and participation in the operascape more broadly. Since, as Dizikes notes, the Met in the 1920s generally rejected avant-garde works such as Richard Strauss's *Salome*, it created a schism in opera publics, between the social, "old hierarchies of opera" and the "musical audience" whose interests were not reflected in the Met's productions—or its broadcasts (316).

¹⁰² The publishers of *Salome*, for example, wanted \$7500 in the 1933/4 season from NBC, which was at that time producing the broadcasts without a major sponsor; the correspondence during initial negotiations between Ziegler and Gatti-Casazza also mentions the necessity for control over repertoire due to restrictions on opera-texts published by Ricordi (Jackson 48; 12-13).

¹⁰³ For a detailed documenting of American-composed opera history, see Elise Kirk's *American Opera*.

This schism, for Dizikes, marks the “turning away from opera by a younger generation” in the 1920s, and as we shall see, this turn away becomes a significant part of the operascape by the 1940s and 50s (316). When the post-war boom of civic opera companies began in the 1950s, those Met broadcast listeners became potential audience members, subscribers, and supporters for local producers, and they brought with them the familiarity of German and Italian works that continue to dominate the repertoire today.

3.ii. Live from the Opera House

While the Met broadcasts certainly introduced an array of opera-texts to broader radio publics, that repertoire by no means comprised performances of complete opera-texts. In the 1931-32 Season, the broadcasts were strictly one hour in length, thus following the broadcast timing of the earlier WEA/NBC Grand Opera seasons. However, because these were live broadcasts of existing productions, they couldn't simply be abridged. Rather, one or two acts were broadcast from a live, fully staged performance. These decisions privileged both the NBC broadcast schedule and the musical experience over dramatic coherence, because broadcast audiences would either miss the introduction of primary tensions, or their resolutions in later acts. Broadcasts of partial performances signalled to radio audiences that the stories were of secondary importance to the musical experience afforded in the one-hour time slot.¹⁰⁴

While radio audiences had the curated one-act experience at home, the exigencies of the broadcast performance for its artists and audience in-house were fitted around the needs of radio. In particular, time played a factor because of scheduling needs for the network, especially for

¹⁰⁴ The index to Jackson's book suggests that the Met moved to full broadcasts in 1933-4 season, when they renewed the contract with NBC (508-522), as very few broadcast listings are noted as “incomplete” following the spring of 1933.

sponsored programs when a company had paid to be promoted for a particular slot of time.

Composer and early commentator Deems Taylor recalled that “if two acts of an opera lasted no more than an hour we presented them both without an intermission,” and Jackson observes that performances such as the last half of *Traviata* on 20 February 1932, were delayed “for about three minutes to give Mr. Taylor a chance to start” the broadcast introduction (Jackson 23).

Intermission activities of socializing for audiences, and resting for performers, were secondary to the timing needs of the broadcast; in short, media-time created demands on the live performance of opera, even while the promise of the broadcasts was to bring the sense of the operatic experience in the theater to listeners at home.

The tension between broadcast and in-house needs is evident on the program cover for the 1932 broadcast of *Tannhäuser*, which stipulates that “positively no encores” would be allowed (Jackson 21; 23). Encores of particular arias, or even more rarely, choruses or duets, occur at the urging of the audience: they are the privilege of what Erika Fischer-Lichte describes as the autopoietic feedback loop of liveness, in which the bodily experiences of both performers and audiences make each event unique (*Power of Performance* 74). However, encores would also disrupt the timing of a given act, and were therefore not welcome on radio broadcast days. In effect, through the banning of encores, the in-house audience for radio broadcast performances was stripped of one of its most public and obvious forms of participation in the pacing and experience of the performance.

Live broadcasts changed the in-house experiences of operatic performance (starting in the 1933-4 season, held almost exclusively on Saturday afternoons). In addition to restrictions based on timing mentioned above, the issue of broadcasting space became a point of contention (Jackson 24). In the first broadcast seasons, Milton Cross and his commentators had no broadcast

booth in which to sit, so they were simply placed in Grand Tier Box 44—a semi-enclosed seating area one level above the main floor seating and located at the back of what was known as the “diamond horseshoe” of the Old Metropolitan house. Their talking (especially in early broadcasts, when Taylor explained the music as it was performed) would have been audible to the patrons sitting near them. Therefore, while radio listeners were hearing shortened broadcasts of a live performance, the bodily co-present audiences at the Met may have been, in many ways, palpably aware of their own experience as a kind of double for the radio audience at home.¹⁰⁵

3.iii. Radio Circuits of Stardom

The limitations of opera broadcasts for home listeners seem to have been largely overshadowed by the novelty of and desire for bringing the famous operatic voices of the day into the home, especially until the 1934 Season, when broadcasts were extended to include entire productions in a regular Saturday afternoon slot. Jackson suggests that “though the truncated performances were frustrating, the radio public was given a full measure of the great vocalists of the Metropolitan” (24), and the enormous popularity of McCormack and Bori in the 1925 WEA radio gala mentioned above suggests that the vocal aesthetics and celebrity of operatic singers were a primary factor driving opera broadcasting in the 1920s and 30s.¹⁰⁶ In fact, the radio contracts between NBC and the Met reflect the investment in these voices. NBC and its earlier

¹⁰⁵ For an examination of this doubling in the context of twenty-first century simulcasting, see Brianna Wells, “Secret Mechanism”: *Les Contes d’Hoffmann* and the Intermedial Uncanny in the Metropolitan Opera’s *Live in HD* Series.”

¹⁰⁶ Radio stardom also hearkens back to the earlier promise of the phonograph and its consequent commodification of celebrity voices. Jackson notes that a market emerged for “Speak-O-Phone” machines, in the 1930s, which allowed home users to create amateur (we might call them pirated) recordings of broadcasts for future use (57). This not only circles back to the celebrity fetish of opera voices, but the original intended use of Edison’s phonograph technology, which was to make, rather than only listen to, recordings.

incarnations (such as WEA) had had great success in variety shows and vocal concert broadcasts, and they built into the Met contract a clause granting NBC exclusive rights to broadcast all Metropolitan artists in these kinds of formats, beyond their appearances on the Metropolitan Opera stage (Jackson 40). The breadth and depth of the Met artist list meant that NBC effectively built a broadcast monopoly over the biggest opera stars performing in the country. Of course, these radio concerts were highly desirable for the singers themselves, in no small part because the broadcasts and publicity increased their name recognition and paid extremely well for a much smaller time commitment than did a full performance run of an opera (Jackson 16). Moreover, as I have noted in the cases of McCormack and Bori, radio appearances spurred record sales and increased the recognition of both the artist's name and voice across the United States. Operatic voices were increasingly detached from the bodily co-presence of artists to participate in a kind of celebrity that Marshall and Rojek (discussed in chapter 1) link with commodification and the imagined intimacy made possible by mediated circulation. The triangle of recording, broadcasting, and stage performance tied many artists to the Met, NBC radio and Victor records, and success in one medium often cemented status in another.

Opera singers' stardom was certainly disseminated, and in many cases enhanced, by radio broadcasting. But perhaps the most significant innovation in opera stardom produced in emergent radio broadcasting was the non-singing hero of opera broadcasts: the announcer or host. Beginning with that first amateur broadcast of *La Bohème* in Salt Lake City in 1922, archives include mention of a person "describing the action of the opera as it progressed" (McPherson, "Overview" 7).¹⁰⁷ KDYL named this role "elocutionist;" WJZ described it as "on-air

¹⁰⁷ The high school student in question, named Persus Quayle (McPherson, "Overview" 7), is thus quite possibly the first person to "announce" an opera in U.S. history.

commentary,” and eventually the role became the “host” or “announcer” in radio productions of all kinds (7). Such positions bridge the experiential gaps between listeners at home, and the performance event being broadcast; and in offering details of the physical space of the house, the reaction of the audiences, and descriptions of the set, announcers negotiate the spaces between musical and dramatic experiences, education and entertainment, and an increasingly codified hierarchy of operatic audiences.¹⁰⁸

Opera broadcasts obviously offered no visual spectacle for radio audiences. On the one hand, this was championed as a more “pure” musical experience (as noted above in the studio description titled “Meet the Broadcasters”). But on the other hand, for many radio audiences a familiarity with the complete opera-text—rather than the excerpts available on 78-rpm recordings or piano reductions—could not be presumed. While a small number of “complete” albums of operas were available on 78-rpm records in the 1920s and ‘30s (as discussed in chapter 1), the vogue of complete opera recordings coincides with the emergence of the LP in the 1950s. The aria culture of early phonograph recording and the abridging or single-act-broadcasting in the 1920s and early 1930s created a gap between the live performance as a whole and the recorded or broadcast experience. So it came to be, then, that the inclusion of spoken descriptions, especially for new or rarely performed works, demonstrated broadcasters’ concern narrative or dramatic coherence without the visual aspect of performance. In studio broadcasting, the announcer’s focus would have been the opera-text and perhaps some commentary on the vocal performances. But the Met’s promise was more than musical, and the Met broadcast

¹⁰⁸ This role is similar in sports broadcasting, with names like Foster Hewitt becoming synonymous with iconic programs such as “Hockey Night in Canada” in response to his long career behind the microphone. Hewitt’s first broadcast was play-by-play commentary on an amateur hockey game in 1923 (McPherson, “Overview” 17).

announcers therefore confronted the multiple tasks of helping audiences not only understand an opera-text in performance, but to imagine themselves as taking part in *attending* the event itself.

By the time Milton Cross, a tenor who had become a broadcaster in Chicago in the 1920s, came to sit in Grand Tier Box 44 for the Metropolitan / NBC broadcasts, the practice of explaining and introducing the opera's story and setting over the airwaves was common. What Milton Cross added to the role of announcer was a sense of hosting the experience of being on site at the performance venue: Cross's voice introduced radio audiences to the experience of being at the opera house, including descriptions of patrons, the sets, and the anticipatory moments in which the lights begin to dim and the maestro comes to the pit. Many of these conventions were scripted by NBC's Laurence Abbott (Jackson 326), but over the next four decades, they became a signal for the beginning of an opera broadcast for millions of people across the U.S. and Canada, an experience intrinsically associated with the voice of Cross (326). Additionally, starting in the first season with Deems Taylor and continuing to this today, the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts include guest commentators (often artists) whose participation is usually organized by the regular host.

In addition to narrating the experience of being "in the house," Cross increasingly took on an educational role in his hosting. His detailed descriptions of the opera's plot and musical highlights informed audiences about the most important and beautiful aspects of each performance, therefore reinforcing a position of curatorial expertise within the description of the space and the opera-text. One listener wrote in disgust that during the January 1934 broadcast of Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine*, American Tobacco, provided a guest announcer who talked too long

about the “roundness and tightness and smoothness of Luckies”¹⁰⁹ and so poor Mr. Cross barely had time “in which to breathlessly tell us the barest outline of the story” (qtd in Jackson 324). This failure contrasted with an earlier broadcast in which “Mr. Cross had time to give almost the entire libretto, indicate the action and describe the setting and the costumes. We need that much. We certainly needed it last Saturday when the opera was relatively unfamiliar” (324-5). This letter indicates that one listener, at least, felt that the explanatory services of Mr. Cross were fundamental to the broadcast experience, especially in cases of unfamiliar repertoire. It also suggests that at least some listeners treated the opera broadcasts with a form of attentiveness that would illuminate small differences such as the topic of discussion during a short interval between acts, and remember that across weeks, if not months.

Sponsors and guest announcers came and went in the first decade of Met broadcasts, but Cross was a steadfast presence. His manner of announcing and the careful balance struck between hosting and informative instruction became, over his four decades in the position, the benchmark of opera broadcasting. Abbott’s scripting for Cross likewise continues to affect the generic tendencies of opera broadcasts and the specifics of the Met broadcasts: the description of the house, sets, and key musical examples are still offered every Saturday by today’s broadcast host and commentators. Paul Jackson terms it “the prosy way of music annotators, even today” (326).

While the radio broadcasts brought the sonic experience of the Metropolitan Opera’s repertoire and stars into private homes, promising a kind of immediacy for listeners, the educational aspects of the hosting also produced a kind of experiential distance. The presumption that listeners would benefit not only from description, but also explanation and commentary,

¹⁰⁹ Lucky Strike also features as a product in Don Draper’s fictionalized ad agency in *Mad Men*.

positions education explicitly alongside the aesthetic experience of opera. In other words, at the same time that historical or musical expertise, as well as “behind the scenes” details, promised new access for radio listeners, thus taking them closer to the performance than in-house audiences, this expert-offered information reinforced the differences of physical access and the presumption of familiarity and knowledgeability for the in-house Met audiences. The broadcasts brought opera experientially closer to a broad public audience, and they fostered operatic apprehension by assuming that opera must be explained to its radio audiences in order to be well-received and fully enjoyed: in short, that broadcast audiences do not, or perhaps cannot, know enough to participate effectively in the operascape without help.

Given the associations between Cross and opera education, it is ironic that the Milton Cross-like voice on the radio broadcast in the *Mad Men* episode I discussed at the beginning of the chapter may have inadvertently hailed an opera public more knowledgeable than the television series’ producers. The naming of the lead singers in the *Figaro* broadcast that underscores Sally Draper’s birthday party—Joan Sutherland and Robert Merrill—belies one of *Mad Men*’s failures of historical accuracy. *Opera-L* listserv posters certainly noticed. In the days immediately following the episode broadcast, they wrote that Joan Sutherland had not premiered at the Met by the episode’s historical date (Silbuer), and that Robert Merrill’s name is mistakenly included for his fame as the Figaro of Gioachino Rossini and Cesare Sterbini’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (1816), not *Le nozze di Figaro*, having sung fifty-one performances of Rossini’s Figaro by the end of 1960 at the Met (Bodge).¹¹⁰ One listserv poster even observes that the severity of this inaccuracy is unparalleled in the rest of the series (Bodge), which suggests that the

¹¹⁰ Both operas are sourced in plays by Pierre Beaumarchais, known as the *Figaro* trilogy: *Le Barbier de Séville* (1775), *Le Mariage de Figaro* (1781), and *La Mère coupable* (1792).

pleasurable rewards of attentiveness I have associated with operatic listening, recording, and broadcasting are very much also a factor in viewing serial television programs such as *Mad Men*.

While *Mad Men* is a twenty-first century television program, both the scenes it represents and its implicit claims for quality, which I will discuss at the conclusion of this chapter, link it directly to the earliest decades of television broadcasting, and by extension, the development of radio. Both media are inextricably linked with opera in their emergent period. The Metropolitan Opera broadcasts were, in a way, the culmination of de Forest's early vision and WEAFF's efforts at "toll" or "commercial" broadcasting, wherein a sponsor paid for programming created beyond the radio studio. By 1940, when Texaco became the primary sponsor for the Met/NBC Opera broadcasts, opera was indeed readily available to anyone with a receiver in the United States or Eastern Canada.¹¹¹ Radio had become an information- and entertainment-distribution communications network, rather than a point-to-point replacement for the telephone or telegram, and it had done so in no small part through opera broadcasting from the Met. The Met's choices became the index of "opera" for millions of listeners who had never entered an opera house. At the same time that opera was thereby "democratized" through mediatized distribution, the very protocols that produced the sense of immediacy and intimacy, created a stratification of opera attendance—between "live" and "broadcast"; and between the knowledgeable and the neophyte.

4. Early Television: 1935-1948

Even as radio broadcasts were defining the North American operascape, via the Metropolitan, in the 1930s, corporations and inventors were turning their energies to the possibilities of television

¹¹¹ The linkup of western Canadian radio stations during the 1930s and 40s created nation-wide coverage in the Trans-Canada and Dominion Networks, which operated under the auspices of the CRBC, and later the CBC (Wolfe 3).

(Spigel 29). The broadcast protocols embedded in disseminating entertainment and information via the airwaves remained fundamentally the same between the two media, with inventors such as Philo T. Farnsworth adding technological sophistication of image translation and complex electronic systems to the existing electro-mechanical functions of radio (Boddy 30). Many factors in television broadcasting supported the sense of television as an extension of radio broadcasting, and these are in no small part linked to the corporate broadcasting structures that were, in the United States, founded on the medium of radio in the 1920s.¹¹² By the late 1930s, a relatively small number of increasingly powerful conglomerates essentially controlled broadcasting, and as they turned attention to television, it was concern for profitability that drove many aspects of the new medium's development. It should come as no surprise, then, that such companies as NBC and CBS, in considering the potential of television, would once again call upon opera to sell television to both federal regulating bodies and potential television publics. But television's engagement with the operascape had higher financial and ideological stakes for broadcasters than did radio, and as I will examine below, it also revealed and amplified contradictions within the operascape that remain influential in opera circulation today.

While the dominance of relatively few producers is not the focus of my argument here, the limited competition within the U.S. market and the public service mission articulated in Canada through the Canadian Radio Broadcast Commission (CRBC) and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) are significant aspects of understanding television genealogy. I

¹¹² RCA owned two NBC networks, and in the 1940s was forced to spin off NBC Blue as a separate company after an anti-trust decision by the Federal Communications Commission, or FCC. This new network would become the American Broadcasting Company, or ABC (*Museum of Broadcasting Encyclopedia* "ABC" 56). There was also a fourth television network, DuMont, that figured in early broadcasting years, but was unable to compete with CBS and NBC, going out of business in 1956 (Curtin and Shattuc 89).

follow Jussi Parikka here in seeking to “excavate the conditions of existence” for the medium, rather than taking its programming as the sole object of study (*Media Genealogy*, 6). Television, like any other medium, comprises social protocols (Gitelman), the address of its publics (Warner), as well as its representational strategies and technology forms. All these are fundamental to the complex and even contradictory ways that emergent television and opera converged in the years leading up to the exponential growth of television in the post war-era. In short, the circumstances surrounding the development of a television industry invite us to question how the production and programming choices made by networks responded to goals or challenges they faced.¹¹³ Several factors both impacted the formation of television as a corporate network broadcast structure. These include the socio-political landscape of the 1930s and ‘40s in North America, the power of corporate broadcasters, and, of course, shifts and traditions within the very operascope upon which television drew some of its earliest programming.

In many ways, televisual broadcasting was figured as a logical extension of sound broadcasting, in part because the major radio broadcast networks—NBC, CBS and ABC in the United States, and the CBC in Canada—had the financial and structural resources to develop the new medium’s technology, build its infrastructure and control its content.¹¹⁴ Michele Hilmes notes that “the schizophrenic nature of US broadcasting, split between First Amendment, free-market ideals and protective social goals, would carry over into television. Notably, control over

¹¹³ See Raymond Williams’s *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* for an analysis of British television that attends to the material circumstances of broadcasting in context of viewer activities and programming decisions.

¹¹⁴ The America Broadcasting Company (ABC) was formed in the wake of an anti-trust decision against RCA/NBC in 1927, in which NBC was forced to spin one of its two major networks off into a separate company. It chose the Blue network, which at the time was broadcasting the Metropolitan opera broadcasts on Saturday afternoons, and the TV branch of ABC was thus the logical choice for future Metropolitan opera broadcast experiments.

the new medium would pass smoothly into the hands of the radio giants, NBC, CBS, and ABC” (30). Along similar lines, Lynn Spigel explains that because “American television technology was developed mainly by the large corporations that already controlled radio,” the agenda for television “was largely defined by the corporate mind of the radio interests” (30).¹¹⁵ In Canada, the hybrid system of public and private networks built in the early decades of radio was interrupted by a government-granted television monopoly for CBC in 1948, which would last until 1958 (Raboy 184). While the CBC maintained a public service, rather than a profit-driven business model, it was still very much competing for audiences— in terms of other media, and in the long-standing tensions between what Raboy describes as “North American continentalism” in cultural production and the politics of nationhood, especially in the period directly following the Second World War (183). On both sides of the border, early television broadcasters wielded extraordinary power, but they were still forced to negotiate with both regulatory and market forces that, in the United States, were especially affected by the Great Depression and the Second World War.

Because U.S. broadcast networks were closely tied to manufacturers, especially General Electric and RCA,¹¹⁶ their profits were made through the sale of receivers, and the Depression of the 1930s severely curtailed the buying power of consumers. Even when RCA had its patents in

¹¹⁵ While local broadcasting remained, it was increasingly relegated either to the public broadcast frequency reserved in each broadcast region, or became an affiliate station for one of the major broadcasters. David Hendy notes that “independent local broadcasting, some of it truly public in style and ethos, was irrevocably marginalized after the creation of the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) in 1926 and the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) two years later” (6).

¹¹⁶ Williams observes that “radio and television were systems primarily designed for transmission and reception as abstract processes, with little or no preceding content” and that manufacturing, not production, was the driver of the U.S. broadcast corporations (*Television*, 25; 34). This differed from Britain and Commonwealth countries, as well as most Western European ones, which had far greater state control or even ownership over broadcast networks.

place (having finally out-spent inventor Philo Farnsworth on litigation)¹¹⁷ and its manufacturing ready to introduce a line more affordable receivers, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) had not yet finalized its technical standards and therefore required a delay in the sale of the receivers. By the 1940s, the United States began recovering from the Depression and the FCC finalized regulatory decisions regarding band usage, largely in favour of RCA's proposals (Winston 11). But the bombing of Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941 and America's subsequent declaration of war changed the priorities of manufacturing and directed public attention away from experiments and innovations directed at private consumers, and towards the general war effort and its effects. Thus, while television broadcasting was technically possible as early as the 1930s, social, legal and national considerations held back the corporate industrial realization of television broadcasting until after 1945.

In addition to these legal and logistical issues, television corporations faced the problem of gaining exposure in a crowded popular market of the 1930s and early 40s, which was saturated with the media of film and radio, as well as the national issues of the Depression, the labour movement, and the Second World War. Lynn Spigel notes that the press rarely published on the innovations and displays of television in the 1930s and 40s, but what it did publish "exhibited little in the way of utopian optimism, seeing television instead as essentially bound to the commercial interests of the radio industry" (30). The ideas of broadcasting, made familiar through radio, did not immediately translate to the popularity of television, and it was not until the broadcast corporations were able to retail affordably priced receivers and deliver regular,

¹¹⁷ Philo T. Farnsworth, who had invented the image dissector and aspects of what would become the video camera tube, held a technological key to television broadcast industry. He refused to sell his patents until he reached an agreement with RCA in 1939 (Spigel 196), and these protracted negotiations held up commercial manufacturing of these broadcasting devices through the 1930s.

enticing programming in the post-war period, that television experienced its first boom. Even then, the television boom was marked by a scepticism regarding the use of television and its possible threat to newly emerging suburban, middle class culture.¹¹⁸ In both the experimental period of 1939 - 1948, and the beginning of the network era in 1949, television producers called upon opera in both formal and social ways to enhance the new medium's desirability and legibility to its publics. But the operascope it called upon was not the same as it had been in the 1920s.

The operascope of the 1930s and 40s was buffeted by war and economic depression, and rocked by sea changes in intellectual, political, and aesthetic investments. Composition style had changed: Neo-Classical and Romantic aesthetics were challenged by avant-garde and atonal movements. New opera-texts appeared on American stages from both Europe and North America: *Wozzeck* (1931 NYC and Philadelphia); *Die Glückliche Hand* (NYC 1930); *Four Saints in Three Acts* (Hartford 1934); *Lady Macbeth of Mtinsk* (NYC 1935); *Porgy and Bess* (NYC 1935). The contentious Pabst film of Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* was released in 1931 in both French and German, and premiered in the Warner Brothers' New York foreign language cinema in the same year (American Film Institute). The last composer generally linked with the operatic canon, Richard Strauss, had premiered his final opera (*Capriccio*) in 1942.

In addition to aesthetic changes in composition, upheavals were also occurring in the opera industry: following the Metropolitan Opera's financial crisis in the 1930s, and the demise

¹¹⁸ Michael Curtin notes the "almost exclusive" focus of television in the 1950s on entertainment as contributing to the perception that it was frivolous (*Wasteland 2*); William Boddy tracks concerns both within the industry and beyond it regarding the complete attention it required in contrast with radio and its potential effect in the home during the 1930s and 40s (18-20).

of the Chicago and Philadelphia companies during the Depression, the opera industry seemed less like a cultural monolith than it had during the “golden age” earlier in the century (Dizikes 433). The Metropolitan Opera’s dominance over the operascape had been diffused by a number of factors. One was the difficulty of importing European stars during the war, and Burke notes that “the only feasible way for the Met to maintain a full production schedule was to utilize singers developed in America” (*Televised Opera* 15-6). For the first time, major stars were being trained at United States conservatories, rather than being imported from Europe (or imagined to be so).¹¹⁹ In addition to specific issues faced by the Met, performance spaces for opera were also loosening the boundaries surrounding ideas of opera’s artistic and political investments. Further diffusing the influence of the Met were the WPA Music and Theater projects, which created new arenas for opera creation, and resulted in politically charged operatic works such as Marc Blitzstein’s *The Cradle Will Rock* in 1937 (Dizikes 464). Broadway’s commercial theatre produced two of the operas mentioned above, featuring all-Black casts for both *Porgy and Bess* in 1935 and *Four Saints in Three Acts* in 1934 (Grout and Williams 690).¹²⁰ And nationalist concerns also affected the existing repertoire: following the bombing of Pearl Harbour, the hyper-popular *Madama Butterfly* was not seen on American stages until after the Second World War.¹²¹ Phonographic recording and radio had both expanded and contracted access to opera outside opera houses, and so it is no surprise that several leading thinkers in the Anglo-European world were writing about the “crisis” in opera—exactly what could, and should, be presented under the moniker; who should constitute its audiences; and how dissemination across various

¹¹⁹ Dizikes describes several singers’ early training and careers in *Opera in America*.

¹²⁰ See *Blackness in Opera* for a collection of essays focused on opera’s race history regarding Black artists and subject matter.

¹²¹ *Butterfly* was performed at the Met nearly two hundred times between its premiere and 1942, not including tours and special gala concerts (metoperafamily.org)

media platforms were affecting both of the above.

Debates about the status and markers of opera are a long-standing aspect of operatic circulation. In the early decades of the twentieth century, they were particularly marked by the concurrence of atonal and serial music composition, modernism, and mass media. T.W. Adorno in particular addresses this relationship in his writing, exploring both the state and quality of contemporaneous music composition in *The Philosophy of New Music*, the connections between mass culture and music in *In Search of Wagner*, and a searing critique of what he and Max Horkheimer saw as the standardization of cultural production in their 1944 essay, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception.” Adorno and Horkheimer critique television as a “mocking fulfillment of Wagner’s dream of the total art form” because it brings together not only word, image and music, but also technology and capital under one uniform mode of production (98).¹²² As Andreas Huyssen notes, Adorno’s earlier criticisms ignore popular and working class culture from the nineteenth century, and rely on a significant stratification of cultural forms that denigrates “realism, naturalism, reportage literature, and political art” as inferior (18; 25). My point is that intellectual and artistic debates about the musical composition and cultural production—especially the future of opera—were, in the interwar period, fundamentally linked to debates about the nature and impact of mass circulation.¹²³ The years preceding the launch of commercial network television demonstrate a recursive pattern of intersections between emergent media and the operascape; however, in this instance the established protocols of broadcasting, including regularly scheduled, series-based programming,

¹²² Adorno revisits some of these arguments a later essay entitled “The Culture Industry Reconsidered.”

¹²³ See Daniel Albright’s *Modernism and Music: An Anthology of Sources* for a collection of writings on the subject of opera’s future (or lack thereof), including that of Kurt Weill, Alban Berg, and Ernst Krenek.

hosting, and claims for intimacy and immediacy, were also part of the remediation of opera.

In the years before commercial television licenses were granted, spectrum regulations implemented, and networks consolidated, television access was localized to a small audience of (predominantly wealthy) patrons in major cities. As was the case in radio's earliest days, opera was part of that mediascape. Director Herbert Graf claimed that an NBC broadcast of *I Pagliacci* in 1939 was the first US television opera broadcast. In a history dissertation focused on opera and television¹²⁴, Richard Burke later challenged Graf, suggesting that an abridged *Carmen* the same year on the non-commercial station W2XBS in New York holds that honour (Burke, *Televised Opera* 6).¹²⁵ The station WRGB produced a series of "light" opera broadcasts, including a number of Gilbert and Sullivan works, between 1940 and 1945 (8), and in 1944 NBC began producing opera excerpts and condensed works. These broadcasts mirrored the activities of WEAJ and the NBC Opera Company on radio twenty years earlier, and reinforced NBC's very public commitment to opera broadcasting. Like radio, television's formal affordances occasioned formal transformations for existing opera-texts in studio contexts; the re-introduction of visual access to the musico-dramatic spectacle, however, produced a new set of challenges and opportunities for artists and producers.

For its series of broadcast excerpts, NBC employed well-known opera director Herbert

¹²⁴ Burke's dissertation offers detailed description of the period from the early 1940s through to 1964. I rely throughout this section on his interviews and quotation of contemporary published commentary in a variety of periodicals, many of which are not easily accessible in digital research contexts today. In all instances where I have cited material quoted in Burke's dissertation, I note the quotation in the works cited list.

¹²⁵ Both broadcasts preceded the 1941 National Television Standards Committee agreement on bandwidth (Winston 11), locating them in the period of "experimental" designations for TV stations, which prohibited advertising and therefore profits from programming. Profits could still be made, of course, through the sale of receivers, which was a primary driver for RCA and its competitors.

Graf, whose deep commitment to broadening access to, and excitement for, opera in the United States are documented in his numerous publications on the subject.¹²⁶ Graf promoted a realistic aesthetic in his opera broadcasts (Burke, *Televised Opera* 8), and even rescored some opera-texts to create a sonic sense of the *mise-en-scène*. For example, “in arranging the musical instruments [for *Carmen*], Graf chose a modified form of Spanish instrumentation, with piano, guitar drums and castanets” (18).¹²⁷ Burke describes the camera work for the opening sequence of a *La Bohème* broadcast as an example of Graf’s work:

The opening shot was on the proscenium arch of a scale model opera house. From this opening shot, which included titles and preface, there was a dissolve to *papier-maché* models of snow-covered roofs, and as soon as the roofs of Paris had been established, there was a cut to the first camera which was focused on a backdrop, painted to represent the room of Rodolfo, complete with snow flecked window, immediately behind Rodolfo. As the camera pulled back from its opening coverage of the backdrop, Rodolfo was revealed writing at his desk. (17)

Graf’s focus on translating the dramatic intensity of an opera-text into a single scene is evident in these decisions: the establishment of setting includes presenting the garret as cold, central in the city. Rodolfo’s first actions (writing) suggest both his vocation and a possible romantic bent, which help make his subsequent “love at first sight” scene with Mimi more persuasive.

Additionally, the use of camera panning and models to create scale were adapted from cinematic techniques, but in the small space and short time frame for production development that were

¹²⁶ See *The Opera and its Future in America* (1941), *Opera for the People* (1951), and *Producing Opera for America* (1961).

¹²⁷ It is also entirely possible that this condensation was also intended to lower orchestral costs and meet the spatial needs of small studios unable to house an orchestra, chorus, and opera set in one place.

hallmarks of early television broadcasting, these became essential in both artistic and logistical concerns.

In his dissertation exploring the history of television opera broadcasting, Richard C. Burke sums up some of the formal goals articulated by Graf in his pioneering opera telecasts:

1. Realistic handling of story, including English and use of dialogue over native language and recitative
2. Physical appearance and acting ability of performers fitting their roles
3. Careful preparation and shot planning, which curtails improvisation in stage business and gesture
4. Use of realistic scenery, costumes, makeup and lighting
5. New studio facilities for sets, singers and orchestras (who were frequently separated by studio size in early opera broadcasts)
6. Skilful camera work including superimpositions, stills, films and recordings
7. Producer/directors who were able to master the techniques of both opera and television and combine them. (19-20)

This list above demonstrates televisual reorganization of operatic protocols, and demonstrates the significant differences in televised opera from its radio precedents, particularly in terms of negotiating studio-produced *mises-en-scène*. Radio's sonic experience aligned neatly with opera's existing investment in the voice as the primary aesthetic performance vehicle, but televisual capacity for depicting the small details of dramatic scenes and acting both expanded the kind of operatic experience available to home viewers, and challenged existing operatic protocols. With increasingly regular use of close-ups for individual arias, three-quarter shots for larger groups, and long shots for mass action or ensemble singing, opera on television created a

new visual landscape for operatic performance (Riley 6). Television would reward intimately portrayed character and detailed scenery, as well as amplify for its broad audiences any failures in performance, particularly in visual registers.¹²⁸ In short, television broadcasting both echoed the issues of time and opera-text organization prevalent in radio, and demanded a visual reorganization of operatic effects.

Graf's commitment to realistic (meaning here detailed and intimate) portrayals extends beyond an aesthetic relationship and into the realm of the ideological, because television remediated opera both to the smaller screen *and* the domestic, quotidian setting of television viewership, the politics of which have been explored by both Lynn Spigel and William Boddy. Graf's and NBC's pioneering efforts, among other experiments, anticipate television as a potentially "everyday" activity, and therefore frame it in conflict with ideas of opera that are regularly linked to histrionic characters in extraordinary narratives, the rarified spectacle of virtuosic vocal display, and the sensorial affect of sweeping musical orchestration. Nearly all operas considered part of the common repertoire today include these markers: consider, for example, *Lucia di Lammermoor*'s star-making mad scene, the musico-dramatic intricacies of *Le nozze di Figaro*, and the rousing Verdian choruses in *La Traviata*, *Aida*, and *Nabucco*. Graf's approach also demonstrates a move away from the radio "concert" experience that privileged the sonic experience (as well as some aspects of aria and celebrity culture) that had abstracted operatic music from dramatic contexts.

Operatic performance, especially as normalized through the Metropolitan Opera radio broadcasts, was synonymous with the grandness of the Met in both its physical space and its

¹²⁸ The WRGB 1945 *Mikado* broadcast was critiqued for "the heavy eyebrows and oriental features obtained by broadstrokes" of makeup which seemed "grotesque on camera" (Dupuy 39).

production capacities. This narrative contradicts the protocol of television intimacy, which delivered the close-up experience of a performance to viewers at home. The most affective audience experiences in the opera house are often described in sensual, visceral terms (recall for example the narrative interview that opens Michele Poizat's *The Angel's Cry*) that rely on multiple kinds of distance. Virtuoso vocal display is unnerving and often described, as was Pavarotti, as super- or inhuman. The common narrative tropes are likewise distancing in abstract progressions of time, locations, depictions of intense emotions that are not always supported by logical narrative (especially in condensed broadcasts!). Therefore, the broadcast performance of opera on television demonstrates what Bolter and Grusin describe as the "logic of hypermediacy," in which the boundaries of both media were both exposed and renegotiated in relation to each other (34). The very boundaries that defined the operatic were called into question by the intimate performance scale and massive distribution of television.

The exposure of these contradictions fueled debates regarding what opera could and could not achieve on television, and what television was and was not able to portray on the small screen. The *New York Times* review of the 1940 NBC *Pagliacci* broadcast proclaims the production's success in precisely the collapse of operatic spectacle and viewer intimacy:

Opera by television becomes an intimate performance . . . the viewer sees the performance close-up through a telephoto lens, that affords a glimpse of the artist's personality far clearer than seen from any seat in the Golden Horseshoe. Every seat in television is in the front row. The opera telecast is more gripping than the sound broadcast; it is held by two forces, eye and ear And so the curtain has lifted on a new era for opera; the viewer sees the very effort and emotion that goes into the singing of a song, which by radio alone might sound quite effortless. ("Looking and Listening In" 7)

On the other hand, Irving Kolodin claims that opera's broad scope is the "antithesis of what you can do on television. It involves a compromise of theatrical values. Opera is too gigantic a form of musical entertainment to be shown on a screen at best the size of a newspaper and fed out of cheap speakers and speaker systems" (April 1963, qtd in Burke 1). While Kolodin's remarks on the quality of the speakers are significant for thinking about the relationships between opera protocols and televisual remediation, he also appears to be eliding "grand opera" with all opera: an opera-text like *I Pagliacci* seems perfectly designed for an intimate performance, with its love triangle collapsing distinctions between the characters' lived world and their on-stage performance. The distinctions between *verismo* texts and other genres of opera-texts were codified both technically and discursively during the television years, and the defining characteristics of opera continued to preoccupy its television discourses for the next fifteen years.

If the labour dispute of 1948 hadn't occurred, Graf's work in television opera may have lasted well into the television boom of the 1950s. However, his telecasting endeavours were cut short by the ongoing struggles between the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) union and broadcasting / recording conglomerates in the United States, which resulted in the AFM Musicians' ban of 1948, during which instrumental musicians were prohibited from making recordings or performing on radio or television.¹²⁹ The lack of live orchestral accompaniment spelled the death knell for Graf's opera excerpts: his use of existing orchestral records for the 1948 *Pagliacci* marked the end of this chapter in both opera broadcasting and Graf's activity in television (Burke 19). However, his investments in realistic, accessible and entertaining opera

¹²⁹ For an analysis of this ban see Marina Peterson's "Sound Word: Music as Labor and the 1940s Recoding Bans of the American Federation of Musicians." Graf would spend much of the U.S. television boom years directing opera in Europe, although he continued to work with the Metropolitan Opera until 1960.

produced explicitly for television remain significant legacies for the opera- and mediascapes, both in the ways that they framed later opera broadcasting (particularly at NBC), and in the implicit ways that they framed “unrealistic” opera as both inaccessible and not entertaining.

5. The Television Boom

While the “boom” of television was much more halting and protracted than the radio boom of the 1920s, the peak pace of growth, both in terms of receiver sales and station and network expansion, matches other industrial and demographic growth in the post-war era of 1945-1960. The years immediately following 1948-9 were extraordinary in the development of the industry and its reach over domestic entertainment in the US, and later Canada.¹³⁰ In those years, unions, networks, and legislators battled over the labour regulations, intellectual and industry rights, and possible roles of television in a post-war USA. The first east-west television network was linked up, marking the “birth of a TV nation” (Gomery 229). These developments coincided with the extraordinary regulatory move of freezing licensing for TV networks from 1948-1952, which meant that the FCC essentially gave the major networks four years of restricted competition.¹³¹ Lynn Spigel, in her analysis of 1950s television, has noted the connections between post-war investments in a suburban middle class and home-centred entertainment. In the operascape’s phonographic flows, 1949 was the year that Columbia announced the long-play record (marketed

¹³⁰ On the consumer side, Douglas Gomery notes that in 1945 there were about six thousand sets in use “principally in labs and homes in New York City” but by the end of the 1940s “there were nearly one hundred stations telecasting to approximately 3 000 000 sets” across the United States” (231). In terms of U.S. stations and networks, Matthew Murray counts six stations reaching up to 8 000 households in 1946, which had grown to 579 stations reaching 89% of the U.S. population by 1961 (35-6).

¹³¹ This freeze was officially reasoned as necessary while the FCC debated on use of Very High Frequency (VHF) or Ultra High Frequency (UHF) bands for television broadcasting (Hilmes 30).

in particular for classical music), bringing full recordings, and the idea of opera as a complete “work” (as discussed in chapter 1) into the realm of domestic listening possibility. And so it was that the first, longest-running (and possibly only), television opera company in North America was formed in a crucible of newly home-focused entertainment consumerism, a reorientation of opera publics towards the idea of “completeness” in recordings, and the new-found capacity to tune in (visually) to live events from across the nation.¹³²

The emergence of national, networked TV broadcasting in 1948/49 coincided with all three major networks launching various versions of an opera broadcast series. The same year that NBC linked up its nation-wide television network in the United States, CBS began a series of two-hour broadcasts entitled “Opera Television Theater,” helmed by radio broadcast stalwarts Lawrence Tibbett and Henry Souvaine. ABC, which had inherited the Metropolitan radio broadcasts when it split from NBC/RCA in 1927, began telecasting opera performances annually from the Metropolitan in 1948 (Burke, *Televised Opera* 123; 22). And NBC went even further, launching the television NBC Opera Theatre, which produced English-language operatic adaptations regularly from 1949-1964 (47).¹³³ Television networks remediated an art form seemingly incommensurate with either intimacy or immediacy into precisely those terms, and offered both “front row” and “behind the scenes” opera experiences as a means of consolidating their own positions of “prestige live programming” (Jacobs 73) in the network television world.

¹³² While state-sponsored companies such as the BBC in Great Britain and RAI in Italy certainly focused on opera production, NBC’s Opera Theatre was a sole-purpose, privately owned, television opera company. Study beyond the Euro-American focus here may reveal other such companies.

¹³³ A note on terminology: the archived broadcast I viewed at the Paley Centre spells the company “Theatre” in its credits; Burke uses the spelling “Theater” in his 1965 article. I use “theatre” to refer to NBC’s endeavour, and “theater” for more general contexts of opera television.

Opera telecasting also dates to the earliest days of television networking in Canada. While disputes over the funding model and Canada's manufacturing commitments during the Korean war set the Canadian boom behind that of the U.S., Stephen Cole notes that "by 1954 a million TV sets had been sold in Canada" and that the affiliate network had made television accessible to "91 percent of Canadians" by 1958 (8; 68). In Canada, the public service focus of broadcasting television meant that most independent television stations that sprang up in the 1940s either became CBC stations (as was the case with stations in both Montreal and Toronto) or affiliate stations for CBC spreading from prairies across the country to Moncton and Saint John in 1954 (68). Between 1952 and 1958, CBC expanded from stations in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto to "six CBC-owned stations [and] forty private affiliates" (68).¹³⁴ Along the lines of Gomery's descriptions of the U.S. "TV nation," we might date Canada's television network history to the 1953 linkup of CBC Toronto and CBC Montreal on 14 May 1953. On that date, the freshly networked CBC-TV marked its new chapter by broadcasting an entire production of Mozart and da Ponte's *Don Giovanni*, and the *CBC-Times* called it the broadcaster's "most ambitious production to date" (2). These historical coincidences between the operascope and various broadcasters invite a close consideration of what exactly was being broadcast under the title of "opera" and what consequences these activities had for both broadcasters and the operascope in North America.

From 1945-1965, the North American operascope was marked by the expansion of the industry, and a general slowing of aesthetic innovations on major operatic stages. Independent

¹³⁴ Frank Peers notes that the absence of licensing fees and the quagmire of regulatory disputes in the 1940s and 50s demonstrates Canada's negotiation between the accessibility and appeal of U.S. commercial models and the fear of cultural abolition by American influence (68). Peers's numbers do not, I believe, take into account people living on Indigenous reserves.

companies premiered in Fort Lauderdale (1945), Fort Worth (1946), Toronto (1948), Charlotte (1948), Baltimore (1950), Santa Fe (1952), Chicago (1954), Philadelphia (1954), Houston (1955), Washington (1956), Dallas (1957), Vancouver (1960), Madison (1961), Minnesota (1963), Edmonton (1963), and Minnesota (1963) during these decades. In general, these companies reflected the repertoire that had become increasingly codified in the radio era. Companies' financial precarity had precluded investments in new productions or commissions in the 1930s, and so therefore, while new companies presented ever-greater numbers of productions across North America, producers such as Rudolph Bing expressed concern over opera's artistic vitality. So extreme was the sense of opera "dying" that when Bing became General Manager of the Met in 1950, he declared his mandate to make opera "living theater" (Burke, *Televised Opera* 31).

Published remarks from 1944-1953 suggest that those invested in televised opera considered the intermedial relationship to be reciprocal. In contrast to some of the claims made in the early years of radio, when it was apparently understood that great performances such as those by the Met were a reason to develop broadcast capacity, writers such as Olin Downes framed television as a saviour for opera. In 1932, he remarked in a *NY Times* article that once television is perfected, then opera

will at last have a fair trial with the public. It is a time certain to come and then it will be seen whether anything really is the matter with opera as an art form, or whether like most art forms that threaten to become antiquated, it can be rescued from its plight by some fresh and powerful influence. (Downes X8)

The anticipation of a "fair trial" suggests both that opera is undergoing a period of intense public scrutiny, and that this scrutiny has been unjust. Television is therefore of benefit to the public evaluation of opera for Downes. Richard Burke notes that both critics and prophets "predicted

that television would do for opera what radio had done for concert music: introduce it to a vast new audience of potential music lovers” (*Televised Opera* 1), thus offering up new potential publics for opera, and, perhaps, a broader set of evaluative criteria.

Writing a decade after Downes, Robert B. Stone felt more optimistic about opera’s current situation, suggesting that “television will benefit from the operatic renaissance which is taking place in music schools, in the music departments of universities and colleges, and in a number of experimental groups. Television can reciprocate by providing a comparatively inexpensive outlet for an art form which is being revitalized and popularized as never before” (432). While both these quotes predate the advent of corporate network television, they seem to suggest that the amateur stages were sites of innovation and growth in the pre-television years, and that the hope was to bring this new innovation to broader publics.

Arguments in support of opera on television most often related to the idea of increased reach or a larger potential audience, while acknowledging the technical difficulty in portraying opera on the small screen. For example, Burke marks the ABC broadcast of the Met’s 1948 season opening performance of *Otello* that year as “the first actual theater performance of a full-length opera” broadcast on television (*Televised Opera* 23). The *Etude* review noted that “it was not technically perfect in every detail but it was so remarkably done that thousands of people who had never been inside an opera house got a fine idea of what happens in opera. Musically they probably heard more and heard it better than they might have from some of the seats in the house” (“*Otello*” 1). The language of the review echoes the logics of intimacy and the predictions of democratization: audiences heard “more” and heard it “better” than would have been possible from a bodily co-present experience, and those audiences included people who might never have been able to attend in any case. However, celebrating television as a force that

could bring ready access and an intimate experience to the world of opera also underlines the lack of easy access and intimacy as failures for operatic experiences that are *not* broadcast. Operatic grandeur and spectacle, not possible through the small screen in the same way as in a great house, are problematized rhetorically so that television offers the solution.

Other commentators focused less on the broadening of access and more on (re)vitalizing the visually dramatic aspects of opera, which were of course unimportant in other mass media. Certainly, the phonograph, which until 1949 primarily produced arias and excerpts for home listening, and radio, which by this time usually included entire productions in the Metropolitan broadcasts, included no visual representation. Writing in 1953, John Gutman argues that television will save opera from its own caricature:

All too long, the visual aspects of opera have been neglected, a necessary evil but something to which no particular interest need be given as long as there is a fine orchestra in the pit, a good conductor at the desk and the best singers available on stage. All too long opera has been a concert in disguise rather than a drama in music I feel confident that opera as theatrical entertainment is not only suitable for the television screen but one day may well have its greatest development in this medium. (75)

Gutman frames opera's history as one of being mired in unhelpful and outdated performance traditions. Similarly, his distinctions among aspects of operatic performance—a “fine” orchestra, a “good” conductor, and “the best” singers—suggests a history of treating opera as a sum of its musical parts, rather than as a holistic musico-dramatic art form. In short, Gutman's description echoes a Wagnerian critique of early nineteenth-century Italian opera, and he sees in television a corrective because its forms demand new attention to the visual and dramatic staging of opera. His attack on opera as a “concert in disguise” may also reference the abridgment of opera-texts

in radio, as well as phonography, and many modes of staging practices in the nineteenth- and early-twentieth century discussed in chapter 1.

The annual ABC Metropolitan telecasts lasted only until 1954, but they presage both the developing protocols surrounding television broadcasts from theatres, and the Metropolitan's ongoing efforts to send their productions beyond the confines of their house and touring venues.¹³⁵ The technical challenges of broadcasting from an opera house are articulated at length by Burke, but the general claim for broadcasting's capacity seems to transcend the technical, and to broach the broader issues of democratizing and socializing art on a mass scale. Graf quipped that, "whether by telecasting from the theater, from the studio, or from film, television can become the most decisive medium for forcing opera to take off its top hat, and enter the American home" (*People* 231). In Graf's formulation, television's exigencies (presumably something akin to intimacy and immediacy) confront some of opera's alienating protocols. The synecdoche of "top hat" in this instance suggests a kind of class elitism, and an out-dated stylization, or commitment to the past. Finally, the image of opera "entering the American home" hearkens back to the advertisements for Caruso's entry into the home via Red Seal records from the early 1900s, but with a significant change. In this instance, it is not the home that is transformed by the addition of opera, but rather opera that is transformed into an accessible artistic experience by its remediation in the home.

Opera broadcasting on television added to claims for TV's artistic and social capacity in two ways. First, these discourses suggest that television could "save" opera by updating and democratizing it through intimacy and immediacy; and second, that TV had the capacity to

¹³⁵ The Metropolitan Opera has resurrected a version of this broadcast in their simulcasting series, *Live in HD*, which in recent years has included a "plazacast" in Lincoln Centre for its opening night of the Season each fall.

present in meaningful ways both a canon of great operatic texts and new innovations in opera composition. But as the years of the television boom continued, the intermedial push and pull between opera and television also exposed contradictions within the operascope that continue to resonate today. As we shall see in the case of the NBC Opera Theater, broadcasters relied on opera's "top hat" in their claims for quality programming, even as they claimed to be removing it—with double-edged consequences for opera-texts and the operascope in general.

6. NBC Opera Theatre

The NBC Opera Theatre's 1949-1964 seasons on television are the most sustained effort towards televised opera in North American history, and their coincidence with the years of the television boom offer evidence for the ongoing negotiations required to bring the technical and social aspects of the operascope to its "TV nations" (Gomery 229). Like Herbert Graf in preceding years, NBC's opera producers strove to bring opera into modern domestic life while still relying on some of opera's traditional cultural *caché*, especially canonical opera-texts, to attract its viewership. Its primary champions, Peter Herman Adler, Samuel Chotzinoff, and David Sarnoff, wrote and interviewed extensively on the project. Adler likened the company's mission to that of the *opéras comiques* in the mid-nineteenth century in Paris: "an interesting plot made understandable by clear diction, fine acting, by singers who look the part, presented in a scenic frame which is up to date and on a par with the contemporary theatrical style of the day" ("Television" 18). In logistical terms, producing accessible, entertaining, "contemporary" opera broadcasts meant that NBC opera productions were sung in English; direction, staging and casting were undertaken with a commitment to an intelligible and compelling story; and productions included both works in the North American repertoire (including both *Madama*

Butterfly and *Le nozze di Figaro*), and new opera-texts, most notably, Benjamin Britten, E.M. Forster and Eric Crozier's *Billy Budd* in 1952; Leonard Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti* in 1952 and Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* on several occasions.¹³⁶ Adler suggested that television could persuade “thousands of people for the first time that opera is not high-brow or esoteric, but that it is good and exciting theatre” (“Beginning of an Era” 29). These claims are reflected in the technical issues facing a studio opera company, and they indicate that champions of televised opera saw their work as significant for the future of the operascape as a whole in the United States.

The television production paradigm, which included small television studios and the relatively small screen size of receivers, also highlighted challenges in producing certain aspects of opera-texts. For example, close-up shots of principals to “reveal depth of emotion and passion” (Burke, *Televised Opera* 71) quickly became hallmarks of televised opera, while large choruses and dance sequences frequently failed to capture the same intensity (56). Additionally, the close-up aesthetic and reliance on facial expression made it difficult to portray the intricacies of certain plots, and impossible to stage meaningfully large crowd scenes. Burke discusses the difficulties presented by *Le nozze di Figaro*, which was broadcast over two Saturday slots in 1953. *Figaro* was the first “big, standard opera” presented in its entirety by NBC, but as Burke notes, “its plot abounds with intrigue, confusion and complication. Much of the plot advancement depends on split-second timing and very complex bits of business such as note passing, searching for lost items, and rapid change of costumes” (83-4).¹³⁷ Similarly, a review of the 1951 *Carmen* telecast highlights the problem of large groups and small screens by observing that many chorus

¹³⁶ See Appendix B for a full list of NBC Opera Theatre broadcasts.

¹³⁷ Unfortunately, this production was not recorded in its entirety. The first of two broadcasts is archived at UCLA, but I was unable to travel to view it during the course of my research.

members' heads were "cut off" by the camera ("Initial Attraction" 59).

The formal demands of television broadcasting occasioned significant reshaping of opera, both in reorganizing existing opera-texts to better suit the time-and-space needs of the broadcast studio construct, and in fostering the demand for new opera-texts to be created with televisual affordances in mind. Technical decisions to cut or reduce choruses, to cast with attention to acting ability (as well as the problematic "look good in the part" logic), and to produce dramatic exigency through intimacy in both camera shots and staging, reveal tensions in mediacy. Many of these investments were incompatible at the textual or musical level with commonly produced operas in the 1940s. For example, many of Giuseppe Verdi's "galley period" works are known for their powerful choruses, including the *Coro di Zingari* ("Anvil Chorus") of *Il Trovatore*, and "Va, pensiero" ("Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves") in *Nabucco*, but the Verdi operas with large choruses were not telecast by NBC, whose Verdi repertoire was confined to *Rigoletto* and *La Traviata*. While not all operas rely on Verdian choruses or complicated stage business that would seem overwrought on a small screen, it was the case that many operas that *were* popular on phonograph and radio did not work well on television. Burke notes that the 1953 *Der Rosenkavalier* was too wide in its necessary staging to fit on TV; that the movement in the 1950 *Die Fledermaus* was too constricted; and that the fantasy of the 1950 *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* seems to have failed in its attempt to negotiate fantasy and realism (Burke 79; 56; 57). None of these operas was telecast again in the NBC Opera Theatre repertoire. These failings called into question what counted as "operatic" on television, when operatic meant "grand."

NBC's technical decisions also privileged a much different kind of opera performance on an individual level. Intimate portrayal of characters and themes created greater effect, while performance styles that may have read well in a theatre seemed histrionic or cartoonish in nature.

These choices would benefit many young artists, including soprano Leontyne Price, whose first major roles were performed on NBC. She was noted for her acting ability, especially in her portrayal of Tosca in a 1954 broadcast, and it was in no small part her exposure on television that led to her long career at both the Met and San Francisco Opera (Burke, *Televised Opera* 96). Television also helped spark the career of Canadian director Irving Guttman. Guttman directed CBC and Radio-Canada opera on television from 1953-1959, the years in which he built a reputation beyond the tutelage of Herman Geiger-Torel in Toronto, and which directly preceded his appointment as the first Artistic Director of the newly formed Vancouver Opera in 1960.¹³⁸

During NBC Opera's tenure, reviews of productions reiterated the central tensions between television's protocols of intimacy (and to a lesser extent, immediacy), and opera's seemingly intrinsic grandeur, as well as its hierarchical investments in dramatic coherence over music. For example, the *Musical America* review of *Madama Butterfly* in 1955 argued that, "the dramatic qualities of the opera had taken precedence over the musical qualities, and consequently, the two hours and a quarter seemed a little long to devote to the television screen" ("Complete *Madame Butterfly*" 16). Richard Burke reads this sort of commentary as indicative of "the feeling that the whole point and purpose of opera is pageantry, spectacle, and the magnificence of the human voice" (90), an image that may call up the high Romanticism of *Aïda* or *Die Walküre* (neither of which was ever broadcast by NBC Opera Theater). NBC's Samuel Chotzinoff framed this "grandness" as a problem in opera in his defence of televised opera's intimacy. In an interview reproduced by the *CBC-Times* preceding their pickup of the NBC Opera Theatre's production of *Figaro* in 1954, Chotzinoff explained that "as it's presented today, especially in large auditoriums, opera has lost a good deal of its meaning, at least as far as I'm

¹³⁸ These broadcasts are listed in the database housed at CBC Music Archives in Toronto.

concerned. Think of the immediacy that's sacrificed in a big house seating thousands of people. No contact at all is made between artist and listener. Even worse, though, is that the size of the house leads to the extreme exaggerations [in acting] today" (3). Chotzinoff's claims invert the value of large-scale opera-texts and productions, highlighting the over-sized opera houses in North America as problematic for all opera performances. He claims intimacy as the realm of medial reconfiguration for opera on television, without discussing the affective narrowing that might occur via smaller screens, or the ways that apprehending and attending to vocal performance would be fundamentally affected by the quality of both the transmission and the speakers in the receiver.

The 1955 NBC *Butterfly* broadcast offers an example of Chotzinoff's argument. The opera-text is well suited, dramatically, to an intimate portrayal. The eponymous character, Cio-Cio-San, is on stage for nearly the entire opera, all of which is set in and near her home near Nagasaki. As Director Garnett Bruce explains it, this opera is "Cio-Cio-San's story," and the portrayal of her struggle to retain the belief in her prodigal husband's return is the driving dramatic tension in the second and third acts. The 1955 broadcast capitalized on the tensions between the intimate emotional struggle of Cio-Cio-San (sung by Elaine Malbin) and the misogyny and American imperialism that underpin her situation. For example, in act 1, the camera lingers on the shoes of Pinkerton and Sharpless, left outside Cio-Cio-San's house, thus underlining the manner in which the American characters take up just enough of the Japanese custom to maximize their own pleasures. Similarly, the act 1 duet, portrayed primarily in three-quarter and close-up shots, demonstrates a nuanced ambivalence that is difficult to portray on stage. Cio-Cio-San does not look at Pinkerton for nearly the entire duet, and his concern, voiced in Ruth Martin's English translation ("Honey, ready? Not sure?"), suggests a tenderness that is

undermined as he begins pulling her in to the house. The waiting tableau in the Humming Chorus is also depicted in enough detail to see the child in the role of Trouble fidget slightly before the music ends and the scene fades to black.

While much of this broadcast production would be comparable in style (though different in scale) with traditions of staging this opera from the post-war period through to the early twenty-first century, certain moments are unique to a broadcast or cinematic context. In addition to the capacity of the camera to draw attention to small details such as the shoes mentioned above, there are several instances where the mediacy of television asserts itself. For example, the musical interlude that opens act 3 is complemented by written narration on the screen, informing viewers that, “through the long hours of the night, Butterfly has been waiting.” This information parallels the kind of explanation I have attributed above the rise of the host and the concerns for broadcast apprehension, and it may also belie the difficulties in producing gradations of light in early television, which in the staging context indicate the rising of the sun and the end of night at the beginning of act 3.

Cio-Cio-San is also characterized in televisual means. During the aria, “*Un bel di*,” the point of view alternates between multiple camera angles, which together present the sense of Cio-Cio-San being surrounded by those who doubt Pinkerton’s return. These decisions heighten the contrast between other characters, and her firm resolve (or perhaps her madness) in believing that Pinkerton has not betrayed her.¹³⁹ Additionally, during the act 3 interlude, a photograph of a ship in harbour is superimposed on the black screen, and it crossfades into the familiar sight of Cio-Cio-San’s yard as Suzuki enters the scene. Taken together, these details inform the broadcast

¹³⁹ Shadows of camera operators are also visible throughout the scene, which reinforces the challenges of such techniques in live broadcast contexts.

production with informative and affecting narrative detail, while also reinforcing the studio context of the performance.¹⁴⁰

The arguments which I have sketched above about telecasting opera engage, albeit often implicitly, operatic protocols regarding space or sound, and they demonstrate a key difference between radio and television. While radio made a claim for sonic purity by stripping opera of its visual spectacle, television took the primacy of the voice and the visual spectacle of opera as problems that denigrated dramatic intensity. Different aspects of opera-texts and their performance were intensified in television mediacy than those in radio. These aspects were then mobilized through a vast circulation network that had the capacity to reach millions of viewers, thus potentially fixing that performance, that staging, that voice, or that aria as a kind of synecdoche for the entire opera-text, and in some cases, for the idea of opera more generally.

One solution to the abridging, re-organizing, and cutting of existing opera-texts was the development of a new intermedium: opera composed explicitly for television. These texts would highlight both the strength of intimate portrayal on television, and the idea that not all opera was, nor should be, necessarily “grand.” Jennifer Barnes explores the history of opera-texts created for television in *Television Opera: The Fall of Opera Commissioned for Television* (2003), and NBC’s efforts are well documented in her work. NBC Opera’s repertoire certainly included a number of these texts, but the only one that seems to have found a regular place on TV was Gian

¹⁴⁰ NBC clearly saw this production as an important part of their broadcast seasons, because during the 1955 *Butterfly* broadcast, NBC chairman David Sarnoff announced during the intermission that NBC would be launching a touring company for *Butterfly* and *Figaro* in 1956, starring Malbin and fellow cast members from the broadcast itself. In this short-lived endeavour, NBC Opera Theatre apparently sought to close the circulation loop of theatrical and broadcast staging, by capitalizing on broadcast success through a bodily co-present encore. Burke notes that the touring company only lasted two years, and that its *Figaro* and *Butterfly* tour had a troupe of seventy performers and lasted eight weeks. While it met with critical praise it was enormously expensive and folded in 1956 (*Televised Opera* 103-5).

Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, in part because the nativity story embedded in the narrative made a logical scheduling practice for yearly Christmas broadcasts. Most of NBC's television operas are listed as produced once only in the company's fifteen years on the air, and in general they have not found steady circulation beyond the television screen for which they were created. This lack of traction is the subject of Barnes's study, and she concludes that, despite the generally positive response to the realism that combined the energy of liveness with the intimacy of TV, by 1990, television opera had never quite resolved its negotiations between musical and visual performance: "it has neither formed an artistic identity nor established distinguishing characteristics" (97). The discourses surrounding NBC Opera Theatre suggest that part of this failure relates to the conceptual inertia surrounding "opera," which carries with it intersecting baggage of aesthetic traditions, technical limitations, and cultural assumptions—and this holds true both for new works and the existing repertoire remediated for the small screen in the 1940s and 1950s.

Television's claimed capacity for expanding and enhancing operatic access was significant in an era in which questions about television's public merits were questioned.¹⁴¹ In response to NBC's later, curtailed seasons of opera broadcasting, for example, Howard Taubman of the *New York Times* lamented that in previous years NBC Opera had been "one of the principal adornments of a medium that never was long on material of consequence" (35). The elevation of TV via opera in terms of "consequence," however, falls back into the discourses of cultural hierarchy that television was supposed to ameliorate. For example, a review of the 1951

¹⁴¹ The most quoted concern is the likening of television to a "vast wasteland" by FCC commissioner Newton Minnow in 1961. The quiz show scandals of the 1950s were perhaps the broadest example of television's debasing powers. See William Boddy's *Fifties Television* and Michael Curtin's *Redeeming the Wasteland* for analyses of these issues.

NBC broadcast of Giacomo Puccini and Giovacchino Forzano's *Gianni Schicchi* (1918) raved that it was "heartening for those viewers who have hopes that television can achieve the high art potential of good theater and good cinema" ("Puccini" 3). When Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, the first opera commissioned for U.S. television, won a Peabody award in 1953, it was described as "a genuine work of art, and living proof that television can accommodate itself to greatness if it wishes" ("Peabody Awards" 27).

Here, the language of "genuine" art suggests that opera on television elevates television to the status of art, and greatness can only be realized by maintaining opera traditions. In the case of *Gianni Schicchi*, wit and tightly organized musical declamation continue to delight audiences long after its 1918 premiere. In the more complicated case of *Amahl*, which was written specifically for NBC, the network created what Barnes, following Eric Hobsbawm, defines as an "invented tradition" in which *Amahl* was immediately claimed as a long-standing classic (34-8). These examples demonstrate a contradiction in television opera circulation: despite hopes that opera would take off its "top hat" via television, they seem to suggest that the operascape could (and did) offer early television some of the symbolic capital it lacked.

In addition to the matrix of intimacy, scope, and grandness in televised opera, the social capital of prestige was never really divorced from the newly democratized mediation. While NBC opera advocates promoted intimacy and realism as hallmarks of opera's future, the reviews of their productions often reassert opera's hierarchies along the lines of complexity, prestige, and grandness. A generally positive review of *I pagliacci* notes that "NBC was frankly not aiming in this telecast at the connaisseur [*sic*]. For what *Pagliacci* did aim at, and for what it accomplished, it can be called a real success" ("Review of *Pagliacci*" 24). A review of ABC's *Der Rosenkavalier* broadcast from the Met in 1949 suggests that the work itself was not "particularly likely to strike

the lowbrow's fancy. It's too bad that with an opportunity to impress a number of new folks, the work could not have been something a little more lyrical and colourful" (Chase 29). In both the *New York Times* and *Billboard* magazine, the anticipation of what kinds of viewers would appreciate what kinds of operatic experience reveals the deeply entrenched connection between prestige, grandeur, and "the operatic." The studio broadcast is *too* accessible to quite count as an opera, *per se*, while the Met broadcast fails at reaching the "lowbrow" audiences by its lack of lyricism and colour. While televised opera, especially opera composed *for* television, promised to bring the beauty of opera to viewers of all sorts, in practice the contradictions of tradition and innovation, as well as those of popularity and cultural capital swirling through the operascape were sharpened, not diminished, by the television endeavours of the 1950s.

The 1950s opera telecasts pushed the technical and aesthetic boundaries of emergent broadcasting, and the choices made by broadcasters—in particular NBC—distributed as they were to millions of viewers at home (including Canadians, via CBC), also framed what "counted" as opera. Broadcasters' choices in repertoire increasingly highlighted television's capacity for intimacy—and belied the difficulties associated with large-scale works and narrative abstraction. These decisions meant that the more intimate settings of works by Puccini, and the ensemble-, rather than chorus-focused, works of Mozart played reasonably well on the small screen, but that Wagnerian opera did not "take off its top hat" via television; nor did many other opera-texts, because they simply weren't broadcast.

As much as some opera-texts increased in circulation through endeavours such as the NBC Opera broadcasts, opera repertoire as a whole was stratified by television. Those works (especially by Wagner and Verdi) that were *not* broadcast are, to this day, viewed in some contexts as more complex, more demanding and artistically significant (maybe "grand?")

undertakings than those of Puccini, Donizetti, and to an extent, Mozart.¹⁴² In my view, these conceptions of aesthetic value are linked, in part, to a topos of accessibility that conflates audience access with aesthetic complexity. In addition to codifying certain repertoire as accessible, curatorial choices (not unlike those of radio discussed above) demonstrate television's ongoing reliance on aria culture, even as it strove to amplify dramatic coherence. One extreme example is the 1952 NBC *Il barbiere de Siviglia* broadcast, which was cut and rearranged so it opened with Figaro's famous aria "*Largo al factotum*," easily the most familiar music of the opera. John Ellis has argued that television works through a kind of sonic hailing to capture and maintain viewers' attention (162), and certainly opening the broadcast with the iconic aria is both an example of aria culture's continued resonance, and the media-specific demands of keeping viewers "tuned in" by introducing the opera through its most familiar musical strains.

The repertoire, casting, and technical choices of NBC Opera Theatre highlight tensions among operatic traditions, the protocols of new media, and social debates about democratization, as well those as between a reliance on aria culture and focus on dramatic coherence. NBC's intended inauguration of popular opera written for television never became normalized and the Opera Theatre never found long-standing funding or sponsorship, thus highlighting the often contradictory experiences of opera circulation: critical acclaim and public approbation do not necessarily translate into financial stability. As television began broadcasting new series specifically for the medium and therefore moving away from what Williams terms its

¹⁴² Anne Midgette addresses this differentiation in terms of twenty-first century educational practices. She notes the "American conventional wisdom that puts all young singers on a diet of Mozart arias to cultivate lightness and agility" and that undervalues the unique, large voices of some singers ("The End of the Great Big American Voice").

“parasitical” programming of existing formats (*Television 25*), opera broadcasting was left behind, marking the early years of television and thus also their passing. Television fed the discourses of opera as an object of the past precisely through the ways it figured opera broadcasting both as a marker of quality and as being in need of updating and recuperation by the new medium. As the 1960s wore on, opera became the television domain of public, rather than commercial broadcasting, and PBS (founded in 1963) has been host both to the *Live from Lincoln Center* series, and, since the 1970s, the *Great Performance* series. In Canadian contexts, CBC produced opera in a number of programs, including omnibus series such as *L’Heure de concert* and *Folio* (1955-1959), and the *Chrysler Festival* (1956-1966); as well as early event broadcasts such as the *Don Giovanni* broadcast in 1953 and pickups of NBC opera broadcasts throughout the 1950s. As far I have ascertained, there was no private, commercial investment by other Canadian broadcasters. As competition increased from private commercial broadcasters in the 1970s, the Public Broadcasting Service or PBS, (and CBC in Canada) became increasingly “associated with a sense of effete cultural snobbery” as well as high art (Marcus 56), which might indicate that the connections between elitism and opera, as well as the Met as the primary proprietor of operatic production, have been reified, not overcome, by opera’s television history in North America.¹⁴³

Radio and television broadcasting and programming owe debts to their early convergences with the texts, protocols, and social discourses surrounding opera. The legacies of these intersections with the operascope may be explicit, as is the title of CBC radio’s alternative

¹⁴³ PBS is a conglomerate of not-for-profit channels reserved by the FCC in each market for “educational, non-profit use,” and as government pressure forced PBS to move away from controversial topics (particularly in the Nixon era), an emphasis on “the high arts and innocuous documentary” emerged (Marcus 55).

music program, *Definitely Not the Opera*, or in the 1990s television program *Seinfeld* episodes entitled “The Barber” and “The Opera,” which intertwine their comedic plots with those of *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *I pagliacci*, respectively. But they may also be nearly imperceptible, or a combination of signalled and implied connection. For example, the *Netflix* series *House of Cards* stages its Season One finale with political intrigue backstage at a production of *Madama Butterfly*, wherein the devious Frank Underwood cavalierly betrays his erstwhile ally. Similarly, in a 2015 episode, *The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* stages an intermedial scene-within-a-scene wherein a character sings “*Vesti la giubba*” as background music at a dinner party wherein a suspicious wife attempts to catch her husband having an affair. These examples suggest that contemporary radio and television turn to opera music, plot, and tropes to create in-jokes, layer their own plotlines, and, at times, mark particular characters or spaces with the cultural capital that early television strove to amplify as part of its social and aesthetic capacity—even if they do so in a manner derogatory to the concept of the “opera.”

In the past thirty years, many U.S television programs engaging with the operascape are also known for a kind of “quality” that has been part of television debates since the inception of the medium. Taking up the foundational work of Charlotte Brundson, Sarah Cardwell has argued that “quality television” is fundamentally a generic framework for organizing certain kinds of formal elements: “American quality television programmes tend to exhibit high production values, naturalistic performance styles, recognised and esteemed actors, a sense of visual style created through careful, even innovative, camerawork and editing, and a sense of aural style

created through judicious use of appropriate, even original music” (26).¹⁴⁴ *Mad Men* is one such “quality” television program, and it relies regularly on the operascape in both implicit and explicit ways.

7. Broadcasting Legacies

When *Mad Men* stages its lead character, Don Draper, “tuning in” to a Saturday afternoon broadcast of *Figaro*, it invokes the historical moment of the 1960s suburban household it stages, while also calling upon familiarity for viewers in the twenty-first century who may also have listened to such a broadcast. This care in staging historical media (if not opera knowledge) is one of the ways that *Mad Men* has made claims for itself as a prestige program—a claim that is also linked to the genealogical intersections of opera and television in North America.

In this episode, the generic markers of quality—complexity of plot and character, historical attention to detail, high production values and innovative camera work—are tied to the intertextual and intermedial engagement with *Le nozze di Figaro*. The thematic parallel between the opera and the episode are evident in both the work and party scenes of the episode: intimate relationships are uncomfortably public, and public relationships, such as those between neighbours or coworkers, frequently tread upon the sexual intimacies that are ostensibly the private sphere of married couples. Seemingly fixed codes of gender and social hierarchy are interrogated even as they organize the relationships between characters. The *Figaro* radio broadcast demonstrates not only attention to detail, however, but also the hauntings of the operascape in North American broadcast contexts.

¹⁴⁴ Other elements include complex narrative structure, intricate themes, and erudite, technical, oratorical or even poetic language (26-27). Vermeulen and Rustad follow Cardwell’s call for reassessing the difficulties in terminology in their analysis of the “late cut” (346).

It is the Met that came to be indexical for both superior opera production and opera itself via the radio broadcasts that have run on Saturday afternoons since 1931. *Mad Men*'s fictional radio broadcast implies a Metropolitan performance by its weekend afternoon schedule and stars, calling upon that particular logic of operatic prestige to introduce the plot and thematic complexity that will develop in the rest of the episode. *Mad Men* echoes the broadcast genealogy of capitalizing on, and reifying, certain aspects of the operascape in service of its own claims for quality or artistic merit. It does so with a subtle wink for the opera-knowledgeable among its viewers.

The tensions and hypocrisies of Don's work and social circle are perhaps most intensely embodied in the figure of Helen Bishop, who is introduced in this episode. Bishop is the outsider at the party, a divorced woman who is new to the neighbourhood and who consequently becomes an object of both fascination and fear for her neighbours. The women interrogate her in the kitchen after she arrives at the party, and when she escapes from the kitchen she is ogled by the men in the living room, before being propositioned by one of the neighbourhood husbands in the front hallway.¹⁴⁵ She is a catalyst for community formation while simultaneously disrupting the seemingly tidy lines of social mores among the Drapers' neighbours. Most obviously, Helen is marked visually as being outside both the female and male spheres of the party by her wearing slacks, which none of the other women are sporting. Her body and clothing make explicit the sexual tensions that are elsewhere hinted at, and thus in many ways, she occupies the kind of "anarchic role" in the Draper house that Margaret Reynolds has ascribed to that of Cherubino in

¹⁴⁵ In my view, Bevan's claim that she is "flirting" with Carlton (549) misreads the scene. Her wide-eyed demeanor, taken in the context of the sexualized mockery she has just suffered, suggests that she is consciously rendering his sexual proposition explicit.

Le nozze di Figaro: the “body with its delights and surprises is kept on show” (141).¹⁴⁶ This character parallel is reinforced by another occasion of intermedial representation in the episode, wherein Helen’s status in the household is underscored by Cherubino’s famous arietta, “*Voi che sapete*” (“You who Know”) and a home movie.

The episode’s climax employs the 8 mm home video camera (which was introduced in 1958) to create a sense of Don’s internal point of view, as he films the birthday party. As the view shifts from the multi-camera angle to the 8 mm film view, and the diegetic sounds of the party fall away, we see, via the camera lens, children at play before the view catches the men obviously staring at Helen Bishop, and acting startled at being “caught” in Don’s filmic gaze. Don then pans to the hallway, where we witness Carlton propositioning Helen. While the obviously diegetic sound cuts back in to offer the dialogue in this exchange, during the majority of the home movie sequence the only sounds are the ticking sound of the film advancing in the camera, and Cherubino’s act 2 arietta from *Le nozze di Figaro*, the text of which asks for help in understanding the first experiences of love.¹⁴⁷

For *Mad Men* viewers familiar with *Figaro* in general, and Cherubino in particular, the staging of Helen and the invocation of the arietta add a darkly humorous layer to the episode. Cherubino’s actions drive the plot of *Figaro* and mirror the interrogation of gender and class boundaries in the opera, while in the episode, Helen’s presence is linked to Don’s increasing alienation from his house and family and arguably his own role within those hypocrisies (he abandons the party to drink by himself shortly after this scene). The connections between

¹⁴⁶ There is much consternation in the kitchen that Helen’s daily “walks” are some sort of sexual display in the suburbs.

¹⁴⁷ This opera scene has been staged as both an earnest plea and a clumsy seduction; Heather Hadlock describes it as a “failed serenade” (70).

Cherubino's musical register and the politics of Helen's body and character constitute an example of what Robyn Stillwell calls "metadiegetic" music operating not only as "pertaining to the narration by a second narrator" but as situated "in a character who forms a particularly strong point of identification / location for the audience" (196). The female singing voice invites viewers to identify with both Don and Helen's perspective and recognize their connection as outsiders; for viewers familiar with the opera-text, the echoes of Cherubino's music underscore Helen's ambivalent position within the neighborhood community and the perhaps dubious quality of Don's affection for his wife. *Mad Men's* use of *Figaro* in this episode capitalizes upon regimes of recognition prevalent in different kinds of opera publics, while simultaneously hailing its television audience *as* an opera public.

Opera publics are, as I argue in my introduction, highly variable in their makeup and sociability, but they are all in some way rooted in access to or experience with an opera-text. In North America, that access is deeply imbricated in broadcast media. Even though commercial television broadcasting and television opera commissions essentially ended with the NBC Opera Theatre's demise in 1965, its influence resonates through radio and television mediascapes today.

Early periods of media-opera convergence have also influenced the development of live opera companies and the North American operascape more generally. As I mentioned above, the first two decades of television broadcasting coincided with the creation of opera companies across North America. This coincidence meant that precisely as local professional opera was emerging across Canada and the United States, regimes of recognition surrounding opera were often rooted in both radio and television broadcasts, which predominantly radiated out from New York (via the Met or NBC) to the rest of the continent. While an exhaustive study of historical company repertoire and staging practices is beyond the scope of this research, the coincidence of

the timing, and the preponderance of Puccini and Mozart in early company repertoire suggest a correlation between broadcasting and anticipated audiences for early company productions. Recall, for example, that NBC formed a touring company based on its TV productions of *Butterfly* and *Figaro* in 1956 with the goal of “stimulating national interest in opera and meeting the demand thus created” (Burke, *Televised Opera* 102). It would seem that the demand, or at least perceived demand, was linked to those texts. Santa Fe, Edmonton and Toronto companies premiered with *Madama Butterfly*, Vancouver produced *Butterfly* in its second season, Madison produced *Figaro* in its second year, Seattle played *Tosca* in its first season; and Montreal, which went through a number of company fluctuations prior to the 1980s, had a guild-based company that produced *Butterfly*, *Faust*, and *Don Giovanni* in its early years (Littler 17). The New York City Opera produced both works nearly every year in its first decade.¹⁴⁸

The burgeoning opera industries of Canada and the United States in the 1950s and 60s are associated with broadcasting of the same period, including debates about the meaning and capacity of opera, the potential quality of television, and the capabilities of one to benefit the other. These sites of convergence also affected, and continue to affect, participation in the operascape. Broadcast media increased access, and introduced new limitations, linked to technical affordances. The circulation of repertoire and artists continue to be linked to technical, financial and artistic demands faced by producers; and, as I will explore in my next chapter, opera publics themselves have, through various periods of convergence, become increasingly stratified along the logics of knowledge, familiarity, and proximity.

¹⁴⁸ See the Central Opera Service *Bulletin* (1954-1965) for lists of productions.

Chapter 3: Opera in Print

My consideration of operatic circulation has, thus far, focused on the ways in which particular performance practices are inscribed and broadcast throughout the North American operascape. I turn now to opera circulation rooted in printed media. Opera's relationship with printing is not a twentieth-century innovation, and I do not claim the same relationship of convergence and emergence I discuss in chapters 1 and 2. Rather, I use a particular case study to address the ways in which the North American print circulation both reflects and archives other modes of engagement with operatic protocols, emergent media, and their convergence. I begin with a small piece of paper that fell into my lap.

The paper in question was tucked into the 1949 edition of *The Victor Book of the Opera*, which I borrowed from the University of Alberta's Book and Record Depository as part of my phonography research. As I was leafing through the book in search of particular production photographs, a pink piece of cardstock about six centimetres in length fell out (see image 1). It is a torn ticket stub from the Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium in Edmonton that lists a cost of \$5.00, the partial title "*Rigo*," and a fragment of the term "Edmonton Opera Presents." With this information and the date of April fifth, I identified the performance it references. The stub links the book to the Edmonton Opera Association's 1970 production of *Rigoletto* (conducted by Richard Carp and directed by Irving Guttman). Additionally, the letters "STUDE" stamped in blue across the black ink on the stub suggests that the ticket was issued at a reduced, student price.

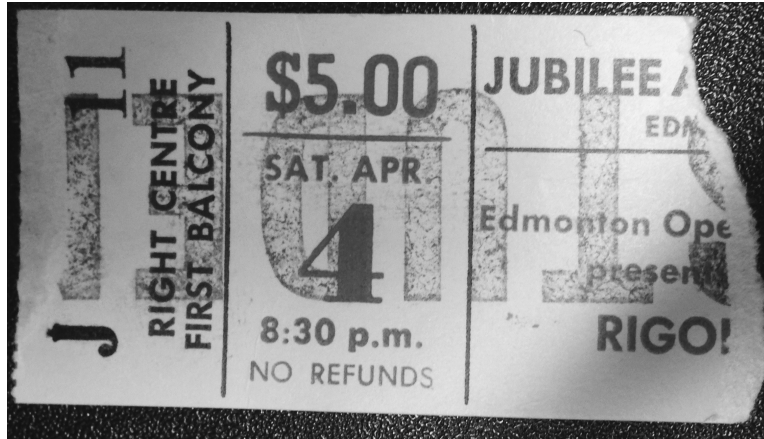


Image 1: Ticket stub, Edmonton Opera's 1970 *Rigoletto*.

The ticket stub documents part of Edmonton Opera's history: the company launched in 1963 and this was its second production of *Rigoletto*. The stub also references the tradition of student ticketing at opera performances, and it presents a physical connection between the opera production for which the ticket was created, and the book in which it likely resided for the five decades between the performance and the day it fell into my lap.

The ticket stub links the Edmonton Opera Association to the material circulation of the 1949 *Victor Book of the Opera*. It is part of what Robert Darnton terms a "communication circuit," in which a text travels from its creators to its publishers (or producers), to its audiences, and their response impacts further writing, printing, and selling in turn (67). In this case, for the opera-text *Rigoletto*, the circuit involves the *Victor* book, a nascent opera company and its student-patron in 1970, the University of Alberta's book repository, my hand, and now this study. While we cannot know who placed the ticket into the book or when, we can connect the use of the book with attendance at a live opera production. We also know that someone was using the 1949 edition of the *Victor Book* in some capacity at least twenty years after its publication. The relationship between the print medium of the book and opera performance also illuminates some aspects of the ways that two media intersect with people's participation in the operascape. What

might opera books illuminate about the circulation of opera stars, opera-texts, and opera productions in North America? In what ways do they trace the changing modes of opera fandom and participation in the operascape over the first half of the twentieth century? How do they figure in the broader trajectory of media relationships between opera and print? In what ways (if any) do these relationships continue to resonate in twenty-first century contexts? In this chapter I trace material and rhetorical aspects of *The Victor Book of the Opera* in an exploration of opera's intersection with print media in the twentieth century.

The Victor Book of the Opera was first published in Camden, New Jersey in 1912, and was revised in thirteen editions, the last of which was produced in 1968.¹⁴⁹ It was edited first by Samuel H. Rous (1912-1929), then Charles O'Connell (1936 and 1939), Louis Biancolli and Robert Bagar (1949 and 1953), and finally Henry W. Simon (1968). It first appeared during the years of early commercial acoustic recording; it spans the introduction of electronic recording, radio and television broadcasting, the advent of long-play records, as well as seismic events in Anglo-European history, such as both World Wars and the Great Depression. In its longevity, it archives both tradition and change throughout the North American operascape during the early twentieth century. This object provides a meta-text for media emergence in its publication period generally, and for the phonograph in particular, because it was created to advertise Victor's opera records. But as a commercial print object, it also invites us to closely consider the ways in which opera circulates as text and image (rather than musical score or performance) on a mass scale. The trajectories of *The Victor Book of the Opera* are imbricated not only in the promotion of record sales, but in negotiations about the idea of "opera," the objects and events circulating

¹⁴⁹ Because all editions of this book have nearly identical titles, and several have the same editor, I include the publication year in citations throughout this chapter for the sake of clarity. See appendix C for further descriptive information regarding the thirteen editions of the book.

under that moniker, and modes of participation in the operascape relating to pleasure, nostalgia, and education.

1. Victor / Victrola: A Serial Book of the Opera, 1912- 1968

In the 1910s, as phonograph ownership expanded throughout the world and commercial record sales skyrocketed, opera music had already been circulating in contexts of Vaudevillian, concert, piano and band transcriptions, which would have fostered familiarity and recognition of certain music far beyond the operatic stage. The earliest *Victor Book of the Opera* was published in 1912, at a time when the Victor Talking Machine Company offered several musical and non-musical genres in its various catalogues.¹⁵⁰ The opera books were central to an extensive and elaborate promotional program. The enormous investment made by the company in its contracts and its advertising for opera on the Red Seal label (discussed in chapter 1) suggests that Victor considered opera records to be worthy advocates for the enterprise of home phonography in general. In its advertising, the company drew upon popularity of its stars, musical familiarity with opera excerpts, and in some cases the rhetoric of “good music” to promote Victor records through the approach of “atmospheric” and “lifestyle” advertising in the *Victor* book (Katz 62; Sivulka 103; Fabrizio and Paul 125). In my view, these features were intended to excite interest in purchasing records through the effects of fandom, stardom, familiarity, presumptions of technical and artistic mastery, all of which were already associated with the operascape.

The Victor Book of the Opera's significance for understanding the operascape is rooted in

¹⁵⁰ These included ragtime, folk music, speeches, educational lectures and some ethnographic recordings. Michael Sherman's book *The Collector's Guide to Victor Records* offers a fulsome account of these developments, and John Bolig's various discographies of Victor labels detail the genres and forms offered on each label.

its multi-vocality, multi-layered genres, long publication history and multiple editions. It is by no means the first or only guidebook published on opera in North America, but unlike many of its contemporary counterparts, it was printed in several editions from 1912-1968, and its publishers claim it sold hundreds of thousands of copies over these years (1968, 13), during some of which it had the title *The Victrola Book of the Opera*.¹⁵¹ These editions trace specific changes in recording, broadcast, and performance activities. They also circulated in Canada, particularly in Montreal, as suggested by Canadian listing prices in an insert from a 1919 edition. However, perhaps because it is part guidebook, part fan-program, and part sales catalogue, *The Victor Book of the Opera* has received scant scholarly attention.

In histories of the Victor Talking Machine Company in particular and of phonography in general, scholars often mention the *Victor* books' role in promoting sales and the framing of user experience for Victor's opera records. For example, Michael Sherman describes the book among Victor's other promotional endeavours as the "most ambitious, best known, and longest-lived effort," to capitalize on "America's interest in opera" to promote both particular records, and the Victor Talking Machine (231). Wayne Koestenbaum's self-reflective study on opera fandom describes the translation of "*Celeste Aïda*" from the *Victor* book as fitting the syllables in Italian, "so we can sing along" with Caruso (57). Phonograph historian Roland Gelatt notes that the book sold for seventy-five cents in 1912, and that it included "commentary on different recordings" (150). However, I have found no sustained analysis taking the books themselves as the object of study.¹⁵² I propose that the thirteen editions of this book present a unique archive because they

¹⁵¹ *Kobbé's Complete Opera Book* was first published in 1919 as *The Complete Opera Book*.

¹⁵² There is a poem published in the 1985 *Iowa Review* titled "The Victor Book of the Opera" by William P. Sears, Jr., and a brief review of the fifth edition appears in a 1939 issue of *Education*, by Louis Simpson.

bring together so many aspects of opera circulation that are normally kept separate—in particular, the issues confronting media corporations, the reification of repertoire, and the status and access afforded to different publics.

My method for this chapter necessarily departs from the tracing of academic, industry, and popular discourses employed in previous chapters. I treat the *Victor* book as a serial print archive and I read comparatively and chronologically across its various editions, tracing change and uniformity in the book against other aspects of the operascape. I use the term “serial” to refer to the intertextual and self-referential work of later editions in referring or responding to their antecedents. Editions of the books respond to those that came before them, as well as to changes in the Victor catalogue, shifting aesthetics of opera composition and production, and to a lesser extent, the economic and political situations of the years in which they were published: 1912, 1913, 1915, 1917, 1919, 1929, 1936, 1939, 1949, 1953, and 1968.¹⁵³ I employ a comparative reading of their material content and rhetorical investments, including the illustrations, the writing (prefatory and descriptive), and the record listings. I track these aspects across the editions, tracing changes and similarities in representation, repertoire, organization, and rhetorical position. I organize the resulting analysis along three intersecting lines of inquiry.

The first line traces the books’ history in terms of mediacy, including relationships with the opera as performance, as well as recording and broadcasting. The second traces the cultural

¹⁵³ The numbering for the 1930s editions is somewhat confusing. Two editions I have accessed claim to be printed in 1938, but one identifies as the “third printing” of the 1929 edition, calling itself the ninth edition, although it has several formatting departures from the 1929 edition. The other is described as the tenth edition in the publisher’s boilerplate. I have not been able to locate a copy of the ninth edition printed in 1936 (which would have been the second printing), but the illustrations in the books bear out the chronology suggested by the publisher information. The confusion in naming revisions and editions may stem from the merger of RCA and Victor in 1929, or the change in editor from Samuel H. Rous to Charles O’Connell for the editions following 1929.

position of the book in its movement towards an increasingly custodial position for the repertoire and of what counts as “operatic.” Both the first and second inquiry link the *Victor* books to the genealogy I have constructed in my earlier chapters. The final area of focus considers the books’ solicitation of its users through the dual lens of pleasure and education. I reserve my discussion of the 1968 edition for my conclusion, in part because it differs so completely in substratum (the materiality of the object itself) and content from those of its predecessors, and in large part because it situates itself in a position of reflection upon the history of *The Victor Book of the Opera*, and of the operascape more generally.

2. The *Victor* Books and Opera’s Medial Networks

My interest in the *Victor* books stems from their myriad, and at times contradictory, endeavours: they were designed to promote Victor Records and also to function as an educational text by offering translations and, in some editions, key musical examples. They bring together the corporate investment of the Victor Talking Machine Company and the complex discourses surrounding opera participation in North America, many of which I have sketched above. Additionally, as print objects resplendent with illustrations (an average of roughly one per page throughout each edition), they fix a kind of pictorial gallery, archiving a generally New York-centric visual landscape as representative of world of opera for readers throughout Canada and the United States. The books’ physical layout and editorial choices also represent the competing genres presented within the books, particularly the exigencies of cataloguing that, as far I have found, had not been applied to the operascape in such a fulsome way before.

Obviously, the development of print technologies predates the *Victor Books* by several centuries. The development of *music* print technologies coincides chronologically with the

earliest surviving score of Jacopo Peri and Ottavio Rinuccini's *Euridice* (printed in Florence around 1600), which employed the use of the copper plate engraving process that had emerged in Florence in the 1580s (King 17). A. Hyatt King observes that by the mid-eighteenth century, the demand for popular forms of music performance—including opera on the stage and small arrangements designed for keyboard use in the home—necessitated faster, cheaper printing processes (24). This demand fostered changes in materials and techniques used in European printing. Regarding opera, King notes that “the large quantity of separate parts required had to be supplied in multiple copies more quickly than was usually possible by the use of movable type or by the employment of hand-copyists” (25).¹⁵⁴ Cheaper forms of plate printing, such as those employing pewter instead of copper, were fostered by the shifting social demands for musical scores. Access to opera in print also extended to non-performance contexts. Joseph Kerman, for example, describes how miniature scores or *Taschenpartituren* “found their way into the pockets of serious opera goers” (“Variations” 182) in the nineteenth century, and thus located score circulation in networks of audience members, fans, or aficionados. In North America, nineteenth-century piano reduction scores and band transcriptions of famous opera excerpts present examples of the aria culture I discussed in chapter 1, and frame a kind of print recording that predates sonic inscription technologies of phonography (Jennifer Lynn Stoever, *The Sonic Color Line* 30).¹⁵⁵ These are only a few examples of the manifold diversity of opera circulation through

¹⁵⁴ He also notes the dominance of the “all-conquering piano-forte” in the home, which he says “reflected a new middle-class public of music-lovers, who required a mass of new music for domestic performance,” and argues for the prominence of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven in Vienna as framing the conditions for a Viennese printing industry, which had not really existed prior to 1775 (25).

¹⁵⁵ Stoever argues that historiographies of sound “that give primacy to recording technologies” engage in a technological determinism that obscures “how social, cultural, and historical forces mediate sound and audio technologies” (30).

the printed scores; opera circulation also functions in a number of discursive print contexts.

2.i. The Many Genres of the *Victor* Books

The Victor Book of the Opera participates in a number of different genres, including guidebook and sales catalogue. Early U.S. examples of opera guidebooks include Henry Lahee's celebratory history of operatic "firsts" in the United States (1900), which oscillates between delighting in the ingenuity-bordering-on-recklessness of U.S. opera producers and deriding the troublesome, "fickle" opera public that is stratified by education, distance from New York, and the "star" system driving tickets sales at the turn of the twentieth century (118, 134, 136). Lahee oscillates between offering intriguing details from the perspective of an industry "insider," and descriptive information about the formation and dissolution of operatic ventures and companies. While they mirror some of the narrative modes found in books such as Lahee's, the *Victor* books also echo the history of mail-order advertising, which generally balanced between driving sales traffic to bricks-and-mortar retailers, and direct sales via the post system. Early catalogues included the "Blue Book" by Tiffany's, introduced in 1845, and Eaton's, in 1875 (Cherry 200). The *Victor* books incorporate aspects of both guidebooks and catalogues, while also soliciting readers through presentation of a multitude of opera images that were not, to my knowledge, collected in such abundance in any other mass circulation object in the early twentieth century. The earliest editions of the *Victor* book simultaneously endeavour to promote sales of records, advance the idea of home record-listening, and position themselves as the central authority for delivering key information and access to the world of opera on record. Their substratum reflects that of well-made books or high-end periodicals such as *National Geographic* or *Harper's*. One protocol shared by these forms of publication is a dual link to longevity: the implications both that their

content is worth saving for some time, and that the object will last.

The earliest *Victor* books (understood here as those edited by Rous and published between 1912-1929) reverberate with a plethora of generic investments. The 1917 edition (the earliest physical copy I could obtain) boasts a highly decorative cover and heavy, enamelled paper throughout. Its complete title is *The Victor Book of the Opera: Stories of Seventy Grand Operas with Three Hundred Illustrations & Descriptions of Seven Hundred Victor Opera Records*. The last part of the title is the only direct reference to the sales approach of the books; the other major components promised are the stories and illustrations linked to seventy opera-texts, each of which have print circulation histories that precede this particular format.¹⁵⁶ The entries are organized alphabetically, and the tripartite organization anticipated by the title is realized in every opera-entry.

The book's title posits a kind of compendium in terms of its content through the inclusion of multiple illustrations and record listings throughout each plot summary. The preface of the 1912 edition also makes extraordinary claims for the capacious pleasures of listening to Victor opera records. The introductory writing argues that the Victor is an "Excellent Substitute for Opera," because it offers listeners the opportunity to hear their "favorite aria" repeatedly and in the comfort of their own homes (1912, 7). It relies on celebrity examples to extend this claim, suggesting for example that listeners could "let [Caruso] sing" for them and their friends "by means of the Victor" instead of attending a performance in New York (7). I will explore the celebrity affiliations solicited by the *Victor* books below: what interest me in these examples are

¹⁵⁶ See Levine's *Highbrow / Lowbrow* for a commentary on puffing practices associated with the star system in the nineteenth century. See also Carl F. Kaestle and Janice A. Radway, *A History of the Book in America*, for a discussion of intersections among technical innovation, corporate capitalism, and the "magazine revolution" (10-12).

the books' seemingly incongruous goals. The language in the example above links pleasure and fan culture with record listening, thereby illuminating the commercial aims of the book. But other elements of the book suggest self-conscious promotion both of the book itself and of its contents.

The materiality of the early *Victor* books and the numerical updates to its subtitle (including number of opera entries, illustrations, and records for different editions) indicate its investment in proving a kind of value beyond the catalogue or sales function discussed above. Why would it matter how many images or opera entries were included? These factors frame the book's investment in quantifiable quality in terms of innovation and in terms of completeness. The 1912 preface closes with the claim that the *Victor* book is both the "first of its kind" and the "most completely illustrated book on opera ever published" (9). The innovation is, according to the book's preface, rooted in its completeness, because it offers:

- Titles in various languages with pronunciation guidelines.
- Date and place of original production.
- Date and place of first U.S. performance.
- Cast of characters.
- Brief and clearly stated synopsis.
- Translations of text for key numbers.
- Act and Scene indicated.
- Separate numbers mentioned in place throughout the synopsis.
- Portraits and pictures. (9)

The sheer quantity of information offered for each entry in the book fulfills the promises made by the book's preface. It also creates an unsettled layout on the page that borders on frenetic.

This page is typical of the 1912-1919 editions of the book.¹⁵⁷ In this example, the plot cedes centrality to the explanation of the “hit” song, and is framed physically by images of two of the tenors who have performed the role. The musical example offers an inscription of the music, which for some users will conjure the melody of the aria. In short, this page offers a print parallel to the multiple modes of sensory affect frequently associated with opera, and the effect is visually overwhelming. The kinds and amount of material on the page compete for the eye’s attention, upsetting any attempt at linear reading activity. It may be argued that all the material is organized to promote the record listings, and certainly the sales information is prominent. But I contend that, beyond the obvious investment in commercial circulation, the early *Victor* books depict in print the ways that phonography infused new life into old, established, opera media.

The overlapping of sales, descriptive, and imagistic elements of the books illuminate the interconnected medial networks and protocols through which North American publics accessed the operascape in the early twentieth century. The early editions of the *Victor* book portray a kind of generic frenzy within their pages, but the publication history also demonstrates a shifting investment in the idea of “completeness.” In later editions of the *Victor* book, the prefatory writing moves away from the explicit promotional tone of its predecessors. The 1924 edition, for example, announces the goal of “telling the stories of Grand Opera as completely as seems necessary for general understanding and to show the wealth of operatic music which is available on Victor records for study and for entertainment” (11). This language belies several departures from the book being all-encompassing, and its earlier, explicit focus on record promotion.

Whereas earlier prefaces had focused almost predominantly on the various pleasures of listening,

¹⁵⁷ The overt promotion of individual performances disappears by the 1917 edition, and it should be noted that not all opera-entries in this edition, nor all editions of the book, include musical examples.

the 1924 version establishes both the book and operatic experience as imbricated in learning as much as in delight. This newly stated investment in learning is furthered by the promise of supporting “general understanding,” which contradicts earlier editions’ focus on the pleasures of phonography and celebrity (1924, 11). The rhetorical posture of the prefatory writing reflects the physical layout of the book, which becomes far more uniform in the 1920s editions. The 1921 edition offers a dual-column layout only occasionally overlain by page-wide photographs or the record listings, which have been moved to the end of each opera entry. The type size in this edition is consistent.

The promise of completeness by no means disappears from the *Victor Books* as they increasingly call attention to the books’ educational qualities. The 1929 edition promises that, “no effort has been spared to make this book as complete as possible” (11). As I will discuss below, the terms of completeness expand to include the realm of aesthetic curation. The same edition argues that it includes “as representative as possible . . . the standard operas regularly in the repertoire and the newer operas that seem to be of permanent interest” (11). Here the *Victor* book claims a capacity for mediating not only the sonic pleasures of records, but also the ability to archive the opera industry *on* those records. This claim for the book as an opera authority becomes increasingly concerted. In the 1949 edition, the tone (under new editors) turns from completeness in terms of material, to completeness in terms of accuracy and reliability.

In addition to the introduction of music critics as its editors, the 1949 preface claims accuracy and authority in noting that “introductory accounts of the composition and performance history of every opera Have been particularly re-edited and brought up to date, with careful verification of all the facts from musical histories, newspaper accounts, and especially that

monument of musicological scholarship, the *Annals of Opera* by A. Loewenberg” (v).¹⁵⁸ This reference to scholarship, particularly Loewenberg’s five-hundred-year history of opera premieres (published in 1943), and the promise of careful verification, position the book as a source of information. The refrain of completeness is replaced by the promise that the book offers “as reliable a reference work as possible” (1953, vi). The shift to accuracy and reference undercuts exigencies linked with delight, including imaginative associations regarding opera stars, opera houses, and record listening, that were prevalent in earlier editions. Additionally, it all but erases the commercial goals of record sales in its rhetorical posture, even as record listings continue to appear at the end of each entry.

By the 1953 edition, the genre of the reference work overshadows the Victor books’ other historical investments completely. Prices are excised from the record listings, which are now moved to the back of the book. The schism between opera information and record listing produces in this book’s layout that which the prefatory writing had produced rhetorically, with increasing intensity, over the course of the books’ editions: the privileging of the authorial, educational tone over both the sales exigencies and the pleasures of fandom upon which they relied. The 1953 preface echoes earlier editions’ promises for accuracy and describes a methodology for opera-entry selection that reinforces the authority of the *Victor Book* as not just

¹⁵⁸ The 1949 entries for *Madama Butterfly* and *Le nozze di Figaro* bear out the promise for greater attention to scholarly treatment in the opera-entries. While the synopses remain fundamentally the same for each opera-text throughout the *Victor Book* history, in this edition the introductory materials are fundamentally altered. The anecdote of Puccini attending Belasco’s play receives more fulsome attention than in previous editions, for example, and the introduction assesses the various explanations for the premiere’s flop at La Scala in 1904 (279). Additionally, the account attends to the contemporary contexts for the opera-text, claiming that “‘*Un bel di*’ almost reach[es] the status of a ‘hit’ song” (280). In the case of *Figaro*, increased attention to U.S. performance history reveals an increase in the number of productions. The claim from earlier editions that the opera “remains one of the greatest masterpieces of comedy in music” also gains two paragraphs of explanation (306).

a purveyor of information about records and opera stories, but more broadly about the state of the operascape overall. The 1953 edition is also the first to include within the body of its text a direct reference to the role of broadcasting in the operascape, which brings me to a consideration of the relationship between the *Victor Book of the Opera* and the other non-opera media to which it responds. The 1968 edition, which I will examine in the conclusion of this chapter, differs from all its predecessors in its material form, its inclusion of non-Victor record labels, its reflexive examination of other *Victor* books, and the completeness with which it claims the role of a reference book.

2.ii. The *Victor Book of the Opera* and Intermedial Relationships

I have noted above that the early *Victor* books present a multi-modal, multi-generic experience on the printed page that in later editions resolves into the recognizable and relatively stable (and staid) format of the reference book. I turn now to the relationships between the *Victor* book and the other media under consideration in this study. Taken together, the *Victor* books offer an archive of the opera records produced by the Victor Talking Machine Company / RCA Victor from 1912-1968. They also offer significant insight into the shifting protocols surrounding recordings, live performance, and the broadcast experiences that emerged in the 1920s with radio and again with television after 1949.

The Victor Book of the Opera promotes the sonic experience of opera through an exclusively visual medium. The 1912 book's preface claims that, "opera has come at last into its own in the United States," due in no small part to the realm of sonic recording in general, and to the Victor Talking Machine Company in particular (7). While it lists a number of cities presenting regular, fully-staged opera seasons (as opposed to the sporadic tours of the nineteenth

century), the preface as a whole frames this new American opera scene in terms of auditory access in its claim that “grand opera is now enjoyed for its own sake by millions of hearers throughout the country” (7). The specification of “hearers” rather than attendees, fans, patrons, or any number of other available nouns signals the book’s affiliation with auditory access to opera, and it also sets up the central advertisement for the Victor Talking Machine Company in the preface. One of the subheadings in the 1912 preface is the claim that the Victor is an “Excellent Substitute for Opera” (7). While it couches this claim in terms of the limitations of finance, time and geography for the “hundred[s] who cannot” attend a live performance, it functionally offers the recorded experience as a medial metonym for live performance (7). In other words, Victor not only enhances the operatic pleasures, it also claims to constitute them. As I discussed in chapter 1, this promise relies on the operatic protocol relating to the primacy of the voice: if the singing voice is the first mediation producing operatic experience, then that voice’s inscription on a cylinder or a disc, re-played in the privacy of the home, is a new mobilization of the operatic protocol. While early editions promote the sonic experience of opera and therefore its recorded inscriptions, later *Victor* books also attend to the spectacular and visible performative qualities of opera, claiming them as fundamental to its appreciation.

The *Victor* books attend to opera as a dramatic form most explicitly in an explanatory essay entitled “What is an Opera.” It was introduced in 1921, and revised in the 1924, 1929, 1936 and 1939 editions, and it frames anticipated resistance to opera as a fundamental misunderstanding of the medium. The 1921 version has an overtly defensive tone, structuring its arguments around common complaints of opera lacking “action;” the “comparative scantiness of the kind of melody that can be readily whistled;” and the foreign languages in which it is most often performed (np). While the essay suggests that Victor’s English-language recordings and

translations address the last complaint, the first two are addressed through arguments invoking film, and the dramatic interplay between story and music unique to operatic forms. Those opera resisters who want opera to function “like a photoplay” and cannot appreciate the virtuosity of the “high C” are described as “neophytes” who fail to participate in both the protocol of appreciating vocal virtuosity, and that of accepting the more spectacular exigencies of musical drama (1921, np).

The 1929 version of the essay extends the parallels between opera and other performance media, invoking presumed familiarity with play-going and film-watching as a means of making opera’s dramatic intensity more legible. It suggests that the “revelatory architecture” of the theatrical fourth wall, and the time and space transpositions so readily accepted in cinematic forms, are nothing more than “a convention [that] has become such a habit that we forget that it is untrue to life” (13). The text constructs the operatic trade-off of realistic portrayal for dramatic intensity as simply one more form-sensitive protocol: “if we are to add the emotional and aesthetic appeal of music to drama, we have to accept the convention of people singing their thoughts instead of speaking them. And it doesn’t take long to become accustomed to it” (13). In this example, *The Victor Book of the Opera* moves away from its earlier claims for producing sonic inscriptions of opera experiences, to defining opera’s new life in U.S. mass-media contexts. This paradox speaks to the ongoing negotiation of operatic protocols in contexts of media convergence. The relationship of sound recording to opera, while rooted in the emergent capacity to capture and reproduce vocal performance, exposes other issues relating to operatic structure and performance. These include the increasing distance between the circulation of musical excerpts and the dramatic effects of the opera-text in stage realization; the ensuing issues over repertoire familiarity and the concerns faced by opera producers and recording companies either

in relying upon existing familiarities, or attempting to introduce new or little-known texts, stars, and sounds to their various publics. Even as Victor continued to sell opera excerpts on its records, its book works to frame that experience as part of an artistic whole even grander than the very voices that the records and books commodify.

In the editions published after the Met/ NBC radio broadcasts began in 1932, the *Victor* books also respond to the non-inscriptive media of broadcasting. Both 1930s editions include a small boilerplate inscription on the publisher's page, entitled "Opera on the Air:"

Once, grand opera as performed by the best companies was available only to a few. Victor records expanded its scope enormously but it remained for radio to open wide the door It brings to thousands a new and vital experience. For its notable Saturday afternoon broadcasts of the Metropolitan Opera in New York, probably the greatest in the world, the National Broadcasting Company has received a vote of thanks from every music lover. During the opera season, we urge our readers to listen to these technically beautiful, as well as artistically beautiful, broadcast performances. For the delightful intimacy of repeat performances in one's own home, or for study, we call your attention to the Victor recordings in this book. (2)

This short paragraph illuminates the interconnections of broadcasting, recording, and live performance in the operascape. It also reveals the corporate interconnections underpinning many of these networks. The explicit mention of NBC's Metropolitan broadcasts frames promotion as self-reinforcing: the parallel between the beauty of the Met's live productions and the "technical beauty" of professional radio broadcasting bolster each other. Recalling that these broadcasts began in 1932 and were therefore relatively new, the "plug" seems timely. If we also recall that Victor became a subsidiary of RCA in 1929, which owned NBC, and that many of Victor's

recording stars were Met artists who were regularly broadcast via NBC, we can see that the corporate structures of broadcast media were closely tied to regimes of recognition fostered by recording. In this case, the specific relationship between RCA and the Metropolitan opera *via* NBC and Victor are treated as mutually supportive, and they functionally position other opera companies and other broadcasters as technically, and artistically, inferior.

In addition to presenting the corporate connections among live performance, broadcast and recorded media, this paragraph inserts the *Victor Book* into that matrix with a directive to its readership that may seem counterintuitive. Why would a book designed to promote record sales urge its readers to listen instead to free broadcasts? The book's position in this network functions not unlike the curatorial voice of the radio host I described in chapter 2. It positions the book as a disinterested guide to accessing the operascape in myriad ways, even as it returns finally to the promotion of Victor records.

The later *Victor* books increasingly acknowledge other media, and reflect upon the role of the book within the operascape. The 1949 edition reframes the paragraph included in the 1930s editions with a more explicit argument for the book's position in the increasingly multi-medial operascape: "with millions now listening regularly to operatic broadcasts, with even more millions regularly buying operatic recordings, with the vast increase in the popularity of stage presentations, it is the hope of the editors and the publisher that the *Victor Book of Operas* will find an even firmer place than it had before in the hearts of the music-loving public" (1949, vi). Here the book presents as a medial object in the circuit of radio, record, and stage presentation, positioned as enhancing operatic experience in all three registers.

The publisher's paragraph on radio disappears in the 1953 edition, perhaps with good reason. As I discussed in chapter 2, the coincident introduction of nationwide television

broadcasting and television opera in 1949 introduced visual access to the performing body in mass mediations of operatic performance. In the 1953 *Victor* book, the reference to broadcasting appears appended to the United States section of the “History of Opera” overview, and it echoes coeval public discourses concerning the emergent years of opera telecasting:

The full potentialities of television as an inspiration for the production of new operas in America have not yet been fully realized. However, the immediate success of the first opera to be commissioned for that medium—Gian Carlo Menotti’s *Amahl and the Night Visitors*—and the extraordinary interest aroused by Leonard Bernstein’s *Trouble in Tahiti* when first given on television [NBC Opera Theatre in 1952] may be very significant straws in the wind. (xxii)

This brief paragraph concludes a five-page article spanning four centuries from the Florentine Camerata to the NBC Opera Theatre. Both its location and tone indicate an attempt to acknowledge another, new, medium as a significant mobilizing force within the operascape, not only as a mode of distribution, but as a possible site of innovation. While it is once again an implicit endorsement for other RCA companies (although NBC is not mentioned specifically), it also undercuts the commercial endeavour of promoting records, because it articulates a future for opera that may not involve them. Here, as is often the case in the *Victor Book*’s genealogy, investments seem to vacillate between promoting a particular opera-object (records), and promoting the general interest in opera more broadly.

3. The *Victor Book of the Opera* as Operascape Custodian

While the *Victor* books index media change throughout their publication history, one could argue that all the elements of the books—record listings, opera stories, publication information, and the

myriad illustrations that I will explore in more detail below—serve the ultimate goal of exciting interest in opera and by extension, opera records. Taken as a collective object, then, the thirteen editions of *The Victor Book of the Opera* offer an archive of changes regarding the technical and material aspects of operatic record production; they also illuminate the connections between this archive and the ways in which operatic repertoire and canonicity intersect with North American opera circulation from 1912-1968. Within its record listings and its illustration practices, the *Victor* book traces change and tradition not only in terms of operatic repertoire in North America, but in its own relationship to the practices of stewardship within the operascape more broadly.

The Victor Book of the Opera appeared in the emergent period of commercial phonography in the United States. The books thus offer an archive of what Henry Jenkins has described as periods of “convergence.” As I discussed in the introduction to this study, Jenkins describes convergence culture as a site in which “old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways” (*Convergence 2*). While Jenkins’ coinage is rooted in his analysis of digital and new media convergence in the early twenty-first century, his inquiry into the relationships “between media audiences, producers, and content” (12) resonates with my analysis of the *Victor* books, even though the books precede the digital revolution of the 1990s by eight decades. In the case of the *Victor* books, the old media of print and opera intersect with the new medium of recorded sound, and the books’ attempt to incite commercial investment (record sales) via the logics of fan affiliation with, and nostalgia for, certain singers, texts, and performances.

In a period when commercial phonography was becoming more common in the United States and Canada, the overlay of recording experience with opera had serious implications for

both media. The *Victor* books navigate between the media of performance and records, endeavouring to capitalize on energy surrounding opera performance in the early twentieth-century, as well as further it through phonography. As technical developments such as electronic recording and the long-play format emerged, therefore, the books undertook the labour of making those changes legible to potential buyers, as well as locating that change within existing models of stardom and fandom within the operascape. Two features of the book in particular trace these endeavours: the record listings, and the pictorial gallery of famous opera houses.

3.i. Record Listings: Promotion and Curation

All editions of the *Victor* books feature record listings. These include information relating to artist, title of selection or album, catalogue number, and price (at least until the penultimate edition of the book). The layout of this information changes over the course of the editions, especially as technical innovations foster both opportunities and challenges for the sales exigencies of the book. A genealogy of recording technology in the case of the Victor Talking Machine company includes: the early connections between 78-rpm records and the opera star “performing” in private homes; the introduction of electronic recording practices, termed “orthophonic” by Victor, in 1925; the experimental “complete albums” of the 1930s and finally the long-play or LP record in 1949. In articulating those changes, however, the *Victor* books illuminate an ongoing negotiation in the North American operascape: the seeming contradictions between innovation (particularly, but not only, linked to technical sophistication), and traditions, which are increasingly conflated with familiarity, nostalgia, and the sense of pastness being necessarily equated with greatness. These negotiations are most visible in the layout, and rhetorical framing of, different formats for the record listings.

The 1929 edition was the first to include electronic record listings. New technologies offered marked improvements in sound quality over acoustic recording, particularly via the new orthophonic players, introduced by Victor in 1925 (Gelatt 227), but the shift to electronic recording created a problem for Victor. It had built the reputation of its opera catalogue on the work of acoustic-era stars such as Enrico Caruso and Nellie Melba, who were no longer available to record;¹⁵⁹ and in 1929, as a new subsidiary of the Radio Corporation of America, it had moved away from the commitment to high-cost opera contracts (Gelatt 253). Therefore, its “glittering galaxy” of stars threatened to shine less brightly in the new electronic era (Fabrizio and Paul 84). The record listings in the 1929 edition reflect this tension: far fewer recordings are listed for each opera-text. Further acoustic recordings made before 1925 are marked with an asterisk and listed alongside the newer recordings featuring younger, and in many cases, less well-known stars. For example, compare nine recordings for the “mad scene” of *Lucia di Lammermoor* listed in the 1917 *Victor* book, with the 1929 edition, which lists only one “mad scene” recording for sung by Toti dal Monte, who was hired by Melba for an Australian tour early in her career. Additionally, the record listings have been relocated back to their original position throughout, rather than at the end of, each opera-entry. This movement may reflect a concern about recognition: if the drastically reduced star-power of the artists might not be persuasive, perhaps the context of each selection within the dramatic arc of the story would effectively promote the new records.

I discussed in chapter 1 the difficulties confronting the recording industry in the 1930s. The *Victor* books reflect those difficulties, as well as produce, in part, the company’s efforts to meet new challenges by maintaining a dual focus on a glorious past and the promise of

¹⁵⁹ Melba’s final recordings for Victor / Gramophone and Typewriter were in 1926; Caruso died in 1922.

innovation. After 1929, the *Victor* book disappeared for seven years, paralleling a period with few new significant opera contracts from RCA, and challenges introduced by radio broadcasting. When the book reappeared in 1936, it did so with a new editor (Charles O'Connell), a new catalogue of recordings, the first "complete recording" listings,¹⁶⁰ and a newly nostalgic tone for the by-gone acoustic era.

Svetlana Boym distinguishes between restorative and reflective nostalgia. For Boym, restorative nostalgia seeks to resolve the loss of temporal distance by producing intimacy and availability through certain objects (44), while reflective nostalgia focalizes the experience of both individual and collective memory, and doesn't preclude attention to the future (50). The 1930s *Victor* books seem equally invested in promoting records as the products of the future and as the rich legacy of the past. The preface of the 1936 edition (reproduced verbatim in 1938) claims that the book operates on the cutting edge of the "science of recorded music" with new and higher fidelity recordings available (12).¹⁶¹ The same text also notes the continued inclusion of acoustic recordings (nearly twenty years after being rendered technically obsolete) by describing their "unforgettable loveliness," and foregrounding their archival capacity because the recording artists who made them have "disappeared from the operatic stage" (1936, 12). The record listings reflect these seemingly conflicting investments: they remain located within each opera-entry's synopsis, and the number of recordings available is drastically smaller than those from earlier editions of the book. In general, the only acoustic recordings listed are those by

¹⁶⁰ Early "complete" recordings, it should be noted here, were an effort to keep pace with Columbia (Osborne 90), and comprised doubles from existing 78 matrices onto longer playing discs. The result was technically a complete recording, but maintained the track cuts in tracks and played back at an extremely low volume (Gelatt 253).

¹⁶¹ "High fidelity" replaced the term "orthophonic" in the 1930s as a way of updating the language of new technologies; Michael Sherman speculates that the replacement reflects a concern that the old term "may have begun to sound dated" (97).

prominent stars, such as Caruso, De Luca and Ruffo. The 1930s editions strive to create a value for older recordings through logics of nostalgia and rarity—in this way they operate within Boym’s articulation of “restorative nostalgia” by making the past newly available, and doing so in an intimate setting of home-listening. Of course, the listening experience of phonography also reinforces the boundaries of that object, because listeners are, as Gunning notes, always aware of both their mediated position and the distance between the recorded voice and the person who embodied it.

In oscillating between the past and the future of opera records, the *Victor* books self-consciously articulate a curatorial role by mediating between the two poles of innovation and tradition. The preface promises inclusion of “engrossing modern works” and “old favorites” (1936 12), and suggests that *The Victor Book of the Opera* should therefore “have a welcome place on the bookshelf of every lover of music and every buyer of records” (12). The claim here for a curatorial value of the book, and the allusion to the bookshelf, suggests a shift in the book’s investment in its own longevity as a work within the operascape. As a reference work, the book certainly reflects recent changes and innovations within opera composition, broadcasting, and recording, but its viewpoint is also focused on explicating in increasingly generalized terms, what opera *is* and how it should be enjoyed and understood. In other words, the book promises to be complete and modern, but can only remain so if the vision of opera it reflects does not radically change. The irony of this balancing act is that even as the prefatory writing declares a kind of permanence in the book’s value to its users, other arenas of the book necessarily reflect ongoing change in both repertoire selection and the technologies by which opera circulates in North America. Thinking along the framework set out by Boym, then, the record-objects promoted by the books offer a form of restorative nostalgia, while the books themselves present

an archive of reflective nostalgia in their self-conscious negotiations between individual memories and a collective idea regarding opera's past greatness, as well as its future.

The record listings in the 1949 edition reflect an increasing investment in acoustic recordings through the lens of nostalgia. In addition to removing prices from individual listings throughout the book, and placing a "suggested price" listing in a small paragraph at the front of the book, the 1949 edition introduces a new label dedicated to opera's past. The Gold Label "Heritage Series" was introduced in 1947. It reissued old recordings, often remastered, of "the world's greatest voices" (Sherman 111), such as the familiar names of Caruso, Melba, Plancon, Destinn and Amato (Peet and Stratton 69-71). These records superseded the Red Seal label as the most expensive (\$2.50 - \$3.50) in the *Victor* books' listings, and anticipated a usership invested in a sense of luxury connected to a bygone era.¹⁶² In the year that Victor would introduce long-play records into its catalogues, then, technical capacity is also deployed to repackage and reconstitute the stars, and repertoire, of an operatic past.

The 1953 edition of the *Victor Book of the Opera* illuminates the fundamental change to the recording industry connected to the long-play record. In this edition, pricing has been removed entirely, all record listings have been relocated to the back of the book, and each recording is listed as part of an album that is organized around a particular opera-text, composer, performer, or some other marker (often "greatness"). Between 1949 and 1953, Victor produced a prodigious number of long-play albums for the new era, only some of which included newly

¹⁶² The move of record prices to a brief paragraph at the front of the book may be connected to a number of shifts in record selling between the 1939 edition and the post-war era. First, RCA Victor was effectively pressured to drop almost all of its record prices to one dollar by Columbia (Gelatt 275), and the relocated pricing information might downplay this price drop. Additionally, the circulation of the books to different regions and countries may have meant that a "suggested price" listing at the front of the book would more effectively support record sales beyond the greater New York area, which may have had different price listings for individual records.

recorded material. Following an alphabetized list of complete opera albums, the *Victor* book's appendix lists composer-titled albums such as the "Verdi Commemorative Album" and "Rossini Overtures" (627, 625). There are also several listings featuring the acoustic-era singers that had previously been listed on the Heritage Gold Seal label, and four albums include the word "Golden" or "Golden Era" (622), suggesting that early, acoustic-era celebrity was repurposed not only for the electronic, but the long-play era as well through the link of nostalgia and artistic virtuosity. Five albums are specifically titled after Caruso, and several album titles include the evaluative terms "Great," "Famous" or "Favorite," as in the case of "Great Operatic Love Duets" and "Great Tenor Arias by Jussi Bjoerling" (1953, 623). While such extra-theatrical organization of opera music has existed since the earliest opera concert performances, the fixity of the recording and inscription process formalizes certain types of affiliations, and the titles contribute evaluations of their qualities. The long-play albums demonstrate a repurposed opera celebrity linked with both nostalgia and the claims of quality, made possible by an extant catalogue unique to *Victor*. The collected nature of these albums frames the record company as a curator of the past, and the book as the archive of that curation. As the technologies of recording changed over the course of the *Victor* books' publication, so too did the books' implicit and explicit position of organizing, framing, and effectively curating operatic material for its usership. These technological shifts and their reflection in *Victor*'s record listings also intersect with the relationship the book negotiates with the operatic repertoire coincident with its publication years.

In the editions of the *Victor* book from 1912-1924, record listings are prominent throughout each opera-entry, and are listed at their corresponding place in the plot synopsis. The number of recordings for musical selections generally reflects the prevalence of the opera-text on North American stages at the time, as well as connections with prominent *Victor* recording

artists. For example, according to the entry in the 1917 edition, Gounod, Barbieri, and Carré's *Faust* has sixty-five 78-rpm records listed throughout the synopsis, as well as fifteen further selections sharing a double-sided record with another work. By comparison, Mozart and Da Ponte's *Le nozze di Figaro* has only seven recordings listed within its synopsis, and another two on double-sided discs. *Faust*'s place in the U.S. opera repertoire at the time was prominent in comparison with *Figaro*: it was the first opera-text staged by the Metropolitan Opera in 1885, and was seen regularly on that stage until well into the 1930s; whereas most of Mozart's operas were, as I have mentioned above, not frequently produced on major stages in North America until nearly the middle of the twentieth century (Dizikes 549-552).

In addition to the number of recordings available for popular works, the selection of recordings for any given opera reflects the interplay between the star system and the aria culture I discuss in chapter 1. For example, in the 1917 edition of the book, the listings for *Lucia di Lammermoor* are highly concentrated in the "mad scene" and sextet recordings. There are fifty-four total *Lucia* recordings in this edition: thirteen are renditions of the sextet, and eleven are the "mad scene." The pricing within the recordings also reflects an assumed link between the desirability of the recordings and the star quality of the performers. Nellie Melba's 1910 "mad scene" record is one of four recordings listed at \$3.00 (257), while the other five interpretations descend in price to a \$1.00 record recorded in Russian by Marcia Michailowa.¹⁶³ Two of the sextets are listed at \$7.00 (96200 from 1908 and 96201 from 1912), making them the most expensive records listed in the 1917 edition. Like that of the "mad scene," the sextet recordings

¹⁶³ Melba's "mad scene" with flute *obbligato*, written in 1886/7, has been identified as a major force in popularizing the performance tradition (Matsumoto 304). She recorded it three times for Victor; two of these recordings have been digitized and are available on the American Jukebox site of the Library of Congress.

are listed in descending price, going from the expensive Melba record to a band transcription at \$1.00 (255). Michael Sherman cites an internal communiqué from Victor as evidence of the 1912 sextet record's intended use as an advertisement:

[Do not] underestimate the value of the Sextette as an advertising medium. This feature of the record is very much more valuable to the average dealer than the actual profit he may make on its sales. Not all of your customers can afford to purchase a \$7 record, but the mere announcement of it will bring them to your store as a magnet attracts steel!

(133)

In the example above, the 1912 sextet recording serves not only as a work of art, but also as a commodity designed to support the sales of other records and, presumably, the Victrolas on which the records were played. The matrix of influence and promotion cannot, in these cases, be divorced from examinations of operatic repertoire formation and popularity, because the record's cycle of creation, promotion, and anticipated use conflates musical affect, celebrity aura, and broader commercial aims.

The *Victor* books trace trajectories of operatic stardom, and presumably, the popularity or performance history of opera-texts on stage, and they also produce those histories discursively. The 1929 edition offers the prefatory promise that it has included “all the standard operas regularly in the repertoire and the newer operas that seem to be of permanent interest” (11). In this phrase, the preface posits the *Victor* book as a reflection of changing repertoire. In doing so, it offers itself as a curatorial voice, that is to say, the text claims authority over arbitrating which new operas may become permanent additions to the repertoire. But these decisions are far from exclusively rooted in stage performance or aesthetic evaluations. In addition to reflecting celebrity circulation in their selection, pricing, and promotion of records, the *Victor* books'

curatorial efforts illuminate the intersection of live performance, recorded and broadcast circulation.

As I noted above, the technological changes in sound recording between 1912 and 1953 were frequently seismic in scale. The *Victor* books battled at times to make those changes seem appealing, while maintaining the topos of extraordinary value in the earlier acoustic celebrity recordings. One of the central tensions between operatic phonography and performance in the 1910s and 20s was the necessary scaling of playing time and sonic density in relation to what could be effectively transcribed on disc or cylinder with reasonable playback quality. Recordings of three minutes' length with piano or small orchestral accompaniment offered a necessarily different sonic experience from an eighty-piece orchestra and full chorus in live performance settings (such as those that were available at San Francisco Opera or the Metropolitan Opera). In the 1930s, however, *Victor* began listing new "complete recordings" of operas, and these were predominantly made from staged, rather than studio, recordings.

The earliest of these nearly complete recordings were the Mozart / Da Ponte operas recorded at the Glyndebourne Festival in the 1930s, and a number of D'Oyly Carte productions of Gilbert and Sullivan. Both were recorded by Victor's British affiliate, HMV, and in the 1939 edition they are listed at the beginning of their corresponding opera-entry, which marks the first time that recordings of anything other than overtures preceded the introduction of an opera's plot in the *Victor* books. Since the Glyndebourne Festival itself began in 1934, these recordings mark not only the festival's introduction to publics beyond its immediate audiences, but also its focus on both Mozart and intimate productions of outstanding artistic quality. These recordings are first listed in the 1939 edition of the *Victor Book*, and they remain the only complete albums for each of *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte* as late as the 1953 edition. Through

their early appearance, the exceptional quality of the performances they capture, and their longstanding rarity in Mozart operatic recordings, the Glyndebourne recordings inscribe the quality of the festival's productions for North American audiences that may have never heard of, let alone attended, the festival. The Glyndebourne records' promotion in the *Victor* books also illuminates the role of the book as a cultural curator, in which it offers explanation and introduction of innovations within the operascape, both in terms of media, as in the case of broadcasting or electronic recording, and in terms of a new festival format dedicated to intimacy and quality.

Complete opera recordings increased significantly in the 1949 and 1953 editions. There are twenty-nine such recordings in each of these two editions, with the primary difference being not repertoire selection, but the emergence of American-made recordings for Italian opera in the latter. Specifically, recordings of *La Bohème*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Otello*, *I pagliacci*, *Rigoletto*, *Il Trovatore*, and *La Traviata* from Rome and Milan in the 1949 edition are replaced by those made in studio explicitly for Victor in the 1953 edition. The predominance of this repertoire among complete works illuminates an investment in Italian opera, even while it elides the material conditions making these recordings possible. Regular use of the NBC Symphony Orchestra (headed by Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini) suggests that the corporate relationship between NBC and Victor played a significant role in naturalizing the popularity and familiarity of Italian opera in the United States, while also reifying its artistic value through the celebrity of Toscanini in particular. In their reliance on the NBC Symphony, investments in the predominantly Italian opera traditions, and their promotional and inscriptive relationship with record listings, the 1949 and 1953 *Victor* books reflect the kind of institutional dynamics identified by John Guillory as the root of canon formation.

Guillory's *Cultural Capital: the Problem of Literary Canon Formation* draws on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Immanuel Kant (among others) to trace "the social function and institutional protocols of [the] school" whose syllabi are the material proofs of cultural capital consecrated in a particular literary work (vii). In his final chapter, Guillory turns to the "double discourse of value" that oscillates between aesthetic and economic logics. He suggests that

A concept of specifically aesthetic value can be formulated only in the wake of political economy's discourse of exchange value. The immense pressure of that adjacent discourse eventually renders archaic the defining concepts of eighteenth-century aesthetics—concepts such as the "standard of taste"—and imposes upon later aesthetic theory the necessity of rephrasing the problem of aesthetic judgment as the problem of a peculiar kind of "value." (317)

Guillory suggests that "'aesthetic value' is nothing more or other than cultural capital," which is to say that participation in aesthetic evaluation is inextricable from the locales of evaluation, and these are in Guillory's articulation primarily found in the academy (332). Bourdieu suggests that "the educational system, claiming a monopoly over the consecration of the past and over the production and consecration of cultural consumers, only posthumously accords that infallible mark of consecration, the elevation of works into 'classic' by their inclusion in curricula" (118, qtd in Guillory 339). While Guillory's use of Bourdieu attends specifically to an argument about literature, I see parallels with the circulation and institutional language surrounding the *Victor* books and opera circulation.

In my view, we can apply the logic of institutional education to understanding the roles played by the *Victor* books in the circulation of opera in North America. As in other aspects of circulation in the operascape, there are tensions between valuations produced in restricted

settings (critics, academics, musicians), and those arising from within the opera industry and broader circulation among opera's diverse publics. These differences produce a set of works we might understand as a "canon" and a "repertory." Musicologist Joseph Kerman cites criticism as the significant difference between repertory, which he argues is a "program of action," and the canon, which he claims is "an idea" ("Variations" 177). His distinction aligns with that of Guillory, especially in his historical argument that the musical canon arose in the nineteenth century in close connection two print forms—discursive publications about music and the increased circulation of music as a score (182).

If these aspects of circulation are two key elements in canon formation, a third is institutional or academic modes of authority—acquired in any number of ways. In fact, Philip Bohlman suggested in 1992 that "it might be possible to describe the canon in the singular as a principle or rule whereby a[n academic] discipline is maintained" because the scholarly work of identifying and debating canonicity is a significant task of musicology (201). Taking the distinction of repertory as performance activities, and the canon as an idea circulating in academic or educational discipline, what roles, then, do the *Victor* books play in these aspects of opera circulation?

Regarding phonography, Kerman suggests that music recordings function like texts, freely circulating and not rooted to a particular performance period and site, which may contribute to canonization even in the absence of a vibrant position within a repertory ("Variations" 188). The *Victor* books, as paratexts for recordings, archive a repertoire ostensibly based upon staged performance traditions, while simultaneously proffering these decisions as vested with an increasingly scholarly position of authority. The later *Victor* books (1949-1968) present a trifold curatorial logic that includes the promise of accurately reflecting the staged

repertoire, the presumption of authority in selecting and promoting certain recordings over others, and the corporate investment of the record company. The 1953 edition, in particular, effectively reframes which activities constitute the “program of action” identified by Kerman as the principle of repertoire formation.

The twelfth edition of *The Victor Book of the Opera* implicitly equates operatic stage performance with television broadcasting in its claims for reflecting current repertoire. Its preface attends more explicitly to changes in opera repertoire than many of its predecessors, and it only includes long-play records (many of which are repackaged from 78-rpm), all of which are listed at the end of the book. This edition asserts the authority of reflecting the operascape activities in its proffering of “histories and descriptions of nine operas that have in the past few years been added to the more or less staple repertoire of the modern operatic stage” (vi). The additions include new works composed by Gian Carlo Menotti and Kurt Weill, while others are older opera-texts in new productions, such as the 1914 Puccini triptych of *Il tabarro* (libretto by Giuseppe Adami), *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi* (libretti by Giovacchino Forzano), Mozart and Giambattista Varesco’s 1781 *Idomeneo*, and Berg’s 1925 *Wozzeck* (vi). A look at the available circulation history for these works up to 1953 reveals, however, that the criteria for inclusion are rooted as much, if not more, in broadcasting than in staged performance.

Between 1949 and 1953, *Gianni Schicchi* was produced by the Met in New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Cleveland and broadcast on the radio for a total of nineteen performances. The complete Puccini triptych had three performances by San Francisco Opera, split between San Francisco and Los Angeles in 1952. But none of the other nine works added to the repertoire listed in the 1953 *Victor* book here seem to have had significant productions between 1945 and 1953 in the United States. For example, the only Kurt Weill opera-text listed

in the 1953 *Victor* book is the folk opera *Down in the Valley* (librettist Arnold Sundgaard), which by 1953 had had two stagings: one at a University in Indiana, and one in Provincetown.¹⁶⁴

Except for *Wozzeck* and *Idomeneo*, these new “staples of the modern operatic stage” had all been telecast on NBC Opera Theatre between 1949 and 1953. While this brief survey is by no means exhaustive, it suggests that the *Victor* opera recordings reflected the broadcast circulation of operas in North America in the post-war period, and that the *Victor* books’ presumed reflection of the operatic repertoire reflect deep imbrications among circulation media for opera-texts. In short, the 1953 *Victor* book reflects a network of live staging, broadcast and recording in its claims for reflecting operatic repertoire, while simultaneously claiming an educational ethos akin to the institutional locus of symbolic capital identified by Guillory in his assessment of canon formation.

The multiple genres and formats embedded within the *Victor Book of the Opera* functionally conflate stage performance and broadcast media within their assertions for reflecting an existing repertoire. The records listed within the books, and the presumption of authority in prefatory and introductory writing, also align the books with the logic of canonicity. While Kerman goes to great lengths in distinguishing between the two, and I do not disagree with that distinction, I contend that the *Victor* books functionally conflate the two in their presentation and promotion of RCA Victor’s opera recordings. In claiming to reflect stage practices, they present a version of North American opera repertoire; but the educational tone and increasing claims for scholarly work align the *Victor* books with the institutional power Guillory associates with canon formation. This is particularly significant in considering how the 1953 book implicitly promotes

¹⁶⁴ Donald Jay Grout and Hermine Weigel Williams list *Down in the Valley* as part of Weill’s “second career” of operas and musicals, following his emigration from Germany prior to the Second World War (666).

broadcasting as evidence of repertoire formation. The consequences of that conflation are, I believe, far-reaching. In addition to contributing to the normalization of nineteenth-century Italian opera as that which constitutes the idea of “opera,” the conflation of repertoire and canon produces a small coterie of experts who invest in an even more highly specialized regime of evaluating opera-texts. The contradictory efforts of reflecting and curating the operascape are also by no means limited to the record listings of the *Victor* book: they also extend to the illustrations in the books.

3.ii. Opera Houses of The World

In addition to claiming a curatorial and educational role within the operascape regarding technology, repertoire and canonicity, the *Victor Book of the Opera* curates the sites of operatic performance through an imagistic gallery of “Famous Opera Houses.” At the beginning of all editions between 1912 and 1949, a number of illustrations represent opera houses in both the Americas and in Europe.¹⁶⁵ These illustrations are mostly eighth-page-size exterior photographic reproductions laid out four or five images per page throughout the prefatory materials, and some appear to be drawing reproductions. A number of interior illustrations of houses in half-page size are also distributed throughout the books, with no discernable connection to the opera-entries in which they appear. While neither the prefatory writing nor the book titles explicitly reference these images, I see them as participants in the multifaceted efforts of the *Victor* book to shape access to the operascape from and for North American perspectives. Over the publication history of the books, these images elevate U.S. and American performance sites alongside older, more established European ones. They solicit imaginative responses from users not unlike those linked

¹⁶⁵ See appendix C.2 for a complete list of opera house images in the *Victor* books.

to celebrity performers. And the trajectory of their curation demonstrates a shift towards an increasingly abstract position for opera as a form of cultural production.

The earliest editions of “Opera Houses of the World” include a number of Mexican, Brazilian, and Argentinian houses, but in later editions of the *Victor* book these have been removed. In the 1919 edition, the operatic architecture of the Americas appears to be distributed more-or-less equally between Mexican, Brazilian, and U.S. theatres (The Teatro Colón of Buenos Aires is the only Argentinian house included), but by 1929 no non-U.S. houses are included except for that of Rio de Janeiro. This shift may result in part from the U.S. opera-house boom of the 1920s in the United States, during which the War Memorial Opera House in San Francisco, The Chicago Opera House, and the Academy for Vocal Arts in Philadelphia were built. These theatres represent a shift from multi-purpose auditoria and practice of touring to more fixed and permanent opera companies in major U.S. cities (at least until the 1929 stock market crash, which ruined the Chicago company); this shift is archived by the *Victor* books’ imagistic curation. In addition to tracing physical changes in the operatic landscape of the Americas from a U.S. perspective, the *Victor* books frame a comparison between the performance spaces of the Americas and those of Europe, with images from famous houses in Milan, Paris, London, Berlin, Vienna, Madrid and Moscow represented alongside the newer American houses. The parallel aligns many relatively new opera houses with some of the world’s best-known and renowned European opera venues.

Through the images of opera houses and the claim for their fame, and the listing of premiere dates and performance locations for each opera-entry, the *Victor* books anticipate imaginative connections between particular opera houses and opera stories or recordings. With the inclusion of interior images in particular, users of the book could visualize more explicitly

the experience of a specific performance in a particular place. One example from the 1921 edition might be the way that the interior photo of Milan's La Scala complements the preface to the *Madama Butterfly* entry. The entry's text remarks upon the colossal flop of the opera's world premiere at La Scala in 1904 (204), and the illustration of the opera house interior (from the perspective of performers on stage) at the front of the book might offer a visual aid to users visualizing that night. This connection fosters imaginative relationships that users might form between their own listening experiences on records and the houses in which these operas were performed. The kind of experience I am sketching here is similar to the idea of "symbolic pilgrimage" coined by Roger Aden in his argument for fan experiences of watching television. Where Aden argues that fans enter the fictional world of television series *The X-Files* from the comfort of their own homes (149), I see the imagining of operatic performances at far away, famous opera houses, as a kind of imagined pilgrimage both in terms of space, and in this case, time.

The association between the books' anticipated use and the opera house is most explicitly articulated in the 1930s prefaces, wherein Charles O'Connell writes that the book will help the reader "prepare more fully for any public performance of the opera that he [sic] may wish to attend" (1936 12). In addition to claiming the books' capacity for enhancing pleasure and familiarity with opera music, stories, and histories, new images of opera houses in this edition support a connection to particular opera houses. In these editions, some depictions of American opera houses are of far finer quality and offer higher levels of detail than their predecessors. For example, the San Francisco War Memorial Opera House is first included in the 1936 edition of the *Victor* book with a nighttime photograph depicting its lights blazing out into the darkness of the city.

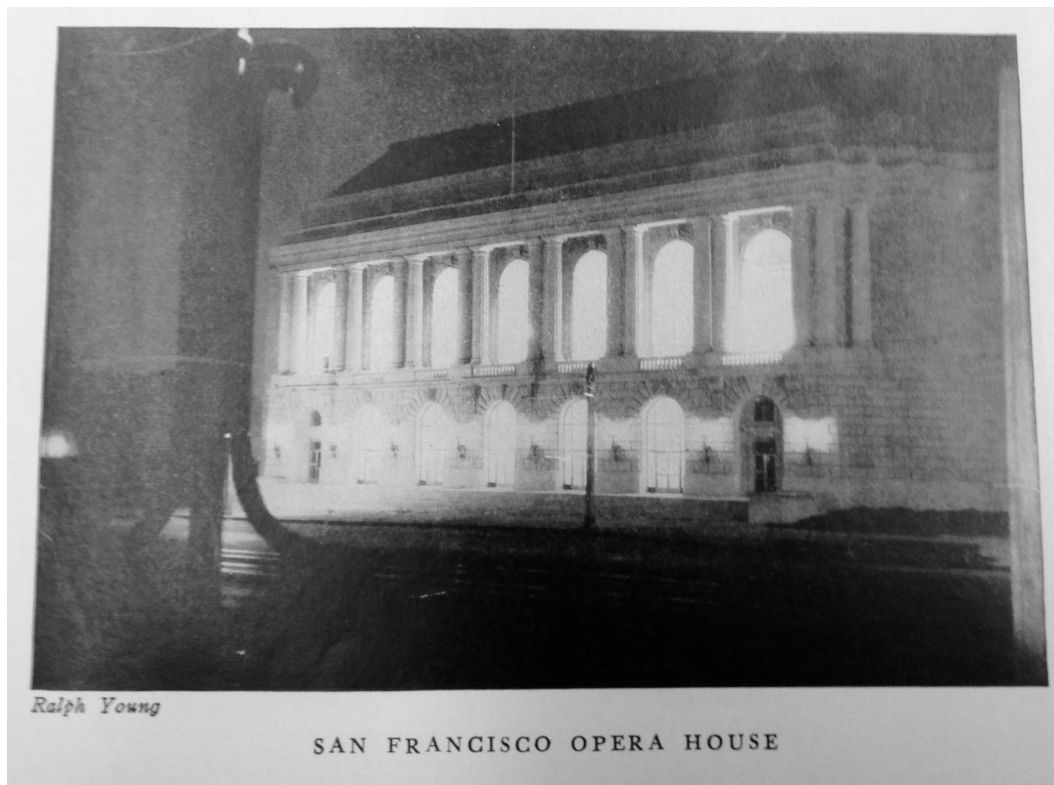


Image 3: Ralph Young, War Memorial Opera House, *The Victor Book of the Opera*, 1936.

The War Memorial House image offers a sense of what Megan Benton terms photographic immediacy, because it “seem[s] immediate and exact, neither mediated nor interpreted by an artist” (155).¹⁶⁶ In their composition and technical qualities, these images frame American opera as lively and modern in comparison with European counterparts, whose opera house images are for the most part created by drawing or etching rather than photography, and which remain relatively unchanged from 1912-1939. They therefore appear at times more hazy and old-fashioned in comparison with photographs of more modern houses.

¹⁶⁶ Gerry Beegan notes that the distinction of interpretation and mediation is photographic reproduction is far from clear, especially in half-tone processes that combined photorelief and chemical etching with hand-work by individual engravers, depending on the desired final image and other factors (9-10).

In addition to furnishing users with material for many kinds of imaginative experience, the specificities of operatic place as realized by the opera house images frame a physical component of opera's circulation networks in the twentieth century. These specificities also bridge the world of operatic performance and the Anglo-European political landscape of the twentieth century, which seems to have played a role in the selection of images within the *Victor* books. For example, the first edition of *The Victor Book of the Opera* produced following the United States' entry into World War One has no photographs of either Austrian or German houses, which had been present in every previous edition. This deletion would logically relate to wartime antagonism. The 1920s editions generally maintain the same images of European opera houses, and Germanic houses are not included again until the 1936 edition, which boasts photos of both the Berlin Royal Opera House and the *Festspielhaus* at Bayreuth. The reintroduction of these images to the *Victor* books reflects shifts that I have noted elsewhere regarding the repertoire of the operascape in the 1930s. Recall that the 1930s saw both the rise of fascist ideologies that are linked in many cases to the aesthetics of Romanticism most famously articulated in the work and writings of Richard Wagner, and also the Metropolitan Opera's commitment to Wagner in production and radio broadcast, as discussed in chapter 2. The connection between a surge in broadcasts of Wagnerian works, photographs of German houses, and the socio-political landscape illuminates some of the various ideological, philosophical and material networks through which opera circulates, and the *Victor* books archive those connections.

The Victor book loses its imagistic gallery of opera houses in the 1949 edition. This change reflects the operascape's intersections with the post-war socio-political landscape and periods of media change, as well as the *Victor* book's custodial and curatorial relationship

therein. While no reference to this decision appears in the books, I see two factors that may have influenced the excision of the illustrations. First, the war in Europe did not spare opera houses. The Vienna *Staatsoper*, Milan's *La Scala*, and the *Staatstoper Unter der Linden* in Berlin all suffered serious damage during the war. Additionally, the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden and the *Festspielhaus* at Bayreuth were repurposed, for wartime popular entertainment in the first instance, and during the Allied occupation in the second. In light of these changes, a reproduction of now-inaccurate images would betray both the protocol of photographic immediacy, and the explicit promise for accuracy made in the preface of the book. And even if the books were to ignore the physical realities of the war, the ideological ones would remain problematic. The physical spaces of operatic performance would reinforce uncomfortable links between the aesthetic appreciation of certain forms of opera and the fascist ideologies promoted under Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco, as well as any connections with a Soviet regime that was increasingly condemned in the emergent Cold War era. By removing the photographic evidence of such links, the *Victor* books could continue to promote the beauty of operas by composers such as Richard Strauss and Sergei Prokofiev in the era of the Nuremberg Trials and the rise of anti-communist paranoia in North America. This distance also frames operatic creation and performance as divorced from coeval material conditions, effectively removing opera from a position of contemporaneity and locating it in the realm of a distant past, or in the "timelessness" associated with canon formation (Bohlman 201).

In addition to negotiating material and socio-political post-war contexts, the lack of opera-house photos reflects increasingly disembodied performance and the circulation of opera through mass media. By the 1940s, radio was established as a communication medium, and as I discussed in chapter 2, television opera was being widely promoted as a new and democratic

mode of access and production throughout the 1940s and 50s. As opera lovers and the opera-curious could increasingly experience opera through broadcasting and recording media, the status of opera houses as unique purveyors of great stars, performances and music changed. The *Victor* books' exclusion of opera house images seems to reflect increasingly intermedial and heterogeneous sites of operatic performance and access. But at the same time, this move limits visual familiarity with all opera houses, which would seem to counteract the efforts (discussed above) in the 1930s editions to make the opera house seem familiar, and to help users imagine or prepare for attending live theatrical productions. The imaginative activities anticipated by the *Victor* books are decreasingly linked to specific localities or companies, and opera becomes far more free-floating in its circulation. This detachment erases the links between material and political contexts of theatrical operatic staging, and enhances the circulation of operatic music unmoored from its dramatic or ideological contexts.

While the *Victor* books only rarely offer an explicit comment on the issues of canonicity, repertoire, medial relationships, or the position of opera within broader contemporary contexts, they participate in these discourses regularly through the curation of opera-entries, record listings, and the images that accompany both. The increasing focus with which they attend to changes in opera repertoire between the 1930s and 1953 edition demonstrates their investment in both reflecting and curating the operascape. The organization of the books' illustrations extends the framework of curation beyond the selection of texts and recordings. The opera house gallery is only one example of the ways in which the book engages in the performative, medial, and imaginative aspects of opera going or opera listening. The books' curatorial efforts also impact the matrices of participation in the operascape from a variety of perspectives.

4. Participation in the Operascope

The *Victor* books' images, record listings, and shifting modes of rhetorical address all contribute to what I have described as an increasingly curatorial role over the course of their publication. This curation is by no means limited to reflecting the material landscape of operatic production and recording, or to the consequent implications for repertoire familiarity or canonical value. I turn now to the means by which this serial print object anticipates and solicits its users' participation within the North American operascope, both in material and imaginative capacities. My consideration of operascope participation is linked in some ways to Benedict Anderson's idea of "imagined communities" that form through linguistic and affective registers regardless of physical proximity. For Anderson, the "most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect *particular solidarities*" (134). Appadurai also draws on Anderson in articulating the "imagination of a social practice" as part of cultural processes that exceed physical space, and do not operate in terms of "objectively given relations," but rather "are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors" (285). While Appadurai's focus concerns the mobilizations of modernity in a global focus more broadly, his articulation of the imagination of social practice aligns with my consideration of what constitutes participation in the North American operascope.

By participation, I mean any sort of engagement with the idea of "opera" or the "operatic." It includes activities stretching from Warner's stipulation of "mere attention" (53) to the obsessive diva worship articulated in the work of Wayne Koestenbaum, as well as any sort of attending to operatic stories, images, music, performances and the more obvious acts of performing, directing, composing and producing. I see all these activities as participation, and

many of them operate in imaginative, rather than material, loci. The photographs of opera houses I mentioned above might produce one example of this: their layout and grouping into regions indicates the books' attempts to solicit user affiliations with the houses, either as spaces they have visited, plan to visit, or wish they could. The books also present varying vocabulary to explain or name participation in particular ways, through which they functionally offer imaginative solidarity, or a possible sense of community, to their users. But these imaginative forms of community are by no means discrete from the politics of operatic circulation, invested as they are in discourses of aesthetic and social hierarchies, as well as the protocols relating to the primacy of the voice and attentiveness. As the later editions demonstrate, the *Victor* books reflect an increasingly fixed hierarchy of participation in the operascape that continues to resonate in twenty-first century contexts.

4.i. Capitalizing (on) Fandom

In order to appreciate the significance of the shift towards educational exigencies in the later editions of the *Victor* books, we must understand what is left behind in pursuit of those goals. As I discussed above, the earliest *Victor* books demonstrate a kind of frenetic organization of musical examples, plot summary, catalogue information, and illustrations jumbled across its pages. Over the course of the books' publication, the prefatory writing, the organization of record listings, and the illustrations implicitly and variously address fans of certain singers, music-lovers, opera neophytes, sceptics, and users seeking to learn about opera generally. The sheer variety of this address marks the books' competing generic investments (as mentioned above). It also offers a snapshot of different anticipated user positions.

The preface of the 1912 edition of the *Victor* book illuminates a hailing of users through

negative comparison. The claim that opera has “come into its own” in the United States is followed by a comparison through negation: “in former years merely the pastime of the well-to-do in New York City and vicinity, grand opera is now enjoyed for its own sake by millions of hearers around the country” (7). The edition’s claim for opera’s new, American life rests on the removal of two markers of inaccessibility. The “well-to-do” New Yorkers of the past represent issues of wealth and geography that have long been challenges in North America operatic circulation, both of which are in some ways resolved by the introduction of recording (and broadcasting). The implicit judgment in the phrase “enjoyed for its own sake” speaks to the issue of opera as a social, rather than aesthetic sphere, and indicates that the participation of opera’s new “hearers” is superior in its artistic investment in operatic music. Whether or not users of the 1912 edition or buyers of Victor records would see themselves in this claim is unknowable, but the preface clearly solicits an affiliation of active or anticipated experience through a distinction from a negative archetype of operatic patronage rooted in wealth and social, rather than artistic, attachments.

This same preface (which remains the same for the three following editions) seems to contradict its framing of operatic enjoyment outlined above with the explicit solicitation of opera participation through fan affiliations. In the 1912-1915 editions, the prefatory writing includes a series of rhetorical questions that present the most overt address to fans in the serial history of the *Victor Book of the Opera*:

Do you think Caruso the greatest of stars? Then do not be satisfied with an occasional hearing of his glorious voice at the opera, but let him sing for you and your friends by means of the Victor.

Is Sembrich, Farrar, Gadski, Calve, Schumann-Heink, Homer or Amato your

favorite singer? The Victor makes it possible to hear these voices at any time . . .

Do you regret that Melba is in Australia? There is consolation in the thought that her voice is here in all its loveliness, indelibly impressed on Victor discs.

Have you memories of Tamagno when he was at his best? The Victor will revive these memories for you by bringing the voice of this great singer back from the grave.

(1912, 7)

These questions promise repeat performances from famous singers who are not accessible in live, co-present experiences. This language suggests an effort on the part of the editors to enhance record sales through fan cultures and their corresponding activities relating to collection and memory. These strategies offer clear, early twentieth-century examples of not only convergence culture, but of the nuanced relationships with fandom that many scholars tend to affiliate with the era of digital and new media.

Jenkins's work on convergence intersects with the field of fan studies, in particular with efforts to articulate the matrices of participation in popular culture in more nuanced ways than scholarship positing a "passive" audience.¹⁶⁷ Fan studies scholarship centralizes fan activities, examining forms of productivity and economies that are often overlooked in cultural studies and other fields.¹⁶⁸ Scholars such as Matt Hills have argued that these activities are frequently misread, in part because they do not fit in with pre-existing academic paradigms. For example, he argues that fans are simultaneously inside and outside processes of commodification, on one hand because they may be willing to place exchange value on memorabilia items that have no

¹⁶⁷ Jenkins' monograph, *Textual Poachers*, offers an articulation of media fandom (his term for fans of television and film without specific investment in a series or *auteur*) regarding its complex cultural status, reception practices, and forms of production.

¹⁶⁸ See for example, Tisha Turk's "Fan work: Labor, worth, and participation in fandom's gift economy."

use, in a Marxian paradigm; and on the other hand because the value they may invest in items not available through industrial production indicates a kind of use-value that is not legible beyond a particular group (44, 35). The *Victor* books' prefatory claims above seem to be a clear attempt to harness intense and long-held fan affection for celebrity singers (discussed in chapter 1) and create a site of commercialization for that affect. The books complement these rhetorical efforts with a particular illustration that I see as a locus of convergence among celebrity, fan cultures, sound recording, opera, and the book medium.

4.ii. A Gallery of Stars

As I discuss in chapter 1, the Victor Talking Machine Company went to great lengths in aligning promotion of the Victor Talking Machine (later the Victrola) and its records with opera stars on its earliest "Red Seal" records. Michael Sherman describes a "glittering galaxy" of stars that recorded exclusively for the Victor, and the vast majority of which recorded operatic excerpts (84).¹⁶⁹ Between 1912 and 1929, editions of *The Victor Book of the Opera* reinforce the connections of star quality, recording, and opera. Their format illuminates a number of intersections among the print format of the book, the commodification of the celebrity body, the archival role of the book in tracing change in the operascape over its multiple editions, and finally, the solicitation of book users in the framework of what is commonly termed "fan culture" in contemporary academic settings.

Most illustrations in the *Victor* books from 1913 - 1953 depict opera stars, either in studio or stage-production poses. What interests me most about the use of star images is the ways in

¹⁶⁹ Many Red Seal stars recorded a variety of music. For example, Caruso sang Italian folk songs as well as arias, duets and ensembles.

which these images solicit fan-focused responses. For example, the editors of the *Victor* book cropped the backgrounds from some images of its most famous opera stars in costume, and deployed them in a composite image as part of the front matter for the editions from 1913- 1929 (see image 4). The singers appear in costume as their most iconic roles, including Emma Calvé as Carmen, Nellie Melba as Marguerite, and Marcel Journet as Méphistophélès.¹⁷⁰



Image 4: “The Great Opera Singers of the World,” *The Victor Book of the Opera*, 1919.

Because many of the images in this composite are also produced in the opera-entry to which they correspond, the composite participates in connecting claims of quality among artist, role, recording and opera-text. This composite image of “Great Singers of the World” creates in its

¹⁷⁰ See appendix C for a complete list of stars appearing in each edition of this photograph.

editorial practices a kind of uncanny gallery, wherein stars that have never shared the stage or studio (and, in later editions some of whom are dead), are grouped together as through they had just walked off the stage (1912, 7).

In the first three editions of the *Victor* book, the composite image appears opposite its reference in a paragraph titled “The Victor Opera Season Never Ends.” Here, the final sentence of the paragraph claims that operatic records have created a permanent opera season, available within the home: “at all seasons of the year may be heard the voices of the great singers, a consolation and delight to opera lovers” (1913, 9). Great singers and opera are treated here as fundamentally the same in this sentence, which highlights both the primacy of voice and the logic of celebrity I discuss in chapter 1. The composite image and the prefatory writing in these early editions are evidence of the books’ efforts at connecting celebrity with fan affect, the promotion of opera, and the advertisement of records. Of course, the responses solicited or anticipated by the book are by no means realized in its readership or usage. The 1919 edition of the book, for example, signals one user’s engagement with the book as a catalogue not of records, but of celebrity singers.

In the copy of the 1919 *Victor Book of the Opera* held at the University of Alberta, the composite photograph at the beginning of the book has been marked up with pencil (see image 4 above). At some point in the circulation of this book, a user has placed checkmarks above the heads of approximately half the singers represented in the gallery of stars. These markings indicate some form of imaginative or archival collecting. There are no checkmarks alongside record listings, or opera titles, which suggests that the placement and collation of the image has provided a site for organizing or documenting some form of access (either realized or desired) to particular opera singers. Opera celebrity, mediated in the composite photograph and put into

circulation as front matter for the *Victor* books, has been collected here, in a way that resonates in recent studies of fandom.

Some scholars seek to illuminate systemic hierarchies that devalue certain modes of fandom while consecrating others. As Matt Hills observes, Bourdieu's influential study on taste only ascribes the term "fan" to the working class; the dominant, dominated and *petit bourgeoisie* have affiliations with fandom but these are organized in terms of "liking" modes of "legitimate culture" in more or less authoritative ways (Hills 48). This distinction is also remarked upon by Joli Jenson, who compares pathologized fan positions (particularly the "isolated loser" and the "frenzied mob") to the valorized "aficionado" position ascribed to academic and "high culture" pursuits, including the fan of opera who offers a few "polite bravos" in distinction with the shouting crowd of a Heavy Metal concert (20).

While I agree that the complexities of fan activities deserves the same scholarly attention as modes of cultural production granted higher aesthetic or cultural status by institutional frameworks, I suggest that fandom has long played a significant role in operascapes. Scholarship setting up operatic participation as a "straw man" against which to argue for the complexities of fan cultures rooted in popular or mass culture flattens out the plane of both fandom and opera participation. Recent critiques of such one-sidedness include that of Roberta Pearson, who interrogates appellations of fandom related to different registers of cultural production. Thinking alongside Pearson and, in particular, regarding the efforts of the *Victor* book to capitalize on seemingly deep investments and knowledge regarding operatic celebrity, I suggest that participants in the operascape demonstrate both the capacity of affective excess in their enthusiasm ascribed to obsessed fans of popular culture (Pearson 99), and the kinds of deep knowledge acquisition and vernacular formation articulated by Thomas McLaughlin (5-6). This

deep investment is not necessarily a by-gone historical phenomenon. As I have discussed elsewhere, Michel Poizat's description of opera fans in Paris offers a brief ethnography of fandom in the late-twentieth century, and Claudio Benzecry's study of Argentinian fans in the twenty-first century takes the mode of excessive affect in opera fans as its central premise. While we cannot know the specific circumstances under which a user marked the 1919 *Victor* book's composite image, I believe it presents a material indication of intense investment regarding operatic celebrity, as well as one potential use of operatic print objects.

The composite image of Victor's stars signals the books' endeavour to capitalize on fan affiliations; the absence of this image parallels other decisions that reframe the books' exigencies. Just as the 1930s editions of the book introduced significant changes in layout and presentation of opera house images, so too did they fundamentally reframe the illustration of the star gallery in the front matter. The two editions from the 1930s present in a gallery of headshots, laid out in alphabetical order and uniform size across a two-page spread.¹⁷¹ These headshots present visual access to the visage of the artist rather than the depiction of the star-in-character as was the case in the composite image. The new gallery is at once more immediate in terms of what Chris Rojek terms the "para-social interaction" of celebrity, and more removed in terms of relating stars to the roles and recordings in which they circulate beyond, and within, the book (52). Because the book does not provide an index of star roles anywhere, cross-referencing a star headshot with a particular role or recording within the 1930s *Victor* books would require pre-existing knowledge about the artist depicted. That is to say, the new layout of Victor's gallery of stars simultaneously relies upon the specialized knowledge of opera fandom, and delimits the illustrative frisson of representing stars within their iconic roles, and as a crowd or group.

¹⁷¹ See appendix C for a list of names included in this gallery of headshots.

4.iii. Fandom, Learning, and Opera Apprehension

The 1949 and 1953 editions of the book eliminate the gallery of stars altogether, and drastically reduce the number of production and studio photographs throughout the opera-entries. This change parallels others discussed above, and reinforces the overtly academic focus of the book. While the images presented continue to use photography as a means of fostering familiarity, imaginative connections, and celebrity affinities, the later books subvert the corporeal and affective relationships with individual artists in favour of increasing focus on opera-texts as complete works. The focus on operas as works aligns with the introduction of LPs, as discussed above and in chapter 1, but the different relationship between the opera-texts and illustrations in the later *Victor* books also produces an affective, or imaginative, distance in the 1949 and 1953 editions.

In the increasingly limited information about the record catalogue and photographic material, these later *Victor* books cleave opera-texts from their material circumstances. What remains as the focus is a curated presentation of operatic stories and recordings. The anticipated usership is “music-lovers” and the promise of the book delivers information first, and enjoyment second (1949 v). The hierarchical organization of information over entertainment is a significant shift from the earliest version of the books, and this shift parallels some of the intersections I discussed in chapter 2 regarding broadcasting and opera. As consumers are offered a larger range and variety of operatic experiences, these are also increasingly framed as *requiring* education in order to achieve pleasure from opera, and the *Victor* book promises to meet that need with “as reliable . . . a reference work as possible” (1949 vi).

The modes of opera participation solicited by the *Victor* books move increasingly from the multivalent address of the early books to a much more narrow focus on learning. If we recall

the “social practices” described by Appadurai and consider them in the context of opera participation, then the inflections of “historical, linguistic, and political situatedness” (285) that qualify participation in global flow can also be observed in the modes of address and curation exemplified by the *Victor* books regarding the operascape specifically. I am not claiming that the book determined the learning, resistance, or delight of operascape participants, but the books certainly reflect concerted efforts to organize, evaluate, and promote certain modes of participation. The central tension within this address is the dynamic of education and pleasure, which in turn refracts the negotiation of operatic innovation (in composition, performance modes, technologies of distribution) against the enormous conceptual inertia of opera as a medium of the past.

The pull of nostalgia regarding operatic stardom is a specific example of this pastness, and it is visible in the “Heritage Series” label, the curation of compilation albums, and the iconography of stars, such as Caruso, who is listed in the book and appears in its illustrations long after he died. Operatic pleasures, according to the earliest editions of the book, link a longing for absent singers with the ownership of recordings. In the 1930s editions, operatic pleasure is relayed through access to a recent past via the Heritage label and compilation album recordings, as I have discussed above. But as time marches forward and many well-known opera-texts and stars can no longer be considered current or new, the 1949 and 1953 editions take on the increasingly educational purview of informing their users about opera’s past. For example, while updates of repertoire are clearly demarcated in later editions of the book, the examples used in instructional writing such as the “What is an Opera” section remain firmly rooted in mid-to-late nineteenth-century examples. Opera pleasure is linked, therefore, to opera knowledge, and opera knowledge is increasingly framed as an object of the past, rather than of

the present. Across the first twelve editions of the *Victor* book, I see evidence for an operatic protocol resonating under the surface of many aspects of participation: that of apprehension.

Operatic apprehension is both highly visible and difficult to articulate. It impacts the ways in which people talk about opera, write about opera, decide what to attend and even how to dress; it functions as a three-fold negotiation regarding participation in the operascape. By threefold, I mean firstly, the sense of apprehension in terms of taking hold of or possessing (OED), in which opera participants access knowledge about, and build familiarity with, aspects of opera with particular intensity. Deeply detailed knowledge of singers' biographies would be one example. Secondly, I refer to the more arcane use of the term as it relates to deeply sensorial affect (particular of listening) that connects participation closely to the primacy of the voice, as I have discussed elsewhere. Both these apprehensive modes are solicited by the *Victor* books through explanation and promise of access to opera via recording. Thirdly, by apprehension I include the sense of "fear as to what may happen" or "dread" that accompanies a lack of this information or familiarity.

The *Victor* books' promise to offer *enough* information to foster enjoyment, as well as earlier editions' pronunciation guides for non-English words, tacitly address the sense of apprehension arising from a lack of appropriate information. This aspect of apprehension has also been fostered by the discourses and practices that reify opera in the language of high culture, elitism, and therefore inaccessibility. In my view, the protocol of apprehension underpins operascape participation with increasing intensity over the course of the twentieth century, and it illuminates the ways in which "opera" has come to be linked with an increasingly distant past, even while new singers and new companies produce new productions of both established and new opera-texts. It also offers a lens through which to understand the tradition of opera

guidebooks, and the modes of education and information that both alleviate and enhance apprehension.

5. The *Victor Book and Opera Guide Genre*

The final edition of *The Victor Book of the Opera* was published in 1968, and other than the opera synopses, it contains few direct connections to its predecessors. In contrast to the 5 x 8.5” size of the earliest editions and the slightly larger format adopted in 1921, the thirteenth *Victor* book boasts a “far larger page size” at 8.5 x 11” (Simon 14). The book’s preface claims that this size change allows “for greater fluidity in the use of pictures” (14), and those photographic reproductions included are indeed aligned with the margins of the double column layout. The larger size also lends the book an aura of a reference or coffee table book, compared to the smaller sizes that preceded it. The paper is of high quality but now presents a matte, rather than enamelled, finish.¹⁷² The photographic reproductions show far less gradation and detail than the earlier books—in many instances the background matter of the illustrations appears as more or less flat black.

The material differences between the 1968 *Victor* book and its predecessors parallel those in its content, primarily regarding its record listings and prefatory matter. As in the 1953 edition, all record listings are organized as an appendix following the opera-entries, but the 1968 edition lists only complete opera recordings, and it also includes recordings produced by direct competitors to RCA Victor. The preface claims that the idea to include other companies’ labels came from RCA Victor, which underwrote the cost of the book for publisher Simon and Schuster,

¹⁷² I am grateful to Steve Dixon, printmaking technician at the University of Alberta, for discussing the paper of the *Victor* books with me.

and that it was “good business for the entire industry in fulfilling a need” (13). This claim implies disinterest on the part of RCA Victor, and supports the tone of the book as providing much-needed reference. Taken in context of the book’s title page, however, the inclusion of competitor recordings also indicates a shift in the book’s position, from explicitly promoting the sale of Victor Records, to arbitrating the circulation of opera-on-record in general.

The thirteenth edition of the *Victor* book includes a title page claiming that the book offers “the historical background and act-by-act summaries of 120 Operatic masterpieces—and complete listings of the best available recordings, an outline history of opera, and over 400 illustrations of the great composers, the great singers, and the great scenes of Grand Opera in all its historic splendor” (3). This claim echoes the title of earlier editions of the books in the numeration of its contents, but here it also premises its contents on evaluation: operas included are termed “masterpieces,” and the recordings included are termed the “best available.” This kind of evaluative authority regarding which composers, singers, and scenes are “best” is in a way an extension of earlier editions’ promotion of expertise and academic rigour, but that rigorous effort is expended here both in relation to opera-texts and recordings. For example, *Madama Butterfly* has ten complete recordings listed: including three by Victor, each of which presents a different soprano in the lead role (except Renata Tebaldi, who is featured on both the London and Richmond Albums (464). The book, in claiming that these are the “best” recordings available for *Butterfly*, frames itself as a curator of opera recording, as well as of composition.

The disinterested, academic tone of the preface comprises two primary textual activities: first, a retrospective essay on the history of the *Victor* book since 1912, and second, a brief analysis of changes in repertoire since the previous edition of the book was published in 1953. The first essay, titled “The Evolution of *The Victor Book of the Opera*,” offers a meta-curation of

the *Victor* books' history, and conflates it with the history of the operascape. The language within the preface claims both the books and the operas represented therein are "classic" (13), and thus reifies the authority claimed by its predecessors. The writing congratulates the various editors of previous editions for their contributions, including "forward-looking innovations," increased eloquence, reduced "puffery," and the creation of a "handsome trade book" in the 1930s (13). This preface frames the present edition as complete and final, and one that will balance the "classic" aspects of the book—located in access to "the glamour and nostalgia that grand opera feeds on"—with the updating of the actual content of records, repertoire, and artists to reflect the current period (13). Here the book makes an explicit claim for sponsoring operatic pleasure through nostalgia, while simultaneously valuing itself as a "reliable and comprehensive guide" (13). In setting up the comparison of accuracy and nostalgia, however, the book hierarchizes the first over the second.

Both the prefatory writing and the organization of the 1968 *Victor* book leverage educational exigencies in a way that occludes access to the same kind of imaginative activities I discussed above regarding earlier editions. The exclamatory tone of earlier prefaces is replaced by exposition. Listening is barely mentioned in the preface, and the descriptions of connections between recording and opera house experiences are gone. Opera house images remain absent, and in the place of a "gallery of stars," prefatory images are almost entirely portraits of composers, distributed more or less in a chronological fashion throughout the "History of Opera" section (1968, 14-24). The preface acknowledges that many of the photographs from earlier editions "were in such bad shape that they simply could not be sent through the presses still another time" (13). The choice to replace old images of performers with composers' images may be linked as much to the material investment in procuring current production photographs as to

shifting attention to opera-texts as complete works, as I discussed in chapter 1. In any case, operas are linked more closely with their historical composition origins than with any particular production context by this decision, thus reinforcing the link of opera to an increasingly distant past, and widening the gap between material aspects of opera production and the sites of access for publics.

In its selection of composer photographs, its continuing lack of opera house and star images, and in its reflective tone regarding other *Victor* books, the 1968 edition locates itself at the end of a curatorial trajectory, and this evaluative tone extends to the discussion of repertoire and recording. In the preface, the rationale for changes in opera-text selection are discussed at length, but the discussion concludes with a claim for general fixity:

the really popular operas—the *Aïdas*, *Fausts*, *Carmens*, *Lohengrins*, that get played year in and year out in every country and in almost every language—number somewhere in the thirties and no more. They have all been in every edition of the *Victor Book of the Opera* and every other opera guide published since the latest of them was produced, that is *Madama Butterfly* in 1904. (14)

Here, the book claims to present the repertoire—that is, what is “popular” in the operascape, but it also evaluates that repertoire as more-or-less permanent.

I am not claiming that the 1968 *Victor Book of the Opera* creates the conditions under which opera repertoire has become understood as a small, fixed set of works, but the combination of claiming expertise, and the end of the book’s evolution, coincides with the archival and curatorial activities reflecting, and promoting, certain texts, composers, singers and selections at different times in the books’ long publication history. Effectively, this edition presents both the end of opera change and the end of the *Victor* books as a single activity. The

preface certainly allows for the “constant ferment in taste and intellectual curiosity” (14), but the phrase connotes a change in feeling about existing objects linked more to decay than to growth or innovation. This last edition of the *Victor* books presents the exigency of knowledge acquisition as a linear, progressive trajectory, and effectively collapses a shared teleology of opera innovation and the *Victor* books’ publication history within the project of fixing opera as an object of study.

The last *Victor* book seems barely like a *Victor* book at all. But it was also published following a period of intense change in the operascape. Between 1953 and 1968, the Metropolitan Opera Guild formed the Central Opera Service, which was the first U.S. support organization for opera producers. As I mentioned in chapter 2, many opera companies still in operation today were founded across North America during these years. Television became a normalized form of entertainment- and information distribution, and radio and phonograph recording likewise moved from away from their earlier eras of emergence. Concurrently, serial publications on opera emerged, such as *Opera Annual* (1954-1964), which offered a yearly reflection on opera productions in Britain and around the world, and the Metropolitan’s *Opera News* (1949-), which still offers the most current information available on productions, recordings, and to a lesser extent, broadcasts of opera, with a focus on the Metropolitan Opera. It is not surprising, then, that a book founded on the multiple endeavours of promoting record sales, tracing changes in repertoire, informing readers and fostering delight in access to the operascape would by this time reframe its intentions. And other than vestiges in its record listings, this last *Victor* book operates fully within the tradition of opera guides, the print genre responding to, and reifying, the protocol of apprehension.

Opera guides were a strongly established print tradition in North America well before the

1968 *Victor Book*. Examples include Ernest Newman's *Stories of the Great Operas and their Composers* (1930), radio host Milton Cross's *Complete Stories of Great Operas* (1948), Henry W. Simon's *the Pocket book of Great Operas* (1949), and *100 Great Operas and Their Stories* (1960), which is a revision of the earlier *The Festival of Opera* (1957). All these guides were published in more than one edition, and they frame information as a pathway to enjoyable participation in the operascape. For example, Simon reminds readers that though *Figaro* is the "most loved" opera by musicians, it is important to remember that "this adorable work was thoroughly revolutionary" (*Great Operas* 296). But they differ from the format of the most of the *Victor* books in their privileging of text over illustration, and the lack of connection to contemporary circulation and production considerations. The operas are presented as stories divorced from both the contexts of their creation and those factoring into their selection for the book in which they appear. In its wholesale move towards the genre of the guidebook, the 1968 *Victor* book loses the reflection of multiple networks imbricated in opera participation, in particular fandom, stardom, and the intersection of recording, circulation, and familiarity beyond operatic stage audiences. Like many other guidebooks, its focus on the fixed aspects of operatic texts—primarily libretti and some evaluation of musical form—effectively positions operas as discrete from the performance and intermedial circulation that had an enormous impact on opera repertoire, performance traditions, and modes of access and interpretation. What remains, however, is the engagement with operatic apprehension, primarily in the sense of holding on to an understanding of opera as both "great" and linked with the past, but also in the sense of offering much-needed information to alleviate worry or concern about participation on the part of its users. This trend resonates in more recent formats of opera guides, wherein mitigating anxieties about participation frames a significant, if not central, organizational strategy.

A relatively recent, and extreme, example of opera guides' engagement with apprehension is perhaps the 1997 *Opera for Dummies: A Reference Guide for the Rest of Us*. The book advises readers on what to wear, what to listen to (and for), as well as synopses of fifty "Big Kahuna" opera-texts—a list which parallels the operabase.com "Most Performed" works list, or what we might call the common repertoire in late-twentieth-century North American contexts. It includes a small number of performance photographs, brief translations of libretti excerpts, and a companion CD of well-known music from within its stated repertoire. This guide's subtitle suggests its position of offering the most important information to non-experts, and it goes so far as to differentiate knowledge acquisition into that desired by "virtuosos," who seek detailed information about specific aspects of plot or history, and "snobs" who know how to pronounce the word "*Fach*" and don't like surtitles (40; 133). If "virtuosos" are aspirational learners who seek in-depth information about a specific aspect of the operascape, and "snobs" are those who know opera but delight in others' ignorance, then the authorial voice of the text takes on a third role, that of the benevolent expert who can assist readers in avoiding the scorn of snobs while aspiring to transition from being a neophyte to a knowledgeable fan.

The *Opera for Dummies* authors are, according to the author page, both professional musicians who graduated from Yale (np). These markers of cultural capital maintain the status of expertise while the tone of the writing—casual and even disparaging of some operatic traditions—suggests a distance from the "snob" that is figured as jealously holding hostage the inner secrets of "how to" participate in the operascape. A very specific set of opera publics are presented by *Opera for Dummies*, stratified generally by knowledge of opera history, audience behaviour, and musical form, but these publics have fluid membership and the book promises mobility for invested readers. For example, the introduction explains that the book has been

designed to “unlock your capacity to experience one of the greatest highs in life: the indescribable, profound, cathartic joy of opera” (1). In offering to increase opera enjoyment through learning, *Opera for Dummies* frames its role as educational. It reifies the trope of operatic enjoyment requiring certain modes of learning, while also stereotyping certain forms of knowing as excessive or negative. In its selection of opera-texts, the book echoes confluences of repertoire and canon found in earlier *Victor* books, but without the defense of these selections offered by later *Victor* editors. It also frames repertoire and performance traditions as unmoored from the intricate networks of mediacy, commercial interest, and fandom that I argue are central to understanding how opera-texts accrete familiarity (or notoriety), and the ways in which they come to stand for opera as a concept.

The *Victor Book of The Opera*, in its thirteen editions, offers a unique archive of the ways in which corporate interest, repertoire reification, and emergent media intersect in the North American operascape. Its claims for completeness, accuracy, information, and pleasure are in many ways linked to ideas of participation in the operascape, both within and beyond the opera house. While its contemporaries proffered information about opera stories, I see the *Victor* books as an early example of attempts to grapple with operatic experiences in the complexities of its circulation. The large number of copies produced—700 000, according to the 1968 preface—also suggests, although obviously doesn’t prove, a large usership and therefore potential impact on other publications. In my view, *The Victor Book of the Opera*, more than any other North American publications, underpins the breadth of opera apprehension found in various opera-texts today. In twenty-first century contexts, opera guides typically reify the fixity of opera repertoire, value opera-text familiarity over celebrity and fan affect, and focus on alleviating anxiety about participation in the operascape. Opera company websites reflect these discourses, and popular

texts frequently set up humorous and persuasive comparisons with what is not opera. What later *Victor* books abandoned, but what remains in the archive of its publication history, is an intersecting approach to soliciting participation within the operascape in ways that do not fit tidily into the ideas of “high culture” being discrete from corporate interest and the affects of pleasure through celebrity, sensual delight, and fandom.

Conclusion

If you are paying attention, you will often find opera in the most unexpected places. In addition to film, television, and advertising examples I have considered throughout this dissertation, opera circulates in the videogame series *Grand Theft Auto* (Rockstar Games 1997-2015), which was an early and important development in the sandbox genre.¹⁷³ In the third instalment of the game, *GTA 3*, the protagonist (Claude) has been left for dead by his ex-girlfriend and becomes embroiled in gang factions in (fictional) Liberty City. While Claude and I can earn money, prestige, and a dizzying array of weapons by taking on violent assignments from various underworld leaders in Liberty City, the format doesn't force this narrative. Rather, I can choose to have Claude wander around aimlessly, or we can steal cars and then proposition prostitutes, run over pedestrians, or simply drive around listening to one of the game's many radio stations. I can select the station of my choice, and in scanning the stations I am delighted to discover *Double Cleff* FM, a classical station that plays only excerpts from Italian-language operas from Donizetti, Verdi, and Mozart.¹⁷⁴ The station announcer, Morgan Merryweather, has a high-pitched voice with an affected, pseudo-British accent. His commentary is sneering and self-aggrandizing but seems, at first, well informed. However, when I am not attempting to navigate a

¹⁷³ While it has been critiqued for championing misogyny and extreme violence, *GTA* is also known for its landmark development of the open narrative genre, wherein a player's character may explore the game space—in this case, fictional or fictionalized U.S. cities—at his or her discretion. Radio listening is at the discretion of the player, who can change stations at will. This element of free decision is a significant aspect of the “sandbox” form of gaming, and is also part of framing unique experiences for players.

¹⁷⁴ The selections are “*Non più andrai far fallone amoroso*” from *Le nozze di Figaro*; “*Libiamo ne' lieti calici*” from *La traviata*; “*Chi mi frena in tal momento*” from *Lucia di Lammermoor*; “*Finch'han del vino*” from *Don Giovanni*; and “*La donna è mobile*” from *Rigoletto*. I term the Mozart / Da Ponte collaborations as “Italian opera” because of their performance language and affiliations with the *opera buffa* form (Steptoe, 105-110).

high-speed getaway and can therefore listen more carefully, I quickly discover that Merryweather knows next to nothing about opera.

Merryweather describes “*Non più andrai*,” one of *Figaro*’s quick-paced, witty and famous arias, as “very emotional” and “*molto adagio*.” He asserts (wrongly) that Dante’s *Inferno* is the source text of Verdi’s *La Traviata* (it is the Dumas fils play *La Dame aux Camellias*.) Finally, he claims he read Proust “in the original Italian.” But because his declarations are made decisively, and he complains in a later episode of the game that his successor, Sergio Boccino, plays nothing by “that Italian pap,” he assumes the role of a cultural curator, albeit a caricatured one. Merryweather’s pompous yet effusive ignorance blends the position of the educational host, an evaluation of national genres with stereotypes of both the elitist-but-ill-informed opera aficionado (or “snob” in the parlance of *Opera for Dummies*), and the obsessive fan culture of “opera queens” discussed at length by Wayne Koestenbaum (*The Queen’s Throat*).¹⁷⁵ In *Liberty City Stories*, an extra episode of *GTA 3*, the radio announcer is Sergio Boccino, a stereotyped Italian character who speaks of each selection in relation to having sex, rather than offering any kind actual observation about the music or story. Boccino blends a concerted focus on describing the voice (in this episode singing selections from Verdi, Mozart and Leoncavallo), with objectifying and mocking the bodies of fictional singers. Thus, while we might understand Merryweather as a stereotyped “opera queen,” Boccino is presented as an uneducated, passionate, and slightly ridiculous “rustic Italian,” a stereotype frequently represented in Anglo-European cultural production, such as the opera scenes in E.M. Forster’s *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, and

¹⁷⁵ “Opera Queen” is itself a deeply complicated term, and is described by an encyclopaedia of Gay Histories and Culture as “obsessed with all aspects of opera to a degree bordering on mania, and particularly mad for sopranos” (Morris 650). All the opera recordings are licensed from the *Opera d’Oro* label.

later in early twentieth-century debates over the quality and importance of Italian *versus* German opera.

The makers of *GTA* mock the negotiation of opera protocols without actually disparaging the music.¹⁷⁶ Double Cleff FM's mockery suggests a commentary on the social, rather than aesthetic, aspects of contemporary opera circulation. For example, the intricacy and subtlety of the jokes will be funny only to the player who takes the time to listen attentively, because the joke's set-up usually precedes the musical selection and its punch-line follows. Additionally, the humour relies on the ironic gap between the seemingly informative radio host, a kind of perverted Milton Cross, and the listener's potential realization that the ethos of authority is wholly unfounded. In other words, the humour requires a certain level of pre-existing knowledge about things like Italian musical terms, and operatic source texts—the kinds of issues addressed by the radio hosts I discussed in chapter 2, and the genres of opera guides discussed in chapter 3.

In circulating a repertoire comprised solely of Italian-language opera, Double Cleff FM situates Italian opera excerpts (including the Mozart/Da Ponte collaborations) as representative of all opera, and in this case of classical music as a whole. This logic of aria culture, is, however, framed by the negative response of Merryweather, thus mimicking the paradoxical push and pull of operatic familiarity and evaluation in North America. When Merryweather becomes a caller on Boccini's program in *Liberty City Stories*, complaining that he plays nothing but "that Italian pap," his complaint produces several effects. It reinforces his ignorance and hypocrisy (because his own playlist was also Italian), echoes the disparagement of Italianate opera forms in late nineteenth-century U.S. criticism (as discussed at length by Karen Ahlquist), and highlights Italian opera's ongoing ubiquity in public performance in spite of such criticism. With

¹⁷⁶ Other musical genres receive similar treatment on the games' various radio stations.

Merryweather's show, the music serves as a sonic marker of the queer elitism commonly associated with opera cultures, and with Boccini, the racial stereotyping of (southern) Italian culture and people. This second marker is furthered by a systematic coding of certain cars in the game—such as those driven by the Leone family mobsters. If a player is quick enough to steal one of these without being beaten or shot in the *Liberty City Stories* episode, she will discover that the mob cars are all pre-tuned to Double Cleff FM and its Italian opera, thus reifying the connections between southern Italian culture, criminal violence, and operatic extremes.¹⁷⁷

The relationship between the mob cars and the radio station remind us that the opera on Double Cleff FM is mediated not only by the protocols of radio, but those of videogames and the realm of experience offered in the sandbox genre. Mark Grimshaw suggests that, unlike film sound, soundscapes in digital games that respond to the actions of the character (running, shooting a gun, turning on the radio) create a porous boundary between diegetic and non-diegetic sound (350). In other words, the player's choices blur the distinction between the realm of the game and the decisions of the player *upon* the game. Games like *Grand Theft Auto* create a kind of "contextual realism" (Grimshaw 362) wherein the game world is completely fantastic (health boosters float on street corners) and yet it immerses players in a world authentic unto itself, replete with small details and choices such as what to wear, what to drive, and what to listen to. In any instance, the choices made by me, as a player of the game, have an impact on the sonic sphere in which I play. This logic of the porous boundary between effect and experience is not unlike the relationships I have described regarding the twin genealogies of opera discourse and

¹⁷⁷ The echo of *The Godfather* movies here seems unavoidable. The films' music also swings between the diegetic and non-diegetic, especially in the shooting outside the opera house at the end of the third film, set to the famous intermezzo from Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana*. Note, however, that in the main *GTA 3* set up, radio stations are not definitively linked to either type of car or neighbourhood.

opera circulation. Discourses engaged with opera protocols, or the ways people “do” opera, reflect and are inflected by what kinds of operatic experiences are available in any particular context, whether in terms of company repertoire, long-play records, or the erasure of distance for the “live broadcast” possible on radio, television, or in twenty-first century contexts, the livestream.

Grand Theft Auto is only one in a long list of operatic deployments in contemporary North American cultural production. Perhaps it is one radio station among many in a highly controversially violent video game, or James Bond climbing around the set of *Tosca* at the Bregenz festival in *Quantum of Solace*. Maybe the opera house appears as the scene for a Cialis commercial. It has even been organized as a yearly “family-friendly” public event at San Francisco’s AT&T park, even when the opera is Verdi’s thriller of rape, revenge and murder, *Rigoletto* (2012). Keeping Double Cleff FM in mind, this dissertation has explored the contexts of opera circulation under the conceptual umbrella of the operascape, and has read across genres, forms, and cultural registers to better understand how protocols frame participation within it.

The early-to-mid twentieth century operascape of Canada and the United States, and the media of records, radio, television, and print reveal tensions and paradoxes that may seem inimical to the challenges facing opera companies today. The connections between previous periods of convergence and contemporary issues are genealogical: most of the opera companies I have studied, as well as the one that employed me, began operations between the 1950s and the 1970s. While operas and elements of opera were certainly circulating widely in the United States, and to a lesser extent in Canada in the nineteenth and early twentieth century,¹⁷⁸ the post-war

¹⁷⁸ See Elise Kirk’s *American Opera*, Kathleen Paterson’s *Opera on the Road*, and Dorith Rachel Cooper’s dissertation, “Opera in Montreal and Toronto: A study of performance traditions and

boom of the 1950s and 60s saw the groundswell of independent companies in less-densely populated centres and throughout the western provinces, the mid-west, pacific Northwest, and southern regions of the United States. These new companies built their models in relation to their regional situations, as well as in response to their publics and potential ticket-buyers, and all of these factors were heavily marked by the mediascapes instantiated in sound recording, radio, and television broadcasting.

In order to better understand how today's opera companies negotiate the expectations of their publics, I have explored operatic mediation in North American contexts through the periods in which opera protocols are exposed to public discourse and even debate. I have argued that we can better appreciate the work of opera producers when we contextualize that work within the imaginative, rhetorical, and contradictory activities of opera publics, and the protocols that organize that participation. Further study on commercial media forms emerging in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first century, such as the development of VHS tapes, CDs, DVDs, and digital streaming subscriptions, would enrich the genealogical enquiry of the North American operascape. If we trace opera activities in direct relationship to opera performances, events, and transfigurations, I believe we can begin to appreciate not only the ubiquity of "opera" in the North American cultural landscape, but also the nature of that ubiquity and the deep complexities that drive its ongoing mobilizations far beyond the operatic stage. In treating opera as a medium with its own matrix of protocols that demand ongoing negotiation by the people who participate in the operascape, we can better study what opera *does*.

repertoire 1783-1980 (University of Toronto 1983) for historical information on these traditions. Two texts more focused on the west are Ralph L. Davis's *A History of Opera in the American West* and the edited collection *Opera and the Golden West*.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Approximate Repertoire List for WEA/NBC National Grand Opera Company, 1925-1932

Cited from Jim McPherson, "Before the Met: The Pioneer Days of Radio Opera Part 2."

Note: Numbers in italics represent number of broadcasts.

Auber: *Fra Diavolo* (1)
 Balfe: *The Bohemian Girl* (1)
 Beethoven: *Fidelio* (3)
 Bellini: *Norma* (4); *La sonnabula* (4)
 Bizet: *Carmen* (10); *Les pêcheurs de perles* (6)
 Cadman: *Shaewis* (2); *A Witch of Salem* (1)
 De Leone: *Algala* (1)
 Delibes: *Lakmé* (5)
 Donizetti: *L'elisir d'amore* (5); *La favorite* (5); *Lucia di Lammermoor* (7)
 Flotow: *Martha* (8)
 Franchetti: *Namaki-San* (2)
 Gluck: *Armide* (1)
 Gounod: *Faust* (8); *Roméo et Juliette* (6)
 Hadley: *Bianca* (1); *Cleopatra's Night* (1)
 Harling: *A Light from St. Agnes* (1)
 Herbert: *Natoma* (2)
 Humperdinck: *Hänsel und Gretel* (2)
 Leoncavallo: *Pagliacci* (10)
 Mascagni: *L'amico Fritz* (6); *Cavalleria rusticana* (8)
 Massenet: *Manon* (5)
 Moniuszko: *Halka* (2)
 Mozart: *Così fan tutte* (1); *Don Giovanni* (1); *Le nozze di Figaro* (3); *Die Zauberflöte* (3)
 Offenbach: *Les contes d'Hoffmann* (6)
 Ponchielli: *La Giocanda* (7)
 Rossini: *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (3)
 Saint-Saëns: *Samson et Dalila* (7)
 Skilton: *The Sun Bride* (1) (world premiere)
 Sodero: *Ombre russe* (1) (world premiere)
 Thomas: *Mignon* (5)
 Verdi: *Aïda* (8); *Un ballo un maschera* (4); *Ernani* (5); *La forza del destino* (6); *Rigoletto* (11);
 La traviata (11); *Il trovatore* (5)
 Wagner: *Lohengrin* (5); *Parsifal* (2)
 Wallace: *Maritana* (1)
 Weber: *Der Freischütz* (4)
 Wolf-Ferrari: *Il segreto di Susanna* (3)

Appendix B: NBC Opera Theatre (Television) productions 1949-1962

Cited From Richard C. Burke, *A History of Televised Opera In the United States*.

Note: titles are generally anglicised, as they were in advertising and broadcast contexts.

Experimental Season: 1949-50

2 Scenes from *Barber of Seville*

1 Scene from *Bartered Bride*

La Bohème – act IV

The Old Maid and the Thief

First Season [January -April 1950]

Down in the Valley

Madam Butterfly

The Bat (Fledermaus)

Tales of Hoffmann

Second Season [December 1950-February 1951]

Carmen

Hansel and Gretel

Gianni Schicchi

Third Season [October 1951 – May 1952]

Pagliacci

RSVP

Amahl and the Night Visitors

Pique Dame

Il Tabarro

The Barber of Seville

Amahl and the Night Visitors

Gianni Schicchi

Fourth Season [October 1952-May 1953]

Billy Budd

Trouble in Tahiti

Amahl and the Night Visitors

The Marriage

Sister Angelica

Der Rosenkavalier (parts 1 and 2)

Fifth Season [October 1953- May 1954]

Carmen

Macbeth

Amahl and the Night Visitors

The Marriage of Figaro (parts 1 and 2)

The Taming of the Shrew
Pelleas and Melisande
Salome

Sixth Season [October 1954- May 1955]

Abduction from the Seraglio
Sister Angelica
Amahl and the Night Visitors
Tosca
Ariadne (Original version with Would-Be Gentleman)
The Saint of Bleeker Street

Seventh Season [November 1955- April 1956]

Griffelkin
Madam Butterfly
Amahl and the Night Visitors
The Magic Flute
The Trial at Rouen

Eighth Season [November 1956-April 1957]

La Bohème
Amahl and the Night Visitors
War and Peace
La Grande Breteche
La Traviata

Ninth Season [December 1957-April 1958]

Dialogues of the Carmelites
Amahl and the Night Visitors
Rigoletto
Così Fan Tutte

Tenth Season [August 1958- March 1959]

Maria Golovin (at Brussels Fair)
Amahl and the Night Visitors
Maria Golovin (TV)

Eleventh Season [November 1959-April 1960]

Fidelio
Amahl and the Night Visitors
Cavalleria Rusticana
Don Giovanni

Twelfth Season [December 1960-March 1961]

Amahl and the Night Visitors
Deseret

Fidelio (Repeat)
Boris Gudunov

Thirteenth Season [December 1961- March 1962]

Amahl and the Night Visitors
Don Giovanni (Repeat)
The Love of Three Kings
Cavalleria Rusticana (Repeat)

Fourteenth Season* [1962-1963]

Labyrinth
St. Matthew Passion
Amahl and the Night Visitors (Repeat)
The Love of Three Kings (Repeat)
Boris Gudunov (Repeat)

Fifteenth Season* [1963-1964]

Lucia di Lammermoor
Amahl and the Night Visitors (new production)
St. Matthew Passion (Repeat)

*Not included in original source; compiled from Richard C. Burke, "The NBC Opera Theater."

Appendix C.1: *The Victor Book of the Opera Publication Information, 1912 - 1968*

Year	Title	Edition	Editor	Copyright	Page Count	Introductory Materials	Placement of Record List
1912	The Victor Book of the Opera: Stories of Seventy Grand Operas with Three Hundred Illustrations & Descriptions of Seven Hundred Victor Opera Records	1st	Samuel H. Rous (not credited)	Victor Talking Machine Company	375	Index; Famous Opera Houses; Forward	Plot synopsis
1913	The Victor Book of the Opera: Stories of One-Hundred Operas with Five-Hundred Illustrations & Descriptions of One-Thousand Victrola Opera Records	2nd	Samuel H. Rous (not credited)	Victor Talking Machine Company	480	Index; Forward; Famous Opera Houses; "Great Singers" composite photograph	Plot synopsis
1915	The Victor Book of the Opera: Stories of one-Hundred and Ten Operas with Seven-Hundred Illustrations and Descriptions of Twelve-Hundred Victor Opera Records	3rd	Samuel H. Rous (not credited)	Victor Talking Machine Company	558	Index; "Great Singers" composite photograph; Famous Opera Houses	Plot synopsis
1917	The Victrola Book of the Opera: Stories of One-hundred and Twenty Operas with Seven-Hundred Illustrations and Descriptions of Twelve-Hundred Victor Opera Records	4th	Samuel H. Rous	Victor Talking Machine Company	553	Index; "Great Singers" composite photograph; Famous Opera Houses	Plot synopsis
1919	The Victrola Book of the Opera: Stories of the Operas with Illustrations and Descriptions of Victor Opera Records	5th	Samuel H. Rous	Victor Talking Machine Company	436	Index; "Great Singers" composite photograph; Famous Opera Houses	Plot synopsis
1921	The Victrola Book of the Opera: Stories of the Operas with Illustrations and Descriptions of Victor Opera Records	6th	Samuel H. Rous (not credited)	Victor Talking Machine Company	433	Index; Great Opera Houses; "Great Singers" composite photograph; "What is an Opera"; "History of Opera: A Brief Outline"; "Note on Pronunciations"	End of entry

Appendix C.1: <i>The Victor Book of the Opera</i> Publication Information, 1912 - 1968							
Year	Title	Edition	Editor	Copyright	Page Count	Introductory Materials	Placement of Record List
1924	The Victrola Book of the Opera: Stories of the operas with Illustrations and Descriptions of Victor Opera Records	7th	(?) Samuel H. Rous (not credited)	Victor Talking Machine Company	447	Index; Famous Opera Houses, "Great Singers" composite photograph; Preface, "What is an Opera"; "History of Opera: A Brief Outline"; "Note on Pronunciation"	End of entry
1929	The Victrola Book of the Opera: Stories of the Operas with Illustrations & Descriptions of Victor Opera Records	8th	(?) Samuel H. Rous (not credited)	Victor Talking Machine Company	428	Index; Famous Opera Houses; "Great Singers" composite photograph; Preface, "What is an Opera"; "History of Opera: A Brief Outline"; "Note on Pronunciation"	Plot Synopsis
1936	The Victor Book of the Opera: Stories of the Operas with Illustrations and Descriptions of Victor Opera Records	9th	Charles O'Connell	RCA Manufacturing Company	528	page; Index; Great Opera Houses; Gallery of artist headshots; Preface; "What is an Opera"; "An Outline History of Opera"; "Note on	Plot Synopsis
1939	The Victor Book of the Opera: Stories of the Operas with Illustrations and Descriptions of Victor Opera Records	10th	Charles O'Connell	RCA Manufacturing Company	535	page; Index; Famous Opera Houses; Gallery of artist headshots; Preface; "What is an Opera"; "An Outline History of Opera"; "Note on	Plot synopsis
1949	The Victor Book of Operas	11th	Louis Biancolli and Robert Bagar	Simon and Schuster	596	"Publisher's Preface"; Table of Contents/ Index; Suggested selling price for records; "An Outline History of Opera"	End of entry
1953	The Victor Book of Operas	12th	Louis Biancolli and Robert Bagar	Simon and Schuster	628	1949 "Publishers' Preface"; "Preface to Newly Revised Edition"; Table of Contents/ Index"; "An Outline History of Opera"	End of book

Appendix C.1: <i>The Victor Book of the Opera</i> Publication Information, 1912 - 1968							
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1929	The Victrola Book of the Opera: Stories of the Operas with Illustrations & Descriptions of Victor Opera Records	8th	(?) Samuel H. Rous (not credited)	Victor Talking Machine Company	428	Index; Famous Opera Houses; "Great Singers" composite photograph; Preface, "What is an Opera"; "History of Opera: A Brief Outline"; "Note on Pronunciation"	Plot Synopsis
1936	The Victor Book of the Opera: Stories of the Operas with Illustrations and Descriptions of Victor Opera Records	9th	Charles O'Connell	RCA Manufacturing Company	528	page; Index; Great Opera Houses; Gallery of artist headshots; Preface; "What is an Opera;" "An Outline History of Opera;" "An Outline History of page; Index; Famous Opera Houses; Gallery of artist headshots; Preface; "What is an Opera"; "An Outline History of Opera"; "Note on	Plot Synopsis
1939	The Victor Book of the Opera: Stories of the Operas with Illustrations and Descriptions of Victor Opera Records	10th	Charles O'Connell	RCA Manufacturing Company	535	"Publisher's Preface"; Table of Contents/ Index; Suggested selling price for records; "An Outline History of Opera"	Plot synopsis
1949	The Victor Book of Operas	11th	Louis Biancolli and Robert Bagar	Simon and Schuster	596	1949 "Publishers' Preface"; "Preface to Newly Revised Edition"; Table of Contents/ Index"; An Outline History of Opera"	End of entry
1953	The Victor Book of Operas	12th	Louis Biancolli and Robert Bagar	Simon and Schuster	628	End of book	End of book

Appendix C.2: Opera House Photographs, <i>The Victor Book of the Opera</i> , 1912 - 1939				
Year	Edition	Full Page	Half Page (interior unless stated otherwise noted)	Composites*
1912	1st	Metropolitan (NY) Interior	n/a	Europe 1 America 1
1913	2nd	Metropolitan (NY) Interior	Royal Opera (Naples) + La Scala (Milan) Covent Garden + London Opera House The Opéra (Paris) + Marienski Opera (St Petersburg) Imperial Opera (Vienna) + Royal Opera House (Berlin)	America 1 Europe 1
1915	3rd	Metropolitan (NY) Interior	Royal Opera (Naples) + La Scala (Milan) The Opéra (Paris) + Marienski Opera (St Petersburg) Imperial Opera (Vienna) + Royal Opera House (Berlin)	America 2 Europe 1
1917	4th	n/a	Metropolitan (NY) Proscenium Arch + Backstage Metropolitan (PA) Proscenium Arch + View from Stage Royal Opera (Naples) + La Scala (Milan) The Opéra (Paris) + Marienski Opera (St Petersburg) Imperial Opera (Vienna) + Royal Opera House (Berlin)	America 1 Europe 1
1919	5th	The Opéra (Paris) Exterior	Metropolitan (NY) + Metropolitan (PA) The Opéra (Paris) + Marienski Opera (Petrograd) Royal Opera (Naples) + La Scala (Milan) Covent Garden + London Opera House	America 3 Europe 2 America 4
1921	6th	The Opéra (Paris) Exterior	Metropolitan (NY) + Metropolitan (PA) The Opéra (Paris) + Marienski Opera (Petrograd) Royal Opera (Naples) + La Scala (Milan)	America 3 Europe 3
1924	7th	The Opéra (Paris) Exterior	Metropolitan (NY) + Metropolitan (PA) The Opéra (Paris) + Marienski Opera (Petrograd) Royal Opera (Naples) + La Scala (Milan) Covent Garden + London Opera House	America 3 Europe 3 America 4

Appendix C.2: Opera House Photographs, *The Victor Book of the Opera*, 1912 - 1939

Year	Edition	Full Page	Half Page (interior unless stated otherwise noted)	Composites*
1929	8th	The Opéra (Paris) Exterior	Metropolitan (NY) + Academy of Music (PA) Royal Opera (Naples) + La Scala (Milan) Covent Garden + London Opera House	America 5
1936	9th	Festspielhaus (Bayreuth) On Stage	Metropolitan (NY) + San Francisco Opera Chicago Opera House + Buhnfestspielhaus (Berlin) Opéra (Paris) + La Scala (Milan) Royal Opera House (Berlin) + Academy of Music (PA)	n/a
1939	10th	n/a	Metropolitan (NY) + San Francisco Opera Chicago Opera House + Buhnfestspielhaus (Berlin) Opéra (Paris) + La Scala (Milan) Royal Opera House (Berlin) + Academy of Music (PA)	n/a

*Composites are four- or five-photograph layouts on a full page spread, usually titled "Famous American Opera Houses" or "Famous Opera Houses of Europe." For clarity, the different versions these composite photos are listed in detail here:

American Houses 1	(Metropolitan, NY; Metropolitan, Philadelphia; The Auditorium, Chicago; Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires; Boston Opera House)
American Houses 2	(Metropolitan, NY; Metropolitan, Philadelphia; French Opera, New Orleans; The Auditorium, Chicago; Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires; Boston Opera House)
American Houses 3	(Metropolitan, NY; Metropolitan, Philadelphia; French Opera, New Orleans; Municipal Theatre, Rio de Janeiro; National Theatre, São Paulo)
American Houses 4	(Teatro DeGollado, Guadalajara; Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires; Teatro Juarez, Guanajuato; Mosaic Curtain National Theatre, Mexico City)
American Houses 5	(French Opera, New Orleans; Municipal Theatre, Rio de Janeiro; Academy of Music, Philadelphia; Metropolitan, New York; Chicago Opera)
European Houses 1	(Royal Opera, Berlin; Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; La Scala, Milan; Royal Opera, Madrid; The Opéra, Paris)
European Houses 2	(Royal Opera, Naples; Covent Garden, London; La Scala, Milan; Royal Opera, Madrid; Imperial Opera, Moscow)
European Houses 3	(Covent Garden, London; La Scala, Milan; Royal Opera, Naples; Royal Opera, Madrid; Imperial Opera, Moscow)

Appendix C.3: Composite / Headshot Photos in Introductory Pages of <i>The Victor Book of The Opera, 1912 - 1968</i>			
Year	Edition	"Great Singers of the World" / Artist Headshots Left to Right by Last Name	Changes from Previous
1912	1st	No headshots/ composite photo	n/a
		Caruso; Schumann-Heink; Clement; Amato; Calvé; Dalmores; Tetrazzini; Martin; Homer; Alda; Hempel; Witherspoon; Gadski; Eames; Sembrich; Gortiz; Mazenauer; Ruffo; Sammarco; Gluck; Farrar; McCormack; Scotti; Journet; Melba	
1913	2nd	Caruso; Schumann-Heink; Clement; Amato; Calvé; Dalmores; Tetrazzini; Martinelli; Destinn; Homer; Alda; Hempel; Witherspoon; Gadski; Eames; Sembrich; Gortiz; Matzenauer; Ruffo; Sammarco; Gluck; Farrar; McCormack; Scotti; Journet; Melba	no change
1915	3rd	Caruso; Schumann-Heink; Clement; Galli-Curci; Calvé; Dalmores; Tetrazzini; Martinelli; Homer; Destinn; Alda; Hempel; Witherspoon; Gadski; Eames; Sembrich; Whitehill; Bori; Matzenauer; Ruffo; De Luca; Gluck; Farrar; McCormack; Scotti; Journet; Melba	Out: Martin In: Martinelli; Destinn
1917	4th	Caruso; Schumann-Heink; Clement; Galli-Curci; Calvé; Dalmores; Tetrazzini; Martinelli; Destinn; Alda; Homer; Witherspoon; Eames; Sembrich; Whitehill; Bori; McCormack; De Luca; Gluck; Farrar; Ruffo; Scotti; Journet; Melba	Out: Amato, Matzenauer; Gortiz; Sammarco In: Galli-Curci; Whitehill; Bori, De Luca,
1919	5th	Caruso; Schumann-Heink; Clement; Galli-Curci; Calvé; Dalmores; Tetrazzini; Martinelli; Destinn; Alda; Homer; Witherspoon; Eames; Sembrich; Whitehill; Bori; McCormack; De Luca; Gluck; Farrar; Ruffo; Scotti; Journet; Melba	Out: Hempel; Gadski; Sammarco
1921	6th	Caruso; Schumann-Heink; Clement; Galli-Curci; Calvé; Dalmores; Tetrazzini; Martinelli; Destinn; Alda; Homer; Witherspoon; Eames; Sembrich; Whitehill; Bori; McCormack; De Luca; Gluck; Farrar; Ruffo; Scotti; Journet; Melba	No change
1924	7th	Caruso; Schumann-Heink; Clement; Galli-Curci; Calvé; Dalmores; Tetrazzini; Martinelli; Destinn; Alda; Homer; Witherspoon; Eames; Sembrich; Whitehill; Bori; McCormack; De Luca; Gluck; Farrar; Ruffo; Scotti; Journet; Melba	No change
1929	8th	Caruso; Schumann-Heink; Clement; Galli-Curci; Calvé; Dalmores; Tetrazzini; Martinelli; Homer; Destinn; Alda; Hempel; Witherspoon; Gadski; Eames; Sembrich; Whitehill; Bori; Ruffo; De Luca; Gluck; Farrar; McCormack; Scotti; Journet; Melba	In: Hempel; Gadski

Appendix C.3: Composite / Headshot Photos in Introductory Pages of <i>The Victor Book of The Opera</i> , 1912 - 1968			
Year	Edition	"Great Singers of the World" / Artist Headshots Left to Right by Last Name	Changes from Previous
		Headshots: Bampton, Bori, Caruso, Chaliapin, Crooks, De Gogorza, De Luca, Eddy, Flagstad, Galli-Curci, Giannini, Gigli, Jepson, Jeritza, Lehmann, Leider, Martinelli, McCormack, Melchior, Pinza, Pons, Ponselle, Rethberg, Schipa, Schorr, Swarthout, Thomas, Tibbett	5 of 28 remain the same, now in alphabetical order.
1936	9th		
		Headshots: Bampton, Bori, Caruso, Chaliapin, Crooks, De Gogorza, De Luca, Kipnis, Flagstad, Galli-Curci, Giannini, Gigli, Jepson, Jeritza, Lehmann, Leider, Martinelli, McCormack, Melchior, Pinza, Pons, Ponselle, Rethberg, Schipa, Schorr, Swarthout, Thomas, Tibbett	Out: Eddy In: Kipnis
1939	10th		
1949	11th	No headshots / composite photo	
1953	12th	No headshots / composite photo	
1968	13th	No headshots / composite photo	