THE ROLES OF "MOTHERS" IN OPERA AS EXEMPLIFIED BY FIDÈS (MEYERBEER'S, LE PROPHÈTE); KOSTELNIČKA (JANÁČEK'S, JENŮFA); MRS. PATRICK DE ROCHER (HEGGIE'S, DEAD MAN WALKING)

by

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ABSTRACT

Mothers in operatic plots are mostly absent; when present, they are generally sung by a mezzo-soprano and are considered "supporting" roles. This dissertation attempts to elucidate what led to the scarcity of mothers as important characters in opera, and to the apparent stereotyping of the role with the mezzo-soprano voice type. Chapter 1 introduces the topic, while chapter 2 explores the aesthetics of the singing voice throughout various periods during which the "preferred vocal ideal" changed, as vocal ranges were equated with the personification and stereotyping of certain character types. Influences which affected the evolution of plot paradigms are also investigated. A summary of opera libretti from the seventeenth to the twentieth century supports historical evidence drawn from the above context and identifies the mother characters in these operas (see Appendix A).

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 offer three case studies of the treatment of operatic "mothers" who are central to the plot of the operas in which they, respectively, appear: Fidès from Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*, Kostelnička from Janáček's *Jenufa,* and Mrs. Patrick De Rocher from Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*. Each includes an investigation of the opera's context, the dramatic study of the mother character, an analysis of the musical settings of the drama, and performance aspects. A brief interview with Jake Heggie is included in Appendix B.

This study concludes that the presence/absence of the mother character is influenced by vocal aesthetics as conventionalized by Metastasian *opera seria* plots, and by subsequent opera plot conventions formulated through socio-cultural values. Despite the difference in time, place and musical style among the operas studied, the problems and feelings of the mother character have not changed much from the nineteenth century to the twentieth.

Whether sung by a mezzo-soprano, or, occasionally, by a soprano, a timeless stereotype of the mother character emerges: a woman tormented between the love for her children and her moral duties.

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Finally, I am greatly indebted to my family for their unwavering support and practical help, especially during computer-related crises. In particular, I owe much gratitude to my husband, Manfred, for assiduously reading through each of my drafts, and for his moral support, and encouragement. *Gloria Dei.*

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family: my husband Manfred, and our children and grand-children; and also in memory of my sister,
Anita (Rahn) Born (nee Lind) (1946-2003)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Mothers as operatic characters are mostly absent from operatic plots, and when present are most often performed by mezzo-sopranos and typically considered "supporting" or "bit" roles.[1] On the rare occasions when the mother is a lead or a supporting role, she is characterized through one of the stereotypes associated with the mezzo-soprano voice: "witches, bitches, and britches."[2] One case in point is the mother and witch in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*,[3] where the same person is often cast in the Jekyll and Hyde position as both the mother and the witch, raising her to the status of a lead character. She is a mean mother given to hysteria, threatening the children with beatings (from their father) and driving them away from the security of home. Although the same casting of the role of mother and witch is often due to monetary concerns, in the plot neither the witch with her chameleon nature and evil machinations, nor the mother, serves as a positive female role model for the children.

As a "bitch" stereotype, Klytemnästra from Richard Strauss's *Elektra* also comes to mind. Considered to be a lead character, she carries on an affair while her husband is at war and then together with her lover murders her husband on his return. Her son is exiled and her

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[1] The categorization of roles used by Canadian Actors' Equity Association in order to determine pay scale is Lead, Featured, Supporting, Bit, or Chorus Bit.

[2] This is a singer's expression, often used jokingly particularly among mezzo-sopranos. "Britches" refers to cross-dressing roles and will not be examined in detail in this document.

[3] An adaptation from a nineteenth century Grimm's Fairy-tale where the step-mother wishes for the children's demise due to family's poor economic status and lack of food, and forces the father to abandon his children deep in the forest. See Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Kinder und Hausmärchen gesammelt durch die Brüder Grimm* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1941), 86-94.

daughters are totally neglected. She is both bitch and witch, a madwoman who lives with hallucinations and nightmares, eventually murdered by her own son and daughter.

The gypsy Azucena, the mother of Manrico in Verdi's *Il Trovatore,* is a third example of a mezzo-soprano lead character in a stereotyped mother role. She is herself the daughter of a witch burned at the stake for having caused illness in the old Count's infant son. Azucena avenges her mother's death by throwing the baby onto the embers of her mother's ashes only to later discover that she has mistakenly thrown her own baby onto the pyre. Her act 2 aria "Stride la vampa," sung as she is tending the fire, is sinister and evocative of incantation. Later in the opera when she is identified as the one responsible for the Count's son's disappearance, Azucena is likewise branded a witch and sentenced to the same fate as her mother.

We have to recognize that the scarcity of real mother roles in operatic plots is a strange phenomenon. Biologically speaking, it is a fact that all operatic characters received life through a mother. However, while marriages are quite common in opera plots, motherhood and maternal love seem to have been neglected. As Jennifer Barnes points out, most of the daughters (and sons) in opera don't have a mother.[4] Wouldn't Dorabella and Fiordiligi (*Così Fan Tutte)*, who had only the wily Despina to guide them, have fared better with motherly advice? Juliet's mother (Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*) is not in the cast of characters in the opera at all, yet appears in Shakespeare's play. The mothers of Rosina (*Il Barbiere*), or Gilda (*Rigoletto*), Mimi (La Bohème), or Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Luisa (*Luisa Miller*) or Mignon (*Mignon*) are also absent.[5] By contrast, fathers are highly ranked on the pedestal

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[4] Jennifer Barnes, "Where are the Mothers in Opera?" *Opera Quarterly* 79 (1995): 402-21. Also reprinted in Sarah Cooper, *Girls, Girls, Girls: Essays on Women and Music* (N.Y.: New York University Press, 1996), 86-97.

of opera plots even though they often meddle in their daughters' lives, most often negatively, and are usually responsible for their demise. As Catherine Clément points out, nineteenth-century daughters in opera tend to die. She summarizes: "nine [die] by knife, two of them suicides; three by fire; two who jump; two consumptives; three who drown; three poisoned; two of fright; and a few unclassifiable, thank god for them, dying without anyone knowing why or how."[6] Where are the mothers who would so obviously defend them?

Although a few mothers *are* nevertheless portrayed in opera, I will argue that the long tradition of ignoring mothers in opera plots already existed in the early development of opera in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As mothers begin to appear more often in the nineteenth century, they are treated, as my opening examples show, as stereotyped characters often with negative features (see also Appendix A). Klytemnästra is a formidable mother driven by the lust for power. Hansel and Gretel's mother is seen through a fairy tale's depiction of an evil stepmother. Azucena, like her mother is considered a witch. Moreover, other nineteenth century mothers are almost invisible, ineffectual, and have little influence, such as with Strauss's Adelaide (*Arabella*).

Finally, opera in the twentieth century continues to include more mothers as operatic characters (see Appendix A). The inclusion of women into opera plots grew in general as did plots about women's lives. Canadian Tim Sullivan's opera *Florence, The Lady with the Lamp* and American Mark Adamo's opera *Little Women* (based on the book of the same

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[5] In her article Jennifer Barnes includes other daughters in her list; heroines still young enough to be living with family or guardians. I chose Mignon, Rosina, Dorabella and Fiordiligi and Sophie from her list. In addition, her list also includes Amina (*La Sonnambula*); Zerlina (*Fra Diavolo*); Charlotte (*Werther*); Senta (*Der Fliegende Holländer*); Elizabeth (*Tannhäuser*); Lulu (Berg); Joan of Arc, in Rossini's (*Giovanna D'Arco*) and Tchaikovsy's (*Maid of New Orleans*); Angeline (*Cenerentola*), the title role in *Cendrillon*; Valentine (*Les Huguenots*); Antonia (Les Contes d'Hoffmann); Lisa (*Pique Dame*); and the title roles in *La Wally*, *Iris*, *Iolantha*, and Tiny (*Paul* Bunyan).

[6] Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 47.

name) are two examples; American Vivian Fine's *Women in the Garden* is an opera composed by a woman about women (Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Isadora Duncan, and Emily Dickinson).[7] Do these examples suggest a possible paradigm shift in the thinking of composers and their librettists? Is there a move away from the traditional stereotypes, towards the portrayal of mothers in their maternal, loving role as characters in opera?

My thesis seeks to understand the role of "mother" as an operatic character, by focusing on the questions raised above, and attempts to explore why these roles are most of the time specifically assigned to the mezzo-soprano voice type, as the opening examples show. I shall do so by drawing on three operatic mothers who are central to the plot of the operas in which they respectively appear and are lead characters: Fidès from Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*, Kostelnička from Janáček's *Jenůfa,* and Mrs. Patrick De Rocher from Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*. The importance of the character in each opera is shown by the fact that each mother interacts with the other characters through her own arias, not just short recitative and ensemble scenes (a fate faced in opera plots by secondary characters such as nurses who often replace mothers). Notably, these characters span the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and each of them intersects deeply with the general constraints placed women in their respective societies. Each mother is significant in her own right and aids in reaching a conceptualization of the operatic mother through her own distinctive voice and character.

Chapter Summary

The discussion in Chapter 2 will explore the aesthetics of the singing voice, showing that the "preferred ideal" influenced the stereotyping of operatic characters, as each vocal

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[7] Donald Jay Grout and Hermine Weigel Williams, *A Short History of Opera* 4th ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 747-480.

range was equated with the personification of certain character types. The emergence of the mezzo-soprano voice type will also be examined. Further, opera plot paradigms will be brought as historical evidence in support of the aim of this thesis, to understand better the evolution of the role of "mother" as an operatic character.

Chapter 3 will discuss the role of Fidès in Giacomo Meyerbeer's five act grand opera *Le Prophète*, with libretto by Eugène Scribe, which premièred at the Paris Opéra on April 16, 1849. Fidès, as mother to Jean de Leyde the false prophet is not only the female lead, but the most important character in the opera. The emphasis on the relationship between mother and son replaces the typical theme of romantic love, and their duets equal those of operatic lovers. This was the first opera to designate the role of mother for mezzo-soprano. In addition, Meyerbeer's choice of a "mother" as a lead character in her maternal, loving role, and his musical treatment, serve as a founding stone for the subsequent traditions analyzed in this study.

Chapter 4 will focus on the role of Kostelnička Buryjovká in Leoš Janáček's *Jenůfa*, which premièred in Brno, Czechoslovakia in 1904. Janáček wrote the opera to his own libretto based on Gabriela Preissová's play, *Její pastorkyna,* meaning "not own daughter." In the opera, Jenůfa is both stepdaughter and foster daughter to Kostelnička, whose own name means sacristan. It is an important study because women as characters are prominent in the operas of Janáček, and as a stepmother, the lead role of Kostelnička offers valuable insight into the stereotypical character type of the mother as viewed in a different culture and in a modernist time.

In Chapter 5, I will investigate the third opera with a mother as a lead character. The American opera, *Dead Man Walking*, composed by Jake Heggie with librettist Terence

McNally, premièred in San Francisco in 2000, and has since become one of the world's most performed operatic new works.[8] Based on the award winning book by Sister Helen Prejean,[9] the opera depicts her own journey into Louisiana's prison system to become the spiritual adviser to a convicted death row inmate whose composite name is Joseph De Rocher. Joseph's mother is not given a first name and is known only as Mrs. Patrick De Rocher. Her identity is seen through her husband, although he is not a character in the opera. As this is a contemporary opera, not a lot of research is available on the opera or on the composer Jake Heggie, and therefore a character study on Mrs. Patrick De Rocher will give new insights into the dramatic and musical treatment of mothers at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Literature Review

Little prior research has been conducted on the topic of mothers in opera prior to mine. Since opera plots seldom include mothers in principal roles, the lack of research aiming to discover possible reasons for this is highly surprising. Besides an essay by Jennifer Barnes, I found no other written material asking questions similar to mine. The mothers Barnes writes about in her research are Janáček's Jenůfa from *Jenůfa*, Puccini's Chô-Chô-San of *Madame Butterfly* and Angelica from his *Suor Angelica.* These young mother roles are designated for the soprano voice type and therefore do not fall into the category of mothers which I am addressing. In order to delimit my research, I am focusing on roles applicable to my voice type as a mezzo-soprano. Catherine Clément's book, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women,* is cited in many of the works I consulted on feminist criticism

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[8] Jake Heggie, Official Website <http://www.jakeheggie.com/> accessed August 23, 2007.

[9] Sister Helen Prejean, CJS, *Dead Man Walking* (New York: Random House Inc., 1993)

related to women in music. Her scholarship has been important for opening dialogue into a feminist viewpoint in musicology and music analysis, and is therefore important to this study. However, her chosen characters are primarily soprano heroines. In addition to works already cited, *Feminine Endings*, by Susan McClary, *Musicology and Difference*, edited by Ruth Solie, and Carolyn Abbate's *Unsung Voices*, among others, have increased my knowledge and understanding of the topic as it relates to feminist critique.

A historical reading of opera plots from the standpoint of "where we've been and where we may be headed," is essential in placing characters in context interpretatively. There is little direct information about mothers as characters in opera but, Rosand, Rosselli, Heriot, Pleasants, André, and Grout, have provided some perspective. The most recent research of Martha Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*, is an excellent resource on *opera seria*. In researching the individual operas, important sources for gaining insight into the career and musical language of Meyerbeer include Letellier and Becker, while Pendle's comprehensive study on the works of the librettist Eugène Scribe provides valuable information on his collaboration with Meyerbeer, and on French opera of the Nineteenth century. Similarly, Tyrrell, Kulka, Ewans, and Wingfield are the notable scholars whose research is influential in understanding the operas of Janáček. Several dissertations were located via ProQuest, which offered some information, and led to further resources.

Heggie's visibility has greatly increased since the year 2000 première of *Dead Man Walking*. However, the focus of scholarly material investigated is mostly on his vocal works (of which many are composed for mezzo-soprano). His website and links to reviews of the opera and its social implications have been the main sources of available information. Two dissertations were consulted through ProQuest. A 2006 Master's Thesis by Kendra Lynch

"A Comparative Analysis of Four Pieces by Jake Heggie," from California State University, provided valuable biographical information on the composer. A second recent dissertation, "A Stylistic Analysis of Jake Heggie's opera: *Dead Man Walking*," by Sean Teet from the University of Northern Colorado, is from 2007. Teet's analysis is focused primarily on Sister Helen Prejean and Joseph De Rocher, although he does include Mrs. Patrick De Rocher's Act II aria, "Don't say a word." In addition to these, Kirk's book *American Opera* sheds light into the musical styles that shaped American opera. An email interview with Jake Heggie pertaining mostly to the opera is included as Appendix B. (detailed biographical information is available in the above-named theses).

Finally, discussing my topic with colleagues, friends, and acquaintances, has generated genuine interest and discussion on their part. My thesis is unique in its approach and through the questions that are raised. Further, as the topic of mothers as characters in opera has not been extensively researched, this thesis will inform the reader and offer insight that can be applied to mothers' presence and status as dramatic opera characters. Finally, my research will offer an in-depth look at the three mothers who are lead characters in view of re-valorizing the interpretative potential of both mothers as characters, and of the mezzo-soprano voice.[10]

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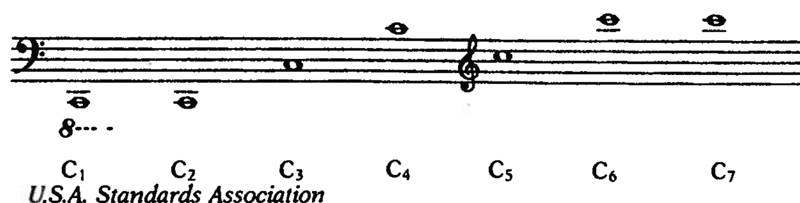
[10] As a final note, the pitch range indications used will be categorized according to the Acoustical Society of America, endorsed by the U.S.A. Standards Association, and is shown below.



CHAPTER 2

AESTHETICS AND OPERA PLOT PARADIGMS

According to musicologist Roger Parker, the majority of operas that form the present day international repertory belong to the period between 1780 and 1920.[11] For this reason, our perception of opera as a genre is based on the dramaturgy and the characters in these operas. Stereotyped plots from this period have introduced characters that have become the most common archetypes. The leading roles are most generally young lovers, typically monopolized by sopranos and tenors. Fathers (bass or baritone) and daughters (soprano) are also in good company as lead characters, while servant roles are most often old women and men, designated for mezzo-soprano and baritone voice types. In addition, there are "breech-es"[12] roles for mezzo-soprano (women cross-dressing to play male roles), and "villain" roles for baritone or bass. Mothers, seen as operatic characters in their maternal role, seem to be missing from these character representations. The three roles of mothers studied here are therefore exceptions from the norms. They are main characters designated for the mezzo-soprano voice type, propelling both role and voice to a prominence seldom received before. Therefore, this chapter explores pertinent historical evidence and likely causes that support the absence and/or presence of mothers as operatic characters, in order to ferret out possible conclusions to this investigation.

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[11] Roger Parker, "Nineteenth Century Opera," Howard Mayer Brown, et al., "Opera (i)." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* 1 Jul. 2008. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40726pg5>.

[12] Owen Jander and Ellen T. Harris, "Breeches part." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online,* http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/03911 (accessed June 30, 2008).

The Aesthetics of the Voice

The aesthetics of the voice is a significant starting point as the description of operatic characters above is associated with a specific category of voice. This historically based and "conditioned" convention of stereotyping characters with specific voice types is still primarily the accepted norm today, and the narrative that established this is worthy of consideration in order to contextualize the role of mothers as operatic characters. Despite the fact that the voice types—soprano, tenor, baritone, or bass—do not always fit neatly into a similar plot design, some generalizations emerge that support the stereotyping of voice with character.[13] The relevance of these generalizations in this present discussion pertains more to the aesthetics of voice types and their effect on the characterizations they may be correlated with, rather than to the characterizations themselves.

The vocal aesthetics of the soprano voice developed in the Baroque period became the preferred ideal, favored due to its ability for flexibility and expressiveness. In 1668 Bacilly wrote:

> Considering the voice according to its musical range, using the musical terminology of Soprano, Contralto, Tenor Bass, etc., we find that the higher voice ranges are more successful in effective performance even though all of the vocal ranges ought to be equally suitable for training. This is due to the fact that a greater number of the emotions or passions will appear to good advantage in the higher voice ranges than in the lower ones. The bass voice is suitable for almost nothing but the emotion of anger, which appears rarely in French airs…[14]

Similarly, Tosi (1723) and Mancini (1774) wrote *their* treatises on singing for sopranos, and the soprano voice was universally considered the most suited for rapid divisions and

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[13]Catherine Clément, "Through Voices, History," In *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality In Opera*, edited by Mary Ann Smart (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 21, 22. Although Clément discusses this with regards to individual voices and their social roles, it applies equally to the aesthetics of the voice types.

[14] Ellen T. Harris, "Voices," In *The New Grove Handbook in Music Performance Practice : Music after* 1600, eds. Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie (Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers, 1989), 111.

emotional expression. According to Ellen T. Harris, this pertained not only to the female soprano voices, but the castrato voices also (soprano or mezzo-soprano).[15] Tosi, a soprano castrato, describes voices by their range and their ability in the following manner:

> . . . a *Soprano* has generally the most Volubility, and becomes it best [sic]; and also equally the Pathetick. The *Contr'Alto* more of the Pathetick, than the Volubility; the *Tenor* less of the Pathetick, but more of the Volubility than the Contr'Alto, though not so much as the *Soprano.* The *Bass*, in general more pompous than any, but should not be so [sic] boisterous as now too often practiced.[16]

Accordingly then, the aesthetics of the soprano voice was seen as ideal for the emotional expression that was cultivated in opera. Suitability for a role was based on an aural perception of what a specific voice type could signify in terms of the affect of the music. Voices took on a certain persona simply by virtue of their characteristic sound. Therefore, it was no mistake that in the eighteenth-century, castratos sang the roles of heroes or noble lovers, and Metastasian heroine roles were composed in the female soprano voice range.[17] This tradition of casting women with female soprano voices as the plots' heroines continued into subsequent centuries. Notably, the heroines in Mozart's operas are all female sopranos, as are those of Verdi, Puccini, Strauss, and Wagner, and all operas which are in the mainstream of the operatic repertory canon (although the type of soprano varies from opera to opera).

The above quotes would indicate that the lower voices were not favored because they were weightier and less able to express the desired affects, a view held by other theorists as well. According to Nigel Fortune, the theorist Giovanni Battista Doni felt nothing but con-

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[15] Ibid., 112.

[16] Ibid.

[17] The Metastasian libretti available in Groves Music Online did not stipulate whether these roles were sung by women or castrati. It likely could have been either.

tempt for the contralto voice, dismissing it as "unnatural and too feminine."[18] But as we shall presently see, the lower female voice was not categorized yet in modern terms of mezzo-soprano or contralto.

Mezzo-Soprano as a Voice Type

The mezzo-soprano voice type as a designation did not begin occurring with regularity until the end of the eighteenth century. No clear distinction was necessary between contralto and a middle-ranged voice, as the typical soprano range during the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century was C^4 to G^5.[19] Most female operatic roles were written in this range. As the opera genre grew in popularity, and because they were the principal female characters, the women who sang these roles became the first divas. Anna Renzi, the leading seventeenth century Italian soprano who created the roles of Deidamia in Sacrati's *La finta pazza* (1641), and Octavia in (Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1642), is an example.

During the first half of the eighteenth century, a greater need to distinguish between the soprano and mezzo-soprano voice types resulted as composers began extending the upper soprano range in their compositions, and adding *fioritura* passages which required a lighter voice with an agility necessary to successfully negotiate the coloratura demanded in these

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[18] Nigel Fortune, "Italian Seventeenth-century singing," *Music and Letters*, xxxv (1954): 208ff.

[19] Owen Jander, et al, "Mezzo Soprano," In *Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, vol. 16 (New York: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1980), 584-585. For example, Handel's range for soprano did not exceed beyond an A^5 very often. See also Owen Jander, et al. "Soprano," In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. 10 Jun. 2009.
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/26243>

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new soprano roles. The new higher soprano roles further solidified the soprano aesthetic and the prima donna status of these singers, as this was the vocal aesthetic sought for principal female characters. Notably, the aesthetic of the slightly lower ranged, more robust mezzo-soprano voice was unsuited to these roles.

Therefore, the idealized soprano voice pushed women with lower ranged voices further into the background, as the roles available to them were the occasional character parts of old women, nurses, confidantes, or occasional mothers, which would be smaller, secondary roles. Additionally, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, lower voiced parts for women's roles in opera could also be sung by castrati (due to their treble quality), or tenors who often sang the role of nurses in the seventeenth century. A representative example is Sacrati's *La finta pazza* (1641), where both Tetide (Achilles' mother) and Deidamia's nurse are designated for tenor voice type. Similarly, in Cesti's *Il pomo d'oro* (1668), the nurse Filaura is also cast as a tenor.

For women who were not sopranos, the primary avenue to pursue prominent careers was to sing the androgynous roles, as they were sometimes allotted these roles *en travesti,* even while castrati were still available.[20] Examples include Sartorio's *Giulio Cesare* (1676) where Cleopatra's Ptolemy is a contralto, and in Legrenzi's *Totila* (1677) the General Vitige is also written for contralto. Similarly, in Perti's *La Rosaura* (1689) Gelindo is a contralto, and Princess Cunegonda of Bohemia is cast as a contralto, but disguised as a man. While these roles were most often designated for castrati, women were also cast in them at times.

[20] A representative example is Victoria Tesi (1700-1775), who excelled in male roles. See Pleasants and also John Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 1992), 58, 59.

In several of Handel's operas, women were also cast in male roles. One example is *Rinaldo*, where Francesca Vanino sang the role the captain Goffredo in the première and Francesca Bertolli sang the role of the Saracen king Argante in the 1731 revival.[21] Margherita Duristani created the title role in Handel's *Radamisto* (1720, London), which was then taken over by the castrato Senesino. And in 1748, Handel wrote the role of Solomon for the mezzo-soprano Caterina Galli. Benedetta Pisaroni (1793-1872) began her career as a soprano, but also sang male roles, premièring the role of Malcolm in Rossini's *La donna del lago* (1819), and performing Alsace in *Semiramide* and the title role in *Tancredi*.[22]

In addition to these cross-dressing or breeches roles, when contralto voice types were cast into nurse roles they were categorized as "old women." Two examples include Penelope's old nurse in Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse*, and Derisbe's old nurse in Thomas Clayton's *Arsino* (1705). While these are only a small sampling, they underscore that until middle-ranged female voices reached the designation of mezzo-soprano, the lower voice aesthetic was felt to be more suitable for masculine (androgynous) and older (old) women roles. The older women characters would be past their child-bearing years, a fact worth noting for its implications towards the exclusion of "mothers" in their maternal role as operatic characters.

This growing distinction between the soprano and mezzo-soprano vocal ranges can be further illustrated by the descriptions provided by J.J. Quantz and Charles Burney. For example, in 1754-5 the castrato Senesino was described by Quantz as having a "penetrating, clear, even, and pleasant deep soprano voice (mezzo-soprano) which he rarely used above

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[21] Anthony Hicks, "Rinaldo," In *The New Grove Book of Opera*, ed., Stanley Sadie (New York: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997), 541.

[22] Owen Jander, 585.

F^5." Yet in England, Charles Burney referred to him as a contralto.[23] In 1727, Quantz described Faustina Bordoni, whose vocal range was $B^3 - G^5$, as "having a mezzo-soprano voice that was less clear than penetrating."[24] However, Bordoni and her greatest rival Cuzzoni (whose range was $C^4 - C^6$) were considered the two most important sopranos of the eighteenth century.[25] As well, Rossini considered the contralto his favorite female voice,[26] and wrote several operas where the leading heroic male role was written in this range specifically for the female voice. Thus, the vocal range in the title role of his opera *Tancredi* (1813) is $G^3 - G^5$, and similarly, in the role of Arsace in *Semiramide* (1823), the range is $G^3 - G\#^5$. Notably, the heroic role of Armando in Meyerbeer's *Il Crociato in Egitto* (1824), written for the castrato Giambattista Velluti, is also written in a similar vocal range and does not exceed an F^5. As the nineteenth century progressed, the descriptions for contralto and mezzo-soprano roles were not clearly distinguishable; however, more female roles whose vocal range reached above a G^5 were added to the repertory by the major composers.

In summary, vocal aesthetics occupied a critical space in establishing the association of character archetypes with vocal range. The distinction between the vocal categories of

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Henry Pleasants, *The Great Singers: From the dawn of Opera to our own time* (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1966, 1981), 98.

[25] Owen Jander, 585. The prima donnas primarily billed themselves as sopranos and sang soprano repertoire even if they were not truly sopranos. As an example, in the nineteenth century both Maria Malibran and Giuditta Pasta were indeed mezzo-sopranos, but sang soprano opera repertoire. Henri Beyle Stendhal (1783 – 1842) noted that although Pasta's range was from A^3 to $C\#^6$ or D^6, her true designation was that of mezzo-soprano and "any composer who writes for her should use the mezzo-soprano range for the thematic material of his music." See also Henry Pleasants, *Great Singers*, 144. I would also point out that some roles that mezzo-sopranos sing today are designated for soprano voice type in the score. Marcellina in Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro* is a prime example.

[26] Christopher Headington, Roy Westbrook and Terry Barfoot, *Opera: A History* (London: Arrow Books Ltd., 1991), 161.

soprano, mezzo-soprano, and contralto became markers of the types of roles women sang. The soprano voice type predominated as the ideal choice for heroine type of roles, as it still does today. As shown above, the lower female vocal ranges were considered aesthetically appropriate only for the secondary roles of old women, occasional mothers, and lower classed servant-type of characters. Due to the reign of the castrati whose vocal ranges were similar to the women, heroic male roles sung *en travesti* or as breeches roles also became available to the lower ranged voices. Towards the end of the eighteenth century as the mezzo-soprano range became more prominent, this voice type became more often considered for major roles, first, by replacing the castrato in the heroic male roles and, as the nineteenth century unfolded, as major female characters. Notably, the "mother" as an operatic character would progress from a minor, infrequent operatic character to a recurring and principal character of choice, which the three chosen operas will illustrate even though their infrequent occurrences testify to a continued distrust in the ability of the mother character and the lower female voice to captivate operatic audiences.

Opera Plot Developments

The genre of opera as a whole is reflective of its times, and transformations occurred within its evolution that paralleled those in other art forms. Significant influences brought about new categories within the genre. The projection of social structure, as influenced by Aristotelian principles, led to a separation of tragic and comic genres as well as dissemination of moral and institutional messages.[27] Further, issues of gender and class were

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[27] Reinhard Strohm (with Michel Noiray), "The Eighteenth Century," Howard Mayer Brown, et al. "Opera (i)." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* 25 Jul. 2008 <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40726pg4>.

addressed in the plots of operas. While these issues will not be advanced further in this investigation due to space limitations, they have influenced the evolution of plot paradigms. For this investigation, I have examined individual operas from each main period in the opera genre, in order to discern the treatment of the "mother" as an operatic character. The objective was to determine character, voice type distribution, and the frequency of mothers or nurses (who were often substitutes for mothers) as dramatic personae in opera plots.

I began by reading synopses of operas from seventeenth-century Italy, France, Germany and England.[28] Seventy-two Italian operas were mentioned by the musicologists considered, but I was unable to find librettos for twenty-five of them. Of the remaining forty-seven operas, only fourteen included mothers or nurses.[29] In noting vocal aesthetics and characterization, the leading male roles (primo uomo) were designated for either soprano or alto, indicative of the castrati filling them. Secondary male roles were likewise designated for either soprano or alto, similarly with castrati in mind, although actual performance would allow for exceptions as already noted. The leading lady was always a soprano. She could be a daughter or a wife, but was not a mother. Tenors were present occasionally as a love interest, sometimes as masked commedia dell'arte characters, as nurses, or more minor male characters. Basses or baritones characters vary from those of "position" to servant or villain types.

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[28] These operas were mentioned or discussed in Grout and William's *Short History of Opera*, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera*, edited by Roger Parker, and Ellen Rosand and Wendy Heller's books. My sources to locate the librettos were *The New Grove Book of Operas*, edited by Stanley Sadie, and the *New Grove Dictionary of Opera* in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.*

[29] While these women were described as being mothers, their children were not necessarily present as characters in the operas.

The composers and librettists of operas with mothers or nurses will follow. Cesti's *Orontea* (Cicognini, 1656) includes a mother, Aristea (alto). His *La Dori* (Apolloni, 1657) includes a mother's ghost and nurse, Dirce (alto). His opera *Il pomo d'oro* (Sbarra, 1668) includes a nurse, Filaura (tenor), who is also a comic character (all forty roles in this opera are written for either natural male voices or castratos). Cavalli's *Didone* (Busenello, 1641) includes a mother, Ecuba (mezzo), and a nurse (soprano), while his *Ercole Amante* (Buti, 1662) has a mother, Deianira (soprano). Cavalli's *Ormindo* (Faustini, 1664) includes a nurse, Erice (tenor). His opera *Giasone* (Cicognini, 1648-9) was the most frequently performed opera of the seventeenth century, and includes Medea and Hypsipyle (both sopranos), who are each mothers of twin sons that have been fathered by Jason (Giasone), and a nurse (alto). Landi's *Sant' Alessio* (Rospigliosi, 1632) includes a mother and a nurse (unnamed, sung either by a boy soprano or a castrato).[30] Manelli's *Andromeda* (Ferrari, 1632) includes a mother (voice type not specified). Mazzochi's and Marazzoli's *Chi soffre speri* (L'Egisto, 1637) includes a mother, Alvida (soprano). Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse* (Badoaro, 1640) includes a mother, Penelope (soprano), and a nurse, Ericlea, (mezzo). Rossi's version of *Orfeo* (Buti, 1647) includes a nurse, while Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (Striggio, 1607) does not. Finally, Sacrati's *La Finta pazza* (Strozzi, 1641) includes a mother, Thetide (tenor) and a nurse (tenor). In his opera *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* (Bussani, 1676), Pompey's widow Cornelia, mother of Sesto, is a soprano, and Cleopatra's nurse Rodisbe is a tenor. Except for in *Sant' Alessio,* and *Il ritorno d'Ulisse,* the mothers are not seen as positive role models, but rather are portrayed as vain, ambitious, or vengeful.

The French, German, and English operas mentioned by the musicologists totaled twenty-six, for which I was able to read twelve. Only the seventeenth century French operas

[30] Piero Weiss, *Opera, A History in Documents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 26-32.

of Lully and Quinault include two mothers. In the title role, *Alceste* (1674, soprano) is a mother of two children, who offers herself as a sacrifice to save her husband, while in *Persée* (1682) the gorgon Medusa (tenor) births monsters from her blood. In Charpentier's and Corneille's *Médée* (1693), Medea (soprano) is the abandoned lover who not only murders her sons but also poisons her rival Creusa.

The investigation of the above-mentioned seventeenth century operas is not comprehensive, but a pattern emerges that illustrates a stereotyping of characters in opera plots according to voice type. Mothers listed are predominantly altos, supporting my earlier observations regarding their vocal aesthetic. Moreover, mothers in their maternal roles are infrequent operatic characters, and several are negatively characterized. Interestingly, the use of tenor in the role of nurse as a motherly figure is worth noting, and points to the use of servants as a comic effect rather than in a nurturing role.

The most significant current of the eighteenth century can be found in the conventions established in *opera seria* through the literary reforms of Apostolo Zeno and Pietro Metastasio. Zeno favored historical subject matter and sought to rid opera plots of the use of its excesses, which included supernatural interventions, use of machinery, and comic episodes. What Zeno began, Metastasio completed. The plethora of characters, both human and supernatural, confusing plots, and comic scenes gave way to a cast of about six stereotyped characters, orderly plots, restrained emotions together with refined and courtly language. As well, Metastasio favored a happy ending (lieto fine), and the stock figure of a tyrant offering clemency is present at times.[31] As Drummond notes, with the literary reform, the plots reflected the activities of an autocratic court, where political and amorous intrigues were pitted

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[31] Donald Jay Grout, *A Short History of Opera,* 204. 207. Note: *La clemenza di Tito, Siface, ré di Numida, Il ré pastore, Catone in Utica,* and *Ipermestra* are examples.

against conflicts arising from exhibitions of despotic power versus servitude, duty over obedience, virtue over vice, and temptation over fidelity.[32]

Moreover, Aristotelian principles sway the criteria important to the themes of the libretti of Metastasio. Mothers are not significant as operatic characters and are mostly absent from opera seria. With the elimination of the comic scenes from Metastasian plots, even the nurses were removed. A paternalistic society present in life is also present in the "lives" of the characters on stage. Feldman argues that the reason for this is found in the quintessential father figure who was structurally embodied in the divine king since men were seen as the dominant generative force by early-modern Europeans.[33] Further she states:

> Far from grounding itself in realistic polities and genealogies, opera seria thrived on roaming representations of kinship and power in which omnipresence was all . . . Its taken-for-granted nature depended on highly saturated and pliable signs—the divine king, noblesse oblige, the magnanimous prince, the royal crown, the divine sword, the altar and sun, the sacred cup. Enormously plaint, opera seria sounded the absolutist order in a general way while numerous changes were rung on the messages it was understood to express.[34]

Through much of the eighteenth century, *opera seria* was maintained and controlled (sponsored) by the tastes of court cultures, from Naples to St. Petersburg, and from Lisbon to Vienna, or by associations of aristocrats at centers such as Venice, Milan, or London. Metastasio articulated an eighteenth century ideal, and the impact of his influence can be seen in the number of settings of his librettos. The main composers of opera seria were Scarlatti, Leo, and Vinci in Italy, Keiser, Hasse, and Graun in Germany, and Handel in England.

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[32] John D. Drummond, *Opera in Perspective* (London: J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd., 1980), 148.

[33] Martha Feldman, "The Absent Mother in Opera Seria," In, *Siren* Songs ed. Mary Ann Smart (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 32.

[34] Feldman, "The Absent Mother,"36. Feldman takes these signs - the divine sword, the altar and sun, and sacred cup from the opera *Artaserse.* However, the blueprint is typical of many of the libretti of Metastasio. Societal hierarchy is exemplified in the opera as well as in life.

Rameau and Gluck continued the French tradition of ***musique en tragedie***, although seventeen of Gluck's twenty opera seria composed 1742-1763 were to Metastasian librettos.[35] In all, the twenty-seven opera librettos by Metastasio were given more than a thousand settings in the eighteenth century, which attests to both the popularity and influence of these works.[36]

On investigating the twenty-seven librettos of Metastasio (*The New Grove Dictionary of Opera,* in *Grove Music Online*), the mother figure does not fare well as a character in the plots. Martha Feldman notes that Apostolo Zeno showed no special aversion to mothers being represented onstage. The mothers present in Zeno's libretti *Griselda* (1701), *Merope* (1712), and *Andromaca* (1724), for example, are "valorous, protective ones."[37] Mothers appear in only four of Metastasio's libretti. These are: Thetis in *Achille in Sciro* (1736), whose plot is parallel to Sacrati's *La finta pazza* (1641), but the libretto does not mention a nurse; *Ciro riconosciuto* (1736) where Mandane's son Cyrus' life is threatened by her father, King of Media, as it is foretold that he will lose his throne to a descendent; the title character, *Semiramide* (1729), who rules the country of Assyria disguised as her son; and Dirce in

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[35] Thomas Bauman, "The Eighteenth Century: Serious Opera," In *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera*, ed. Roger Parker (Oxford, N.Y: Oxford University Press, 1994), 54. Note: Frederick the Great was always involved in the selection of librettos (favoring Metastasio), and in 1749 began to write plots himself in French prose which his court poet translated into Italian verse for the composer Graun (*Montezuma*, 1755). As well, his Kapellmeister J.F. Agricola preferred the libretti of Metastasio, which were often set at Berlin Opera. See, Pier Tosi, J. Agricola, and Juliana Baird, *Introduction to the Art of Singing by Johann Friedrich Agricola*, trans. and ed. Julianne C. Baird (New York, N.Y: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 4.

[36] Donald Jay Grout, 207, 221. Note: The number of operas written by 18th c. composers testifies to the popularity of this form of entertainment. A tabulation of 40 leading composers of the period shows nearly 2000 works, or an average of about 50 operas each. The sum total of the production of all composers would of course be much greater. One reason for this was that audiences insisted on new music each season while they also welcomed the old familiar librettos year after year. (Grout 221) As well, *Artaserse* was one of Metastasio's most popular texts with over 90 settings between 1730 and 1760.

[37] Martha Feldman, "The Absent Mother in Opera Seria," 32.

Demofoonte (1733), who suppresses both her marriage and her motherhood in order to protect her honor and her son's life (the son does not appear in the opera).[38]

By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, with the birth of *opera buffa* and its hybrid *dramma giocoso*, *opera seria* was still performed but interest in the form began to wane. The castrati lost their popularity and soon disappeared. A changing shift toward comic opera was becoming apparent. An outgrowth from the Italian commedia dell'arte, opera buffa resulted largely from the re-inclusion of comic scenes in between the acts of opera seria, which Zeno and Metastasio thought to be detrimental to the majestic and heroic seria plots. With similar character types to those developed in the comic operas of the seventeenth century, the comedy moved from the lower class farce to social satire between the bourgeoisie and their servants.[39] Characters were often nobility disguised as servants and included deceitful husbands and wives, pedantic lawyers and notaries, bumbling physicians, and pompous military. With the shift in genre, a more realistic treatment of characters was possible particularly between the lovers. Comic characters opened up possibilities for the return of nurses, servants, and confidantes to plots, and feminine figures gained in stature allowing for the possibility of mothers to be included as operatic characters.[40]

Goldoni (librettist) and Galuppi established some successful models, of which *Il filosofo di campagna* (1754) is an example. However, it was composer Niccolò Piccini's and librettist Goldoni's Rome opera, *La buona figliuola* (1760), whose libretto was based on

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[38] It should be noted that while Dirce has a child, her role in the opera is not that of "mother," but rather a typical young "love interest" female character.

[39] John Drummond, *Opera in Perspective*, 190.

[40] Brian Trowell. "Libretto (ii)." *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera.* Ed. Stanley Sadie. *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Accessed 30 Jun. 2008. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O002842pg2>. See also Thomas Bauman, "The Eighteenth Century: Comic Opera," *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera*, 91.

Samuel Richardson's extremely popular novel, *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*, which became one of the best and most popular operas of its time.[41] Both novel and opera reflected sentiments that had become favorable to the women who were theatre patrons. Martha Feldman acknowledges that a different type of heroine emerged, more impassioned and also distressed, which suited the new bourgeois ethos of sentimentality and sincerity.[42] By the 1780's, sentimentalism was reflected in existing literature that praised the importance of marriage and family and stressed the importance of women in their role as mothers. Martha Feldman argues, " Sentimental opera was arguably women's drama about women . . . the sentimental theater coincided with growing pressures on women, public and private, to embody newly formed ideals of naturalness and simplicity, to be better mothers, attentive to new standards of nurturing, health, and hygiene."[43] This ideal of marriage and motherhood was found in the literature of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, such as his novel *Emile*, which was translated into Italian from 1760 until the end of the eighteenth century,[44] and also in the writing of Frédéric Melchior Grimm, whose writings corresponded with the opera reform in Paris.[45] Gluck and Calzabigi's opera *Alceste* (1767) illustrates this well. In the Italian version, the children of Alceste and Admeto are included and sing with their mother. As well, Alceste makes the ultimate wifely sacrifice in her willingness to die in her husband's place.

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[41] Grout, 278.

[42] Martha Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 380.

[43] Martha Feldman, *Opera and Sovereignty*, 381.

[44] Ibid., 382.

[45] Catherine Jean Cole, "'Nature' at the Opéra: Sound and Social Change in France, 1750-99." 2 vol. (Phd. Diss. University of Chicago, 2003), Chapter 5. Cole argues that this is one aspect which brought about reform in French opera of this period.

My survey of the eighteenth century *opera seria* and *buffa* libretti shows that the role of mother as a character in opera is not often included, although as with Gluck, in the examples below the mothers are treated somewhat more respectfully. Comic opera, with its inclusion of servants, does provide opportunity for the presence of nurses or maids as characters, who in their role can be seen as surrogate mothers to their charges. As they are of a lower social class, maternal presence is projected, but not necessarily seen. Apart from the list of mothers taken from my investigation of Metastasio librettos (which I have not included in this tally), *The New Grove Book of* Operas edited by Stanley Sadie lists nine eighteenth-century operas that include mothers. Among them are Handel's and Haym's *Giulio Cesare* (1724, Cornelia), Gluck's and Roullet's *Iphigénie en Aulide* (1774, Clitemnestre), Mozart's and da Ponte's *Le Nozze di Figaro* (1786, Marcellina), and Mozart's and Schikaneder's *Die Zauberflöte*, (1791, Queen of the Night) (see also Appendix A).

The nineteenth century brought on a set of new opera plots, but the stylized conventions of opera characters were firmly in place especially within voice type divisions, although the tenor would replace the castrati in the principal male role and the mezzo-soprano voice type would develop and take over the "breeches" roles. A greater range of characters were explored providing a wider scope for realism (*verismo*), naturalism, and emotional expression reflective of the Romantic period and its exploration of the human condition. The novels continued to be a source of inspiration for operatic subjects, but they also kept mostly quiet about mothers. Goethe's *Sorrows of young Werther* provided the inspiration for Jules Massenet's *Werther* (1892). Other "literary" operas include Gounod's *Faust* (Carré and Goethe) in 1859, *Roméo et Juliette* (Shakespeare) in 1867, Thomas's *Mignon* (Goethe) in 1866, and Bizet's *Carmen* (Mérimée) in 1875, among others, none of which feature mothers.

Both French and Italian opera subjects moved from classical antiquity to medieval or modern history with direct application to contemporary issues and individuals,[46] which, however, again, mostly excluded mothers. Giordano's *Andrea Chénier* (Illica, 1896) is based on the life of the poet of the same name; Cilea's *Adriana (Adrienne) Lecouvreur* (Scribe and Colautti, 1902) is based on the life of the eighteenth century actress; Verdi's opera *Un ballo in maschera* (1859), set to a libretto by Scribe entitled *Gustav III*, is also based on historical fact. The popularity of the simple stories of *verismo* opera at the end of the century, in which the "real-life" emotions of characters are depicted, is best exemplified by Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* (Targioni-Tozzetti and Menasci, 1890). Yet none of the above examples are concerned with motherhood.

Mothers begin to find expression more in comic and *verismo* operas than in serious opera where father figures predominate, but the corresponding biological mother is most often missing. Verdi's operas are prime examples: *Luisa Miller* (Cammarano, 1849), *Rigoletto* (Hugo, 1851), *Simon Boccanegra* (Piave, 1851), *La Traviata* (Piave, 1851), and *La forza del destino* (Piave, 1869), to name a few. Yet, Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades* (composer and M. I. Tchaikovsky as librettists, 1890) includes a Grandmother and a maid; and of course, Catherine the Great appears metaphorically as the "noble" mother figure. In *Cavalleria rusticana*, Turrido's mother Lucia, a peasant woman whose husband is not in the opera, is a major figure in the opera. And in Nicolai's *Die Lustigen Weiber von Windsor* (Mosenthal, 1849), Mrs. Page (mother of Anne) together with Mrs. Ford are central characters in their comical and satirical deflation of Falstaff. Similarly, *Mignon, Carmen,* and

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[46] Donald Jay Grout, 353.

Adriana Lecouvreur, show that women can become the major characters around which an opera revolves.

As opera continued into the twentieth century, I would argue that the feminist movement which began in Europe and America toward the end of the nineteenth century had some bearing on the inclusion of mothers as operatic characters, as well as a greater number of women in opera in general. For example, Susan B. Anthony in Virgil Thomson's 1947 opera, *The Mother of us All* (libretto by Gertrude Stein), is a symbolic mother as she represents the birth of feminism. The opera chronicles aspects of her life as she advocated for women's rights in late nineteenth-century America, and was involved in the women's suffrage movement. Further, fragility and vulnerability in the face of fate, as seen in *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902) and *Madama Butterfly* (1906), were to provide a more basic theme than the gods and heroes of Wagner.[47] As well, the distinctive national subjects introduced by the composers from Eastern European countries brought new cultural distinctness, but as Arnold Whittall suggests, it did not produce radically different librettos.[48]

A list of mothers who appear in the nineteenth and twentieth century opera plots listed in Stanley Sadie's *The New Grove Book of Operas* can be found in Appendix A. It should be noted that the listed operas are primarily from the mainstream of opera repertory, those most performed, and range from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. From a total of 245 operas listed, 66 included mothers as an operatic character. Of these (which I have not included in any other tabulation), 27 were nineteenth-century operas and 31were

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[47] Arnold Whittall, "Opera (i), (VI) The 20th Century," In Howard Mayer Brown, et al. "Opera (i)." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* 1 Jul. 2008. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40726pg5>.

[48] Arnold Whittall, Ibid.

twentieth-century operas. Seven operas belonged to the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries; one nineteenth-century mother was a silent role. Additionally, 18 nineteenth-century and 21 twentieth-century mothers were designated for mezzo-soprano voice type, while 9 nineteenth-century and 10 twentieth-century mothers were designated for soprano. These, and all the previous examples show that while mothers may not be represented prominently in opera plots, their presence has become increasingly evident as vocal aesthetics changed, and history of opera has evolved into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

CHAPTER 3

MEYERBEER'S "LE PROPHÈTE" AND THE ROLE OF FIDÈS

The role of Fidès in Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète* was foundational for launching the mezzo-soprano voice into a position equivalent with her soprano sisters, namely, as a principal female operatic character in a serious opera. Moreover, this opera set the stage for introducing a new type of persona or character type – the mother – into opera plots. These two aspects – the mother and the mezzo-soprano voice – combined would set a precedent that other composers would follow. Further, cast in this unexpected position of primary lead, the mother role of Fidès was equal to the usual heroine roles sung by the soprano voice type and in *Le Prophète* superseded the customary female love interest of the opera (as will be shown below). Henry Chorley describes Fidès as a different type of operatic character, and *Le Prophète* as "the first serious opera relying for its principal female interest on the character of the mother . . . the pathos of maternal tenderness and devotion, pure of all passion had been hitherto unattempted [sic] till it was tried in this opera."[49] Following a short plot synopsis, this chapter will establish context for the opera, and then analyze the character of Fidès to show how her role as a "mother" is significant in its impact on opera plots.

Plot Synopsis

Giacomo Meyerbeer's opera *Le Prophète* with libretto by Eugène Scribe had its triumphal première at the Paris Opéra on April 16, 1849 to a sold out audience. This was

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[49] Angela Cofer. "Pauline Viardot-Garcia: the Influence of the Performer on Nineteenth-Century Opera," (DMA diss., U. of Cincinnati, 1988): 115. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=746323671&sid=1&Fmt=2&clientid =6993&RQT=309&VName=PQD. (Accessed April 2008). The quotation is from Henry F. Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), 261.

Meyerbeer's third grand opera and in its plot and structure in five acts, it conforms to the characteristics of the French Grand Opéra style.

> Act I takes place in a rural district near Dordrecht in Holland. The peasants have gathered and are enjoying the peaceful morning. Berthe (soprano), an orphan and vassal of Count Oberthal (bass), sings of her own joy. Fidès (mezzo), the mother of Jean of Leyden (tenor), is coming to bring Berthe home to her son so that they can be married, but Berthe cannot leave without the permission of the Count. Simultaneously, three Anabaptists, namely, Zacharie (Bass), Jonas (tenor), and Mathisen (baritone), arrive to stir up rebellion among the peasants, but are subdued by Count Oberthal and his soldiers. Berthe asks permission to marry Jean, but finding her attractive, the Count refuses. The peasants react to this, but the soldiers disperse them and take Fidès and Berthe captive.
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> Act II takes place in Leyden at the inn kept by Jean and his mother. Jean is worried because his mother and Berthe have not arrived. The three Anabaptists who are among the villagers in the inn remark on Jean's resemblance to a painting of King David in the Münster Cathedral in Westphalia. Jean recounts his dream to the Anabaptists, in which he is crowned and acclaimed as a messiah, but then surrounded by flames and a river of blood. The Anabaptists interpret his dream to mean that he has been chosen to become their leader, but he is indifferent, seeking only a simple and happy life with Berthe. No sooner have they left when Berthe bursts in, seeking protection from Count Oberthal from whom she has escaped. Jean hides her but Oberthal arrives with Fidès, threatening he will kill her unless Jean hands over Berthe. In an anguished decision, Jean saves his mother over his fiancée. The Anabaptists return and coerce Jean into becoming their prophet and in this way exact vengeance on Oberthal. Reluctantly he agrees, and leaves without saying goodbye to his mother. Jean becomes convinced that God has called him to defend his people.
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> Act III. The Anabaptists are camped in a forest in Westphalia near Münster holding nobles as prisoners as they hope to extort large sums of money from them. Ice-skaters (ballet) arrive bringing provisions for the camp. Zacharie recounts the Anabaptist victories and dispatches Mathisen with soldiers to march on Münster before the emperor's troops can defeat them. Oberthal has infiltrated the camp but is found out. Jean, now known as the prophet, has become disillusioned with all the bloodshed, but on learning that Berthe is still alive and is now in Münster, defers Oberthal's execution and concludes that God wants him to go on to lead the Anabaptist soldiers to victory.
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> In scene I of Act IV the bourgeoisie in Münster are disgruntled due the prophet's tyranny. At the public square, Fidès, now wandering as a beggar, is seeking alms so a Mass can be said for her dead son as she believes he has been killed on orders from the Anabaptist prophet. Berthe has escaped from Count Oberthal and arrives in disguise, but the two women recognize each other. Learning from Fidès that Jean is dead, Berthe determines to avenge his death by murdering the prophet. Scene II takes place at Münster Cathedral where the coronation of the prophet (Jean) is taking place. Fidès prays that Berthe will succeed in her assassination plan. Fidès is horrified to recognize the prophet as her son Jean, and is accused of blasphemy since the prophet is considered to be divine. Jean insists that she is delusional and mad, and forces her to deny him as her son. She does so in order to save his life, and Jean's exorcism of Fidès' "madness" is considered a miracle, praised by the people. Jean leaves for a celebration in his honor and Fidès is taken away by soldiers.
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> Act V. In crypts beneath the palace, the three Anabaptists plot betrayal against Jean. Fidès is brought in, enraged, yet fearful. When Jean comes to see her, she upbraids him as a counterfeiter and blasphemer who has shed innocent blood, but fervently pleads with him until he becomes repentant. Berthe has found admittance to the crypts and plans to set fire to

the store of explosives in order to kill the prophet. At first she is overjoyed to find Jean alive, but on learning that he is the prophet, she denounces him and kills herself. In the final scene, a coronation banquet is being held in the great hall of the palace. When the emperor's soldiers enter the hall to capture him, Jean orders the doors to be sealed. An explosion erupts, and flames shoot up trapping everyone inside. As the great hall begins to collapse, Jean sees Fidès who has come to express her love and to die with him. Together, they commit themselves to God.

Context of the Opera

Following the première of *Le Prophète,* Meyerbeer wrote to his mother: "Many people have said that this opera stands head and shoulders above '*Robert*' and *Les Huguenots*. The reception was *very enthusiastic* [sic]."[50] The London première, again to a sold out audience, took place in 1849. Indeed, by 1912, the opera had received 573 performances at the Paris Opéra alone, and had earned worldwide recognition with performances at all the major international opera houses for decades.[51]

Meyerbeer had completed the first draft of the opera by 1841, and had filed it with a notary in Paris on March 25 until a suitable company of principal singers, which he felt was important for the success of the opera, would be contracted by Léon Pillet, the director of the Opéra.[52] The delay in production was further hampered by the difficult negotiations over

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[50] Heinz and Gudrun Becker, *Giacomo Meyerbeer, A Life in Letters*, Trans. Mark Violette; General Editor, Reinhard G. Pauly (London: Christopher Helm Ltd.), 124.

[51] Robert Ignatius Letellier, *The Operas of Giacomo Meyerbeer* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 199, 200. The 1849 première was based on Scribe's 1839 five act version of the libretto, as the original 1836 version was in four acts; the second scene of act one becomes act two in the 1939 version. See Alan Armstrong, "Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*: A History of its Composition and early Performances," (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1990), vol. 1: 15-28. Meyerbeer made considerable revisions for the characters, adding the Act I Cavatine for Berthe, but greatly reducing her role in Act 4 and 5. He also reduced the finale of Act 5 (couplets Bachiques). See also n. #122.

[52] Meyerbeer had originally planned the tenor role for Gilbert-Louis Duprez, but he was no longer able to vocally sustain the demands of the role. Gustave-Hippolyte Roger was hired to replace him as Jean, but Meyerbeer had to reduce the tenor role considerably for his lighter voice. As well, the original Berthe was to be Marie-Cornélie Falcon (1814-1897) who had created the role of Alice in *Robert le Diable* and *Valentin* in *Les Huguenots*, but she had been forced to retire because she lost her voice. See Steven Huebner, "Le Prophète," *The New Grove Book of Operas*, ed. Stanley Sadie (New York: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996), 511.

who would play the role of Fidès. In a letter to Scribe in December of 1836, Meyerbeer states:

> One of the three primary roles of the piece, and possibly the most interesting, is that of the mother. There is no one at the moment at the Opéra for this post, and it appears to me that before all else it would be necessary to know from the director of the Opéra if he can and if he will engage an artist of talent for this role: this is a vital question.[53]

Further, he considered the role of mother important to the success of the opera right from its inception. This is also seen in his letter to his agent Gouin in 1841, which outlines reasons why Pillet's choice of Rosine Stolz for the role was unsuitable. While the details about Stolz's voice are not important to this study, Meyerbeer's thoughts about the role and voice quality are:

> I found that one of the greatest difficulties was in the casting of the role of the mother. For musical reasons I had decided to write the part for a true contralto...This role of mother always bore a character of unction, religious maternal love, and resignation, and finally, was always sweet, and there was only a single moment of soaring strength in the entire role, that of the finale of the fourth act: for these reasons I did not think Madame Stolz right for the part, on which depends a good portion of the success of the work."[54]

In fact, the continued letters and discussion over this role point to its significance and its importance to Meyerbeer. The only other role of significance to him was that of Jean, the rest he felt were "accessories."[55]

Meyerbeer's aural and visual perception for the role of Fidès was Pauline Viardot, whom he considered the best choice for the opera's success. In the same letter of January 1841, he informed his agent of this:

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[53] Alan Armstrong, "Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*: A History of its Composition and early Performances," vol. 1: 10.

[54] Ibid., 1: 110, 111. From a letter dated January 11, 1841. See also *Giacomo Meyerbeer*: *Briefwechsel und Tagebücher*. ed. by Heinz and Gudrun Becker. III: 311-12.

[55] Alan Armstrong, 1:10.

> The woman who would be admirable in this role, and who would increase the chances of success of this work tenfold is Pauline Garcia-Viardot. Her defects are not defects for this role: she is not pretty, but she does not need to be since she must represent an old woman. One may believe that her voice will possibly not have all the energy necessary for the Opéra, but in this role energy is isolated to one sole instant. Instead of that her beautiful and impressive contralto voice, her big sound, sweet and suave, these are the required qualities the role of Fidès demands.[56]

However, it was not until the Opéra came under the new management of Roqueplan and Duponchel in 1847 that Viardot was retained to sing the role of Fidès.[57] Her performance was viewed as a great success by the majority of the reviewers, both vocally and in characterization. In some ways, the success of the opera was linked with her performance, and conversely, part of her success was due to the character of Fidès. An example can be found in a critique of Viardot by Henry Chorley:

> ...how admirably she was fitted by nature to add to the gallery of portraits a figure which as yet did not exist there. Her remarkable power of identification with the character set before her was in this case aided by person and voice. The mature burgher woman, in her quaint costume, the pale, tear worn devotee . . . was till then a being entirely beyond the pale of the ordinary prima donna's comprehension; one to the presentation of which there must go as much simplicity as subtle art, as much of tenderness as of force, as much renunciation of woman's ordinary coquetries as of skill to impress all hearts by the picture of homely love, and desolate grief and religious enthusiasm. It is not too much to say that this combination to its utmost force and fineness was wrought out by Mme. Viardot, but (the character being an exceptional) to the disadvantage of every successor. There *can* [sic] be no reading of Fidès save hers.[58]

The reviewer from *The Times* of London, likewise, had high praise for Viardot, but also for the character of Fidès:

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[56] Alan Armstrong, 1:111.

[57] Although Meyerbeer calls Viardot a contralto, the range and tessitura written for her in this opera are more characteristic of what would be considered a mezzo-soprano voice type today.

[58] Angela Cofer, "Pauline Viadort-Garcia: the Influence of the Performer on Nineteenth-Century Opera," 117, 118. She cites from Henry Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections*, 261.

> But the masterpiece of the opera, and of Meyerbeer, is Fidès the mother of the Prophet, the devoted martyr to her love of truth and her maternal affection. Fidès has surpassed both Alice and Valentine, while retaining some of the characteristics of both, and that of self-sacrifice in particular. She is the grandest picture in the whole gallery of the French school of opera—a school which, by the way, in spite of its powerful contrasts and vivid dramatic coloring, we never can regard as the truest or the most effective...[59]

The adulation that Viardot received and the success of her interpretation of the role of Fidès cemented her career,[60] and launched the mezzo-soprano voice range as a vocal category appropriate for a leading lady of an opera, into operatic history. At the same time, her success advanced Meyerbeer's choice of a mother as a lead character into a new type of role. According to Pleasants, the role "disclosed a type of matronly heroine especially suited to the mezzo-soprano voice,"[61] and B.L. Scherer likened the character of Fidès to "a matriarch equal in nobility and pathos to the great father figures of Verdi's operas."[62]

It is already clear from the plot that Fidès as mother of Jean of Leyden the false prophet, is not only the female lead, but is also a woman of strength and dignity, particularly in view of the losses and conflicts she endures. Her visibility as an older female character and as a mother is significant particularly in a patriarchal society where mothers were mostly seen as homemakers, with an invisible presence in society. A further look at the character of

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[59] The review was dated Wed. July 25, 1849 and is from the première performance at the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden. It was probably written by James W. Davison, who was music critic of the *Times* from1846 to 1878. He wrote under the pen name of Arthur Pendragon. (As per Basil F. Walsh) http://www.meyerbeer.com/Prophrev.htm (accessed August 14, 2008).

[60] Viardot became a celebrity in Paris, where due to the politics of the opera company, she had been unable to establish herself. She sang the role of Fidès in over two hundred performances in all the major European opera houses of her day. See Angela Cofer, "Pauline Viadort-Garcia," 116.

[61] Henry Pleasants, *The Great Singers*, 218.

[62] B.L. Scherer, "Meyerbeer: The Man and His Music," *Meyerbeer: Le Prophète*, (Columbia 34340, CD. 1976). Also found in on c.d. liner notes (a re-issue of the recording). See also Angela Cofer, "Pauline Viardot-Garcia," 115.

Fidès through Meyerbeer's musical depiction, will point to the centrality that the mother and the mezzo-soprano voice acquire in this opera.

The Character of Fidès and her music

Meyerbeer had asked his librettist Scribe, to "Give the mother naïve language with the inflections of bygone speech in order to characterize the old woman and peasant."[63] With this in mind, he later wrote to his agent Gouin that he envisioned the character of Fidès as an older, but sweet, gentle woman, with "unction, religious maternal love, and resignation . . . there was only a single moment of soaring strength in the entire role, that of the finale of the fourth act."[64] Musically, Meyerbeer achieves this characterization in several ways and these will be shown below.

Act I. Scene (#2)

Act I, is relatively short, and is expository[65] in that Meyerbeer introduces the main characters – Berthe, Fidès, the Anabaptists, and Oberthal – and characterizes them musically. Berthe has become engaged to Jean and is looking forward to her marriage. Fidès is introduced as Jean's sweet, but humble mother who is also an innkeeper. The Anabaptists are revolutionary figures and Oberthal (bass) naturally takes on the role of villain (heard only in recitative). Jean is not present physically in this act, but is introduced through his mother. There is not a lot of physical action here, and the act is more of a snapshot of events that are taking place within the characters' lives.

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[63] Alan Armstrong, 29.

[64] Alan Armstrong, 110. See footnote # 126 above. "Donnez à la mère un langage naïf et avec les tournures de l'ancien langage pour caracteriser la paysanne, et la vielle femme."

[65] As suggested by Karin Pendle, *Eugène Scribe and French Opera of the Nineteenth Century* (Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1979), 512.

A musical tableaux of the opening "Prelude" and the "Choral Pastoral" sets the tone for the act. Meyerbeer's use of winds, oboes, clarinets, and flutes establishes a scene reminiscent of a rustic peasant setting alongside the flowing river Meuse, which is reinforced by bassoons and lower strings in an accompaniment of several series of drones in open fifths. In this aural setting we are first introduced to Berthe in her Act I "Cavatina," (added for the première at the request of Jeanne Castellan). Fidès is then introduced in the number (#2) "Scene" where she is characterized as a simple peasant woman and devoted mother, and shown in her relationship to Berthe. Meyerbeer establishes Fidès' relationship to Berthe through recitative, in which both engage in musical dialogue with each other (#2 scene), and also in their "Romance a Deux Voix" (#4). Fidès does not have an aria in this act although she is visually present in the whole act.

Meyerbeer illustrates the relationship between the two women further in the use of his harmonic language. He uses the key of F major as a means of connecting similar emotions and circumstances together. For example, Berthe's cavatina is composed in the key of B^b major and noticeably, when the harmony moves to the dominant harmony of B^b which is F, she is singing about her fiancé Jean. Similarly, in her recitative, when Fidès is referring to her home and Berthe's place within it, the harmony moves to F major. This occurs in the second number which is composed primarily in recitative and is a dialogue between the two women during which their relationship is established and moved forward.

The recitative for Fidès is more arioso. Meyerbeer gives her short phrases, often one or two measures in length, which are punctuated with rests long enough to register a stop in vocal sound, indicative of shortness of breath and tiredness. Additionally, the rhythm and medium range of the vocal line are reflective of spoken speech, and as the contour is some-

what rolling, gives a sense that she is embracing Berthe through her musical line. In the accompaniment however, florid motivic material suggestive of motion is set in two four bar phrases and two three bar phrases, which add structure to the section that would otherwise sound broken-up. The text for this section is included below.

> Of the girls of Dordrecht
> Berthe is the prettiest
> and the most sensible, and I want to unite you.
>
> And, as of tomorrow, I want
> Berthe to take my place
> in my tavern
> and at my fine counter,
> the finest, mind you, Berthe,
> of the whole city of Leyden!
> Let us go, let us go, let us go!
> For my son expects us
> by this evening,
> for my son expects us
> by this evening. Let us leave![66]

Act I. Romance a deux voix (#4)

Fidès's acceptance and approval of Berthe are further seen in the Romance a deux voix (#4), a strophic duet between Fidès and Berthe, which is also composed in F major, thus underscoring the common interest of the two women in Jean. Both women support each other as they seek Count Oberthal's permission for the marriage, but Fidès is the first to plead Berthe's case. Their common bond is Jean, and the ensuing familial happiness is projected in the refrain of each couplet where their voices unite in parallel thirds as seen in their identical text, "allow it, my kind, my good lord."[67] Moreover, their final cadenza is an

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[66] "Des filles de Dordrecht/ Berthe est la plus gentille/ Et la plus sage, et jeux vous unir/ Et je veux des demain/Que Berthe me succède/ Dans mon hôtellerie/ Et dans mon beau comptoir;/ De toute la ville de Leyde!/ Partons, partons, partons!/ Hâtons-nous, hâton-nous/ Car mon fils nous attend/ Pour ce soir/Car mon fils nous attend/ Pour ce soir. Partons !"

[67] "Permettez-moi/le mon doux, mon bon seigneur."

impassioned plea to the Count, matched in parallel coloratura, the spirit of which is similar to the coloratura of Berthe's aria. Fidès is clearly supporting her. In their intoned happy "ah's," both are confident that the Count will forgo his droit de seigneur.[68]

This duet is an event, which as a set number is static in its action. It is an emotional and passionate plea to the Count that elicits a response. There is an underlying tension in the nature of the request that creates a dramatic situation used by the Anabaptists to further incite the listening crowd to action, and later, Jean, to join their cause. Both Scribe and Meyerbeer could have used a different incident to stir up rebellion. Not only was it a way to bring a love interest into the opera (as was expected by nineteenth century audiences), but it also addressed the inequities of the society Berthe and Fidès were a part of. However, the force of the peasant chorus's *ff* outcry of horror and infamy is clearly indicative of Scribe's and Meyerbeer's own views about the social injustice thrust upon women.

Act II. Arioso (#10)

The music for Fidès in Act II is the Arioso (#10), "Ah, mon fils." The arioso is composed in a two-part AB form, where the A section is in the key of F# minor and the B section is in the key of F# major. It is here that Fidès's noble expression of love for her son is first heard and where she is first plunged into her deep suffering, her "paradise lost." This is the best known aria of the opera, and it is noted for its simplicity, yet fervent dramatic expression.[69] Meyerbeer composed it with "unction and religious maternal love" as he indicated to his agent,[70] and all her love and pathos are embodied in each of the simple short statements.

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[68] This alluded to in Berthe's text, "Je connais votre droit suprême," (mm.25-29).

[69] It is an excellent audition aria for mezzo, and one that I use personally.

[70] Refer to footnote 126, and footnote 150.

The A section includes five short sections in a rondo form, which I will identify as – abaca (mm. 7-34, ex. 3.1 and 3.3). Meyerbeer indicates a *pianissimo* dynamic and that it should be sung with shyness and weeping.[71] A six measure orchestral introduction ending with a Fr.^{6} chord of F$^\#$ minor in m. 6, leads into the actual section "a," which begins with the resolution of the previous chord to the dominant C$^\#$ (see ex. 3.1, m. 7). This in turn leads to the arrival of the tonic in m. 8. Section "a" is characterized by two important motives: one orchestral, underlying mm. 7-13, and one vocal, separated into two gestures, mm.8-9, and 10-11. The orchestral motive also unfolds in two parallel gestures seen in mm. 7-9, and mm. 9-11, and is then continued by the violas using fragmented material in mm. 11-13. In a statement and response, each gesture outlines a I-V progression expressing the welling-up of emotion, and in the response, the grateful blessing indicative of the B section of the Arioso. The fragmented material which is interjected with a rest is indicative of Fidès's sorrow and falling tears.

The vocal motive begins in m. 8 with the words "Ah, mon fils sois béni!" ("Ah, my son, be blessed!"), and is superimposed contrapuntally and coordinated with the orchestral melody. It consists of two short, expressive descending gestures. The first is a diminished third resulting from the two upper and lower appoggiaturas of C#–D natural and B# that both resolve to C#, and the second is the descending diminished seventh A-B#, also resolving to C#. Originating in the baroque "sigh" figures, these gestures create a plaintive cry which is also supported by the plaintive sound of the clarinet. The descending melodic contour interjected with eighth rests, in its brevity, is representative of Fidès's sorrow and falling tears similar to the orchestral gesture in mm. 11-13. A welling up of emotion is heard in the

[71] D'une voix timide, et pleurant.

accompanying orchestral melody starting in m. 8 as the bass line ascends, heard first in the cellos and then carried up $D\#^{6}$ by the flutes (see ex. 3.1).

ARIOSO.

Allegro molto Moderato.

(M. 50=♩) Andante espressivo.

FIDÈS.

PIANO.

dimin.

ms. 7

(d'une voix timide, et pleurant.)

Ah! mon fils sois bé - ni

<u>Ex. 3.1 Act II. Fidès' Arioso (#10) mm. 1-13</u>

This superimposition and dialogue between the vocal and the orchestral motives are important as they become symbolic when they reappear in the orchestral accompaniment of Jean's "Scène et quatuor" (#11). Here, while Jean is contemplating joining the Anabaptists and reflecting on his mother's prayers, the vocal melody of the words "Ah! mon fils, sois beni" from Fidès's arioso is heard in the orchestra, played by the plaintive sound of the oboe. The supporting orchestral melody is also heard, this time in the key of F minor instead of in the $F^{\#}$ minor of the Arioso. (See ex. 3.2, the 6 measures following the tempo indication Andante).

Ex. 3.2 Act II. Scène et Quatuor, (#11) mm. 156-165

The next, small, "b" section of Fidès' Arioso (ex. 3.3) is comprised of an 8 measure sentence (mm.14-21), harmonically organized as i – V – i – V^7 – I, and is divided into two groups of four measures. A two measure motive repeated twice cadences on the dominant at m.7. A closing 4 mm. consequent phrase brings back the tonic (F# minor) at m. 21. These short phrases are more legato in the vocal line, whereas the orchestral accompaniment is marked staccato in mm.14 and 16, the staccato illustrating her dropping tears. "Your poor mother was dearer to you than you Berthe, than your love!"[72] Significantly, Fidès' vocal line of these measures which outlines the above text also appears in Jean's scene (#11, ex. 3.4). Here, during Jean's text, "and her child flees her and abandons her," in mm.166-169,

[72] "Ta pauvre mère te fus plus chère/ que ta Berthe, que ta Bethe/que ton amour!"

cresc.

ta pau-vre mè - re te fut plus chè - re que ta Ber - tha que ta Ber-

pp poco cresc. cresc.

(pleurant)

-tha que ton a - mour ah mon fils ah mon

fils tu viens hélas de donner pour ta mè - - re plus

que la vie en donnant ton bon-heur, ton bon - - heur

pp

Ex. 3.3 Act II. Arioso (#10) mm. 14-30

the orchestral accompaniment repeats Fidès' vocal line of mm. 18-21(ex. 3.3).[73] Following a repeat of the opening "a" (mm. 21-25), the small "c" section of Fidès' arioso (ex 3.3, mm 26-30), is really a short five measure prolongation of the dominant as shown: $V^7 - i^6_4 - V^7 - i^6_4 - V$. The tonic chord is in its most unstable second inversion, musically characterizing the depth of Fidès' despair. Again, the short phrases interjected with sixteenth rests are representative of her sorrow and tears.

Ex. 3.4 Act II. Scène et Quatuor, #11. mm.166-173

[73] "Et son enfant la fuit et la délaisse!"

In the B section of the arioso (mm. 35-62), the tonic remains the same except that the mode changes to F$^{\#}$ major, harmonically outlined as I – IV – V^{7} – I – V^{7} (cadenza) – I (see ex. 3.5). This music for Fidès is full of elation and religious fervor, which is striking in the key of F# major after the plaintiveness of the F$^{\#}$ minor. The juxtaposition of the minor – major tonality illustrates Fidès' own feelings of sadness over Jean's loss of Berthe, as opposed to the depth of love for her son and her devotion to God. The text painting of the words "s'élève ma prière" (my prayer rises) in m. 38 carries the melodic line to its highest vocal range in this aria, an A#^{5}, which also emphasizes this "elevation." A tonic IV – V^{7} – I is reached at m. 45 as the progression moves clearly via the tonic to a full cadence at m. 46. In the cadenza, Meyerbeer also extends the range from a C$^{\#4}$ - G$^{\#5}$ - C#^{4}. In order to achieve the effect of *sanglottant* (sobbing), the rhythms are dotted, and the descending passage that returns to C# is marked by accents. The "ah" in the cadenza is an expression of gratitude to Jean, but the descending line is one of humility as Jean saved her, Fidès, over Berthe. Meyerbeer's notation that she embraces Jean indicates an outward physical expression of her inner feelings (see ex. 3.5 mm. 44-57).

-ni dans le Sei - gneur sois bé -

8ª

p

DOLCE.

(sanglottant.)

CADENZA

-ni mon fils mon fils sois bé-ni dans le Sei-

pp

(elle embrasse Jean avec transport.)

-gneur sois bé-ni dans le Sei-gneur! Jean! ah! sois bé-

PRESSEZ.

RALLENTANDO.

Jean par un geste indique à sa mère qu'il est calme, et l'invite à se retirer dans sa chambre pour se reposer. Fidès, inquiète, hésite, puis obéit, en se retirant lentement.

-ni.

DOUX.

Ex. 3.5 Act II. Arioso (#10) mm. 44-57

Act IV. Complainte de la mendiante (#22)

Act IV is a major act for Fidès musically. Her number "Complainte de la mendiante" (#22) is important for seeing the progression Meyerbeer follows in delineating her character. Her character does not progress dramatically until the finale, yet throughout the opera development occurs through inner, psychological growth. Meyerbeer expresses this as her music expands in range, grows in length, and becomes more virtuosic as the opera progresses. The increased intensity in her music also points to the centrality of her character in relation to the opera's final resolution.

The first scene of this act takes place at the city square in Münster where Fidès is seen begging for alms from the rich nobles in order to buy a Mass for the son she believes dead. From Meyerbeer's direction in the score at the beginning of the scene, we are told that Fidès appears worn out and exhausted, as one who has travelled a long way.[74] The pictorial musical introduction illustrates this clearly. In this "Complainte" or lament, it becomes apparent that Fidès is unaware that Jean has become the Prophet and is still alive. As well, it is not until Fidès meets and recognizes the disguised Berthe that it becomes known (through their recitative and ensuing duet, # 23), that she believes it is the Prophet who had her son Jean killed.

The number "Complainte de la mendiante" (#22), is a strophic two verse aria in an ABAB form, with part A composed in the key of E minor and part B in E major. Example 3.6 shows a portion of the A section. The first musical phrase A (mm. 12-19) has 8 measures, which begin and end on the dominant, and are characterized by short motives that are mostly descending and separated by rests. These short motives are suggestive of the

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[74] "Fidès . . . paraît épuisée de fatigue, sur l'avant-scène."

plaintiveness of Fidès's voice, which is also indicated in the score (d'une voix plaintive). I will call the first two of these descending motives "the crying motif" as it expresses Fidès's text begging ("donnez") in mm. 12-15, and again in mm. 19-23.[75] The phrase is repeated varied at mm. 20-29, ending the first A section of this aria on G major.

The B section of this aria, in E major, is more continuous, (molto dolce) and has broader gestures imploring pity and money from the rich in order to buy a mass for her dear child. One of the most poignant moments comes towards the end of this B section shown in example 3.7 (mm.43-46), where, overcome with grief, words fail her and she can only utter cries of "ah's" ("sanglottant"), first on the pitch b^4 in the octave where natural speech occurs, and then in chest voice an octave lower. The B section concludes dramatically with modulations further away from E minor, to Eb major and minor when she talks about herself being frozen and dead.

[75] "Donnez, Donnez pour une pauvre âme/ Give, give for a poor soul/ and donnez, donnez à la pauvre femme/ give, give to the poor woman."

FIDES. (D'une voix plaintive)

F.

Donnez don-nez pour une pauvre âme ouvrez lui le paradis le paradis donnez donnez à la pauvre femme qui prie hélas qui

dimin. pp un poco rallent. a tempo. p

Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲

cresc. dolce. cresc.

Ped. p

✲ Ped. ✲ Ped. ✲

Ex. 3.6 Act. IV. Compliante (#22) mm. 9-24

dimin.
pp
(sanglottant)
cresc.
-las à mon pau- -vre en-fant ah! ah! ah! pi-tié don-
fp
pp
p cresc.
p
fp

(sanglottant)
Pressez (mais très peu)
-nez ah! ah! ah! hélas pi- -tié.
cresc.
Ped.
Ped.
(à part, avec désespoir.)

Ex. 3.7 Act IV. Complainte (#22) mm. 41-48

Act IV. March du sacre (#24) and Finale (#25)

In his letter to his mother (whose blessing he sought at important moments in his life), Meyerbeer noted that the "March" and the "Finale" (#24 and # 25) lasted twenty-two minutes, and that musically and dramatically they were the high point of the opera.[76] The "Finale," a magnificent Cathedral scene in five sections, with its high drama and huge choral display, marks a huge dramatic shift for Fidès and the greatest conflict between mother and son. Meyerbeer's stage directions of "tremblante," "avec indignation," and "d'une voix suffoquée par les larmes" in the third number of the Finale "Couplets et morceau d'ensemble" (#C), illustrates her heightened emotions. Similarly, the orchestra tempo is marked allegro agitato at the opening, which also increases the tension.

Confrontation between mother and son are brought to a head at the end of the Finale in the "Couplet et morceau" (C) ex. 3.8a, and the "Exorcisme" (#D) ex. 3.8b. The blasphemous "exorcism" of his mother which elevates Jean to divine status, heightens his mother's grief and despair. To increase the dramatic situation as mother and son encounter each other, Meyerbeer employs a bass line in the orchestra that passes through a sequence of diminished fifth tremolo chords – C – F$^{\#}$, D – A^{b}, E – B^{b} (ex. 3. 8a, mm. 45-50)[77]. These tritones of "exorcism" music correspond to Jean's text, "May the light descend upon your brow poor mad woman and enlighten you."[78] Similarly, as Fidès renounces Jean as her son, ("Ah! . . . people! . . . I deceived you! He is not my son!")[79], an exact repetition of Jean's music is

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[76] Heinz and Gudrun Becker, *Giacomo Meyerbeer, A Life in Letters*, 125.

[77] These tritones are also identified by Robert W. Gibson, "Meyerbeer's 'Le Prophète': A Study in Operatic Style," (diss., Northwestern U., Chicago, 1972), 104. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms. Microfilm.

[78] "que la sainte lumière descende sur ton front pauvre insensée et t'éclaire."

[79] "Ah! . . . peuple! . . . je vous trompais! Ce n'est pas là mon fils!"

repeated (ex. 3.8b), to confirm Jean's diagnosis of her delusion. Although mocking the temporary madness, the tritones also clearly illustrate her turbulent inner feelings. Meyerbeer supports this with his markings for the voice, indicating Fidès's use of a "choked voice, barely speaking."

Ex. 3.8 a. Act IV. Finale #25 (C). Couplet et morceau (Jean) mm. 196 - 211

Ex. 3.8 b. Act IV. Finale #25 (D). L'Exorcisme (Fidès) mm. 42-50

Act V. Cavatina and air (#27)

The Act V scene takes place in the crypts. The "Cavatina and air" (#27), is a highly dramatic and emotionally charged scene for Fidès. Considered to be a "*tour de force*" aria for mezzo-soprano voice because of its coloratura (as it was for Pauline Viardot), it requires an extensive range.[80] The vocal range encompasses more than two octaves, the widest of all the music for Fidès, from $a^3 - c^6$. However, the coloratura is not an end in itself. This is where the dramatic and emotional limits of her character are stretched, requiring strength and endurance. Furthermore, this same endurance is required of the singer who embodies her persona. The vocal virtuosity required in this scene gives credence to the experiences Fidès has had. She has lost her son and then found him, met with his rejection and realized that he is the false prophet who is being worshipped as messiah. Her son needs divine intervention and forgiveness petitioned through her supplication and prayers, which Meyerbeer expresses in several ways in this scene.

The number "Scene, Cavatine et Air" (#27) is an expanded scena in four sections. The overall harmonic structure of this scena can be summarized as follows: opening recitative A^b Major, – Cavatina – D^b Major, – recitative – D natural, – Cabaletta – A^b M – E^b M – A^b M. The harmonic form of the Cavatina is ABA and together with the opening recitative will be discussed first.

The opening recitative in A^b major is in two parts. In the first part of the recitative, Fidès is full of fear and foreboding in her text, "O prêtres de Baal." As example 3.9 shows, Meyerbeer progresses into the second part marked allegretto moderato (m.21) via an

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[80] Ibid. In the letter to his mother following the Paris première, Meyerbeer wrote: "During the rehearsals there was general concern as to whether a fifth act would even be possible after the fourth. Nevertheless, Miss Viardot's big aria in the fifth act made such a stunning impression that she was greeted with four rounds of applause the likes of which I have experienced only in Vienna. The response was so overwhelming that the performers had to pause before beginning the duet."

augmented Fr.^{6} – $C^\#$ dominant – $F^\#$ major tonally, before returning to A^b (m.30). Melodically, the vocal contour has wide intervals and passes from chest to head voice and back again with little preparation, while still requiring a legato line from the singer. This corresponds to the vocal gamut of her emotions, from righteous indignation to anger, and also in pitch range, beginning with a $B^{\#3}$, which rises unaccompanied to an $F^{\#5}$ on the word "colère" (wrath) in m. 23, then a G^5 natural on the word "frappe" (strike) in m. 25, that is repeated on an A^{b5}, and then tumbles into low chest register ending on A^{b3} on the text "punish all ingrate children"[81] in mm. 28 – 30. Moreover, the orchestra has its own commentary, corresponding in its descent from $F^{\#1}$ – F^1 natural – E^{b1} in contrary motion to the vocal line. The remote key of $F^\#$ and the rise from $F^{\#5}$ to A^{b5} in the vocal line is reminiscent of the invoked blessing of Fidès's arioso in act two, and Jean's invocation for the exorcism of her madness (now over A^b major and A^b minor from Jean's G major and G minor).[82] When her inner tumult has subsided, Fidès's full forgiveness and deep love for her son are expressed in the Cavatina (see ex. 3.9, 20-32).

The Cavatina ("O toi qui m'abandonne") has an overall form of ABA that progresses harmonically from D^b – $A^{b4}{}_2$ – D^b. The aria is an expression of full forgiveness for her son, with the return to the A section ending with a passionate cadenza, full of love and compassion (see ex. 3.10, mm. 68 – 70). Meyerbeer extends the length and range in this cadenza (a^3 – b^{bb5}) and again uses the "ah!" when words fail, in this way expressing the height and depth of her anguish and grief. In this section the bass clarinet is heard prominently imitating the

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[81] The complete text in this section is as follows: "que sur son front coupable/ éclate ta colère, / frappe, frappe, toi qui punis/ tous les enfants ingrats!" "On his guilty brow/ May Thy wrath burst, / strike, strike, Thou who punish / all ingrate children!"

[82] "Que la sainte lumière/ descende sur ton front, / pauvre insensée, et t'éclaire!"/"May the holy light/ descend upon your brow, / poor madwoman, and enlighten you!"

voice, thereby accentuating Fidès's suffering, while the prolonged sung chest pitches on the word "hélas" in their rocking motion sound disturbingly like a deep moan.

Ex. 3.9 Act V. Cavatine et Air (#27) mm. 20-32

pp

-dieu mon pauvre enfant mon bien aimé sois pardon-

f pp Traînez un peu le mouvement. (mais très peu.)

ad libitum.

Variante. ah! mon pauvre enfant mon bien aimé ah! hélas sois pardon-

-né ah! sois par- -don- -né! a-

Ped.

-né.

Allegretto molto Moderato. (M. 100 = ♩)

-dieu.

(Un Officier arrive, descendant par l'escalier.)

pp f Ped. Ped.

Ex. 3.10 Act V. Cavatine et Air (#27) mm. 66 - 74

A recitative in the key of D follows as orchestral trumpets announce the entry of an officer who informs Fidès that the Prophet is arriving ("Woman, prostrate yourself before your divine master").[83] The low double bass rumblings accompany ominous feelings in Fidès' short response, marked in the score ("d'une voix suffoquée par l'émotion"), which then opens into a cabaletta with extensive coloratura and virtuosic type of singing, clearly expressing her feelings.

The cabaletta is an $A^1A^2BA^1C$ continuous form, and its harmonic progression is A^b major – E^b major – A^b major.[84] The sections are marked by time and tempo changes, with the C section in 4/4 at a fiery allegro tempo of 152. The variation in the A^1A^2 sections is in the cadenzas, the first accompanied by harps as Fidès calls for a heavenly thunderbolt to strike truth into her son. The second cadenza adds the plaintive clarinets as she asks for a heavenly flame to touch his soul. The C section is a type of coda as it increases in tempo, coloratura, and vocal range.[85] The tessitura sits both low and high, with a melodic line that both leaps and flows between the registers, which, like each section is indicative of the gamut of emotions she is experiencing. In addition to the harps, a fanfare by the trumpets, trombones, and horns adds considerable color as the voice invokes the Holy Spirit to descend and bring Jean's heart to repentance.

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[83] "Femme, prosterne-toi devant ton divin maître."

[84] The form is also noted this way by Robert Ignatius Letellier, *The Operas of Giacomo Meyerbeer*, 208.

[85] These are characteristic of a final section of a cabaletta as noted by Don Randel, ed. *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1986), 120.

Act V. Scène et Grand Duo (#28)

The "Scène et Grand Duo" (#28) of Act V between Fidès and Jean, is where reconciliation occurs. Jean is reconciled to his mother and to God. The inclusion of this duet is critical and again points to the centrality of this mother. It matches that of a main duet, which by convention is usually designated for the operatic pairs of lovers. In this instance Meyerbeer omitted the duet between Jean and Berthe, in this way raising the significance of the role of Fidès. In fact, the reunion with Berthe (which follows the duet) is short in comparison. Meyerbeer calls it a "pastorale," and it is actually a trio for Berthe, Jean, and Fidès where together, they recount happier days spent in their humble peasant surroundings.

The shape of the Scene and Grand Duo is recitative – duet, recitative – duet, followed by a coda. Both duets follow a similar pattern. Fidès begins with a "statement" to which Jean responds, and then both join together in duet in similar motion during the first, while more contrasting in the second duet portion. In the first statement (ex. 3.11), Fidès emphatically addresses her son's culpability with indignation and righteous anger (in the key of A^b minor). As example 3.12 shows, Jean's response is in A^b major as he tries to soften her anger with his explanation. However, as remorse begins to sets in, acknowledgment of his guilt elicits the key of A^b minor and an exact repetition of Fidès's opening music.

DUO

Allegro agitato (M. 160 = ♩.)

F.

mais toi mais toi qu'on dé_tes_te ty_ran sous la co _ lè_ re cé_les_te trem_

blant, toi dont les mains sont tein _ tes de sang vas t'en, vas t'en! tu n'es plus rien pour

Ex. 3.11 Scène et Grand Duo (#28) (Fidès) mm. 21-28

Ex. 3.12 Scène et Grand Duo (#28) (Jean) mm. 70-80

In the second duet, Fidès' statement is in E major as her pleading intensifies. Jean's response turns to the dominant B major, and also E minor as he struggles with the thought of repentance. A pedal point on B natural played by the trombones heightens the ensuing tension revealing Jean's inner turmoil, and at the same time also foreshadows the arrival of the emperor's soldiers. The second duet is short but intense. The coda returns to A^{b}, but to the major tonality not minor as in the opening. Fidès begins it with a final plea for repentance on

her text, "Come there is still time . . . God from heaven calls you to him."[86] The duet ends in unison. Fidès persistently urges Jean to seek God's pardon through the repetition of the same text whereas Jean's speaks of his repentance.

Cadenzas

Before concluding this chapter I want to point to the importance of the cadenzas in the music for Fidès as a unifying means for her character. While they signal an impending cadence harmonically, they are not treated as decoration, mere ornamentation, or pure virtuosic display by Meyerbeer. The cadenzas for Fidès are related to each other in expression. As her suffering increases in intensity the cadenzas correspondingly extend in tessitura, range, and rhythmic impetus. Some of the cadenzas are accompanied, but each has moments when nothing but pure voice is heard. Neither the tenor of the words, nor their intent is disturbed when the orchestral accompaniment is silent. The voice alone explodes in an exclamation of true emotion that can compel and be understood without words. This is similarly expressed by Carolyn Abbate who writes:

> Pure voice commands instant attention (both ours and that of the onstage audience), in a passage that is shockingly bare of other sound. In opera, we rarely hear the voice both unaccompanied and stripped of text – and when we do...the sonority is disturbing, perhaps because such vocalizing so pointedly focuses our sense of the singing voice as one that compels...to move us without rational speech. [87]

Therefore, the cadenzas serve an important function. In the case of the early music and Baroque type of ornamentation, a cadenza can "speak" through lament or seduction by its

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[86] "Viens, il en est temps encore . . . Le Dieu du Ciel t'appelle á lui."

[87] Carolyn Abbate, "Music's Voices," in *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 4.

"affect," or as with Fidès express depths of gratitude and devotion, or depths of anguish for which words are impossible. Refer to examples 3.4, 3.8, and 3.9 to compare.

In conclusion, Scribe's and Meyerbeer's creation of the role of Fidès was instrumental in inaugurating the mezzo-soprano voice type into leading lady type of roles that were gender equivalent rather than travesty roles. While the success of Pauline Viardot in the role of Fidès initiated this, it is the aural qualities which characterize the voice type that are significant. Steane describes the mezzo-soprano voice type as one of "common sense . . . It suggests primarily a woman of rational disposition, a mature character, not a flighty soprano . . ." [88] Similarly, in using words like "sweet" and "suave," and "unction" (the ability to soothe), and gentle,[89] Meyerbeer felt that the mezzo-soprano voice type best characterized the role he had written. The adjectives used to describe Fidès set the bar that Meyerbeer used to characterize her in her music as illustrated above, and raised the mother figure to high and noble heights. Similarly, the strength of Meyerbeer's relationship with his mother Amelia can be seen in the noble characterization of Fidès. The blessing conferred on Jean by Fidès is reminiscent of those by Amelia for her son, Giacomo. Finally, her character personifies godly wisdom, unconditional, and sacrificial love, which are key themes in this opera.[90] Fidès, in her role as mother in Meyerbeer's opera *Le Prophète*, is a tightly knit character

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[88] J.B. Steane, *Voices: Singers & Critics* (London: Gerald Duckworth &Co. Ltd., 1992), 35.

[89] Refer to fn. 128.

[90] Robert Letellier, "The Thematic Nexus of Religion, Power, Politics and Love in the Operas of Giacomo Meyerbeer." ©1989 by Robert Letellier. http://www.meyerbeer.com/nexus.htm. (Accessed March 15, 2008).This theme is explored by Letellier. See also Matthias Brzoska. "Meyerbeer, Giacomo." *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (New York: Macmillan, 1980) 16: 572.

who, as a mezzo-soprano voice type principal female personage, is central to the opera's resolution.

The role of Fidès tests both the vocal and physical stamina of the performer in that the highest tessitura and most dramatic scenes occur in the last two acts of the opera where she is front and center in the ensuing action. Therefore, the singer must take care to guard against both vocal and physical fatigue. Furthermore, the simplicity of Fidès's peasant character belies the vocal requirements necessary to sing the role, which the Act II Arioso (#10) with its simpler phrasing may imply. This is a role that belongs to the bel canto type of roles requiring long legato lines and the ability to sing coloratura passages, particularly in the cadenzas which require a performer with an advanced vocal technique, a wide vocal range, and a bel canto type of voice. Finally, based on the musical analysis conducted, with some of the harmonic complexities and intricate vocal lines, this role can be considered vocally and musically difficult, but not insurmountable.

CHAPTER 4

THE ROLE OF KOSTELNIČKA IN JANÁČEK'S "JENŮFA"

Kostelnička, the second mother in this investigation, is a central character in Leoš Janáček's third opera, *Jenůfa* (1904). She is a complex character drawn from nineteenth century Moravian peasant culture and village life. Kostelnička is not her proper name, but is a name designation meaning "Sacristan," given in light of the function this mother performs in the village. She is never called by her first name, though her last name, Buryjovká, is made known from the plot. I have included her in this investigation of the roles of mothers in opera in order to determine whether, as a stepmother, and as a representative of a turn-of-the- century Central European culture, she fits the general archetype of mothers in the broad-er perspective of operatic characters examined here.

The opera is based on Gabriela Preissová's (1862-1946) play, *Její pastorkyňa* (Her Stepdaughter),[91] first produced at the National Theatre in Prague in 1890. Janáček wrote his own libretto and kept the prose structure of the play. The play's subject matter was adapted from two actual incidents Preissová had read about while in Moravia. The first was a crime involving a jealous peasant who slashed the face of his brother's fiancée because he was in love with her. The second involved a woman who helped her stepdaughter throw her illegi-timate baby into the sewer.[92] However, Preissová did not want to have two murderesses as

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[91] Její pastorkyňa means "not own daughter," and can be translated as both foster-daughter and stepdaughter. From a letter to Max Brod, who completed the German translation, Janáček asked for Stieftochter rather than Ziehtochter or Pflegetochter, although the 1917 UE adopted the Pflegetochter (foster-daughter). See Stanley Appelbaum, "Introduction to the Dover Edition," *Jenůfa, Leoš Janáček*, (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002), xiii. I will refer to Kostelnička as stepmother.

[92] John Tyrell, *Janáček's Operas, A Documentary Account* (London, Boston: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1992), 41. See also Karel Brusak, "Drama into Libretto," *Jenůfa; Katya Kabanová*, by Leoš Janáček and Gabriela Preis-sová (London: J. Calder; New York: Riverrun Press Inc., 1985), 14.

part of her play and therefore chose the stepmother as the perpetrator instead.[93] A brief synopsis of Janáček's opera libretto follows.

Plot Summary

The Buryja family tree begins with the old, widowed Grandmother Buryjovká, whose two sons are both deceased before the opera begins. Laca and Števa are stepbrothers from the first of Buryjovká's sons, whereas Jenůfa is the daughter of Buryjovká's second son, Thomas, whose wife (Jenůfa's mother), died and who had married Kostelnička. But Thomas also died, leaving Kostelnička to raise his daughter Jenůfa. Therefore, Kostelnička is a stepmother to Jenůfa. Števa is Grandmother Buryjovká's grandson, and Jenůfa's cousin, whereas Laca and Jenůfa are step cousins. The two half-brothers are at odds because Števa, who is good-looking but irresponsible, has just inherited the valuable mill, and because of wealth may be able to buy his way out of the army. Laca received only a minor inheritance from his step-father, and is forced to work at the mill. Further, he is hopelessly in love with Jenůfa, and on returning from his own conscription learns that Jenůfa has become engaged to Števa.

Act I takes place at the Buryja mill, where Jenůfa is anxiously awaiting the arrival of her fiancé Števa, hoping he will not be drafted so that they can be married before her pregnancy is revealed. Grandmother Buryjaková scolds her for her absentmindedness, and Laca teases her mercilessly. The mill Foreman and Laca are also heard in conversation, with Laca hoping that Števa will be drafted, and the Foreman relating that he has been exempted. Števa arrives intoxicated with a group of recruits and musicians who continue their celebration. Their merriment and dancing is interrupted by Kostelnička, who has observed Števa's drunkenness and withholds permission for his marriage to Jenůfa until he can remain sober for a whole year. Angry and jealous that Števa has been exempted, Laca confronts Jenůfa with his feelings for her, and in an ensuing struggle which occurs as he attempts to kiss her, he deliberately slashes the "rosy cheeks" Števa so admires.

Act II takes place at Kostelnička's home about five months later. Having learned of Jenůfa's pregnancy, Kostelnička has kept her hidden in the house, away from the villagers. Jenůfa has given birth to a son and he is now eight days old. Kostelnička tries to convince Števa to marry Jenůfa. Števa refuses, offering money instead, as long as the child's paternity remains a secret. He has already become engaged to the mayor's daughter, Karolka. When Laca arrives, Kostelnička is frantic with worry and tells him everything. At Laca's hesitation at accepting Števa's child as his own, in desperation, Kostelnička tells him that the baby is dead. She sends him away, and left alone decides that she will "take the child and give it back to God," and rushes off into the winter night. Kostelnička returns to find Jenůfa awakened from a drug-induced sleep, and explains that she has been sick with a fever for two days, during which her baby has died. Telling Jenůfa that Števa has rejected her, Kostelnička advises her to marry Laca. Jenůfa reluctantly agrees.

Act III, takes place two months later at Kostelnička's home on Jenůfa's and Laca's wedding day. Guests who begin to arrive include the mayor and his wife, Števa and Karolka, and some of the village girls, who have come to sing a wedding song to Jenůfa. As Kostelnička is about to give her formal blessings to the marriage, a commotion is heard outside. A frozen body of a baby is found under the ice and Jenůfa identifies its red bonnet as that belonging to her own baby. The horrified crowd threatens to "stone her to death," but it is Kostelnička who saves her by confessing to the murder. Before she is arrested and led away, Kostelnička begs for forgiveness from Jenůfa, admitting that she loved herself more than her stepdaughter.

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[93] John Tyrell, *Janáček's Operas*, 41.

> Jenůfa, understanding that her stepmother killed the child out of love for her, forgives her. Alone, Jenůfa tries to dissuade Laca from marrying her, but he remains firm. The opera draws to a close as Laca and Jenůfa pledge to meet the future together.

The Context of the Opera

Leoš Janáček's opera *Jeji pastorkyňa* (Her Stepdaughter), more commonly known as *Jenůfa*, premièred at the Na Veveří Theater in Brno on January 21, 1904, after a long composition period which began in 1894. Although Janáček wanted to see the opera première in Prague, it was rejected by the director of the Prague National Theatre, Karel Kovařovic (1862-1920). The Brno première was conducted by Janáček's former student, Cyril Metoděj Hrazdira (1868-1926), and despite the fact that the orchestra did not have the specified number of instruments requested in Janáček's score, the performance was a success. The applause after the first act was so favorable that Janáček was called out after the conclusion of each act. The press also gave favorable reviews, especially the Prague critic Emanuel Chvála of the *Národní politika* (National Politics), and the Brno critics considered it the "first realistic Moravian opera."[94]

The first act was completed on March 18, 1894, according to the dates Janáček inserted into his copy of Preissová's play. Teaching duties and also Janáček's immersion in his ethnographic studies and collection of folk songs interrupted further composition. Another possible reason cited as a cause for this break is that he may have been rethinking his approach to composing opera.[95]

Janáček returned to the composition of *Jenůfa* again near the end of 1901, and Acts II and III were completed amidst the backdrop of his personal grief at the loss of his daughter Olga. In March of 1902, while in St. Petersburg, she had contracted typhoid fever, and due

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[94] Jaroslav Vogel, *Leoš Janáček, A Biography*, 148.

[95] John Tyrrell, "Leoš Janáček," In *Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Ed., Stanley Sadie (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1988), 769.

to residual weakness from rheumatic fever was unable to recover. Olga died on the 26th of February, 1903, and Janáček wrote March 18, 1903 as being the completion date of the opera. The opera is dedicated to her, and twenty years after Olga's passing, Janáček wrote in his autobiography: "I would bind *Jenůfa* with the black ribbon of the long illness, the pain, and the sighing of my daughter Olga and my little boy Vladímír (who had died of scarlet fever in 1890, at the age of two)."[96]

Janáček continued to send requests to Kovařovic, the director of the Prague National Theatre, to have the opera performed there, but each time he was refused. In the meantime, there were additional revivals of the opera in Brno, in 1904-05, 1906, 1911, and 1913, for which Janáček continued to make revisions. The most significant revisions that would speed up the drama were made for the 1906 – 07 production, before the publishing of the 1908 vocal score. Some revision suggestions, mainly shortening specific orchestral interludes and two ensembles came from Hrazdira; others were made by Janáček himself. During one of the revisions a substantial part of Kostelnička's aria of Act I (Act I, from R. 66--"Aji on byl zlatohřivy," – up to one measure before R.74 (around 75 measures) was cut by Janáček him-self, and so it did not appear in the 1908 published vocal score. In fact, it did not reappear in printed score until after 1969, and was not included in productions of the opera until after 1970.[97]

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[96] John Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas*, A Documentary Account, (London; Boston: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1992), 45. Taken from his autobiography of 1924. Also in Tyrrell's "CD Notes," *Leoš Janáček, Jenůfa*, (Sir Charles Mackerras and the Vienna Philharmonic, 1984, Decca 414-483-2), 9.

[97]It has been noted that Kovařovic refused Janáček on the grounds of a cynical and cutting review of his opera *The Bridegrooms* in 1887. A thorough account of the details of the revisions and cuts can be found in the pre-face to the 1996 orchestral and vocal score. Scholarly research, including that by John Tyrrell and Charles Mackerras, was conducted of the existing orchestral parts of 1904-13, and the original 1908 version of the opera was restored as much as possible. Universal Editions issued a Kovařovic version in 1918. Since the UE edition of 1969, the Act I aria has been included. There has been much debate as to whether the Act I aria was dropped

It would take nine invitations before Kovařovic would attend a Brno performance of the opera, and it was only through the persistence of colleagues and friends that the opera was finally produced in Prague in1916. Kovařovic felt that the work had some structural issues, and would only produce it if Janáček would agree to a number of cuts and changes to the score. These were mainly orchestral changes and an addition to the final scene that John Tyrrell calls a "grandiose canonic apotheosis."[98] Following its eventual triumphant première at the Prague National Theatre on April 25, 1916, and its subsequent success in Vienna in 1918, Leoš Janáček's opera *Jenůfa* became part of the main repertory of operas.

Like Janáček's other operas, women characters and their stories play a significant role in *Jenůfa*. The opera has three generations of women giving advice to each other. Moreover, the plays or novels which Janáček adapted into his operas have female characters that fit into a similar archetypal pattern. As Michael Ewans points out, these are suffering women who are centre stage and more significant than the male characters of the operas.[99]

A younger female for example, is the primary lead and considered the heroine. She is contrasted with an equally significant older woman character that is authoritarian and harsh.[100] In Janáček's operas *Jenůfa*, *Osud* (Fate), and *Kát'a Kabanová*, all three older women, Kostelnička, Mila's mother, and Kabanicha respectively, are mothers. Mila's

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before the opera's Brno première, or during the revivals. The original full manuscript score and piano-vocal score were destroyed at Janáček's request in 1910, and only the copyist Štross's copy remains, which includes all the revisions together, including those by Kovařovic, making it difficult to determine exactly when the cuts were made. See John Tyrrell, "Preface," in *Leoš Janáček, Jenůfa, Její pastorkyňa*, librettist, Gabriela Preissová, Brno version (1908) Full Score, eds. John Tyrrell and Sir Charles Mackerras, UE 30, 145, 1996. See also John Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life*, vol. 1(London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 2006), 604-612.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Michael Ewans, *Janáček's Tragic Operas* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1977), 23.

[100] Ibid., 23. Michael Ewans discusses this in more detail.

controlling mother is the cause of the death of her daughter in a murder-suicide. Similarly, Kabanicha domineers her son, and ultimately her ill treatment of her daughter-in-law, Kát'a, causes her to commit suicide. Finally, Kostelnička's censure of Števa as well as her prohibition of Jenůfa's and Števa's marriage changes their lives irrevocably. Thus these strong older women characters provide compelling dramatic contrast to their younger counterparts, and a wealth of opportunity for Janáček's interpretation and imaginative composition. Moreover, as mother characters they illustrate the nineteenth-century Czech proclivity for choosing wives and mothers over husbands and fathers as dominant and influential operatic characters.[101]

Janáček's Speech Melody (nápěvky mluvý)

An important aspect of Janáček's compositional style lies in the dramatization of his characters. Unique and human, they grow out of Janáček's interpretation of Czech human speech with its related melodic curve. Janáček collected fragments of human speech and referred to them as *nápěvky mluvý* or speech melodies. An examination of the concept of speech melody is important to this investigation and analysis of the character of Kostelnička. Although there is some debate as to when Janáček actually began to develop speech melody, due to the long history of the opera's composition there is evidence that speech melodies impacted his composition of *Jenůfa*.[102] Furthermore, I will show evidence of it in my musical analysis.

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[101] John Tyrrell, *Czech Opera*, (N.Y., N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 206.

[102] According to Tyrrell and Cernohorská (another Janáček scholar), Janáček himself provided five different dates for the beginning of his concept of speech melody. These are 1879, 1881, 1888, 1897, 1901. 1897 is generally the accepted date among scholars. Cernohorská sees speech melody as a culmination of his interest in folksong, not his starting-point. See John Tyrrell, *Years of a Life*, 479-484. Vilem Tausky, notes that in lectures during the 1920's Janáček was heard telling his students that he had been "collecting speech rhythms for over 50 years." (This would indicate1879 as the start date for beginning his collection of speech melodies).

As Janáček became more immersed in his ethnographic studies and collection of folk songs mainly in the regions of Moravia and Slovakia in the late 1880's, he also began to notate conversations that he heard into short melodies. Janáček discovered that although most of the peasants were illiterate, their culture was orally expressed through approximately 3000 songs. Moreover, because the words of the Moravian peasants were "short and rather chunky," their sentences in turn were brief and disjointed, and the musical phrases followed suit.[103] This was noted on examination of the collection of Janáček's *Moravian Folk Poetry in Song*, where the short sentences are evident in the two measure phrases common to these songs, as well as in the rhythmic irregularity within the phrases at times, due to text declamation.

Speech melody entails expressions of human speech that are notated in musical terms. Most people, regardless of nationality, do not speak in a monotone "monodrone."[104] We inflect our words and sentences by raising or lowering pitches to emphasize what we are saying. For example, when ending a sentence that is a question, there is a natural tendency to inflect the end of the sentence upwards. Word stress, and syllable length and stress, are also a factor. The short sentence: "Oh no, you don't!" is an example. If the reader practices speaking this sentence several times with different intonations, it will become apparent that meaning changes with each different inflection. It is almost impossible to speak this sentence with intent on a single monotone pitch. Moreover, the reader will likely note that

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See, Vilem Tausky, "Recollections of Leoš Janáček," in *Janáček, Leaves from His Life*, ed., and trans., Vilem and Margaret Tausky, (London: Stanmore Press Ltd., 1982), 21.

[103] George Martin, "Leoš Janáček: A Life in Music," 22.

[104] This is a term adopted from Speech Pathologist Linda Rammage (part of the Vancouver, B.C. Voice Clinic team) that aptly describes some peoples' manner of speaking, but it is not considered the ideal. Infusing our speech with energy will naturally produce speech inflection that raises or lowers as we communicate our intent.

there is a melodic curve that occurs, and that the inflection of this short sentence is within a range of a fifth, the syllables corresponding roughly to the musical pitches: doh – soh – me – doh.[105] Further, on singing the sentence using the musical pitches, it will become apparent that the words of the sentence tend to move faster in speech than in singing because we instinctively project note values onto the words when singing them, which take a slightly longer time to complete. This will become significant during my discussion of Kostelnička's music where note value duration is at times determined by syllabic or word stress.

In studying the difference between the singing and speaking voice, it is obvious that the range in speaking is far more limited in pitch range than in singing. The pitch range we speak in a normal voice lies generally within a range of a perfect fourth or fifth interval, which corresponds to my example above.[106] This range is not fixed to a specific pitch range in that it is unique according to each individual and varies with the size of their larynx (hence their voice type). However, during excited speech, spoken pitch range can exceed that of an octave, particularly in female voices.[107] Similarly, in the singing voice this spoken pitch range is known as chest voice, and can be carried up as high as $C\#^5$ – $F\#^5$ with limited laryngeal adjustment.[108]

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[105] I have found this to be a very good vocal exercise when used with students who are particularly interested in using "belt" voice in the Pop or Musical Theatre genre, as it naturally encourages crico-thyroid muscle involvement in vibration of the vocal folds, and reduces the pressure at vocal fold level.

[106] James McKinney, *The Diagnosis and Correction of Vocal Faults* (Nashville, Tennessee: Genevox Music Group, 1994), 166. See Chapter 10 for a detailed analysis of speaking voice function, including assessment and correction.

[107] James McKinney, 168. According to his studies, an untrained singer can often sing an octave and a fifth in chest voice.

[108] The opinion on this varies. Mathilde Marchesi (1821-1913) felt the highest note sung in chest voice should be E^5 or $F^{\#5}$ for females. See Barbara Doscher, *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice*, 2nd ed. (Metuchen, N.J. & London: Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1994), 178. See also Richard Miller, *The Structure of Singing* (N.Y.: Schirmer Books, 1986). Chapter 10.

Similarly, in his studies of speech melody, Janáček observed snippets of everyday conversations, noting the inflection of the voice, the rhythm, and duration of the words, and the emotions behind the words. He "observed the area around the speakers, their movement, the time of day, lightness and darkness, coldness and warmth."[109] Janáček felt they were a "window into the soul," and "like a photograph of the moment."[110] The notated speech melodies became raw material for instrumental and vocal motives. He did not quote them directly. Since these were based on real people and their experiences of life, the gestures of these melodies (as opposed to specific words or conversations) and their emotional intent were essential to Janáček. He felt that the motives with their tone color imbued the music with "national spirit," and were foundational for "creating a *national* work of art."[111] Janáček explained his speech melody concept on numerous occasions:

> Nápěvky mluvý [speech melodies] are an expression of the whole state of the organism and all phases of spiritual activity which flow from it. They show us the fool and the wise one, the sleepy and the wakeful, the tired and the nimble; they show us the child and the old one, morning and evening, light and darkness, scorching heat and frost, loneliness and company. The art of a dramatic composition is to make *nápěvky* which like magic convey the vitality of human beings in certain phases of life.[112]

Also:

> Every person, even the most unmusical, has an intonation in his speech, which pleasant or not, springs from a musical sensibility and, accordingly, can be carried over in its subtlest shades into musical language. In my activity as a composer I have borne in mind that a person's voice changes with every hour that passes, since he is subject to the effects of outward impressions and inward experiences. A person's feelings are always there

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[109] Leoš Janáček, as quoted in John Tyrrell, *Janáček: Years of a Life* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 2006), 480.

[110] John Tyrrell, *Years of a Life*, 478.

[111] Michael Beckerman, *Janáček as Theorist* (Stuyvesant, N.Y: Pendragon Press, 1994), 49.

[112] Leoš Janáček in Michael Beckerman, *Janáček as Theorist*, 48.

> in speech, expressed in its intonation and especially in its speed, even its pitch.[113]

Two examples from his collection of speech melodies further illustrate Janáček's concept and methodology. The first is a conversation he overheard while at the railway station, at twilight, six o'clock on 15th of February, 1922, between two young women who were waiting for the train. Janáček observed that the first speaker was taller than her friend. She had rosy cheeks and was wearing a red overcoat, "flouncing petulantly" as she spoke "scornfully." Her friend was paler, dressed in a "shabby dark jacket," and her answer was given as a "sad echo" in response to her friend. He further noted that the friend did not move, "half through obstinacy, half still expectant" [114] (see example 4.a).

We'll stand here but I know he won't come! What does it matter!

Ex. 4.a

Although this conversation only lasted a mere .4029 of a minute, seeing the written pitch inflection these two women used, it is possible to 'hear' the scorn in the descending phrase, "I know he won't come," as well as 'feel' the sadness in the second woman's immediate

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[113] John Tyrrell, *Years of a Life*, 480.

[114] Vilem and Margaret Tausky, eds., and trans., *Janáček, leaves from his life* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1982), 49-51.

response, "What does it matter!" The bottom system is Janáček's harmonization of the speech melody.

The second example is taken from Janáček's notated conversation with Smetana's daughter which took place in December of 1924. As part of their conversation Janáček remarked that she spoke very quietly (despite her reputation of being highly strung), and also admired the low register of her voice, particularly as she had a soprano singing voice. The segments chosen for illustration are Smetana's daughter's responses to Janáček. Her first was a response with regards to possibly having inherited her father's manner of speaking, the second, a response relating how her father would state his age, and the third, her question to Janáček, asking if he had perfect pitch[115] (see example 4.b).

That interests me very much

I am sixty-three years old

Can you pitch an 'A'?

<u>**Ex. 4.b**</u>

From these snippets of conversation, it is possible to observe the low vocal pitch range, a calm manner of speaking seen by the quarter note values and the repeated pitches (as opposed to what may be expected from a person with a high strung nature where the melodic contour may have greater variance), as well as the natural upward inflection at the end of the phrase when asking a question. Of interest also, are the minor and diminished intervals that occur as a result of her vocal inflection, the difference in speed between the delivery of the 4.a and 4.b, and how their different textures could influence Janáček's vocal text setting and character dramatization.

Janáček has not been alone in his interest in the effect of speech on melodic contour.

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[115] Ibid., 59, 60.

Voice studies were conducted by voice scientists in the twentieth century that measured the contour of pitch during various emotional states. In one study of 1963, twenty-three actors of various nationalities were asked to express eight different emotional states that included neutral, love, joy, sorrow, fear, solemnity, comedy, irony, sorrow, and fear, by reading a single sentence. Important to the study is that the contours of these emotions could be scientifically analyzed by measuring the phonation frequency, amplitude, and spectra of the speaker. On examination, regardless of nationality (which included a group of Czech students), the mean phonation frequency of joy was raised, while it was lowered in sorrow, and intermediate in the neutral mode. [116] A similar study which analyzed the four emotional states of sorrow, anger, fear, and neutral also revealed interesting findings. Statistically, according to Sundberg, the findings resulted in sadness showing the lowest average phonation frequency, the neutral state and fear being higher, and anger, the highest.[117] As frequency can be measured in pitch, this type of study is helpful in determining how the range of emotions can be identified according to specific melodic contour and range.

Further, it aids in understanding the significance of Janáček's own study of speech melody with its far-reaching compositional possibilities. As already noted, the detailed information included with each of his examples, plus his intuitive interpretation of speaker and speech, are an indication of how intricate his operatic characters are constructed. Therefore, to quote the Programme leaflet from the 1904 première: "The principle on which *Jenůfa* was written is the following: Janáček recognized that the truest expression of the soul lies in

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[116] Johan Sundberg, *The Science of the Singing Voice*, (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1987), 147. Different studies were conducted in 1962, 1963, and 1972.

[117] J. Sundberg 148. See p. 146-156 for a detailed discussion and spectrograph images on these studies among others.

melodic motifs of speech. Thus instead of the usual arias he used these [speech] melodies. In so doing he achieved a truthful expression in places where this is surely one of the most important things."[118]

Kostelnička (Sacristan)

The character of Kostelnička is pivotal to the outcome of the story, more significant than Laca's jealousy is to the disfigurement of Jenůfa, which caused Števa's rejection of her. Kostelnička's character is unique in that she stands in opposition to the encountered traditional views and presentations of women during this time, many of whom were likely illiterate[119] and seen only in their roles in the home. Kostelnička is an empowered woman, successful in a man's world. She is educated and has endured an abusive marriage. Widowed while Jenůfa was still little, she became a working parent who lovingly and sacrificially raised her abusive husband's daughter as her own.[120] Moreover, Kostelnička is such an exceptional woman, as the Foreman notes to Laca in scene two of the play, that the priest put her in charge of the chapel, a position normally held by a man. As the Kostelnička[121] (sacristan), she is a highly respected member of the church who leads processions, is responsible for burials, and knows how to cure the sick.[122] Understandably, she is proud of her accomplishments and of her success in raising and educating Jenůfa, despite her

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[118] John Tyrrell, *Janáček's Operas*, 55.

[119] George Martin, "Leoš Janáček: A Life in Music," 22.

[120] In scene 3, act I of the play, she describes to the mayor's wife how she even sold her Marianthaller, given to Kostelnička at her christening, to buy food for Jenůfa, instead of selling the house, moving and finding work and childcare. See, Barbara Day, trans. "Jenůfa" in *Eastern Promise*, edited by Sian Evans and Cheryl Robson (London: Aurora Metro Publications Ltd., 1999), 22.

[121] The name Kostelnička is derived from the Czech word for church "kostel." See Karl Brusak, "Drama into "Drama into Libretto," 14.

[122] Ibid., 14. See also scene 3 of act 1 of the play. See, Barbara Day, "Jenůfa," 19-23.

hardships. Further, in her stature as the sacristan, she sets the example for the strict moral principles of her society.

Kostelnička's Act I aria, *A tak bychom šli* (R. 64 – end of R. 79)

Dramatically, this aria occurs at the Buryja mill, and is part of a larger scene that involves the main characters as well as villagers. Prior to Kostelnička's aria, Števa, Jenůfa's lover, arrives drunk with the other recruits, celebrating his exemption from the draft. After throwing money at a band of musicians, he leads the villagers in a dance which is interrupted by Kostelnička's entrance. In her aria, she shares her personal experiences of living with a profligate, alcoholic, and physically abusive husband, hoping to dissuade her stepdaughter Jenůfa from marrying Števa. Gradually, her plea becomes more assertive, forbidding Jenůfa to marry Števa unless he proves that he can stay away from alcohol for an entire year. She ends up threatening Jenůfa that God will punish her if she does not obey. Toward the end of the scene, the recruits as well as Kostelnička's own mother-in-law, Grandmother Buryja, comment on what a "stern" woman she is.

In his musical setting of Kostelnička's aria, Janáček omits much of her background, turning her into a rather authoritative, strict, and stony stepmother. It is hard to understand why Janáček would have cut the middle section of her Act I monologue since the omitted section would have heightened the impression that Kostelnička's rigid moral principles as a sacristan are behind her disapproval of Števa. I have included the middle section in my analysis not only because it belongs to the most recent scholarly edition of the opera, but also, and especially, because it helps to flesh out her personality and provides perspective and rationale for her opposition to Števa.

The music of Kostelnička's Act I aria (R. 64-end of R.79), without the cut (see fn. 97), is a fairly lengthy scene, and for purposes of clarity I will discuss the aria by musico-

dramatic sections. The aria is through-composed, but both musically and dramatically it falls into several shorter subsections that can be divided into three larger groupings: the first from R. 64 to 65; the second from R. 66 through one measure before R.74 (this is the middle [B] section of ca. 75 measures that Janáček at some point cut from the score); and the final section (C) begins just before R74 through to the end of R79.

Preceding Kostelnička's emphatic entrance and interruption of Števa's wild drunken frolic with the recruits and villagers (right before the actual beginning of the aria, R. 63-64) is a short *fortissimo,* orchestral dissonant chromatic ascending passage making her arrival frigh-tening, as if it were that noise that silenced the startled revelers. Their silent reaction provides a counterpoint to the third act, where on the contrary, the villagers react with horrified cries when she admits to the murder of the baby.

Section A (R. 64 through R. 65–a total of 20 measures) begins with the text, "A tak bychom šli celým životem" (And this is the way your whole life would be . . .). Dramatically this section is expository, introducing Kostelnička's rebuke and her motivation for refusing to allow Jenůfa's marriage to go forward. Her entrance and interruption of the merriment of Števa and the recruits are an over-reaction to the dancing and celebration. After the short four measure transition of ascending chromatic scales discussed above, it begins on a tonally stable 6/4 chord in A flat minor (R. 64), which remains the prevalent tonal anchor in this section. However, the tonality gets a strong modal character through the emphasized raised sixth degree of the scale (F natural) suggesting the Dorian mode. Musically, this short section plays an introductory role, as in addition to establishing the tonality, it introduces one of the most important motives (see ex. 4.1), and establishes Kostelnička's declamatory style.

The vocal setting depends highly on Janáček's own libretto, which he chose to write in prose rather than in verse. This opening section is punctuated by short vocal melodic phrases, one or two measures in length that are fitted to the text. The short motives are related to the language. Czech words are generally accented on the first syllable, sometimes lengthened on the second syllable, therefore leaving the final syllable short and weak.[123] The parlando-style repeated C^{b5} pitch is situated in the upper middle part of the chest voice, a pitch that is increased from a normal speaking range and level, exhibitive of rigidity and an already increased level of agitation.

The texture of the vocal line does not have the melodic curve that Jenůfa's music often has, which endows it with much more softness than Kostelnička's lines. This is a straight-forward no-nonsense type of declamation, whose harshness and intonation in monodrone denote a tragic urgency. The tone becomes more scattered with exaggerated expressive jumps shown, for example, in the melodic rise in pitch for punctuation and emphasis on Jenůfa's name at R. 64:7, "and you, Jenůfa, you Jenůfa." The highest and most extreme vocal jump in this section is over an octave to G^5, at the text, "could be picking up the scattered money!" (R. 64:10 – R. 65:3). This short exclamatory speech melody on the Czech text "peníze sbírat" (scattered money) with its repetition and octave leap are pithy, delivered with aggravation, directed at Števa and by relation referencing Kostelnička's late husband. Janáček seems to use consistently this device of repeating a short declamatory statement twice with the goal of emphasizing a character's urgent and obstinate goal of persuasion, as well as a more "primitive," "rough," "peasant" means of insistence through repetition of words rather than by lengthy argumentation.

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[123] Milena Janda, UBC, Vancouver, B.C. Czech coach. See also Jaroslav Vogel, *Leoš Janáček, A Biography*, 22, 23.

The last two measures of this section (R. 65:3) begin an important two measure speech melody motive on the text, "You are all the same [you Buryjas!]"[124] (ex.4.1). The speech accents of this motive highlight the sarcastic dig directed to Števa that carries with it some punch. By association, it also includes the recruits as they are privy to her sweeping outburst. Vocally, it occurs at the upper end of the chest register for the voice, creating strident vocal declamation. The motive gains its sarcastic effect not only from its irregular rhythm—a syncopation in 9/8 on the second syllable of the word "věrná" followed by a quadruplet eighth figure over three beats—but also by placing this longer note on the modal "dorian sixth" F natural, the highest note of the motive, stridently outlining the discordance between this major sixth and the subsequent descending minor arpeggio of the tonic A flat (see ex. 4.1). This is a recurring motive that will be heard both in the voice and in the orchestra in the following B section and will be described further there. Aside from actual repetitions of the same motives, most of Janáček's motives seem related through either varied repetitions or transpositions of pitches, or rhythmic similarities or variations, all being based on the language accentuations of the text. It is this commonality of declamation that unifies the style of the entire aria.

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[124] "Věrná jste si rodina!" Until otherwise noted, English translations are by Milena Janda, Vancouver, B.C. Czech coach. This is a clear example of speech melody as the accentuation and rhythm of the music follow the patterns of the Czech language.

Ex. 4.1 Act I. R. 65:1-5

The B section has a total of 75 measures, from R66 through one measure before R74. It begins on the words "Aji on byl zlatohřivy" (He had the same golden locks). This is the development section of the aria, both dramatically and musically. It is here that Kostelnička develops her case, providing personal details that justify her opposition to Jenůfa's relationship with Števa in light of her own bad experience with her late husband, namely Števa's uncle. Dramatically, one can discern three parts in her argument: first she describes the early part of her relationship with her late husband, relating how her mother warned her but she did not listen; then she recounts that he squandered their money and got drunk every day; and in the third, more intensified, section, she conveys that she suffered but survived physical abuse, concluding that Števa is not a worthy partner for Jenůfa. In the last subsection, Jenůfa joins her stepmother in a short duet.

Harmonically, the A^b minor of Section A continues until R. 67 where a new less stable texture settles in, with new inflections towards C minor. This is followed by a long ambiguous section at R. 68, where a more stable E flat minor pedal seems to act as tonic, but turns out in the end to have been leading back to A^b minor (at R. 68+9) with a motivic version of 4.2 almost similar to that of R. 66 (see more below). However, the remainder of this section is otherwise unstable, moving through a series of unresolved CT dominant and diminished chords before returning to A^b minor at the end of the B section.

The speech melody motive described above (ex. 4.1), returns in this section stated by both voice and orchestra. The melodic contour and the pitches are identical as shown in the example, but the rhythm has been slightly altered to fit the new text at R66: 3 – 5 (see ex. 4.2). Here each note of the motive is an eighth note, but the strong accents over the first four notes change the rhythm to a duple rather than triple one. Janáček repeats the motive again at

R 69, in both the orchestra and voice, but with different text. The motive is continued by transposition and sequenced, heard both in winds and low strings, with the final note overlapping the beginning of the next repetition. The last is by the low strings, and a segment of this motive is continued by the cellos, reflecting Kostelnička's deep pain, significantly connected with the text, "he beat me cruelly, beat me cruelly."[125]

Example 4.2 shows another related speech melody motive at R. 66: 1, 2, heard first from the orchestral wind section, and then on Kostelnička's opening phrase in this section of text which is "He was of the same golden mane"[126] (see ex. 4.2). The melodic contour has similarities to example 4.1, but the melody emphasizes the raised sixth and seventh scale degrees, and is made up of minor and major seconds and a perfect fourth, giving it a modal quality. Here the clarinets and bassoon support the voice, while the cellos repeat the 4.1 motive during the rests. Significantly, this motive is taken up by the orchestra; Kostelnička does not repeat it. Her vocal line returns to an increasingly more obsessive, single-pitched monodrone declamation, and a melody that is a variation of the strident 4.1 motive. Motive 4.1 is also part of the orchestral texture, but is fragmented with pitches moving in descending rather than ascending order. By using Kostelnička's own motives, Janáček continues to illustrate the harshness of her character as well as the severity of her experiences.

[125] "A tu mě bijával, a tu mě bijával."

[126] "Aji on byl zlatohřivy."

*)
66 a tempo Moderato (♩. = 66)

Cl. (in Si♭) — (pp) dolce
Cl. basso (in Si♭) — (pp) dolce
Fg. — 1° (pp) dolce — 2° (pp) dolce — cresc.
Kost. / Küst.

A - ji on byl zla-to - hři-vý a pě-kně, pě-kně u - rost-lý, že jsem po něm tou-ži -
Ach, wie blond war sein Kraushaar, hübsch war er, kräf-tig ge - wach-sen. Ich hab nach ihm mich ge-
Ah, he was so strong and man-ly, gold - en haired and handsome; I longed for him to be

66 a tempo Moderato (♩. = 66)

Viol. I — pp — cresc.
Viol. II — pp — cresc.
Vle. — pp — cresc.
Vlc. — cresc.
Cb. — pp

Ottav. — Fl. — a 2 — f — sf
Ob. — ff
Cl. (in Si♭) — 1° — f — sf
Cl. basso (in Si♭) — sf
Fg. — a 2 — f — sf
Kost. / Küst.

la, už než se po-pr-vé o-že-nil, a - ji za vdov - ca zno - val!
sehnt, lan-ge, be-vor er ge - hei-ra-tet; sehn-te mich noch, als die Frau starb.
mine e-ven be-fore his first marriage, e ven more af-ter his wife died!

6/8

Viol. I — f
Viol. II — f
Vle. — f
Vlc. — f — sf
Cb. — mf — f — sf

*) v rkp.: předznamenání:

Ex. 4.2 Act I. R. 66: 1-9

At R 70, in emphasis of the text, "[The Miller of Veborany] is not worthy to stand beside my stepdaughter,"[127] Janáček uses a variant of the 4.2 (R. 66: 1, 2) motive, elongating the pitch values to duplets (see ex. 4.3, R. 70:4, 5), contrasting the triple divisions used by Jenůfa whose voice just joined Kostelnička. In this rather jagged and punctuated melody, through several ascending transpositions, Kostelnička's rebuke reaches a fevered high tessitura to A^5 (R.71) and except for brief moments of release, stays at that level. As if to echo Kostelnička's agitated spirit, the dynamic level of the orchestra rises and the texture thickens. Here the C^b monodrone of Kostelnička's opening vocal rebuke becomes a C natural pedal, and the harmony has a C major quality, despite the fact that the accompanying chromatic motives in the violins sequence upwards by half step, rendering the tonality unstable. This unstable tonality underscores Kostelnička's thoughts that she is saving Jenůfa from Števa, and by association, from a life and fate similar to hers. Further, Janáček returns to this same tonality again in Act II, as Kostelnička rationalizes that she can save Jenůfa by taking the child back to God.

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[127] "že třeba Veboranský mlynář], jěstě není hoden státi vedle moji pastorkyně!"

Cl (in Si♭) a 2
Fg
Cor. (in Fa)
Tr. (in Fa)
Kost. Küst.
(ukazuje na srdce)
(zeigt auf das Herz)
(points at her heart)
já už to dá - vno, dá vno v ni tim,
al - le-zeit fühlt ich's tief im Her zen,
I have a feel - ing deep with in me,
že tře - ba Ve-bo-ran-ský mly - nář,
daß die-ser Mül - ler aus We-bo-ran
that the mill - er of Ve-bo-ra-ny
70
sfp cresc.
Viol. I
Viol. II
Vle
Vlc
Cb.
marcato
p cresc.

Cor. ingl.
(p) dolce
Cor. (in Fa)
Tr. (in Fa)
mf cresc.
(prosebně ji přerušuje)
(sie unterbricht flehend)
JENŮFA · JENUFA (interrupts her pleadingly)
espress.
Ó
O
Oh
Kost. Küst.
ješ - tě ne - ní ho - den stá - ti,
lan - ge noch nicht gut ge - nug ist,
is not yet wor - thy to be mar-ried,
ješ - tě ne - ní ho - den stá - ti
lan - ge noch nicht gut ge - nug ist,
is not yet wor - thy to be mar-ried,
div.
Viol. I
Viol. II
Vle
Vlc.
Cb.

Ex. 4.3 Act 1. R. 69: 11 – 70: 1-8

The final section (C) begins just before R74 through to the end of R79. This is not a recapitulation of previous musical material, and although the A^b minor key returns, it is against an F natural pedal (horns) and a C^b pedal (low strings and tympani) which blur the tonality. This is the climactic section of Kostelnička's rather public rebuke, like an ax falling on the head of Jenůfa's hopes of not having to bear the brunt of her moral failure. There is an outburst of objection by the recruits in the middle of Kostelnička's rebuke, just as she has rescinded consent to Jenůfa's and Števa's marriage until Števa can remain sober for one year. The recruits interrupt but, significantly, use Kostelnička's own motive (4.1), in diminution and therefore much quicker on the text, "She's a hard woman"[128] (See ex. 4.4, R 74: 13 – 75:1, 2). These words are sung between tenors and baritones, and then baritones and basses, each voice interjecting before the other has finished. This slight to Kostelnička is more pointed when the B section of the aria is included, because their music refers to the same motive on "all the Buryja men," and by inference, Kostelnička challenges both Števa's and the recruits' values. With the recruits' music, Janáček moves by CT association to $D^{b}{}^{6}_{4}$ major tonality and ends with the tonic D^b reached via secondary dominant chords with CT association. Kostelnička's threat, "God will punish you severely if you don't obey me, God will punish you severely,"[129] is apocalyptic as inadvertently, not aware of Jenůfa's pregnancy, she is bringing judgment on herself as well.[130]

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[128] "Ale ja to přisná ženská!" This example is also mentioned by John Tyrrell, "Musical Aspects," from, *Leoš Janáček, Jenůfa* (Sir Charles Mackerras and the Vienna Philharmonic, 1984, CD, Decca 414-483-2), 24.

[129] "Bůh tě tvrdě ztrestá když mne neposlechneš, Bůh tě tvrdě ztrestá!"

[130] Michael Ewans, *Janáček's Tragic Operas*, 45. Ewans also makes reference to this.

139

75

Più mosso

a2

6
16

REKRUTI
REKRUTEN
RECRUITS

Tenore I. II.

A - le je to přís - ná žen - ská, a - le je to přís - ná
Herr-gott, ist das ei - ne Stren - ge. Herr-gott, ist das ei - ne
How can she be so hard - heart - ed? How can she be so hard -

Basso I. II.

A - le je to přís - ná žen - ská! A - le je to přís - ná žen - ská,
Herr - gott ist das ei - ne Stren - ge! Herr-gott, ist das ei - ne Stren - ge,
How can she be so hard - heart - ed? How can she be so hard - heart - ed?

Più mosso

75

Ex. 4.4 Act I. R. 74:13 – R. 75: 1 – 3

With this analysis I have shown the continuity that flows from one section to another and also the musical motives which connect the B section to A and C. The obsessive mono-drone pitched phrases in the B section in fact strengthen the moral rigidity of her character, and the jagged speech melodies with their modality and often high vocal tessitura intensify the severity of her experiences. Interpretively, the high tessitura and the declamatory motives, which are coarse and reflective of Kostelnička's stern character, are difficult for a singer to maintain since they go against the grain of the bel-canto type of legato singing. This aria requires a dramatic vocal timbre, in order that the assertive repetitions sound like a reinforcement of orders that brook no further objections.

Act II

Act II is relentless for Kostelnička. Her character is fully defined through the dramaturgy and also through Janáček's music. She is confronted with her own moral dilemma and the cultural traditions whose rigid social values have defined her life and her position as a sacristan. Religion and morality were seen as highly important, setting a high standard for the behavioral code of the villagers, and are significantly personified by Kostelnička. Chastity before marriage was an important traditional aspect of a religious peasant community. While pre-marital sex was forbidden, the courtship practice of bundling was a legitimized arrangement where young men and women could explore their sexuality, but without actual intercourse. As Christine Worobec states,

> Intimate encounters . . . also provided them with an opportunity to examine a prospective suitor or bride for physical defects that would make a permanent union undesirable. Bundling customs were furthermore the ultimate traditional expression of the double standard. With community approval young men tested their girlfriends' moral strength by making

> sexual advances. Only a girl who controlled her temptress impulses and refused to give sexual favors was worthy of marriage.[131]

Young women were at greater risk, for promiscuity that resulted in pregnancy was cause for disgrace and public humiliation, as well as damaging prospects for a good marriage. The public disgrace and stigma pronounced on the girl was rarely the same for the father of the child. An example from the late nineteenth century, taken from the region of Blata in southern Bohemia, further illustrates this:

> A fallen young woman was forced to stand in front of the village church with two short boards fitted about her wrists like the stocks or pillory, (known as "s housličkama" or "with violins" in Czech). She was expected to greet parishioners with 'Welcome to church; I have sinned carnally.' And as they left Mass she entreated them with 'I greet you with God's word – where can I ever put down this fiddle.' If the young girl was fortunate enough to eventually marry, derisive songs were sung at her wedding to remind her of her earlier transgression.[132]

From these two examples, it is possible to discern the anxiety and dilemma that both Kostelnička and Jenůfa find themselves in. Unable to bear the censure of the villagers, Kostelnička keeps Jenůfa hidden in the house, while explaining that Jenůfa has gone to Vienna. The pretense in her lie is justified by the rationalization that she has saved them both from ridicule and shame. Additionally, in her position as sacristan Kostelnička is morally superior to the rest of the villagers, and therefore, Jenůfa's fall is a considerable blow to her pride.

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[131] As quoted by Diane Paige, "Women in the Opera's of Leoš Janáček," (PhD diss., University of California, 2000), 67-68. She quotes, Christine D. Worobec, "Temptress or Virgin? The Precarious Sexual Position of Women Post emancipation Ukrainian Peasant Society," in *Russian Peasant Women*, eds. Beatrice Farnsworth and Lynne Viola (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 47.

[132] Diane Paige, "Women in the opera of Leŏs Janáček," 68. See also Barbara Alpern Engel, "Peasant Morality and Premarital Sexual Relations in Late Nineteenth Century Russia," *Journal of Social History* Vol. 23, No. 4 (Summer 1990): 695-714. She notes that transgressing sexual norms, women were judged harshly, publicly shamed in various ways, for example, tarring the gates of the home of the unchaste girl. (699) Similar court-ship practices of bundling are noted in her article.

The incessant pounding C^b tremolo heard in Act I becomes a C# in the orchestral prelude of Act II ($C^\#$ minor), and continues into the first scene in Kostelnička's and Jenůfa's dialogue and short duet. Turning to the sharp side from C^b is indicative of heightened agitation which is expressed by orchestral tutti tremolo. It takes on further guises throughout this act depending on the harmonic material Janáček is using.

However, despite her heightened emotional state in scene one, the melodic line of Kostelnička's music is less angular and softer, until her thoughts turn to Števa and his son; then her melodic line rises in pitch and takes on the reproach of the first act aria. Janáček reminds us that Števa's drunkenness and lack of character (to Kostelnička's mind) are not far from her thoughts, as the music of the recruits and Števa's arrival in act I are heard in the orchestra on Kostelnička's text, "And all that time his father, that worthy fellow, did not care a rap!"[133] (R.7). The theme returns again at R.11 as Kostelnička describes how the howling of the baby will "drive them mad!"

While Kostelnička sees the child as an object of misery and her music sounds reprimanding due to short monodrone pitched phrases, Jenůfa sees a child born out of love. In their short duet section, her music is lyrical with the gentleness of a loving mother who places her child's needs above her own.[134] This is contrasted even more in the second scene, where in her monologue Kostelnička vents her hatred for both Števa and the baby, and her melodic lines become angular and clipped. However, Kostelnička is forced to become more conciliatory in scene three in her attempt to persuade Števa to marry Jenůfa, seeing this as the

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[133] "A jeho hodný otec se ani ve snu o to nestará! Ale bude bečat, bude domrzat!" (Act II, English translations are taken from Otakar Kraus and Edward Downes. Taken from *Leoš Janáček, Jenůfa*, (Sir Charles Mackerras and the Vienna Philharmonic, Decca 414-483-2, CD. 1984).

[134] Michael Ewans, *Janáček's Tragic Operas*, 51-52. Ewans covers this in some detail.

only way to save them both from ridicule. In her dialogue with Števa, Kostelnička's music displays moments of high tension both in the tessitura of her vocal line, and its dissonance, and Janáček again returns to the repeated tremolo to sustain dissonance and instability. It is only while she is reduced to begging on her knees that her music briefly takes on a more lyrical quality.

<u>Act II, scene 5, *Co chvila*</u>

By scene five of Act II, Kostelnička stands in sharp counterpoint to the gentler and humbled Jenůfa who learns to accept Števa's abandonment, her baby's death, and her own fate. Whipped into irrationality through her hatred of Števa and the baby, Kostelnička has become an anguished, guilt-ridden woman. Known as *Co chvila,* Kostelnička's aria encompasses all of scene five and is pivotal for her, as it is the culmination of all her lies and deceit, and is climactic in the opera's overall dramaturgy. Therefore, I would like to focus on some of the aria's defining moments, which will be discussed in three main sections based on the dramatic structure.

The aria is through-composed, and its tonality ranges from both minor and major modes, inclusive of passages of unresolved chordal progressions, and melodic material that uses both whole tone and octatonic material to create modal sounding melodies. The first section, A, is comprised of the first thirty-one measures (to the end of R. 67), while the second, B section, begins at R. 68 and continues through to the end of R. 68, and the conclusion begins at R. 69. Harmonically, the predominant tonal areas of the aria can be identified according to the sections.

Section A, to the end of R67 as noted above, is to the text: "In a moment . . . a moment . . . and I have to wait here a whole eternity a soul's eternity. What if I took the child off somewhere? No . . . no . . . The baby's the only obstacle, a life long disgrace! That

would be a way of redeeming her life, and it's God who knows best how everything stands."[135]

The beginning of this section is drastically different from the previously analyzed act one aria. The "con sordino" tremolando violins, the slow tempo, and the legato vocal phrases indicate from the outset a lyricism that was absent in the Act I aria. Although the aria's two opening statements of "in a moment" are still short, in their lyrical softness and their interaction with the muted violins they sound more like bel canto recitative-arioso figures than the coarse, speech-like motives of the first aria. The melody is, however, still based on speech accents, and the one that Janáček uses here is a version of Laca's own, "In a moment, I'll be back,"[136] from the previous scene. Janáček transforms it slightly by raising it up an octave to conform to Kostelnička's vocal range, dropping down a semi-tone to E^b from Laca's E natural, and changing the intervals from whole tone, half-step order, to a half-step rise and then fall for Kostelnička (see exs. 4.5 and 4.6).

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[135] "Co chvíla…co chvíla . . . a já si mám zatim přejít celou věčnost ce lé spasení? Což kdybych raději ditě někam za vezla? Ne . . . Ne . . . Jen ono je na překážku, a hanbu pro celý život! Já bych tim jí život vykoupila . . . a Pánbůh, on to lejlépe vi, jak to všecko stojí."

[136] " Co chvíla budu tady."

Fl
Ob.
Cl. (in La)
Fg.
Cor. (in Fa)
Laca
Co chvi - la bu-du ta - dy, co chvi - la, co chvi - la bu-du ta - dy, co chvi - la!
Gleich will ich wieder hier sein, im Au - gen-blick, gleich will ich wieder hier sein, im Au - gen-blick.
I'll on - ly be a mo-ment, one mo-ment, I'll on - ly be a mo-ment, one mo-ment.
(odejde) (ab) (exit)
Viol I
Viol. II
Vle.

UE 30 140

Ex. 4.5 Act II. R. 63:8-12

KOSTELNIČKA BURYJOVKA
KÜSTERIN BURYJA
KOSTELNICKA BURYJA

Largo (♩ = 69)

Co chvi - la... co chvi - la...
Im Au - genblick... im Au - genblick...
One mo - ment! One mo - ment!

Viol. I
Viol. II
Vla.

Kost. Küst.

pp dolcissimo

a já si mám za-tím pře - jít ce-lou věč - nost, ce - lé spa - se - ní?
Und in - des - sen soll ich ver-lie - ren al - le E - wig-keit, all mein See - len - heil?
In that mo - ment must I for - feit all my hopes of e - ter - ni - ty?

Viol. I
Viol. II
Vle.

cresc.

Ex. 4.6 Act II. R. 63: 13 - 64: 1 – 7

The tonal area in the first eight bars of the A section alternates between B^{b} minor $^{6}{}_{4}$ – E^{b} minor^{6}, which Janáček uses effectively to heighten the tension dramatically and illustrate the brink at which Kostelnička stands, and her inner struggle with the choices she is facing. He then begins a development of the dramaturgy, moving through several tonal centers as Kostelnička rationalizes the child's death as her only recourse (see text above). These occur from R. 64: 8 (second half of ms.) to R. 65: 5, and are E^{b} major^{7} – C# $^{\circ}{}^{4}{}_{2}$ – A major^{7} – $D^{\# ø}$ – C major ^{6}/C major ^{7} – $B^{b\,ø7}$ (heard against an A^{b} pedal).

The opening tremolo in the strings is reinforced by the winds from R. 64:8 on, as Kostelnička's agitation is emphasized through this section. Melodically, the vocal line combines local tonal allusions with pitches moving in half and whole tones, occasionally suggesting octatonic formations, while the accompaniment tremolos are formulaic without anchoring a stable tonal reference. Therefore, through both tonal and melodic means, Janáček continues to reference Kostelnička's guilt-ridden state. At R. 65: 5 – 8, on the text, "[I could by such] a deed save her life,"[137] Janáček moves temporarily to a C major/ C major^{7} harmony. As in the first act aria, Kostelnička thinks it is she, rather than God, who can save Jenůfa's reputation.

As Kostelnička gains courage to commit the deed, Janáček changes the texture of the orchestra at R. 66, by adding the harp in a chordal texture, moving the violins back to "arco," and expanding a more lyrical, "espressivo" accompaniment to the entire orchestra. A B^{b} minor chord is intoned against an A^{b} pedal in the double bass and cello, acting as a seventh to the chord, thus creating tension and dissonance. Now the gestures of the vocal line become longer and longer, with crescendos and decrescendos, supported by similar phrasing in the

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[137] "Já bych tím jí život vykoupila . . ."

orchestra. With the insistence and repetition of the text "God knows best how everything stands," the intensity, range, speed and volume grow. Again, it is a reminder of Kostelnička's Act I aria, and the role she sees herself in as Jenůfa's fierce protector.

The B section of *Co Chvila* begins at R. 68 and continues through to the end, for a total of eight measures. Harmonically, this section is dominated by G major – D major^6. This corresponds to the text: "So to the Lord our God I'll send the boy! It will be swifter and better! Then, when the spring melts the ice away, there'll be no trace of him! God will surely take him; he is too young to have sinned yet!"[138] This section is newly articulated by a change in texture—the tremolos emphasize every beat with new, shimmering, repetitive, pitch oscillations in *fortissimo,* the orchestra is in tutti here, and the texture is very thick, all playing in measured tremolo, except for the harp which continues its motive from the A section. The pitch range between the instruments is also quite wide; the low strings go as low as F^2, two and a half octaves below middle C, while the flutes reach a range of $G^{b\,6}$, intensifying the drama. The voice gradually reaches a maximum of tension by rising to higher and higher registers, culminating with a climactic moment on high Bb^5 (R. 68:5), whose motive is almost identical to what the violins played in the previous scene; in this way Janáček reminds us of Kostelnička's lie to Laca, saying that the baby has died (Act II, scene 4, R.61: 1-3. see ex. 4.7 (violins), and 4. 8 [R 68: 5]). The presence of the motive is also important for the final section of the aria as Janáček uses it as a recurring speech melody.

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[138] "Já Pánubohu chlapce zanesu . . . Bude to kratši a lehčí! Do jara, než ledy odejdou, památky nebude. K Pánubohu dojde dokud to níčeho neví."

(Kostelnička vzrušeně přejde jizbu a chopí hlavu do rukou)
(die Küsterin geht in der Stube auf und ab, greift sich an den Kopf)
(Kostelnicka crosses the room holding her head in her arms)

Laca

Štef - ko-vo dě - cko?
Kind von Ste - wa?
take Ste-va's ba - by?

Con moto (♩ = 92)

Viol. I

Viol. II

61

Ottav.

Fl.

Ob.

Cl. (in Si♭)

Fg.

Cor. (in Fa)

Tr. (in Fa)

Tbn.

KOSTELNIČKA BURYJA

La - co, ó vě - ru, vě - ru, ó vě - ru, vě - ru, už ten chlap - čok ne - ži - je...
La - ca, o glaub' mir, glau-be, o glaub' mir, glaub', das Kind ist ja ge - stor - ben...
La - ca, you must be-lieve me, you must be-lieve me, that poor child no long - er lives.

61

Viol. I

Viol. II

Vle.

Vlc.

Cb.

Ex. 4.7 Act II. R.61: 1-3

Fl. — Ob. — Cl. (in Si♭) — Fg. — Cor. (in Fa) — Tr. (in Fa) — Tbn. e Tb. — Trgl. — Kost. — Viol. I — Viol. II — Vle. — Vlc. — Cb.

muta in Ottav.

Do ja - ra, než le-dy o-de-jdou, pa-mát - ky nebu-de.—— K Pá - nu-bo-hu do-jde,
Ehe der Früh - ling das Eis schmilzt, ist kei - ne Spur mehr da.—— Eh —— es einen Schmerz fühlt,
Then, when the spring melts the ice a-way, there'll be no trace of him!—— God — will sure-ly take him,

Ex. 4.8 Act II. R. 68:3-5

It is ironic that throughout this rationalization of her premeditated act of murder, a G major/minor, the dominant of C major, is prevalent (though with an added Eb). This is significant in keeping with my earlier remarks that Janáček moves to the C major tonality during times when Kostelnička rationalizes that she is the best judge to "fix the situation" (see above). Seeing the child's removal as the only recourse, Kostelnička usurps God's role as judge, which Janáček articulates through the dominant of C major. The importance of C major will be further seen at the end of Act III, when Janáček again returns to it as Kostelnička appears as a contrite, broken woman, and the key signifies the hope she feels at Jenůfa's forgiveness of her reprehensible act.[139]

In the harmonic structure of the third and concluding section of the aria, an A^b minor pedal is heard against B^b minor and E natural diminished chords, before the big climactic moment underscored by a B minor^{o7}chord, and the aria is brought to a sharp close through a sharp unprepared move from the prevalent E^b minor harmony into a final A major $^6_4$ chord. This section begins at R. 69 with yet another change of texture and motivic structure, increasing the tension even more. This corresponds with the text: "How they would taunt me! How they would taunt Jenůfa!"[140] Moreover, the section is the harbinger of Kostelnička's emotional demise. The harmonic instability of the tritone intervals established between the tonic notes of the B^b minor and E natural diminished chords, as well as between the E^b and A major harmonies, emphasize this psychological downfall. The orchestra responds in a flurry of activity, as the descending motive (ex.4.8) is shortened to thirty-second notes, and is heard

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[139] John Tyrrell. Musical Aspects," from, *Leoš Janáček, Jenůfa*, (Sir Charles Mackerras and the Vienna Philharmonic, 1984, CD, Decca 414-483-2), 21. See Also Michael Ewans, *Janáček's Tragic Operas*, 66-67. Both refer to the significance of the key of C major at the end of Act III. The other observations about the key of C are my own.

[140] "To by se na mne, na Jenůfu sesypali!"

like a pedal in an orchestral tutti. Before shrieking out the words that will haunt her, "Just look at her! Just look at her! Just look at her, Kostelnička," the villagers are already imitated in the orchestra. A *fortissimo* C^{b5}, the most extreme in Kostelnička's range, is reached at the vortex of her madness. As she rushes to collect the child and commit the murder, the orchestra continues this "Kostelnička"[141] motive in its exact repetition (see ex. 4.9, R.71: 1-4). At the end of Act II, after Kostelnička's blessing of the marriage of Jenůfa and Laca, the motive is reiterated in the orchestra as she curses Števa and herself. In addition, as the draught forces the window open, the orchestra's vivid depiction of the "Kostelnička" motive is heard by Kostelnička as "the icy voice of death forcing his way in."[142]

Janáček uses this motive in various guises in Act III to underscore the physical and mental demise of Kostelnička, which has continued since the murder of the baby. It is heard even when she is not singing, for example, as the guests arrive for the wedding, and while the Herdswoman addresses Jenůfa. Kostelnička sings a whole tone version as she begs Jenůfa not to go outside, which Jenůfa imitates as she identifies her baby in scene 9 (R50:6—8), but at the same time the chromatic half-step motive is heard in the orchestra. At the start of Kostelnička's confession the orchestra remains in shocked silence, and unaccompanied, Kostelnička sings the whole tone version to the text, "That deed was mine! Mine the punishment!"[143] (see ex. 4.10).

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[141] Janáček referred to this motive by her name.

[142] "Jako by sem smrt načuhovala!"

[143] "To můj skutek, můj trest boží!"

296

71

Ottav.
Fl.
Ob.
Cl. (in Si♭)
Fg.
Cor. (in Fa)
Tr. (in Fa)
Tbn. e Tb.

[f] f f ff
1°2° a 2
a 2 f
Orig.
1°2° a2 (3°4° tacent)
(c.s.) 1°2° fpp
(c.s.) 3°4° fpp
ff
senza sord.
1°2°
3°

Kost.
Küst.

ff
(ohřek) (Schrei) (scream)

vi - dí - te ji, Ko-stel-ni-čku!
seht ihr sie dort, seht die Küst'rin!
Just look at her, Ko-stel-ni-cka!

(plíživě chvátá do komory, vrátí se s dítětem a zaobalí je do šátku)
(sie eilt geduckt in die Kammer und kommt mit dem Kinde, das sie in das Tuch eingewickelt hat, zurück)
(she slinks quickly into the bedroom, and returns with the child which she has wrapped in the shawl)

71

Viol. I
Viol. II
Vle.
Vlc.
Cb.

sul ponticello pp
[nat.] f
ff

Ex. 4.9 Act II. R. 71:1-4

Ex. 4.10 Act III. R. 56: 8 - 57:1-3

Reduced to an old, guilt-ridden, and tormented woman from her revered position as moral authority of the village, Kostelnička has confessed her deed and is ready to suffer the consequences. She admits that she put her own pride above Jenůfa's welfare. Even in her blessing over Jenůfa and Laca at the end of Act II, having already committed infanticide, she

still believed it was the right course of action, as noted by her words, "So you see, I have acted right after all." [144]

However, there is a redemptive moment for Kostelnička. It is Jenůfa's acceptance of her own failure and her belief in the redemptive nature of God that allowed her to offer Kostelnička forgiveness, which is represented by Janáček's use of C major tonality.[145] Humbled by Jenůfa's forgiveness, Kostelnička recognizes it as her hope and strength. On her final words of confession, "Even on me, the Savior's gaze will light,"[146] (act III, R. 73: 1-4) the tonal centre of C major returns, accompanied by harp and viola arpeggios. Kostelnička will receive God's redemption, and as she is led away the orchestra plays a C major chord in tremolo against the C major harp and viola arpeggios. Paradoxically, the C major of Kostelnička's previous utterances, full of pride and representative of her moral authority, has also led to her own demise. And it is Jenůfa's own humility that will kindle a flame of reconciliation in Kostelnička.

In the character of Kostelnička, Janáček has drawn a portrait of an older woman who fits the archetypes of stepmothers as generally portrayed in nineteenth century literature. Without the inclusion of the 75 mm. in Act I, Kostelnička is seen as a stony and cold authoritarian in her rebuke of Števa. This, together with Janáček's portrayal of Kostelnička's obsessive hatred of Števa and his son which results in her inhuman act of infanticide in Act II, coincides with the nineteenth century tradition of folklore and its stories about evil step-

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[144] "Vidíte že jsem to přece dobře učinila."

[145] See also, John Tyrrell, "Musical Aspects," 21, and Michael Ewans, *Janáček's Tragic Operas*, 66-67.

[146] "Aji na ni Spasitel pohlédne!" Translation, Deryck Viney.

mothers.[147] Her redeeming act is her confession in Act III which saves Jenůfa from the villagers' retribution and shows a brief evidence of her true humanity, but it is overshadowed by her reprehensible act and the Act I scene.

Similarly, Janáček's musical portrayal of Kostelnička's character also supports the general archetypal portrayal of mothers through the mezzo-soprano voice type. This is done, however, within Janáček's own stylistic norms, showing tensions through the unstable tonality with unresolved chords, use of tritones, etc. The juxtaposition of two possible tonal areas A^b minor against the repetition of C^b in the Act I aria, and the pedal tones which are heard against chordal tones that are dissonant to it, illustrate Kostelnička's rigidity. In the speech melodies discussed, the motivic material often unfolds in whole tones and half-steps, in dissonant successions, and her phrases are short and clipped. Furthermore, Kostelnička's vocal tessitura is consistently placed in the upper middle to high end of her range, which in itself creates some harshness and tension indicative of anger and an unstable emotional state. Using the "Kostelnička" motif as an example of characterization, (4.10) Janáček said: "the motifs of every word in *Jenůfa* are close to life. Perhaps some can almost speak."[148] While Kostelnička's character does soften with her repentance at the end of Act III, and Jenůfa's acceptance of the murder of her baby as an act of sacrificial love, Janáček's main focus was

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[147]Folklore and mythological tales were considered a window to understanding traditions and customs of the Czech peasants. The German folktale movement as seen through the Grimm Brothers and those associated with them, similarly influenced a movement begun in Bohemia in the 1830's. Unlike the German folktale movement, the Czech movement sought to create new literature, rather than simply document and edit tales. Examples include Božena Němcová's popular *Folk Tales and Legends (Národní báchorky and pověsti*, 1845-6, 1854-5), based on local tales she had recorded herself, and Karel Jaromír Erben's collection *One Hundred Slavonic Folk Tales and Legends in Original Dialects (Sto prostonárodních pohádek a pověstí slovanských v nářečích původdních*, 1865), which were based on foreign material that he rewrote into stylized prose.[147] See Jack Zipes "Introduction" *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, translated by Jack Zipes, (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), xvii – xxxi. See also John Tyrrell, *Czech Opera*, 149.

[148] Mirka Zemanová, ed., trans., "*Janáček's Collected Essays*, (London: Marion Boyars; N.Y.: Rizzoli International Publications, 1989), 91.

on her rigidity and self-righteousness, allowing his sympathies to rest with the wronged step-daughter, Jenůfa.

CHAPTER 5

THE ROLE OF MRS. PATRICK DE ROCHER, IN JAKE HEGGIE'S "DEAD MAN WALKING"

The opera *Dead Man Walking*, with music by Jake Heggie and libretto by Terrence McNally, gives us the opportunity to explore the mind and feelings of a mother of the present day through the character of Mrs. Patrick de Rocher, the mother of Joseph De Rocher, a convicted criminal on death row. As in the case of the previous mothers studied, the role is sung by a mezzo-soprano and is next in importance to the opera's main protagonists, Sister Helen Prejean and Joseph De Rocher. Therefore, following a plot synopsis, this chapter will examine the opera's context and Jake Heggie's compositional style, as well as provide a detailed analysis of the role of Mrs. Patrick De Rocher.

Plot Synopsis

> The Prologue of the opera depicts the scene of the crime that takes place at a Louisiana lake in the 1980's. A teenaged couple is enjoying a romantic tryst. Joseph and Anthony De Rocher, two brothers who have been watching from the shadows, shatter this tranquil moment and a violent and grisly crime unfolds. The young woman is raped and both teens are brutally murdered. The brothers are both convicted of the crime, but Anthony is sentenced to life in prison whereas Joseph receives the death penalty.
>
> Act I opens at Hope House many months later, where Sister Helen Prejean of St. Joseph of Medaille and other Sisters, work with the children from the families in a poor neighborhood outside of New Orleans. Sister Helen has become a pen pal to Joseph De Rocher. At his request, she drives to Angola State Penitentiary where Father Grenville, the prison chaplain, advises her that prison is not a woman's place, and the warden George Benton informs her that Joseph refuses to acknowledge his guilt, but will likely ask her to become his spiritual adviser. Joseph is somewhat aggressive and irritable on meeting Sister Helen, but when he asks, she agrees to become his spiritual adviser. Sister Helen accompanies Mrs. Patrick De Rocher, Joseph's mother, to the Pardon Commission hearing. Joseph's mother pleads for her son's life, but is interrupted as Owen Hart, the father of one of the murdered teens, angrily lashes out at her. Following the hearing the parents of the victims, Owen and Kitty Hart and Howard and Jade Boucher confront Sister Helen, offended by her continued comfort and advocacy for the monster who murdered their children, challenging her lack of support for them. The Pardoning Board denies Joseph De Rocher's request for clemency. Sister Helen returns to the death row and tries to get Joseph to confess his guilt, but he is remorseless. Emotionally drained from her experiences with Joseph and "woozy"[149] from hunger, she waits for news from a further appeal made to the Governor. Overwhelming

[149] Stage direction in the score.

thoughts begin to crowd her thinking. She hears the children and Sister Rose, and soon their voices are joined by the taunting voices of the victims' parents, and all invade her conflicted thoughts amidst the jeer of the inmates' "woman on the tier." Upon hearing that final pardon from execution has been denied, the imagined ridiculing voices, hunger, and exhaustion overwhelm Sister Helen, and she faints.

Act II opens to the announcement of Joseph's execution date, August 4th at midnight, which is mocked by the guards and the other inmates. As the reality of execution sets in Joseph is confronted by his past, but, nervous and agitated, remains defiant. At the same time Sister Helen experiences a nightmare during which she cries out as she sees the murdered teens. Sister Rose, who has heard her scream, comforts her but also challenges her that she must first find her own forgiveness and love for Joseph before she can help him. The final scenes take place on the date of execution. Sister Helen and Joseph find some mutual interests and she also continues to urge Joseph toward acknowledgement of his guilt and reconciliation. Joseph's family comes for a final visit and his mother reminisces over poignant memories of Joseph's childhood, which she will always remember. The parents of the murdered teens arrive to witness the execution. Again, their conflicted thoughts surface, but Owen Hart shares some of his pain with Sister Helen and asks her to visit him. Just before midnight, after Joseph has been prepared for his execution, Sister Helen tells him that she has driven to the crime scene, but wants to visualize it through his eyes. She asks him to describe the events of that night. Joseph does so and is finally able to find his way to forgiveness, love, and redemption. Sister Helen assures him that he is now a son of God and that she will be the face of Christ and of love for him. Joseph's walk to the death chamber is accompanied by the sung recitation of the Lord's Prayer, but the rest of the scene proceeds in profound silence. Joseph is strapped to the gurney and only the sounds of the injections and his heartbeat are heard until the execution is over. The opera closes with Sister Helen's a cappella singing of the children's hymn from the opening scene of Act I: "He will gather us around, all around. He will gather us around. By and by, you and I, all around Him, all around Him. All around Him. Gather us around."

The Context of the Opera

The American opera *Dead Man Walking*, the first for both composer Jake Heggie and librettist Terrence McNally, premièred on October 7, 2000 to critical acclaim, and in its short history has become one of the most performed new works in the contemporary operatic repertory. It was commissioned by Lotfi Mansouri the director of San Francisco Opera, and at the première, mezzo-soprano Susan Graham sang the role of Sister Helen Prejean, baritone John Packard portrayed the condemned convict Joseph de Rocher, and mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade sang the role of his mother, Mrs. Patrick de Rocher. While few new operas have enjoyed repeated productions due to the expense of staging opera and the risk of poor box office sales, *Dead Man Walking* has been produced by a number of American opera companies and received several premières outside of USA, including Canada (Calgary,

2006), Germany (Dresden, 2006), Scandinavia (Copenhagen, 2006-7), Austria (Vienna, 2007), and Australia (Sydney, 2007). A new production was mounted in Nebraska (Lincoln) in 2008, and several others are projected for 2009 in US and Europe.[150]

The story of the opera was adapted from the national bestselling 1993 non-fiction book, *Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the US* by Sister Helen Prejean CJS, a Louisiana nun who chronicled her experiences as a result of becoming a spiritual adviser to a condemned convict on Louisiana's death row in 1981. Her book also provided the basis for Tim Robbins's award winning 1995 movie, *Dead Man Walking*, that starred Susan Sarandon (who won an Oscar for best actress) and Sean Penn in the primary roles. Like the movie's main character, Matthew Poncelet, the "dead man" Joseph de Rocher of the opera is a composite character drawn from the two convicts about whom Prejean wrote and whose executions she witnessed. Unlike the two real convicts Elmo Patrick Sonnier and Robert Lee Willie who were subjected to electrocution, Joseph dies by lethal injection (as does Poncelet in the movie). With the exception of Sister Helen Prejean, the cast, including Mrs. Patrick De Rocher with her sons, are fictitious characters but drawn from the various accounts of actual persons written about in the book.

Jake Heggie describes his opera as "American and timely" and "universal and so timeless."[151] Martin Kettle describes *Dead Man Walking* as universal in its themes and moral scope, and also an "aesthetically and culturally distinctive American opera."[152] The

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[150] Jake Heggie, "About the Opera," *Official website*, http://www.jakeheggie.com. (2006), (accessed November 22, 2008).

[151] Jake Heggie, as quoted by Robert Faire, "Song of Life on Death Row," *Austin Chronicle*, (January 10, 2003): http://www.austinchronicle.com/gyrobase/Issue/print?oid=116520 (accessed August, 16, 2007).

[152] Martin Kettle, *The Guardian*, From the Jake Heggie: "Official website," (accessed August 23, 2007 and November 22, 2008).

opera is both contemporary American and timeless in several ways. It shows some of the influences that American opera is noted for (see below).[153] One of these influences is the musical theatre genre, Heggie's first love,[154] of which several aspects are evident in the opera. For example, McNally and Heggie have drawn characters from American life, and Heggie also includes short dialogue, in addition to recitative at moments where he feels it is important (this will be shown below). Similarly, his musical compositions show evidence of styles prevalent in the musical theatre genre (see below under Heggie's compositional style).

Further, Tim Robbins' movie provided inspiration for the opera plot, which, however, is not a re-creation of the movie; there are obvious differences between them. The movie does not open with a depiction of the crime and keeps the audience in suspense until the end when the crime is revealed. As well, Poncelet does not fully "confess" to the crime, nor does he address both sets of parents before his execution. Moreover, the realism created in the Prologue's depiction of the horrific crime and the execution at the end are not meant as a melodramatic display (an aspect of American opera–see fn. 153), but rather to allow the audience to see the psychological development and human aspect of its main character as the opera progresses, and powerfully reinforce the main themes of the opera. These aspects as discussed above, as well as the choice of topic, combine to illustrate Heggie's claim of the

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[153] In her book, *American Opera*, Elise Kirk discusses some of the earmarks that shaped American Opera. Among these she mentions choice of subjects which not only tend to reflect back on the American people, their history and their culture, but also show a proclivity toward *verismo*. Moreover the influence of melodramatic techniques that enhance and move the dramaturgy forward are also evident in American opera. (Kurt Weill and Mark Blitzstein are examples). Further, American literature and motion pictures also provided inspiration for opera and shaped its overall sound and temperament. See Elise Kirk, *American Opera* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 1-7.

[154] Jake Heggie, as quoted in "Opera Preview: 'Dead Man Walking' Confronts the Issue of Capital Punishment," (June 3, 2004): http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/04155/32599.stm (accessed December 5, 2008) through Sister Helen Prejean's website: www.prejean.org.

opera being "American," and also shows attributes associated with the musical theatre genre that have influenced his writing.

The opera's central female character, Sister Helen Prejean, is a living person who, because of her experiences now actively campaigns against the death penalty, a topical US issue. Together with name recognition due to the success of the movie, this might suggest that the opera is about the death penalty. However, on reading the libretto and hearing the music, it is evident that the opera is concerned with far more than that. McNally and Heggie have created "real" people who grapple with themes of the human condition: love, hatred, redemption, and the capacity of the human heart to offer forgiveness. As Jake Heggie says,

> The goal was not in creating a documentary of Sister Helen's true-life story or to recreate the movie on stage . . . and it's not a soapbox for a political issue.[155]

He further says,

> [The death penalty] raises the stakes to life and death throughout the whole thing. It's a ticking bomb, but that's the backdrop. The central issue is these two people who are finding how love can transform and transcend and redeem their lives.[156]

For Sister Helen Prejean, the opera is "about the search for redemption – everybody's redemption. . . It helps us journey into the deepest places of our hearts where we struggle with hurts and forgiveness, with guilt for our failings and the need for redemption."[157]

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[155]Jake Heggie, as quoted in "And Then One Night, The Making of Dead Man Walking: Creative Process," The PBS award-winning documentary (2000): http://www.pbs.org/kqued/onenight/creativeprocess/players/heggietran.html (accessed August 16, 2007)

[156] Jake Heggie, as quoted by Robert Faire, "Song of Life on Death Row," *Austin Chronicle*, (January 10, 2003): http://www.austinchronicle.com/gyrobase/Issue/print?oid=116520 (accessed August16, 2007).

[157] Sister Helen Prejean, *Dead Man Walking*, Heggie/McNally, Erato 86238-1.

Characteristics of Heggie's compositional style

Heggie's and McNally's opera *Dead Man Walking* is a relatively new opera that has been added to the repertory. It has been performed and studied less. Moreover, Heggie's own compositional style uses a less conventional musical language than is typical of the main repertory operas, and this will be discussed below.

In writing the music for the opera in general, Heggie considered the psychology of the characters. In the award winning documentary on PBS he was noted as saying,

> I got to know these characters so well and got to know the psychology behind why they do what they do so clearly that by the time I started writing their music, the sounds they make were very, very, clear to me. By the time Terrence finished the first act, I had a really good idea of what I was going to do. He'd set up great dramatic situations that inspired music, and the language was [sic] very spare and clear. He wrote a play; he didn't write a libretto.[158]

Similarly, Heggie explained his attempt to find the music that best represented the "voice of the character":

> Terence McNally, my librettist, is always saying when he writes a play, he needs to find the language that that character would use, not that he would use, but that the character would use. And so the responsibility of the composer is to find the music that that person would sing. Not the music that I necessarily want them to sing but the music that honestly I believe they would sing. And it's all about being honest through the text and through the music and through to these characters.[159]

Heggie was a composition student of the American composer Ernst Bacon (1898-1990), who introduced him to the poetry of Emily Dickenson and text setting. He also

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[158] Jake Heggie, quoted in "And Then One Night, the Making of Dead Man Walking" PBS Documentary. (2000): http://www.pbs.org/kqed/onenight/creativeprocess/players/heggietran.html (accessed August 16, 2007).

[159] Jake Heggie, as quoted by Robert Faire, "Song of Life on Death Row," *Austin Chronicle*, (January 10, 2003): http://www.austinchronicle.com/gyrobase/Issue/print?oid=116520 (accessed 8/16/2007).

studied with the Canadian-born pianist, teacher, and composer, Johanna Harris (1913-1995), the widow of American composer Roy Harris. Heggie's musical style has also been influenced by composers like Barber, Bernstein, Porter, and Gershwin. He describes his music as tonally based and "very lyrical in nature."[160] Perhaps some of the lyrical aspect comes from the fact that Heggie is a prolific song composer and has over 200 songs to his credit.[161] His inspiration comes from the voice and has been influenced by classical singers like Dame Janet Baker, Régine Crespin, Frederica von Stade, and Renée Fleming, but he also loves singers like Barbra Streisand, Shirley Horn, Ella Fitzgerald, and Julie Andrews. Further, his knowledge of the voice has affected the lyricism in his compositions, creating music that is very accessible. Baritone John Packard, heard in the debut role of Joseph De Rocher, says of Heggie's style, "Jake has a unique ability to write as language is spoken. It has a musical line, but it is very much like the spoken line."[162] Susan Graham agrees: "Jake's writing carries these sweeping melodic lines . . . and he set it [the music] so it was as easy to sing as it could possibly be. [Sic]"[163] He uses a wide variety of singing styles such as parlando, declamatory recitative, and arioso as a means to describe his characters' emotions and states of mind, and to "speak" their language.

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[160] Jake Heggie, quoted from an interview with Sean C. Teet, "A Stylistic Analysis of Jake Heggie's, opera: *Dead Man Walking*." DA diss. University of Northern Colorado, 2007. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,
http://proquest.Umi.com/pqdweb?did=1383475231&sid=6&Fmt=2&clientid=6993&RQT=309&VName=PQT (accessed November, 29, 2008).

[161] Noted from an interview Heggie gave to FanFaire in September, 2005.
http://www.fanfaire.com/Heggie/interview.htm. (accessed November 26, 2008).

[162] Kendra Lynch, "A Comparative Analysis of Four Pieces by Jake Heggie." Masters Thesis, California State University, 2006. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,
http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1203557781&sid=6&Fmt=2&clientid=6993&PQT=309 (accessed August 2007), 15.

[163] Ibid., 15, 16.

Although Heggie considers his music tonal, he also qualifies it as being free tonal. As he states, "sometimes it's just clearly in a key, but very often it's not clearly in one key. It's moving through several different key areas and there's a lot of sort [sic] of chromatic commentary on that tonality."[164] Heggie uses dissonance to express the text and the emotions of the character, and not for the sake of dissonance. As he explains:

> Harmony is about emotional color, about psychology. What's going on underneath, that's what the harmony really tells, and the vocal line . . . is very closely connected so that the words can be understood, but also so that the shape of the line also enhances the emotion, the psychology, whether it's a very static line, or very arching, or very angular line. All of that will be determined by the impetus for singing and the moment, the dramatic line. For me, everything is the service to the drama, every thing.[165]

This explanation is an important aspect of Heggie's compositional style and clearly defines his music, illustrating how he defines his characters musically. Chromaticism is a means to an end, not an end in itself. It serves the dramatic elements. Further, dissonance is a way of portraying a character's conflicted emotions, and chromatic commentary as noted by Heggie above, is a means of accomplishing this. In addition, he connects the character with the drama, by using motives that appear throughout in various guises including rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic. According to Heggie, "they serve the drama well and clarify the story for the audience."[166] To allow freedom of expression for his characters he often alters the rhythmic patterns, employs meter change as well as fermatas to indicate a shift in focus, all of which serve to show what the characters are experiencing.

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[164] Sean Teet, "A Stylistic Analysis of Jake Heggie's opera; *Dead Man Walking*," 246, 247.

[165] Ibid.

[166] Sean Teet, 254.

In listening to this opera it becomes evident that some of the musical elements Heggie uses include influences from musical theatre, jazz, gospel, and soft rock. Each of these different styles is, most of the time, associated with respective characters, contributing to emphasize some aspect of their personality. For Patrick De Rocher, Heggie writes an aria that shows elements of soft rock, and for Sister Helen he includes an "Elvis" tribute to show an aspect of her humanity. Particularly, in the music of Mrs. Patrick De Rocher, elements of jazz and blues are present. Heggie frequently bases his harmony on seventh chords with upper extensions of 9ths, 11ths, or 13ths, using flats or sharps on these scale degrees at times. Similarly, the third or fifth intervals above the root are also lowered. He also uses cluster chords or chromaticism to express the text and heighten the drama. Referring again to Heggie's explanation of dissonance, the use of these devices provides the emotional color and psychology necessary for his character depiction, as well as connections with specific American styles, such as jazz or blues.

Another influence is spoken prose text, a musical theater element used simply as a way of moving the drama forward more effectively than if it was sung. Heggie uses this judiciously during moments when silence increases the mounting tension in the scene. Act I, scene 7 for Mrs. Patrick De Rocher is an example. Musically, Heggie's setting of text flows very much like natural speech rhythms and inflections in terms of rising or dropping of the melodic line and its associative note durations. Heggie does use recitative (shorter, more declamatory sections in his vocal writing), but an important feature of his musical style is his use of arioso, which has characteristics of a recitative, but also, has a lyrical flowing quality to it. Again, as Heggie has noted, arioso is his preferred choice because it "support[s] a

continuous flow of music without interruption."[167] It should also be noted that his arioso style places the music and prose text very much within the middle range of the voice type in order to communicate the text clearly. As noted in Appendix B, setting words so they can be understood is an important consideration for Heggie's compositional style.

Another aspect of Heggie's style that is worth scrutiny is his use of the aria form. An important musical form in the opera genre, Heggie uses this form with care. In fact, in this opera only the three main characters, Sister Helen, Joseph De Rocher, and his mother, Mrs. Patrick De Rocher, have each been given an aria. The lyrical lines and closed form of the aria style is suggestive of a moment of reflection rather than moving the dramaturgy forward. The remainder of their music is written in recitative or arioso style.

As a final note to Heggie's compositional style, when asked directly about key structure, Heggie commented that he does not have an overall key structure in mind when beginning composition. As noted in Appendix B, he simply "listens" to what he "hears" and then writes it down. It is obvious that consideration must be given to the range that encompasses the particular voice type chosen for the character.

Mrs. Patrick De Rocher

The themes of the opera and the journey that Sister Helen describes above (see p. 109) apply equally to all the characters of the opera and resonate powerfully in both libretto and music. While the opera's focus is mainly on Sister Helen and her journey with Joseph De Rocher, the depth given to Joseph's mother and the victims' parents is critical to the opera's success, and also to its move away from being a "death penalty" opera. Human suffering has existed since the beginning of time. The characters of this opera allow us to step

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[167] See Appendix B

away from ourselves and enter into their world, not masochistically to enjoy their pain, but rather to empathize. Mrs. Patrick De Rocher, the focus of this chapter, is portrayed as a real person on her own unique and difficult journey.

She is a woman with two of her sons in prison, one who is to be executed for murder, and the second incarcerated for life. As Frederica von Stade says, "she must have been out to lunch for some reason while they were growing up, probably struggling to keep everything in her life together against terrible odds."[168] One of these odds is poverty. We are told this woman was poor. And according to the Atlanta Attorney Millard Farmer, 99 percent of death-row inmates in the southern States are poor – "they get the kind of defense they pay for" (not necessarily justice).[169] Similar to the real mother in the book, Mrs. Patrick De Rocher did not have the means to support the kind of defense that would have seen her son receive life imprisonment over the death penalty. Thus this woman is doubly damned. In the eyes of society she is seen as the mother of a monster who has committed a horrific crime, punishable by death according to law, and in her own eyes she has failed in her role as his mother despite the fact that she loves her son. [170]

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[168]Frederica von Stade, *Dead Man Walking*, Heggie/McNally, Erato 86238-1.

[169] Millard Farmer, spoken in 1983, to Sister Helen Prejean, *Dead Man Walking* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1993), 47.

[170] The relevance of this opera's description of a mother as victim because of the crime committed by her children as an important theme in contemporary life, is supported by the similar real life experiences of another mother, Canadian, Monique Lépine, whose son also committed a horrific crime in 1989. As noted in an interview given to MacLean's before the release of her book *Aftermath*, she was not seen as a victim, but rather as a mother of a criminal. When asked what it felt like to be the parent of the man who killed them [the women], she said: "The shame was terrible. You feel you have no real value anymore. You want to be alone; you don't want to see people anymore. And the guilt! I'm not a murderer, but that was my son. Even at my church, I was never mentioning that I was the mother of Marc Lépine. Nobody knew who I was." See Monique Lépine and Kate Fillion, "Maclean's Interview: Monique Lépine," (Rogers: October 22, 2008): http:/www.macleans.ca/Canada/national/article.jsp?content=20081022_8766 8_87668&pa. (accessed December

Mrs. Patrick De Rocher is thus a victim of the society she lives in and, as adequately described in the opera, is disadvantaged particularly because she lives in the South, which was more backward due to poverty, and more conservative. The very fact that she is only identified through the name of her husband underlines her rather subordinate social position. Heggie also speaks to this as Appendix B will show, when he says: "Up to the 1970's, there were places a woman couldn't even get a credit card by herself. Her husband had to do that. She was given a place in society only through her husband. And this was the poor South, in the 70's and 80's . . . so I think perhaps that had something to do with her identity."

Further, in the opera her character stands in opposition to Sister Helen. She is portrayed as a poor and disadvantaged woman trapped by patriarchal societal values, and as a result, she is psychologically incapable of being a nurturing mother and role model to her children. It is Sister Helen, a woman never having borne children, who, in her role as spiritual adviser, becomes the mother to Joseph that his own birth mother could not be. Therefore, McNally's and Heggie's portrayal of Mrs. Patrick De Rocher's journey provides important social commentary, in addition to realizing the opera's important themes.

The Music of Mrs. Patrick De Rocher

Act I Scene 7 (mm. 1552 – 1750)

This scene takes place at the courthouse, where Mrs. Patrick De Rocher, Joseph's mother, appears for the first time in the opera. She has entered the room where the Pardon Commission is meeting to review Joseph's case, and she is granted a hearing to try to convince the committee to spare her son's life. Also present are Mrs. De Rocher's other two

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6,2008). Portions of this interview given by Lépine were also heard on CBC One in October, 2008, prior to the release of her book, *Aftermath*, published by Penguin, November, 2008.

sons, the parents of the murdered teenagers, Sister Helen, and Sister Rose. The audience is addressed as if it were the hearing committee. Throughout Joseph's mother's monologue, all the stage directions, costumes, gestures, and language show how poor and uneducated she is, and therefore the disadvantaged position from which she is fighting for the life of her son. Her only and most powerful means of persuasion is her love for her son, reflected in the emphasis of his human qualities, and in her plea that his death is not going to change anything about the admittedly horrifying deeds he committed. Clearly, Heggie's musical setting of the libretto is very much centered on highlighting every emotional nuance invoked by her speech.

The scene lasts over eight minutes and consists of a lengthy monologue during which the vocal styles consist of spoken text, declamatory recitative, and arioso. There are two major sections to this scene. Section I, begins at m.1552 after Mrs. De Rocher has been announced and she enters with her sons, and continues until her speech is abruptly interrupted by the angry intervention of Owen Hart (the father of one of the murdered teens) at m. 1658. Section II, begins at m.1676 and continues until the end (m. 1750). Section I consists of several smaller sections organized according to the subject about which Joseph's mother is talking: in Ia (mm. 1552-1606) she first comments on her lack of familiarity with speaking in the microphone and then describes the difficult childhood that Joseph had; in Ib (mm. 1607-1621) she just exclaims that there is also "good in Joe"; in Ic (mm.1622-1657) with a change of tempo to Allegretto, the time signature to a consistent ¾, and the key signature to three flats, she tries to endear Joseph to the audience by describing the gift he gave her for mother's day. This is where the interruption of the enraged father occurs (mm.1658-1675). Part II of Joe's mother's monologue is more continuous, but can also be divided into IIa

(mm. 1676-1690), a recitative in a slower tempo of 4/4 and no key signature, where she recovers from the shock of the insults just received and now "speaks directly from the heart" (noted in the score); then part IIb (mm.1691-1709), outlining all the suffering of her family from her son's crime. Finally, the last subsection IIc (mm.1710-1750) is very emotional as she apologizes for being reduced to tears in public, but also appeals to the audience for clemency to stop the suffering, since "nothing can undo what's happened."

Section I (mm. 1552-1657)

This section includes a lengthy orchestral introduction with spoken dialogue, followed by a recitative (Ia, mm. 1552-1606), and a two-part arioso (Ib, 1607-1621), and (Ic, mm.1622-1657). As the scene begins, the music has stopped and a paralegal steps forward to announce "The defendant's mother: Mrs. Patrick De Rocher" in spoken words to the members of the pardon commission (the audience). The stop in music draws immediate attention and focus to the character of Mrs. De Rocher who enters, together with her two other sons, both in their teens. According to the stage directions, it is obvious that they are poor.

The introductory opening music (exs. 5.2 and 5.3, mm. 1552-1577) accompanies the characters as they move on stage, and is scored for sparse, pizzicato strings, with doubling by bass clarinets and bassoon. It briefly becomes passionate at mm. 1555-1561, referring to music from the opening Prelude at mm. 31-35 (ex. 5.1). In the Prelude this music is scored for tutti orchestra and a *forte* dynamic, and the similarity to mm. 1555-1577 occurs in the flutes and violins. However, in this scene it is played only by bass clarinets and bassoons in a *pianissimo* dynamic, the plaintive timbre and overtones of these instruments and soft dynamic suggestive of Mrs. De Rocher's grief and fear. As well, the clarinets and bassoons play dissonant dyads that move by half steps, similar to the motivic material of mm. 31-35 of

the Prelude. Here, in scene 7 there are rests which stop the phrase's fluid movement, illustrating the hesitancy and fear on the part of Mrs. De Rocher to appear in front of the Pardon Commission (see exs. 5.1, mm. 31-35, and 5.2, mm. 1555-1561).

Ex. 5.1 Act I, Prelude, mm. 28-31

Ex. 5.1 (cont.) Act I, Prelude, mm. 32-35

Scene 7: The courtroom. There is a single long table - it seems the width of the entire stage - with one chair and a microphone. The rest of the stage is black.

A paralegal steps forward and calls out in our direction, as if we are members of the pardon committee.

♩= ca 120

Bb Cl 1-2

Bsn 1-2

Paralegal

[spoken] The defendant's mother: Mrs Patrick De Rocher.

1552 1553 1554 1555 1556

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

Joseph's mother comes forward with her two other sons, both in their teens. They are obviously very poor. Sister Helen is with them, though she remains to the side.

E. Hn.

Bb Cl. 1-2

Bsn. 1-2

Harp

1557 1558 1559 1560 1561 1562 1563 1564 1565

con sordino arco

Vln. 1

con sordino arco

Vln. 2

arco

Vla.

arco div.

Vcl.

Cb.

Ex. 5.2 Act I, Scene 7, mm. 1552-1565

She taps the microphone.

She waits for an answer, but there is none. Just a hostile silence.

[spoken] Is this what I talk into? I feel like I'm on TV or something. Do you all ask me questions, or do I just talk?

You all right, ma - ma?

1566 1567 1568 1569 1570 1571 1572

Ex. 5.2 (cont.) Act I, Scene 7, mm. 1566-1572

The harmonic movement (as shown in ex. 5.2) is not centered on a particular tonic, but rather meanders through allusions to various tonal centers, including parallel minor seventh chords without a third (mm. 1555-1556, from $E^7 – B^{b7} – D^7$, etc, and continuing with a series of alternating consonant chords mm. 1557-1560). These various tonal centers attest to the fact that Mrs. Patrick De Rocher is insecure in this unfamiliar and frightening situation as she comes face to face with the Pardon Committee. The rhythm changes suggest the character's movements described in the score. The motivic material such as the chromatic half-step rise of F / F# in m.1557 for example will reappear, particularly in the second half of the scene.

There is a plaintive motive in mm. 1561-1563 (see ex. 5.2) played by the horns in E, which comes back in mm. 1574-1576 (ex. 5.3) and then in varied forms during Mrs. De Rocher's recitative, and subsequent sections of the scene. Further on in the scene, Heggie passes the motive to various instruments, sometimes oboes (m.1602), bassoons (m. 1605, which are shown in ex. 5.3), and clarinets (m.1615, as seen in ex. 5.4, and again at m.1677); each instrument, distinctive for its color and timbre, illustrates shades of Mrs. De Rocher's feelings. However, the rest of the introduction features further changes of texture, including full measure, silent fermatas accompanying Mrs. De Rocher's spoken words. There are pedal tones on F, then on E, over which the violas play new motivic material consisting of oscillating dyads of open fifths and a dissonant major second (mm. 1568 -1569, ex. 5.2) that will become part of the accompaniment for the recitative section. The plaintive motive and the oscillating dyads are significant in that they return often in this scene and clearly illustrate the terror Mrs. De Rocher feels at the thought of speaking to this committee, and being in the public eye.

This fear is evident in that when about to begin speaking, she is unable to utter words, and instead, her older son who sees her fear, interjects to ask whether she is alright (sung). This is followed by a long latent silence as Joseph's mother collects herself and approaches the microphone and begins the spoken part of her monologue. "Is this what I talk into? I feel like I'm on TV or something. Do you all ask me questions, or do I just talk? Sister Helen helped me write something. I don't read so good [sic]. My eyes. I'm sorry." The silence of the orchestra here is startling and palpable. Her questions, an attempt to overcome her fear, are met only with "hostile silence" in return (according to the stage directions). (ex. 5.2)

The repeat of the introduction, which follows (mm. 1574-1578, see ex. 5.3) is played out over a very long minute, and presents a picture, not of a helpless woman, but of one almost frozen with fear at having to speak publicly and prove to a group of bureaucratic men that her son is not a monster, but should be given mercy. Frederica von Stade stated, "I know a lot of people who would rather die than speak in front of a group under any circumstances. Then there is that total lack of control she has in bargaining with strangers."[171] The hostile silence creates vulnerability in Mrs. Patrick De Rocher's character, but she is also able to move beyond her fear and proceed as the introductory music with the plaintive motive begins again.

This introduction ushers in Mt. De Rocher's recitative, which begins at m. 1578 (ex. 5.3). In part due to fear, Mrs. De Rocher speaks in simple, short sentences, but these also show that she is a woman with only a basic education. This is noticeable in her usage of English grammar in her first spoken words and also briefly at m.1593, where she hesitates over the pronunciation of the word dyslexia, pronounced phonetically (die [sic] – le – leck – seeya). Musically, the phrase structure fits the short sentences which are most often two measures in length. Heggie separates the short musical phrases with rests, and marks unnecessary breaths into the score, both indicative of her emotional state. Although there is no time signature given in this recitative section, the measures are composed in 4/4, but there is some freedom in being able to express the text.

This recitative is an example of how Heggie uses the orchestra and harmonic structure to underpin the character's emotions. The tonality of the introduction is clouded by the F ^{9} major^{7} harmony that omits both third and fifth of the chord, while the diatonic white-

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[171] Frederica von Stade, *Dead Man Walking*, Heggie/McNally, Erato 86238-1:18.

note collection in the vocal line avoids committing to a tonal centre. Aside from the introductory F $^{9}{}_{7}$ chord, Mrs. De Rocher delivers her first sentence in silence. This is followed by an accompaniment of two measures with the same motivic dyads of mm. 1565 and 1566, only they are played by flute and oboe, or clarinet when they are heard between mm. 1581 and 1604. Heggie alternates this ambiguous F harmony (the chords become sustained) with the quasi-A minor $^{6}{}_{4}$ harmony every two measures. In the measures with the oscillating dissonant dyads the melodic line is parlando, and these are the more painful, shameful moments recounting Joseph's life. When the chords are sustained, the melodic line is more arioso-like and Joseph's mother sings a more passionate plea of defense for her son.

Another example of emotional distress is heard in mm. 1596 -1604 (ex. 5.3). Here bass clarinets and bassoons are first to accompany the voice. Their timbre, plaintive support, the 2-3 suspensions, or at times the flat ninth in the seventh-chords, are indicative of her emotional state. The oboes, horns, and strings enter as thoughts of Joseph's crime fill her mind, and during the last two measures, the A minor motive of the oscillating dyads returns, played by both bassoon and violas (see ex. 5.3) mm.

A more prolonged arioso begins at measure 1607 (section Ib), and continues at m. 1622 into Ic (see ex. 5.4). Ib and Ic unfold as a continuous, through-composed, binary AB or two-part form. The arioso begins following a double bar line and a clear indication of a new tempo of quarter-note=120, as well as a 4/4 time signature. This change is also an emotional change as the oscillating motive from the previous bars is accelerated from quarter note value to eighth note value. The dynamic also is *pianissimo*. Joseph's mother is clearly pleading more intensely for her son. Harmonically, the A section (Ib) of the arioso (mm. 1607-1621) in an A minor/E minor Phrygian combination. The pitch centres, rather than presenting

220

E. Hn.
Harp
Joe's Mother

[spoken]
Sister Helen helped me write something. I don't read so good. My eyes. I'm sorry.

freely

I am a mo-ther who is ask-ing you to spare her son's life.

1573 1574 1575 1576 1577 1578 1579 1580

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vcl.
Cb.

Fl. 1-2
Ob. 1-2
E. Hn.
B. Cl.
Joe's Mother

No-thing more. No-thing less. My son Jo-seph's life has-n't been an ea-sy one. His fa-ther left us when he was two.

1581 1582 1583 1584 1585 1586

Vla.
Vcl.
Cb.

Ex. 5.3 Act I, Scene 7, mm. 1573-1686

Fl. 1-2

Ob. 1-2

E. Hn.

Bb Cl. 1-2

B. Cl.

Joe's Mother

He did-n't get a-long with his step-fa-ther. We were poor. Al - ways poor. Joe was a poor stu-dent.

1587 1588 1589 1590 1591

Vla.

Vcl.

Cb.

<u>Ex. 5.3 (cont.) Act I, Scene 7, mm. 1587- 1591</u>

moving ahead a bit

Fl. 1-2

Ob. 1-2

Bb Cl. 1-2

Bsn. 1-2

a tempo

Joe's Mother

[spoken]
I can't pronounce this word: Die-le-leck-seeya?

He left school in the ninth grade went with a bad crowd. There was drugs and some

1592 1593 1594 1595 1596

moving ahead a bit

Vcl.

Cb.

Bb Cl. 1-2

Bsn. 1-2

Joe's Mother

crime in-volved. I be-lieve there was a wo-man and a child. None of this ex-

1597 1598 1599 1600 1601

Ex. 5.3 (cont.) Act I, Scene 7, mm. 1597-1601

222 - 1

Ex. 5.3 (cont.) Act I, scene 7, mm. 1602-1606

directed harmonic progressions, are the result of various repetitive linear figures from which irregular vertical sonorities result. For example, mm. 1607-1613 (ex. 5.4) have a repetitive oscillating motive with a moving bass line, and the pattern changes at 1614 when Joe's Mother talks about the "good . . . . in my Joe." The descending bass line played by the clarinets and second violins illustrates that she is grieving. At the same time, she is also able

to express herself better in more of a singing mode as the range increases slightly, sustaining D^5 (m. 1608) and E^5 (1620) (see ex. 5.4 mm.1607-1627).

Ex. 5.4 Act I, Scene 7, 1607-1612

poco rit. a tempo

Fl. 1-2

Ob. 1-2

E. Hn.

Bb Cl. 1-2

Bsn. 1-2

Harp

Joe's Mother

There is good there - There is good there, too. In my Joe.

1613 1614 1615 1616 1617 1618 1619

poco rit. a tempo

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vcl.

<u>Ex. 5.4 (cont.) Act I, Scene 7 mm.1613-1619</u>

She reaches into her purse and shows a plastic comb.

poco rit. — long pause — Allegretto ♩. = 48

Joe's Mother: In my Joe. See this pret - ty comb? Gen - u-ine

1620 1621 1622 1623 1624 1625 1626 1627

<u>Ex. 5.4 (cont.) Act I, Scene 7, mm. 1620 - 1627</u>

The B (Ic) section of the arioso (mm. 1622-1657, exs. 5.4 and 5.6) almost becomes an aria. The time signature changes to ¾, the tempo increases to a dotted half note=48, and the key signature moves to E flat major. Again the music underlines the character's psychological change. As Joseph's mother remembers a gift she was given by him, this almost waltz-like music connotes the happiness of earlier times. Harmonically, the B section suggests an F minor tonic (with an added seventh) and moves through B^b minor – E^b minor – A^b minor before finally reaching E^b major at measure 1635, as the memory of Joe's gift momentarily

lifts her from her grief. However, this is a bittersweet memory that Heggie characterizes by emphasizing a repeated tritone throughout this section in the vocal line between G and D^b.

The love and tenderness Joseph's mother has for her son are underlined musically not only through the quasi-waltz rhythm and feel, but also through the use of major harmonies (with slight dissonances) in the remainder of this section as she is clearly attempting to show the human aspect of her son in this part of the deposition. Melodically, this section becomes very lyrical. Joseph De Rocher's name (see ex. 5.5), which Heggie introduced during Sister Helen's drive to Angola, is a frequently recurring motive in the opera and is used as melodic material in this lyrical section as Mrs. De Rocher's thoughts are on her son. She also refers to him by his shortened name, Joe, a form of personal endearment and familiarity (see ex. 5.5 mm. 405-7 and refer to exs. 5.4 mm. 1624 -27 and 5.6 mm. 1628-1635).

<u>Ex. 5.5 Act I, Scene 2, mm. 402-408</u>

224

Fl. 1-2

Ob 1-2

E. Hn.

Bb Cl. 1-2

Harp

Perc. 2

triangle

Joe's Mother

tor-toise shell made in Ja - pan. A Mo-ther's Day gift from my Joe.

1628 1629 1630 1631 1632 1633 1634 1635 1636

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

div arco pizz.

Vla.

Vcl.

Cb.

pizz.

Ex. 5.6 Act I, Scene 7, mm. 1628-1636

Mrs. De Rocher does not get to finish because she is interrupted by the outburst from Owen Hart (baritone). Here the music changes from its previous lyric and melodic quality to clashing dissonance, using Mrs. De Rocher's motivic material from the oscillating dyads of the opening that is now heard tutti in the orchestra, but played faster, more driven, and in a *forte* dynamic. Heggie adds horns, trumpets, as well as percussion to the tutti strings and winds to achieve this. The music is as pictorial here as the text is graphic which heightens the dramaturgy of the scene: "She's talking about the man who stabbed my daughter. She was just seventeen. He stabbed her over and over and over and over. He stabbed her thirty-seven times in the throat. That was after he raped her. They couldn't find her senior pin, it was buried so deep in the cuts." The music changes here from the arioso of Mrs. De Rocher, to a very declamatory recitative style written in the upper range for a baritone voice type, and has short phrases that are punctuated with frequent rests. Clearly, Owen Hart's loss is evident and he is also having difficulty in controlling his anger in this outburst. Dramatically, a guard also needs to restrain him.

Section II (mm. 1676-1750)

Mrs. De Rocher's monologue continues in Section II, which begins at m. 1676 following Hart's outburst. It is similar to the first section, in that it also contains a recitative (section IIa, mm. 1676-1690) and an arioso that can be further subdivided into IIb (mm. 1691 from the fermata- m.1698) and IIc (mm.1699-1750). This section becomes a fervent plea in response to Owen Hart's verbal explosion. Tonally, section II continues and concludes in the E minor "free tonality" of Hart's section. The music is through-composed, but Heggie brings back previous motivic material in the orchestral texture that corresponds to her conflicted emotions and passionate expressions.

The recitative of section IIa (mm. 1676-1690) is given no key signature and a tempo marking of 76 = to the quarter-note. Stage directions indicate that Mrs. Patrick De Rocher is no longer reading from the paper, but is to speak directly from her heart. Heggie writes the melodic line very much like it would be spoken, including several rests to show that as a result of Owen Hart's hateful attack she is having difficulty in managing her emotions. The orchestration is very sparse here, only clarinet at first, followed by horns and harp. At the heart of this section on the lines "But I ask you to hate the crime and not the criminal," Joe's mother finds some inner strength to speak the truth and does not diminish her own pain or perspective, drawing us into the center of her experience and journey.

Heggie develops this further in the arioso of Section II which can also be analyzed as a two-part form, already noted as section IIb (mm.1690-1709) and IIc (mm.1710 -1750). Although there is a key change (E minor) and a time signature change to 4/4 at measure 1690, the text and the orchestral motivic material that begins the arioso starts at the fermata at m. 1689 (see ex.5.7, mm. 1689-1698). In section IIb, the first section of text begins with: "We have all suffered enough. Haven't we all suffered enough?" This is a climactic section, which is supported in the orchestra as Heggie adds horns, trumpets and trombones to the strings, returning motivic material of the impassioned music from the Prelude (refer to ex. 5.1) and the beginning of the scene (refer to ex.5.2). As well, the vocal tessitura shifts to a higher register as the melodic line is carried to its highest pitches, E^5 – A^5 allowing for more dramatic expression. Although the key signature is one sharp (G major/E minor), the tonality is undermined with the vocal line outlining D major – A minor – E minor chords. At m.1693, with the E minor dominant chord inclusive of a sharp ninth, the tonality of E minor becomes clearer.

230

E. Hn.
Bb Cl 1-2
Harp
Joe's Mother
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vcl.
Cb.

poco cresc.

I'd hate my boy, too. But I ask you to hate the crime and not the cri-mi-nal. We have

1684 1685 1686 1687 1688 1689

div. arco

Ex. 5.7 Act I, Scene 7, mm. 1684 - 1689

Ob. I-2
E. Hn.
Bsn. I-2
Bsn. 3
Hns. I, 2
C Tpt. I-2
C Tpt. 3
Tbns. I-2
Tbn. 3
Joe's Mother

all suf-fered e - nough. Have-n't we all suf-fered e-nough?

1690 1691 1692 1693

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vcl.
Cb.

Ex. 5.7 (cont.) Act I, Scene 7, mm. 1690-1693

232

<u>Ex. 5.7 (cont.) Act I, Scene 7, mm. 1694-1698</u>

In mm.1699-1709, the motivic oscillating dyads from the opening (refer to ex. 5.2) and the A section (Ib) of the first arioso (refer to ex. 5.4, mm. 1607-1612) return in m.1698 (refer to ex. 5.7). They continue through to the end of m.1703, as Mrs. Patrick De Rocher explains that she too is suffering personal pain. Dead animals are left at her door, she is cursed at, and her children are tormented at school. In the words of Sister Helen Prejean,

"When the government kills human beings, it sends a signal that such criminals are no better than vermin. The family of the condemned are often treated like vermin, too."[172] Unable to continue vocally, a four measure instrumental interlude using fragments of motivic material of Mrs. De Rocher's impassioned music allows the orchestra to express feelings that she cannot (ex. 5.8, mm. 1709-1713). This interlude parallels Hart's outburst in its interruption of her arioso in its own intensity and pleading, and uses motivic material from the Prelude and opening of this scene.

Only once Joseph's mother has regained her control does the orchestra recapitulate material from the introduction at the opening of this scene at m.1717 (compare ex. 5.2). The music returns to the F major of the opening introduction, although the voice continues a new melodic line. The vocal line again takes on attributes of Joseph's "name" motive (refer to ex. 5.5) and Heggie extends its range to $G^{\#5}$, as Joseph's mother's plea becomes more impassioned and she returns to calling him by the shortened form of his name (Joe). Her scene ends in a dual tonality of E minor set against $F^{\#}$ diminished chords. Clearly, skirting the tonality of F major from the beginning, the ending with its dual tonal centers is indicative of the deterioration in Mrs. Patrick De Rocher's sense of hope for her son.

In this scene, Mrs. Patrick De Rocher appears as a very vulnerable woman in deep pain, but one who still has the strength to face her adversaries. Despite her failures, McNally and Heggie present her with honesty. She is shown as a woman whose inner resolve surfaces as she endeavors to bargain for her son's life.

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[172] Sister Helen Prejean, *The Death of the Innocents*, (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, Inc., 2006), 193, 194.

234

She can't continue.

poco rit.

(♩= ca100)

a2

wo-man.

1709

poco rit.

1710

(♩= ca 100)

div.

1711

1712

1713

arco

Ex. 5.8 Act I, Scene 7, 1709-1713

Ensemble, Act I, Scene 8 (mm.1772 -2022)

Act I, scene 8, takes place in the parking lot outside the courthouse, and is powerful for its dramaturgy and impact on the character of Mrs. De Rocher. In this scene, Sister Helen is confronted for her lack of empathy for the parents of the murdered teens. Additionally, the parents express some of their own pain at the loss of their children, and their guilt because of how they might have failed them. McNally and Heggie are very sensitive to the feelings and grief of the mothers Kitty Hart and Jade Boucher, as the listener is invited to hear aspects of their pain. Their statement begins with "You don't know what it's like to bear a child, to fail your child . . ." This text is written into a melodic figure and main motive that pervades the scene, and after the mothers have sung a short duet, the ensemble grows as the fathers also join in. To each, Sister Helen offers a sincere, "I'm sorry."

Mrs. De Rocher also enters the scene musically, and McNally and Heggie allow us to see deeper into her grief. She begins with the same text, "You don't know what it's like to fail your child," but then she continues, "Watch him slip from your hands. And think he'll never know how much I love him. . . I can't forgive myself. You don't know how I love my boy. You don't know." There is a raw vulnerability in her expression, but her feelings are presented with clarity and honesty. The scene reveals that the suffering is the same for each parent, whether a parent of the murdered teens, or parent of the killer.

Musically, a highlight of this scene is how Heggie supports the voices in Baroque type of gestures. At first he uses string accompaniment with a legato line in the recitative sections, which just support the singers. However, in the tutti vocal ensemble, the orchestra imitates the short rhythmic motives of the voices. Sometimes this is played tutti as an ensemble, and at other times it is passed between the instruments, like individual voices in imitation of the singers they are supporting.

Act II, Scene 4: The Visiting Room (mm. 697-1099)

I have limited the detailed discussion of this scene from the beginning at m. 697 through to the end of m. 992, which concludes Joseph's mother's time with her son. The remainder of the scene shows aspects of Sister Helen's own journey that follows a short dialogue she has with Mrs. De Rocher, ending with a short duet section between them. These will be commented on, but not analyzed in detail as my main focus in this scene is Mrs. Patrick De Rocher's relationship with her son.

The scene consists of two parts: a long ensemble sung mostly in recitative-like style with several characters, including Joseph's family who have come for their final visit, Sister Helen, and Guards; and second, an "aria" proper, sung by Mrs. De Rocher as she expresses her feelings toward her son. The scene is important for showing the human side of Joseph, his love for his mother, and his caring for his brothers. It is also an important scene for Joseph's mother as it also exemplifies her relationship with her son. To ensure that this is clearly expressed, in the first part McNally engages the characters in dialogue that Heggie sets by imitating natural speech rhythms and inflections.

For the second part, Heggie writes music for Joseph's mother that is marked as an aria, one of only three so marked in the opera.[173] In his use of the term "aria," Heggie states that it's "a moment where time stands still to me, and there's either a meditation or something very specific. . . [Musically], it is a piece that stands on its own outside of the texture and the drama."[174] In this aria, she is given time to reveal positive images of her son, which

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[173] The first music labeled as an aria is Sister Helen's "This Journey," in Act I scene, 2. The second aria is Joseph's in Act I, scene 6, during the first meeting with Sister Helen, as he dreams of his past encounters with women.

[174] Sean Teet, "A Stylistic Analysis of Jake Heggie's opera; *Dead Man Walking*," D.A. diss., 250.

at the same time show the love she has for him. This aria will be analyzed in detail below, but the dramatic situation is also important for understanding why Heggie chose to use the aria form and not the arioso style of writing in which so much of the opera is composed.

Dramatically, the scene opens with the family waiting for Joseph's arrival. When he arrives, his concern turns to his mother's welfare, enquiring whether his brothers have been taking care of her. She reassures him that the boys have been painting and helping to fix up things around the house. An emotional moment occurs as the younger brother reveals how much Joseph will be missed by the family after his death. Sister Helen offers to buy the boys a coke in order to allow some privacy between mother and son. Joseph tries to ask forgiveness from his mother, but afraid of where that might take her emotionally, she diverts his questions. She tells him about the cookies she made but was forbidden to give to him, and then asks Sister Helen to take a picture of her family. As the warden arrives and announces that their time is up, Joseph tries one more time to be honest with his mother, but she interrupts with, "No, son! No. No." These words are followed by the aria, "Don't say a word," where she recalls happy memories and tells her son that she will always remember him as a happy, carefree boy. The aria etches the son, her "little Joey," into her memory, not the convict Joseph De Rocher, convict number 95281.

Musically, the ensemble at the opening of this scene, featuring Joseph's family, Sister Helen, and Mrs. De Rocher, has polite, conversational dialogue with multiple interactions among as many as four characters as they are visiting, although each has individual lines and are not heard simultaneously. Thus the music is composed in a parlando recitative style to allow for this interaction. Only Joseph and his mother have short arioso interjections and sing in duet together, during which two guards offer their own commentary as the scene

continues to unfold. The orchestral accompaniment in this opening ensemble is in a soft dynamic, and is scored for strings and winds, which support the recitative feel with their sustained chords, and an often bare texture. Heggie is careful not to cover the voices with a heavy orchestral texture. During the emotional moment described above (mm. 752-759) when the voices are silent, Heggie enlists tutti orchestra inclusive of horns, trumpets, trombones, flutes, percussion and timpani, with more passionate music, similar to the Prelude of Act I. The plaintive sound of the oboe is also heard prominently in this section, emphasizing the underlying sadness.

The aria "Don't say a word" (mm. 923-956) follows after the warden announces that their last visit is over. Avoiding a deep discussion with her son, in this first section of the aria she wishes to only look at Joseph, smiling as she begins to remember her little boy. The aria is through-composed in D^b, but with a lowered seventh and a lowered third degree that give it a blues quality throughout, both in the vocal melodic line and in the orchestra. Heggie's directions ask for *pianissimo* dynamic and a "bluesy rocking tempo" at ca. 66=quarter note, which in itself is not much faster than a relaxed heartbeat. The opening of the aria (ex. 5. 9, mm. 923-931) is scored for first and second violins, cellos, who are asked to play *con sordino*, as well as flutes and clarinet. The first violins play an ascending and descending melody, while the second violins play sustained half notes that similarly alternate between ascending and descending. This melodic figure in the strings, together with the slow tempo marking, present a pictorial image of a mother rocking and cradling a young son close to her heart while singing a lullaby to reassure him. This musical image supports very simple text. Further, Heggie keeps the blues aspect in this opening by alternating the flute and clarinet in a bluesy countermelody (lowered C flat and F flat), recalling motivic material

introduced by the strings and voice reminiscent of the good memories Joseph's mother wishes to recall, both of the youth and man Joe and especially, the little boy "Joey".

Ex. 5.9 Act II, Scene 4, mm. 923-931

The texture changes at mm. 934-947 (ex. 5.10) as Joseph's mother reminisces about him swimming and splashing around in the water like a little porpoise, his funny antics, and the happy boy he was. Heggie adds the harp to the orchestration, and there is a time signature change from 4/4 time to 6/8 and 2/4 before returning to 4/4 again, lingering on the word repetition of "remember," repeated up a minor second as if to keep the memory alive a little longer. At m. 937, this short vocal motive is supported by an E^{b6} and a D^{6} chord, both major in tonality, clearly indicative of happy memories. The feeling of two beats to the bar speeds up the tempo naturally as Heggie keeps the note value the same, and the addition of the harp played in arpeggiated chords adds a visual picture to the sung text of Joseph's mother reminiscences of his play in the water. The change in time signature is both to accommodate the text and also to express a happier, more carefree time of her boy that was good, her "little Joey." Heggie creates symmetry in these short ten measures with the two groups of five measures that correspond to the memories Joseph's mother is reminiscing about, each group closing with "I remember." At m. 944, the orchestral texture returns to the opening bluesy feel and the key of D^{b} with its lowered seventh and third degree. The second violins pick up the motive from the first violins and the violas play the motive of the second violins. This change is indicative of an emotional change, a more poignant memory elicited by the violas taking on the legato sustained rocking motion. Knowing she would lose control of her emotions, she cannot bring herself to tell Joe that she loves him to his face but simply expresses it by returning to the memory of rocking her little boy, and a tune similar to that of the opening (see ex. 5.10).

Ex. 5.10 Act II, Scene 4, mm. 932-934

Bb Cl. 1-2
Harp
Joe's Mother
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.

wa - ter. All the fun-ny tricks you'd do. Re-mem-ber? Re-mem - ber?

935 936 937

div. in two

Fl. 1-2
Bb Cl. 1-2
Harp
Joe's Mother
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.

My lit-tle por-poise? Laugh-ing in the sun, run-ning free... Oh, what a hap-py boy. Such a

938 939 940 941

div. in three
no trem.
div. in two

Ex. 5.10 (cont.) Act II, Scene 4, mm. 935-941

Ex. 5.10 (cont.) Act II, Scene 4, mm. 942-947

Measures 947-957 (ex. 5.11) act as a final cadenza to this aria. In m. 948, Heggie adds *ad libitum* (with freedom) to the score, and the text is repeated, "I always, I always, always. I always will" (remember). Measure 947 begins in the key of D^b, but the cadenza begins supported by a chromatic cluster chord in the strings combining C flat minor and

F flat minor (each chord without its fifth degree) against an E natural sustained by the harp (see ex. 5.11). The vocal melodic gesture of the cadenza however, is heard in the D flat tonality of the opening with its lowered seventh and third degrees. Clearly, although Mrs. Patrick De Rocher would like to remember only the good memories, the underlying dissonance and ambiguous tonality is indicative of her unstable psychological state. Unable to say the words of love, Joseph's mother pours her love out through these cadenzas vocally in a blues lament, and the orchestra returns to the opening motive (heard in the first and second violins in D^b). Heggie exploits the range here also, carrying it to its highest tessitura, inclusive of an F^{b5} and G^5. He also adds a little musical tag to close the aria on the text, "No goodbyes now. Look. I'm still smiling." This text is supported by a C major 6/4 chord which moves to its dominant in second inversion, G^7, concluding on an A^b 6/4 on the word "smiling." The instability of the second inversion, coupled with the tritone between A^b in the second violins and the D natural in the voice, leave a lasting dissonance and a sense of the grief and tears behind the memories (ex. 5.11).

Ex. 5.11 Act II, Scene 4, mm. 948-952

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No good-byes now. Look. I'm still smi - ling.

Will you call me la-ter?

Ex. 5.11 (cont.) Act II, Scene 4, mm. 953-957

The aria ends at measure 956, but as soon as Joseph is led away and out of sight, his mother loses her control. She calls for her son Joey and seeks reassurance from Sister Helen. With her final words she is able to verbalize her feelings, "It's only that I love him more than I could ever show, ever really know to say to him: "I love you, Joe." This inability to express her feelings face-to-face with her son is also reminiscent of her ensemble scene in Act I. Additionally, it illustrates how fractured her relationship to her son really is and points to the lack of an emotional bond between them.

The scene continues as McNally and Heggie outline Sister Helen's and Mrs. Patrick De Rocher's relationship (mm. 993-1036). Joseph's mother thanks Sister Helen for being so

good to the family and to Joseph, noting that she could never repay her. As a gesture, she offers the cookies she baked for Joe, but was not allowed to give him, because they could have been laced with poison. Sister Helen graciously accepts them and then both sing together, Mrs. De Rocher seeking reassurance by asking whether Sister Helen sees the good in her son and stating simply that she loves her son "more than she could ever show or know to say to him," and Sister Helen reassuring Mrs. De Rocher that she loves Joe as "the Lord loves all His children." After encouraging Joseph's mother and after she has left, in the remaining section of this scene, Sister Helen expresses her discouragement in her own journey; however, the scene ends with hope as she and Joseph will walk the final distance together.

Heggie's musical portrait of Mrs. De Rocher includes the vocal styles of recitative, arioso and aria. Her character is developed through her spoken text, individualistic type of phrasing, and specific expressive breath markings as indicated in Act I. Additionally, Heggie's use of dissonance and the repetition of motivic material are critical for underpinning the emotions that her character experiences, because it helps to underscore her thoughts and feelings as they change while she is singing. The aria is not high brow, eloquent, or pompous. Written with a simple bluesy feel, it is in a style that she is familiar and comfortable with, evoking an image of the type of person she is.

In Mrs. Patrick de Rocher, mother of convicted murderer Joseph De Rocher, librettist Terrence McNally and composer Jake Heggie have created yet another character of a mother designated for a mezzo-soprano voice type who is a prominent character in the opera. Aside from Sister Helen and Joseph, she is the only other character to be given an aria. Her scenes are dramatically powerful in the message they communicate, and her role is critical for

identifying some of the human element in her son, Joseph. Like the other mothers examined previously, we see vulnerability in her characterization, yet despite her grief and sense of shame, she finds the strength to speak for and relate the good in her son. There is honesty and realism, but also compassion and sensitivity in how her journey is expressed in both libretto and music. This twentieth-century musical setting of the sensibilities of an American mother in the context of our contemporary society shows that the problems and feelings experienced by the character of a mother have not changed that much from the nineteenth century, and thus gain some unsuspected universal and timeless quality. Through his music Heggie demonstrates that "modernist" music, although lacking the previous conventions, manages to address these problems through different means, thus enriching the vocabulary by which mothers' voices are heard.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

The topic of this dissertation has been an examination of "the mother" as an operatic character, which has not yet been widely discussed in academic scholarship. My focus has been on understanding why mothers are rarely present in opera plots. Related to this, when mothers do appear as characters, I have also explored what seems to be a stereotyped connection between the character of the mother and the mezzo-soprano voice type, to which mine belongs, in this way hoping to shed light on aspects of the interpretation of these type of roles in my own performances.

The investigation of influences that affected the development of opera plots with their conventions, as well as the impact of the historically based predilections for particular types of voices, revealed some interesting findings. In my research I discovered that the aesthetics of the singing voice influenced the stereotyping of operatic characters, as each vocal range was equated with the personification of certain character types. The aesthetic of the soprano voice, developed in the Baroque period, became the preferred ideal as the affective nature of vocal sound became important. Therefore, based on aural perception, the operatic roles designated for the young heroine type of characters were identified with female soprano voices. Similarly, the soprano voice of the castrati, whose vocal aesthetic was equated with nobility and heroism, also helped form the ideal of the "soprano voice type."

This idealized soprano voice pushed women with lower ranged voices further into the background, and into secondary roles, as they were aesthetically not suited for the young heroine types of roles. Thus, lower ranged female voices in the seventeenth century were relegated to representing characters of old age, such as mothers or nurses, in this way affect-

ing the stereotyping of archetypal characters. Additionally, these older women roles could also be seen as comic and were designated for unaltered male tenor voices. A prime example is Arnalta, the nurse in Monteverdi's and Busenello's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1643). Further, the aesthetic of the lower-ranged women's voices was found to be suitable for heroic male roles. These "breeches roles" became an avenue whereby these women could establish a career equal to that of the soprano heroines.

Examination of the aesthetic of the mezzo-soprano voice type revealed that this designation began to appear in the middle of the eighteenth century as composers began to extend the upper ranges in their compositions. Towards the end of the eighteenth century when the mezzo-soprano designation became more prominent, this voice type was considered for major roles. At first, they replaced the castrati who most often sang the heroic male roles. Later, as the nineteenth century unfolded, the mezzo-soprano voice types also became principal female characters.

As part of my investigation I examined individual opera plots from each main period and opera genre in order to discern the treatment of the "mother" as an operatic character. I found that mothers were not present as primary characters or even "bit" characters, especially in the seventeenth century, because, physically and aurally, they did not fit the aesthetic required to be principal characters. This can be substantiated by the fact that of the forty-five seventeenth-century opera librettos researched here, only fourteen included mothers or nurses, and a number of the nurses were cast as tenors. Therefore, mothers were partly obscured by the conventions that developed in character types during the seventeenth century. This situation was not remedied until the nineteenth century, when the mezzo-soprano voice type became more established.

Further findings in the evolution of plot paradigms revealed that as *opera seria* became the favored genre of opera, notable changes occurred that affected woman characters and, by default, mothers. In the *opera seria* plots, Metastasio reduced the number of characters to a norm of six and removed the comic scenes. This reduced the type of servant roles, where nurses would often appear, further silencing a maternal voice. Moreover, *opera seria* was maintained and controlled by the tastes of court cultures throughout Europe and as far as Russia, and the favored subjects were linked to the jockeying for position and power of the kings. Thus, Metastasio articulated an eighteenth century ideal of the "heroic soprano voice" sung by castrati. The impact of his influence can be seen in the popularity of his twenty-seven libretti, which were given more than a thousand settings during this period. As noted in chapter two, on reading Metastasio's twenty-seven opera libretti, only one of four mothers mentioned is seen in a maternal role. Dircea, in the opera *Demofoonte* (1733), is a mother and a wife, but suppresses her motherhood as well as her marriage in order to survive. However, while her child is mentioned, Dircea's character is a young female, love interest type. Therefore, together with the reduction of servant roles and the scarcity of mother roles, the *opera seria* genre negatively impacted the role of mother as an operatic character.

Toward the latter part of the eighteenth century, when *opera buffa* became popular, a maternal influence reappeared in opera plots as servants were reinstated into plots, and, along with them, nurses and confidantes. By the end of the century as women became more visible in society and better educated, a different heroine emerged in what Martha Feldman has coined as "sentimental opera." Sentimental opera was inclusive of the stories about women's lives and coincided with the ethos of societal values that took root during the late eighteenth century, which began to encourage and promote women in their roles as wives and mothers.

However, this did not result in a significant increase of roles for mothers in opera based on my tabulations in Appendix A.

In nineteenth century opera plot development, the cultural constraints with their gender politics are still evident in plots. A woman's role in life is firmly entrenched by societal expectations, with her place being in the home, bearing and rearing children. Daughters are placed under the authority of their fathers in opera. Fathers predominate as important characters of interest, especially in nineteenth-century Italian opera, and daughters are left to their own devices because of the lack of maternal supervision. Mothers do not appear alongside their husbands as a family unit in opera, nor are they seen as characters of interest in opera plots. It was the nurse or servant, when present, that took the place of a birth mother in opera. Yet, as already noted, servants do not have a lot of authority in opera, and seldom play major roles.

However, as the nineteenth century progressed, a paradigm shift occurred as a greater range of subjects were explored, allowing for more realism (*verismo*), naturalism in character depiction, and also a greater variety of emotions. Through a more natural depiction, characters of interest, which included women, were often based on real people drawn from history or contemporary times and were also closely linked to those found in literature and art. Additionally, concurrent with a shift in societal values that afforded women an education and a greater involvement in society, their stories became subjects of interest. Women became the focus of opera plots and the lead female characters, mostly as young love partners, keeping the soprano voice in focus, except that now unlike in the eighteenth century, the voice type corresponded in a realistic fashion to the actual gender and social position of the character. Coinciding with what we may call the "emancipation of the female voice,"

"mothers" also became a character of interest and were included more often as operatic characters.

Again, I refer the reader to Appendix A for an overview of nineteenth-century operas and the increase in the number of "mother" figures that appear. The total number of operas tallied during this century that included mothers was twenty-seven. Of this number, eighteen were designated for the mezzo-soprano voice type and nine were designated for soprano. Notably, not all of these mothers are major characters. While not all operas show mothers in their maternal role, there is a significant growth in the portrayal of a mother as a character choice when compared to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which totaled seven. The Appendix also shows that these operas were composed during the latter part of the century. Moreover, as opera continued into the twentieth century, I would argue that the feminist movement beginning to grow in Europe and America at the end of the nineteenth century fostered a climate amenable to a more frequent inclusion of mothers as characters of interest. Again, Appendix A lists thirty-one operas from the twentieth century that include mothers, with twenty-one designated for mezzo-soprano and ten for soprano.

It was surprising for me to discover the number of mother roles that were designated for the soprano voice type in nineteenth and twentieth-century operas. While thirty-nine operas were designated for mezzo-soprano, another nineteen were for the soprano voice type. I was not able to investigate further in order to determine solid reasons for this. Thus, it was not fair to conclude that the role of mother is a stereotyped character specific to the mezzo-soprano voice type. Although it appears that it could be, since more mothers are listed as mezzo-sopranos, the number of sopranos listed as mothers seems significant enough to encourage further research.

The total number of operas surveyed, including the forty-seven seventeenth-century operas, the twenty-seven Metastasian libretti that were fashioned by many composers, and the sixty-six operas surveyed in *The New Grove Book of Operas*, do not total the whole canon of opera plots, but it is possible to see a shift occurring that begins to accept mothers as operatic characters more often. It is fair to conclude that as opera is reflective of its times, subject matter and character types likewise reflect the respective societal tastes and preferences, and the transformations that occurred within opera were linked to similar changes in culture.

The investigation of each of the three operas further supports a shift in the treatment of mothers as operatic characters. Meyerbeer's opera *Le Prophète* is significant in that the role of Fidès as mother is the main female protagonist in the opera, chosen in favor of a soprano heroine who would normally be the love interest of the tenor lead. Moreover, it brought into opera a strong maternal character, seen in her nurturing role in this opera. Similarly, as it was the first opera to designate this leading role for mezzo-soprano, it launched this voice type into its own as a leading lady equal to that of a soprano. It was also Meyerbeer's preferred choice of voice type for this role, in its suitability of color and nuance.

Similarly, Janáček's opera *Jenůfa* and the role of Kostelnička are significant in that the opera intersects with the popularity of *verismo* opera at the end of the nineteenth century, which brought these types of subjects to life. Furthermore, Kostelnička is important in that she is a stepmother. Her character parallels the nineteenth century fairy tale view of stepmothers as seen in the folktale movement of the Grimm brothers and also a similar movement that began in Bohemia in the 1830's with the stories of K.J. Erben, Božena Němcová,

and others.[175] In this way she is reflective of the culture she is a part of and similarly reflects that culture back onto itself.

Jake Heggie's opera *Dead Man Walking* is a contemporary opera (2000) whose context has American elements in it, but is universal in its themes. Mrs. Patrick de Rocher typifies aspects of the 1980's culture, and as Heggie states, "is likely somebody you could meet in your neighborhood."[176] Similarly, as a contemporary, living, and influential composer, his concerns are important in shaping this view of mothers as characters in opera. Like Meyerbeer, Heggie shows a preference for the mezzo-soprano voice type in the role of mother. He "loves the color, the timbre, and the range of the lyric mezzo," . . . and feels it is well suited for diction.[177] Moreover, he articulates something important when considering composer's and librettist's choices of subject matter as well as voice type when he states, "An artist's work is always connected to their personal journey. I don't think you can separate [them]. If you are an honest artist, and what you write resonates as true – it's because you are writing from truth. From what you know. I've been shaped by those experiences as a person . . . so of course that extends to me as an artist, too."[178] His twentieth-century musical setting of the sensibilities of an American mother in the context of the contemporary society shows that the problems and feelings that the character of a mother undergoes have not changed that much from the nineteenth century, and thus the concept of "motherhood" gains some unsuspected universal and timeless quality.

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[175] John Tyrrell, *Czech Opera*, 149.

[176] See Appendix B. Taken from an email interview conducted between December 2008 and January 2009. (used with permission from the composer).

[177] See Appendix B.

[178] See Appendix B.

From these three operas then, it can be concluded that each composer had an aural ideal in mind when designating voice type for the role of mother. Additionally, each mother is a leading and influential character in the plot she is part of, critical to realizing the opera's themes. There is a recurring theme prevalent in each of the operas, which is the sacrificial love of each mother for her child. Fidès abandons her livelihood and gives up the comforts of her home to search out her son. Kostelnička fiercely protects her daughter when she commits a heinous crime in order to save her daughter from a fate similar to hers. And Mrs. Patrick De Rocher finds strength beyond her own limitations to bargain for her son's life. The sacrificial love of mothers for their children is thus a timeless attribute that runs concurrently within each contemporary society. While this may not erase the stereotypes associated with "mothers" as operatic characters, it does open a window for realistic treatment. Furthermore, from observing these three mothers from three composers in different periods of time, a psychological stereotype of the mother emerges, as one caught in the conflict between her love for her child and her own values and her own life.

This research provides a frame of reference for the study and performance of these roles. Each opera's context is critical in understanding how each mother is reflected in both drama and music, and is essential in forming a firm basis from which to begin dramatic characterization. Additionally, the musical analysis reveals the composers' views, and how they each breathe life into the character in their respective styles. Further, the musical analysis is important in order to clearly distinguish the language distinctive to each character, their inner psychology, as well as the type of vocalization required. Thus, this research has been a valuable tool in learning these roles, and can also be a helpful guide to any singer wishing to learn and successfully perform these roles.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

OPERAS WITH CHARACTERS THAT ARE "MOTHERS"

Taken from *The New Grove Book of Operas*, edited by Stanley Sadie.
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Mezzo Sopranos (Mezzo)/Contraltos:

17th Century

Composer	Opera – Character	Voice
Monteverdi (1640)	*Ritorno d'Ulisse in patria, Il* – Ericlea (Penelope's old nurse)	Mezzo

18th Century

Composer	Opera – Character	Voice
Handel (1724)	*Giulio Cesare in Egitto* – Cornelia (Sesto's mother)	Contralto

19th Century

Composer	Opera – Character	Voice
Gounod (1867)	*Roméo et Juliette* – Gertrude (Juliet's nurse)	Mezzo
Humperdinck (1893)	*Hänsel und Gretel* – Gertrud (mother) Witch (often mother and witch are cast as the same person)	Mezzo Mezzo
Marschner, Heinrich A. (1833)	*Hans Heilig* – The Queen of the Gnomes (Hans' mother); Gertrude (mother of Anna; bride of Hans)	Soprano Contralto
Mascagni, Piero (1890)	*Cavalleria rusticana* – Lucia (Turiddu's mother)	Contralto
Massenet (1899)	*Cendrillon* – Madame de la Haltière (Step-mother)	Mezzo
Musorgsky (1874)	*Boris Godunov* - Xenia's former wet nurse	low Mezzo
Musorgsky (1913)	*Fair at Sorochintsï, The* – Khivrya (Cherevik's wife who is step-mother of Parasya, Cherevik's daughter)	Mezzo

Meyerbeer (1849)	*Prophète, Le* – Fidès (Jean de Leyde's mother)	Mezzo
Offenbach (1881)	*Contes d'Hoffmann, Les* – a Ghost (Antonia's mother)	Mezzo
Ponchielli (1876)	*Gioconda, La* – La Cieca (Gioconda's mother)	Contralto
Rimsky-Korsakov (1882)	*Snow Maiden, The* – Vesna-Krasna (Mother to the Snow Maiden)	Mezzo
Rimsky-Korsakov (1895)	*Christmas Eve* – Solokha (Mother of Vakula and witch)	Mezzo
Rossini (1817)	*Cenerentola, La* (leaves out step-mother)	
Rossini (1829)	*Guillaume Tell* – Hedwige (Tell's wife and Jeremy's mother)	Mezzo
Smetana (1870)	*Bartered Bride, The* – Háta (Mother of Vašek)	Mezzo
Tchaikovsky (1881)	*Eugene Onegin* – Larina (Landowner and mother to Tatyana and Olga)	Mezzo
	Filipyevna (an old nursemaid)	Mezzo
Tchaikovsky (1890)	*Queen of Spades, The* – Countess (Grandmother to Liza)	Mezzo
Verdi (1857)	*Trovatore, Il* – Azucena (Manrico's mother)	Mezzo
Wagner (1843)	*Fliegende Holländer, Der* – Mary Senta's nurse)	Contralto

20th Century

Britten (1947)	*Albert* Herring – Mrs. Herring (Albert's mother)	Mezzo
Britten (1973)	*Death in Venice* – a Polish mother (Choreographed)	
Charpentier (1900)	*Louise* – Her mother	Contralto

Debussy (1902)	*Pelléas et Mélisande* – Geneviève (Mother of Pelléas and Golaud)	Contralto
Ginastera (1967)	*Bomarzo* – Diana Orsini (Grandmother to the Duke Orsini)	Mezzo
Henze, Hans W. (1966)	*Bassarids, The* – Agave (Mother of Pentheus, King of Thebes)	Mezzo
Janácek (1904)	*Jenufa* – Kostelnička (Stepmother of Jenufa)	Soprano/Mezzo
	Grandmother Buryjovká	Contralto
Janácek (1921)	*Kát'a Kabanová* – Kabanicha (Tichon's mother; also foster child Varvara in the household)	Contralto
Menotti (1950)	*Consul, The* – Mother/Grandmother (John's mother and Grandmother of his baby)	Mezzo
Moore, Douglas (1956)	*Ballad of Baby Doe, The* – Mama McCourt (Mother of Baby Doe)	Mezzo
Poulenc (1957)	*Dialogues des Carmélites*	
	Madame de Croissy, Old Prioress	Alto
	Mother Marie of the Incarnation	Mezzo
	Mother Jeanne of the Child Jesus	Contralto
	Mother Gerald	Mezzo
Puccini (1918)	*Suor Angelica* – The Abbess	Mezzo
Ravel (1925)	*Enfant et les sortileges* (mother)	Mezzo
Schreker (1912)	*Ferne Klang, Der* – Graumann's Wife (Mother of Grete)	Mezzo
Strauss (1905)	*Salome* – Herodias (Salome's mother)	Mezzo
Strauss (1909)	*Elektra* – Klytemnästra (Mother to Elektra and Chrysothemis)	Mezzo

Strauss (1919)	*Frau ohne Schatten, Die* – The Nurse (Guardian of the Empress Keikobad's Daughter	Dramatic Mezzo
Strauss (1933)	*Arabella* – Adelaide (Mother to Arabella and Zdenka)	Mezzo
Stravinsky (1927)	*Oedipus rex* – Jocaste (Mother of Oedipus; incestuous relationship)	Mezzo
Stravinsky (1951)	*Rake's Progress, The* – Mother Goose (Brothel owner);	Mezzo
Zimmermann, Bernd (1965)	*Soldaten, Die* – Wesener's old mother Stolzius's mother Countess de la Roche - Mother (Mother to young Count)	Contralto Contralto Mezzo

<u>Sopranos</u>

<u>18th Century</u>

Gluck (1774)	*Iphigénie en Aulide* – Clitemnestre (Mother of Iphigénie)	Soprano
Handel (1725)	*Rodelinda* – Rodelinda Mother of Flavio)	Soprano
Mozart (1786)	*Nozze di Figaro, Le* – Marcellina (Housekeeper, Figaro's mother)	Soprano
Mozart (1791)	*Zauberflöte, Die* – The Queen of The Night (Pamina's mother)	Coloratura Soprano
Rameau (1733)	*Hippolyte et Aricie* – Phèdre (Step-mother of Hippolyte)	Soprano

<u>19th Century</u>

Bellini (1831)	*Norma* – Norma (Mother to two children)	Soprano

Donizetti (1833)	*Lucrezia Borgia* – (Mother of Gennaro)	Soprano
Gounod (1859)	*Faust* – Marthe (Guardian of Marguerite)	Soprano
Smetana (1870)	*Bartered Bride, The* – Ludmilla (Mother of Mařenka	Soprano
Verdi (1843)	*Lombardi alla prima crociata, I* – Viclinda (Mother of Griselda)	Soprano
Verdi (1844)	*Ernani* – Giovanna (Nurse of Elvira)	Soprano
Verdi (1859)	*Ballo in maschera, Un* – Amelia (Mother of unnamed son)	Soprano
Verdi (1893)	*Falstaff* – Mrs. Alice Ford (Mother of Nannetta	Soprano
Wagner (1868)	*Meistersinger von Nürnberg, Die* - Magdalene (Eva's nurse)	Soprano

20th Century

Berg (1925)	*Wozzeck* – Marie (Mother of un-named son)	Soprano
Britten (1954)	*Turn of the Screw, The* – Governess (Governess of Miles and Flora)	Soprano
Menotti (1950)	*Consul, The* – Magda Sorel (Mother of dying baby)	Soprano
Menotti (1951)	*Amahl and the Night Visitors* – (Mother of Amahl)	Soprano
Poulenc (1957)	*Dialogues des Carmélites* Madame Lidoine, the new Prioress	Soprano
Puccini (1906)	*Madame Butterfly* – Cio Cio San (Mother of Dolore, 'Trouble')	Soprano

Puccini (1918)	*Suor Angelica* (Mother of unnamed son)	Soprano
Puccini (1918)	*Gianni Schicci* – Nella (Mother of Gherardino)	Soprano
Strauss (1924)	*Intermezzo* – Christine (Mother of Franzl)	Soprano
Tippet (1962)	*King Priam* – Hecuba (Mother of Hector and Paris)	Dramatic Soprano

Silent Role

Berlioz (1863)	*Les Troyens* – Andromache (Mother to Hector)	Silent role

APPENDIX B

EMAIL INTERVIEW WITH JAKE HEGGIE

C.H. In her book American Opera, Elise Kirk discusses some of the earmarks that shaped American opera. These include among others, melodrama, movies, subjects taken from American literature/history. What is "American" about American Opera to you?

J.H. First and foremost that it is written in the vernacular of this country – "American" English, and with freedom to draw upon the diverse influences of our musical heritage. We're quite a salad bowl of cultures and ideas in the USA. I think American opera reflects and draws upon that.

C.H. Also, in an interview with Robert Faires (2003), you referred to DMW as "so American and so timely." In what ways do you consider DMW an American opera? (other than the obvious subject matter) Might it be some of the musical elements?

J.H. Yes, first the story and the characters in the story. Here we are in the 21st century still debating the death penalty and still torn apart over everything surrounding it. Every one of the characters in DMW is likely somebody you could meet in your neighborhood. It was the drama, the story and the characters combined that determined my use of the diverse musical elements that create the musical universe of the opera. And I do believe it "sounds" very American, with the jump from a classical tradition to gospel, jazz, blues, rock, pop, musical theater, etc.

C.H. I have also read that you consider your music to be "first and foremost American." (Carolyn Redman thesis) Can you comment on that? What does that mean?

J.H. Unashamedly influenced by the extraordinary gamut of music in this country that I grew up with, and a proud exponent of setting "American" English. I also look for universal stories and texts that have an American context. You know the old saying "write what you know. . ." and that proves to work best for me, as well.

C.H. Can you comment about your musical compositional style and how if affects your composition of opera? (What were some of your influences if you haven't given them above). For example, you write very lyrically for the voice.

J.H. To me, that's what the voice does best – lyrical long lines – and I am tremendously influenced by singers and what they do. They are a great inspiration, and I LOVE the voice. I am a theater composer, so when writing a song or an opera, I'm always thinking of how best to serve the drama. Everything I do is in the interest of that drama, including the musical world of the opera and how the characters emerge in that musical world. I'm not academic in terms of analyzing my own work or trying to categorize my writing. I simply write what I hear and feel is true in the face of the drama. Some of my favorite composers, who have

influenced me greatly, are: Britten, Gershwin, Bernstein, Sondheim, Adams, Mozart, Verdi, Puccini, Poulenc, Debussy, Ravel, Mahler, and of course folk music.

C.H. Are there specific composers who have influenced you?

J.H. See above.

C.H. DMW was a collaborative work between you and Terence McNally. I understand that it was his idea to write an opera on DMW (book) and it obviously resonated with you also. How much influence did you have over the decision about voices types for the characters? Can you comment about that? - especially Sister Helen and Mrs. Patrick De Rocher? Did you have the specific singers in mind first, (Susan Graham and Frederica von Stade) with the idea of writing a part for them or was it organic? (The roles just simply had to be mezzos!)

Did you change any of McNally's texts or repeat sections of text to fit your melody?

J.H. We worked very closely on every part of the opera, including the voice types. We didn't have a Sister Helen in mind when we started – and we did consider a soprano. But it just felt wrong to me in the end. Helen is a very grounded, earthy, real person … and the lyric mezzo voice was perfect for that because of the range from low to dramatic high. I also love mezzo voices because you can get every word throughout the range. When Terrence started writing the libretto, he asked me to give him an example of a retired mezzo who would be an ideal Helen and I told him Janet Baker. Very shortly after we started writing, we thought of Susan Graham and that was perfect. Just perfect. Flicka had been on board from the beginning, and we did ask her if she wanted to be Helen, but she said she really wanted to be Joe's mother. Wanted to explore that experience of motherhood … and boy did she make a great choice or what? … So, they were both on board very early on. We searched far and wide for the right Joseph De Rocher and listened to about 60 baritones. I knew it was a lyric baritone part immediately.

As for the text. Terrence told me right off the bat that he's a playwright and he would write a play and hope to set up situations and find language that would inspire music. If the words weren't working, he gave me permission to change things, rewrite, edit, etc and then check in with him … and I did that. I would let the music start and then change things based on where the music was taking me. I have pretty good instincts on that front … and Terrence was with me all the way.

C.H. DMW is a gold mine for the character of "mother," and also for mezzos! What is it about the mezzo voice type (as compared to soprano), that influenced your choice in writing the 'mother roles' for mezzo (Kitty Hart excepted). Is she written as soprano merely to balance the score and give Jade and herself the duet in the ensemble? Or is part of your voice type casting based on the general stereotype we are used to in opera?

J.H. Jade definitely was a soprano to balance that quartet of parents. I wanted them to be sop, mezzo, ten., baritone. As for the mezzo voice, see above. I love the color, the timbre,

and the range of the lyric mezzo – it's my favorite voice type. Also for diction. The best. And mezzos happen to be really great people, too, I've found. Many of my close friends are mezzos!

C.H. I read that recently, a dramatic soprano was cast as Sister Helen in place of a mezzo. Did that change anything for you?

J.H. No, absolutely not. Christine Brewer actually sang a section of DMW (the duet with Sister Rose from Act Two) and she was GREAT as Sister Helen. Then they cast Margaret Jane Wray in Cincinnati and she was tremendous.

C.H. In a previous email, you mentioned that the character of mother (and daughter) was a big theme in your life! Can you briefly elaborate on that?

J.H. I grew up in a household of women. My father died when I was so young, and my sisters were older. So it was all about the women in my house. That dynamic of mother and daughter, or of parent and child in general, is a big, big theme in my work. It resonates with me deeply.

C.H. Can you discuss how you go about developing the characters in DMW in the music you created for them? the psychology? (especially Mrs. Patrick De Rocher).

J.H. That's a tough question, because it's just something I do instinctively. It's a very organic process. I find the musical world – or sound world – of the opera based on the story, the characters, how they talk, what's happening to them, etc … and then, musically, the characters start to emerge from that universe. All of that takes a lot of time. I have to live with all of it for a long time in my head and heart, and then it just starts speaking.

C.H. This may be a difficult question. You have experienced a number of very unfortunate and significant losses in your life - your dad's suicide at age 10, the death of your wife, Johanna Harris, your sister, and others. Has this impacted you as a composer, and in how you create/empathize with characters? (I ask this because I think there is something "real" about each of the characters, that comes out through the music)

J.H. Of course. I think that's pretty obvious. An artist's work is always connected to their personal journey. I don't think you can separate. If you are an honest artist and what you write resonates as true – it's because you are writing from truth. From what you know. I've been shaped by those experiences as a person … so of course that extends to me as an artist, too.

C.H. Can you tell me about your relationship with your mom? You have mentioned in previous interviews that life was very difficult for her as a single mom in the 70's. Can you comment on that? What was it like for her coping with 4 children, a job etc., as you experienced it? Has this impacted your characterization of Mrs. De Rocher?

J.H. You can only imagine how tough it must have been for her. She was also dealing with the fact that my dad had committed suicide, which was a huge stigma back then. Mental illness was something unclean in many people's minds (still is) … and I think she suffered tremendously as an outcast in that way. Mrs. De Rocher is definitely outcast and suffers from events that were pushed upon her, but she also suffers because of her choices. Part of her suffering is that she feels somehow responsible for the situation her family is in … her choices have impacted the future of her kids: she chose those men to be the father of her children, she chose to stay in that area and not get away, she chose to focus on certain things and not on others, and she wasn't probably available to her children much of the time – emotionally or physically. I think this is a very real situation.

My recent opera – Three Decembers – deals with the single parent, too. In a very different way, because nobody is murdered and there's no criminal activity. But, she is not emotionally or physically available to her children … and it has a tremendous impact on their lives.

So you see there's a theme going on here …

C.H. Mrs. Patrick De Rocher. Why the anonymity? Why is she identified only through a husband and not by her given name? Both mothers of the composite "Joseph" are mentioned in the book (Gladys Sonnier and Elizabeth Lee). What was your and possibly Terrence McNally's rationale (if you know), in this? (I have to admit that it bothered me at the beginning when first starting to learn the role!)

J.H. That was Terrence's choice. I think it speaks of the time the piece takes place (the 80s in the South). Remember that up through the 70s, there were many places a woman couldn't even get a credit card by herself. Her husband had to do that. She was given a place in society only through her husband. And this was the poor South, in the 70s and 80s …. So I think perhaps that had something to do with Terrence's choice.

C.H. In your interview with Sean Teet, you mentioned that you have motives for Joseph de Rocher and also Sister Helen. (It wasn't clear, but I'm assuming one was the use of her name also?) Did you have specific motives for the characters outlined before you started writing their music? What about Joseph's mother? In her act I scene, I hear a lot of what I think is Joe's motive in the orchestra, and I would also identify some of this music as appearing in the Prelude ms. 21- 35, especially the " haven't we" motive. I'm kind of thinking that her music in this scene is influenced a lot by Joe's motive and its mutations. (most notably in the orchestration).

J.H. Oy vey. This is the kind of stuff I leave up to others. This all happens very organically for me. Joe has a couple of themes associated with him: the 5/8 meter and also his name "Joseph De Rocher" … Helen has "He will gather us around" and also the three-note theme in "This journey" … those snippets and tunes show up everywhere. ALL of the parents have the "You don't know" theme going on (from the sextet) because they are all parents. Mrs. De Rocher has a few other things going on, too.

C.H. The act II piece, "Don't say a word," is specifically called an "aria." Can you tell me your rationale behind that choice, particularly as there are only a couple of other instances where you have done that in the opera?

J.H. Felt right.

C.H. In learning the Act I scene and Act II aria, I'm finding that you have a very "parlando" style of writing. The melody often finds similar inflection to regular speech. Has that been influenced at all by the Musical Theatre style, (Gershwin, Sondheim, for example)? I'm not suggesting that it's composed in a popular style, just that is has a feeling of natural speech. What made you decide what was recitative-like, more lyrical "speech" (arioso), or aria?

J.H. Yes. Tremendously influenced by musical theater. It is EXTREMELY important to me that the words be set so they can be understood. I absolutely hate supertitles in English, and if a singer is worth their salt, and if the words have been set well, the audience should be able to understand the words. As for arioso, it's just how I write. A composer has to make a choice on how to set material in between "numbers" or ensembles … in the classical era they used straight recit. . . . afterward it became more arioso to support a continuous flow of music without interruption. In musicals, they just talk between numbers. I like the arioso option.

C.H. I have one final question about the key structure. Is this based on the vocal range of the singer - voice type or because that's the key the texts are best suited to? Do you have an outline of the key structure for the opera set out when you first started composing the opera? To me, the F M/m of "He Will Gather Us Around," is the "Home" key of the opera, the 'redemption' key if you will, and characters sing in relation to that key according to where they are in their journey. (For example, that's why Joe speech-sings his last lines on C (dominant of F which "leads home.") Does that sound too trite? (I'm also thinking that a specific key invites a specific colour palette, which, like in Lieder for example, doesn't always convey the poetry when the Lied is transposed). I have theories of course about Joe's mother (which you don't have to tell me about), but not everyone would agree with me on the importance of the "key" idea.

J.H. I do all of this by instinct and what feels right to me. I do not have a big overall key structure in mind when I start. I listen to what I hear and then I write it down. That's about it!