



Shifting the Cultural Balance

American Perceptions of European Opera

1880-1914



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Introduction

“Americans, they have an incredible operatic tradition: the Metropolitan Opera House is – if not the most prestigious -- one of the most prestigious opera houses in the world for over 100 years.”¹

– José Carreras

According to the Spanish opera performer, José Carreras, one of The Three Tenors along with Plácido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti, The Metropolitan Opera House in New York could be perceived as the face of opera in America. Throughout its history, the Met has been America’s most important classical music organization, presenting opera at the highest possible level. The original theatre building at Broadway and 39th Street, New York, opened its doors on October 22, 1883. However, to improve the Met’s technical facilities and seating capacity, the company chose to build a whole new opera house in 1966 at the Lincoln Center in New York. This building is still recognized as the (new) Met and belongs to the largest opera houses in the world. Over the years, it has taken a significant role at bringing some of the most important operas worldwide to the American stage. It hosted American premieres of well-respected European opera composers, such as Richard Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* and Giuseppe Verdi’s *Falstaff* and even world debuts like Giacomo Puccini’s *La Fanciulla del West*.²

The Met still plays a significant role in American musical life, however its relationship with American opera has been quite complex. Especially in its early years, the theatre’s repertory predominately consisted of European opera, performed in either Italian or German. At the turn of the twentieth century the Met gradually settled on staging operas in English or in its original language. Yet, it was not until 1910 that the first opera by an American composer made its entrance at the opera house in New York. *The Pipe of Desire* by Frederick Shepherd Converse was the first American opera performed in English at the Met stage.³ Despite the rise of American opera houses by the twentieth century, it was difficult to find funding for the experimentations with new American compositions. The Met gave Converse’s opera three performances in the 1910 season, before it turned its focus back on the traditional European opera classics.⁴

¹ Plácido Domingo, Luciano Pavarotti and Jose Carreras, interview by Joie Chen and Leon Harris, *CNN*, "Three tenors plan 5 stops on world tour," October 11, 1995, http://edition.cnn.com/SHOWBIZ/Music/9510/three_tenors/, viewed on June 5, 2018.

² "Our Story," *The Metropolitan Opera House*, <https://www.metopera.org/about/the-met/>, viewed on June 5, 2018.

³ "Pipe of Desire, Frederick S. Converse's English Opera to Be Given at the Metropolitan," *New York Times*, March 13, 1910, <https://www.nytimes.com/1910/03/13/archives/-pipe-of-desire-frederick-s-converses-english-opera-to-be-given-at-.html>, viewed on June 5, 2018.

⁴ Mates, Julian, *America's Musical Stage: Two Hundred Years of Musical Theatre*, (ABC-CLIO: 1987), 61-63.

In Opera in America: A Cultural History, John Dizikes explains how Americans struggled with the European backcloth to discover their own opera style and to find a foothold in American opera houses. He describes how opera – which was steeped in European aristocratic tradition – eventually transferred into the democratic cultural environment of America.⁵ Through much of the nineteenth century, opera in America was considered as a European import product. In this cultural fence the New World was always submitted to being compared to the Old.

So one does not have to be an opera lover to have simply heard of top-listed European composers such as Monteverdi, Mozart, Verdi, Wagner or Puccini – who produced landmark artistic achievements within this performing art. According to Kasper Holten – director of the Royal Opera House in London – opera has always been “an art form where all of Europe came together.”⁶ Opera can be perceived as a popular, cultural expression; a creation of Old Europe at its zenith. It all started in the early seventeenth century when opera was introduced and made into a serious form of art by the Italian composer Claudio Monteverdi; a pioneer in the development of opera.⁷ After it arose from Catholic Italy, it gradually transferred across Europe during the eighteenth- and nineteenth century. Opera flourished in Catholic capitals such as Vienna, Munich and Prague and expressed the national trends and tastes of these cities.

Besides exemplifying Europe’s cultural coherency, opera was closely intertwined with society and politics – either as a direct disseminator of political and cultural ideas of its age or as a reflection of the power structures that produced it. In *The Politics of Opera: A History from Monteverdi to Mozart*, Mitchell Cohen explains how opera has been the most respected and the most political form of Western music for centuries. Cohen offers an analysis on the development of opera and politics from the Renaissance to the turn of the nineteenth century. He explains the political context and argues that opera has conveyed the political ideas of its times. He points at “operas that address politics and political ideas directly or indirectly; or that harbor important political implications; or that say or suggest something important about the politics of the times in which they are written.”⁸ Moreover, he emphasizes that the birth of opera coincided with the emergence of the modern nation-state and reveals that the art form’s subsequent development has showed important changes in state power.⁹

Hence; opera can be considered as a distinctive, European cultural expression, which is complex, universal and often political – whether directly or indirectly. But how did this popular, deep-rooted European tradition eventually transfer across the Atlantic? In what way was it received

⁵ Dizikes, John, *Opera in America: A Cultural History*, (Yale University Press: 1995). 3-6.

⁶ “Taking a Walk Through the History of Opera.” *The New York Times*, September 29, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/29/arts/music/opera-victoria-albert-museum.html>, viewed on 26 January 2017.

⁷ Fisher, Burton D, *A History of Opera: Milestones and Metamorphoses*, (Opera Journeys Publishing: 2005), 19-22.

⁸ Cohen, Mitchell, *The Politics of Opera: A History from Monteverdi to Mozart*, (Princeton University Press: 2017), xxii

⁹ Cohen, *The Politics of Opera*, xxiii, 374.

by the democratic cultural environment of America? What was in fact the role of European opera in American society during the turn of the twentieth century when global power and transatlantic relations between Europe and America changed significantly? To examine this possible shift of the cultural balance, this research project will focus on the American perception of European opera as a specific European art form. How was European opera perceived by Americans according to historical American newspapers between 1880 and 1914 and to which extent can we identify a change in American public discourse in relation to European opera at the turn of the twentieth century?

Overview of academic discussion

To elaborate on this research topic and to place the outcomes in a historical context, it is important to draw attention to the geopolitical changes in the transatlantic world in the decades prior to the outbreak of World War I. In previous centuries European civilization had experienced a time of unprecedented rapid expansion around the globe. Europe took a leading role on world stage due to colonial power overseas, the rise of the industrial revolution and the organizational proficiency of the nation-state. The United Kingdom became the leading global power. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it had already established an expansive empire overseas. European nations began to dominate the rest of the world thanks to their capability to control sea routes and to the discovery of the American continent.

Mary Nolan analyzes the shifting transatlantic power relations between Europe and America during the twentieth century. In *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890-2010*, she argues that the world was largely dominated by European powers between 1815 and 1914. She describes this post-World War I era as a time in which Americans and Europeans were increasingly involved in networks of intellectual and cultural exchange.¹⁰ It was a period of an uncertain shifting balance. While the nineteenth century can be considered as European, the twentieth century can be perceived as more American, Nolan states.¹¹ Partly because of the American Civil War in the 1860s, America experienced the economic benefits of the industrial revolution, which enabled the country to develop into an industrial and military nation. Meanwhile, European power – economic, military, cultural, and moral – declined because of the process of decolonization, the collapse of European empires and the outbreaks of World Wars I and II. Nolan acknowledges that America's industrial might was growing exponentially during the twentieth century but argues that America's

¹⁰ Nolan, Mary, *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890-2010*. New Approaches to European History, (Cambridge University Press: 2012). 10-11.

¹¹ Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century*, 1.

so-called “inevitable triumph” of this era should be more nuanced.¹² She refuses to accept the belief that America’s industrial revolution was destined for global hegemony. According to Nolan the New World did not dominate the Old. Instead, the prewar world was one of empires, in which trade, investment, and production were rapidly growing in both America and Europe and in which it was unclear how the transatlantic balance of economic, political, and cultural power would evolve. America was a nation among nations.¹³

However, the multipolarity of the beginning of the twentieth century gave way to bipolarity by the middle of the twentieth century. World War I triggered a development that eventually led to the integration of most of the world’s prominent nations into a single balance-of-power system. During World War I this integration began with the alliance of Great Britain, France, Russia, and America against Germany and Austria-Hungary. It continued in World War II, causing the balance of power to shift. It set the scene for the emergence of two new global superpowers: America and the Soviet Union. The European powers that had been at the forefront of the international stage in the beginning of the twentieth century were left exhausted and ruined by the war. The result was a bipolar balance of power across the northern half of the globe.

How did the geopolitical, political and economic changes of the twentieth century affect the way Americans repositioned themselves towards the Old World? In *Global Dawn: The Cultural Foundation of American Internationalism*, Frank Ninkovich explores the shift of transatlantic affairs in relation to the course of American foreign policy. According to his intellectual analysis of global consciousness, this shift already developed during the post-Civil War years of the Gilded Age. He defines this era as a “golden age of isolationism.”¹⁴ Ninkovich argues that “during these years many Americans came to picture their country as existing within a global economic, political, and cultural environment, and it was at this time that the cultural foundation was laid for America’s turn to empire and world power.”¹⁵ What he means to say is that American perceptions that existed during the Gilded Age provided an important cultural foundation for America’s internationalism of the twentieth century. The rise of America’s interest in international affairs is what Ninkovich calls a ‘global dawn.’ Ninkovich points out that during this so-called global dawn, Americans closely followed foreign affairs and increasingly viewed themselves as transmitters of civilization.¹⁶ “Civilization was the functional equivalent of what, more than a century later, would come to be called globalization, but it was also more diffuse. [...] Civilization appeared to contain a world of

¹² Ibidem, 1.

¹³ Ibidem, 10.

¹⁴ Ninkovich, Frank A., *Global Dawn: The Cultural Foundation of American Internationalism, 1865-1890*, (Harvard University Press: 2009), 15.

¹⁵ Ninkovich, *Global Dawn*, 1.

¹⁶ Ibidem, 18-19.

meanings."¹⁷ Ninkovich supports his claim by examining several Gilded Age periodicals – including *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's Weekly*, and *The Nation*. By doing so he discovers that in the last decades of the nineteenth century many American liberal thinkers expressed a strong awareness of global transformative forces. This contributed to the idea that America's role in the world should not directly focus on geopolitics or imperialism, but rather on the spreading of its economic, political, and cultural influence; its so-called 'soft power.'¹⁸

Ninkovich's concept of a global dawn reflects on America's rising interest in international affairs, which influenced the direction of American foreign policy. Moreover, it explains how globalization affected America's view on Europe and the rest of the world. This could clarify why a shift in America's perception of European opera is likely at the turn of the twentieth century since America was taking a more active role on the world stage. One may assume that Americans started to adopt a more critical stance towards the classical cultural concepts coined by the Old World and began to search for their own identity and place in the world.

In *The American Image of the Old World*, Cushing Strout presents a critical history of the American image of Europe as it has shaped and expressed national politics and culture. Thereby he offers an enlightening outlook on American history, doing justice to both the agreements and struggles within American culture about the meaning of its heritage of Western civilization and puts the American image of Europe into perspective. Strout helps to understand the long-term perspective of the decline of the American perception of Europe as an Old World posed in contrast to the New World.

Hence, in respect to my research project it would be interesting to reflect on the period between 1880 and 1914. It marks a time of uncertain shifting balance concerning global power and transatlantic relations between Europe and America, as described in the work of Nolan. Ninkovich's notion of a "global dawn" offers an interesting theoretical framework in which a possible changing American perception of European opera can be placed. Strout's model is helpful when analyzing American images outlined in American newspapers in relation to European opera. How are these images of European opera constructed in America during the twentieth century, as the nation became a global power that influenced Europe? Moreover, in what way might the tension between the American ideal of exceptionalism and the admiration of the traditional European heritage have affected transatlantic relations? These are key questions that will be addressed in the next chapters of this research project.

¹⁷ Ibidem, 18-19.

¹⁸ Ibidem, 324-325.

Methodology

This research project examines the American perception of European opera through the analysis of historical American newspapers between 1880 and 1914. It is interesting to focus on this specific era, because it refers to a time of uncertain shifting balance concerning global power and transatlantic relations between America and Europe.

Chronicling America has played an indispensable role in this research project. This website provides free access to millions of digitized historical newspapers collected from almost every state in America – with the exception of Wyoming, Alabama, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Rhode Island.¹⁹ This online archive was founded in 2005 and is part of the National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP).²⁰ The program encloses a partnership between the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), one of the largest sponsors of humanities programs in America,²¹ and the Library of Congress (LC), America's oldest federal cultural institution and largest research library in the world.²²

The newspapers of *Chronicling America* are selected and digitized by state institutions across America who has joined the National Digital Newspaper Program. Consequently, the existing collection is limited by the states who have contributed, and the newspapers and date specifications that are selected by the program. Since digitization is expanded backwards, newspapers before 1789 have not (yet) been added to the database. Copyright restrictions inhibit that newspapers published after December 31, 1963 are included. So currently the coverage ranges from 1789 to 1963. Its completeness however varies for each newspaper. Aside from regional newspapers that vary in size and importance, *Chronicling America* also provides non-English newspapers that represent different immigrant and ethnic groups, such as French, German, Italian and Spanish-speaking communities. So the database offers a wide-ranging collection of newspapers. However, since the primary focus of this research project is placed on the mainstream American perception of European opera at the turn of twentieth century in English texts, foreign newspapers have been excluded.

Topics that are registered in the extensive newspaper collection of *Chronicling America* cover significant events in American history as they were perceived and reported at the time they were taking place. Therefore, newspaper articles, advertisements, opinion pieces and images serve as primary resources that reflect on social and cultural trends in America. Moreover, *Chronicling America* can be used as a resource to find information about newspapers, including their dates of publication, preceding and succeeding titles, and editors. The focus can be filtered by selecting

¹⁹ National Endowment for the Humanities, <<https://www.neh.gov/divisions/preservation/featured-project/arkansas-and-georgia-join-the-national-digital-newspaper-program>>, viewed on 1 May 2018.

²⁰ *Chronicling America*, <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/about/>>, viewed on 1 May 2018.

²¹ National Endowment for the Humanities, <<https://www.neh.gov/about>>, viewed on 1 May 2018.

²² Library of Congress, <<https://www.loc.gov/about/>>, viewed on 1 May 2018.

newspapers that are published all on the same day, in the same state, or in a specific period. Since this research project focuses on the perception of European opera in newspapers between 1880 and 1914, English-written newspapers from all over North-America that are published in this period have been selected for examination.

To narrow down a very broad field of research into a clear and well-structured researchable topic, this thesis reflects on three noteworthy European operas; Richard Wagner's *Tannhäuser* (1845), Giuseppe Verdi's *Aïda* (1871), and Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (1904). Thereby it applies the method of a case study. Case studies are considered as a useful tool in the academic field. They do not provide a sweeping statistical survey, but rather enable an in-depth study on data within a specific context at a micro level. Due to the limited amount of time, it is not my intention or even possible to explore every single American newspaper article between 1880 and 1914 on European opera. Therefore, case-selection and the use of relevant keywords play a pivotal role. The method of digital newspaper analysis will be used to construct my observations and arguments.

Chronicling America provides the possibility to search for topics relatively quick by using keywords. In this way the useful American newspapers can be filtered from the large quantity of less useful ones. While selecting relevant articles, reviews and advertisements regarding European opera and transatlantic relations, close attention is paid to changes in tone, appreciation, word choice and opera themes.

The method of digital newspaper research has some academic limitations, this must be acknowledged. First of all, not all newspapers from every state have been digitized. Digitization is a complicated, expensive project that will probably take several more decades to near completion. The data that will be used might therefore not be fully objective or representative for all, since it is a selection. Furthermore, the exploration of a limited amount of cases makes it difficult to reach a general conclusion. Nevertheless, the microscopic methodology and the objective setting of this research are far more important than the big sample size and will provide valuable indications and hypotheses to allow further elaboration on this research topic. It will offer an insight in the way the American public discourse was constructed, changed and developed throughout the decades and in relation to important historical events. Additionally, this methodology allows to study – not only of how people wrote about European opera – but also at what specific moments they wrote about it. Hence, while the limitations of digital newspaper analysis must be kept in mind, this methodology can serve as a valuable academic way to do research.

The selection of Richard Wagner's *Tannhäuser* (1845), Giuseppe Verdi's *Aïda* (1871), and Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (1904), can be explained on the basis of valuable opera statistics provided by *Operabase*. This database specialized in operatic activity, reveals that Richard Wagner is ranked as the most popular composer in Germany. On a global scale, Wagner belongs – preceded by Verdi, Mozart, Puccini and Rossini – to the top 5 composers ranked by the number of performances of their operas worldwide over the seasons 2011/12 to 2015/16. These five seasons included works from 1281 composers.²³ This shows how prevalent these nineteenth century European composers still are at the present day.

However, to visualize how often these top composers occur in American English texts between 1880 and 1914, the facility of Google Books Ngram Viewer has been used. The Ngram Viewer offers a statistical analysis of Google's current dataset that is compiled through collaborations with libraries located around the world. The results showed a classification of the top ranked composers, based on their importance and expressed in the amount of hits, scanned in American English texts between 1880 and 1914. Wagner scored the highest, followed by Verdi and Puccini. Therefore, these three European opera composers have been selected for this thesis.

In the following three chapters the life and work of Wagner, Verdi and Puccini will be discussed. These chapters will explain the influence of these top-rated European composers in the democratic cultural environment of America. Also the selection of the European operas *Tannhäuser*, *Aïda* and *Madama Butterfly* will be clarified. Subsequently, the American perception of these three European operas will be examined. How are *Tannhäuser*, *Aïda* and *Madama Butterfly* received in historical American newspapers between 1880 and 1914? Can one detect a significant change in the American public discourse in relation to European opera at the turn of the twentieth century? These questions will have the main focus in the subsequent chapters.

²³ *Operabase*, <http://www.operabase.com/top.cgi?lang=en&splash=t>, viewed on 9 March 2018.

Chapter 1: The influence of Richard Wagner

1.1. Wagner's life and legacy

I saw in opera an institution whose special purpose is almost exclusively to entertain, to amuse a population as bored as it is eager for pleasure; further, I saw it [opera] as obliged to seek financial gain to cover the expenditures necessitated by such alluring yet bombastic displays; and I cannot deny that there was real folly in wanting to turn this institution toward a diametrically opposed goal, that is to say, to use it to wrest people from their mundane daily interests and to encourage them to venerate and understand the best the human mind can conceive.²⁴ – Richard Wagner

German composer Richard Wagner can be considered as one of the most important figures of nineteenth-century music. He owes much of his recognition to his revolutionary thoughts on European opera and the relation of music to drama. Who was this man, and how did he become such a respected figure in the musical world of opera-making? Since this research project explores the American public discourse in relation to European opera at the turn of the twentieth century, it is relevant to explore the position of such an influential European composer as Wagner. How was Wagner and one of his most beloved operas, *Tannhäuser*, received by historical American newspapers between 1880 and 1914? Prior to the examination, it is important to draw attention to the life of the composer first. This section is not meant to provide a comprehensive biography of Wagner. Instead, it should give a brief outline of the key events of his musical career, his visions and accomplishments, and his impact upon the New World as a valuable introduction to the research study.

Although Wagner was born over two centuries ago, he still leaves its mark on music today. Prominent film composers, like Howard Shore and John Williams, acknowledge to have been inspired by Wagner's use of leitmotifs for their Hollywood adaptations of *The Lord of The Rings* and the *Harry Potter* series.²⁵ As in Wagner's operas, classical music in films provide an intense, emotional experience – when done well. It is striking how frequently excerpts from Wagner's operas have been used into film music. In *Understanding the Leitmotif: From Wagner to Hollywood Film Music*, Matthew Bribitzer-Stull reveals these influences and explains how “it's hard to imagine any Western musico-dramatic genre of the last 130 years – be it film, musical theater, programme symphony, or opera – that hasn't felt the long shadow of Richard Wagner in one way or another.”²⁶

The turbulent life of the illustrious German composer started in Leipzig, Germany, on May 22, 1813. Wagner spent most of his childhood in Dresden. In 1831 he returned to his birthplace to

²⁴ Wagner, Richard, *Quatre Poèmes d'Opéras: Précédés d'une Lettre sur la Musique*, (Calmann-Lévy: 1893), xxii.

²⁵ Bribitzer-Stull, Matthew, *Understanding the Leitmotif: From Wagner to Hollywood Film Music*, (Cambridge University Press: 2015), 141.

²⁶ Bribitzer-Stull, *Understanding the Leitmotif*, 1.

attend Leipzig University, where he became inspired by Beethoven's compositions and decided to devote his life to music. The first years of Wagner's public career were spent at small theatres in Germany, as he started to develop operas since the 1840s.²⁷

His revolutionary ideas and political stances of the time, caused him to get into direct conflict with the authorities in Saxony. His participation in the unsuccessful Dresden Revolution of 1848, drove him into exile. Wagner was unable to enter Germany until the political ban was fully lifted in 1862.²⁸ Consequently, he visited European cities including London, Riga, Lucerne, Vienna, Venice and Zurich, leaving an indelible imprint on all of them. In several letters written from Switzerland Wagner expressed his disappointment in the "slave mentality" that had taken root in his own country.²⁹ The German response of his goals and needs had been insufficient. Therefore, he began to show interest in the land beyond the Atlantic Ocean; America, principally because of financial reasons. While working on opera projects in Europe, he was playing with the idea of staging his musical drama's elsewhere. "I am now thinking a good deal of America! Not because I might find what I am looking for there, but because the ground there is easier to plant."³⁰ Wagner even spoke about immigrating to *America*; although he never *did*.

After years of wandering through cities in Europe, he devoted himself to early drafts of what were to become his academic masterpieces. In a series of theoretical writings published between 1849 and 1852, Wagner developed his renowned concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, by which he defines his aesthetics of drama and strives for a synthesis of music, poetry and dance. It was through this unique 'total work of art,'³¹ that he managed to revolutionize opera-making around the globe. It formed the basis of virtually all his compositions.³²

Yet, he had the misfortune to grow up in the Old World that was basically led by aristocratic and traditional guidelines. While hoping his modern operas would gain popularity in the traditional musical world, Wagner decided to settle in Paris in 1859. Paris was considered one of the most important music capitals of Europe in the nineteenth century. Therefore, he attempted to introduce his work to the Parisian public. Initially, the French press reacted positively on his excerpts from *Lohengrin*, *Tannhäuser*, *Tristan and Isolde*, and *The Flying Dutchman*. But the revision of his full opera *Tannhäuser* at the Paris Opera House, quickly put an end to the positive reception of Wagner's work. One of the reasons was his refusal to insert a grand ballet in the second act of the opera. It had been a common opera tradition since the seventeenth century and was expected by the conservative

²⁷ Henderson, Williams James, *Richard Wagner His Life and His Dramas: A Biographical Study of the Man and an Explanation of His Work*, (Library of Alexandria: 2017) 3-5.

²⁸ Henderson, *Richard Wagner His Life and His Drama*, 57.

²⁹ Millington, Barry and Stewart Spencer, eds. and trans., *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, (New York, 1987), 179.

³⁰ Millington and Spencer, *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*, 179, 242.

³¹ Snowman, Daniel, *The Gilded Stage: A Social History of Opera*, (Atlantic Books Ltd: 2010), 192-194.

³² Horowitz, Joseph, *Wagner Nights: An American History, California Studies in 19th-century Music Series*, (University of California Press: 1998), 26-27.

public at the time. Consequently, Wagner was forced to withdraw the revised *Tannhäuser* after only three performances on March 13th, 18th and 24th, 1861, despite of the 164 rehearsals.³³ It marked the end of his attempt to launch a career in France, and he left Paris soon after.

Nevertheless, over the course of time Wagner managed to establish contacts with leading opera directors and composers, gaining more respect and appreciation in the field of opera-making. In 1871 he moved to Bayreuth, where he decided to build his own opera house: the Bayreuth Festspielhaus.³⁴ This building was inspired by the theatres of ancient Greece and had quite a few innovations. It was designed to be the ideal place to perform Wagner's modern opera's, so the audience could be mesmerized by the optimal dramatic experience of his 'total work of art.'³⁵ The Bayreuth Festspielhaus opened his doors on August 13, 1876 to the premiere of *The Ring of the Nibelung*, which became one of Wagner's most popular opera cycle.³⁶ At the present-day, the Bayreuth Festspielhaus still serves as the venue for the annual Bayreuth Festival, where Wagner's operas continue to be performed to this day.

In 1879, just four years before his death, Wagner decided to write a short autobiography: "The Work and Mission of My Life," to describe his accomplishments, artistic theories and his attitudes toward German music. In his essay he explained how he found – during his exile from Germany – “the perfect freedom” and “full and undisturbed opportunity for self-communion and for the uninterrupted contemplation of [his] ideals”.³⁷ Once again he emphasizes how the New World always awakened hope in him. His interest in America was based on the hope that the German mind could develop there, “in activity and freedom, unoppressed by the wretched burdens left upon it by a melancholy history!”³⁸ Thereby, he envisioned a development of a new, strong civilization that had to embody the greatness of the German mind, hoping it could once more “attain to the full glory of an art that is all its own.”³⁹

Due to the increasing admiration for Wagner's work Wagner Societies emerged in all parts of the world. The first one arose in 1865 and was called the German Richard Wagner Society. It eventually resulted in the foundation of The International Association of Wagner Societies in 1991, which united all these regional Wagner Societies around the globe. Their mission is “to create interest in and deepen the understanding of Richard Wagner's works, to provide support for the next generation of artists, to support the Richard Wagner Scholarship Foundation, which was founded at

³³ Gregor-Dellin, Martin, *Richard Wagner: his life, his work, his century*, (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich: 1983), 293-303.

³⁴ The Bayreuther Festspiele, <https://www.bayreuther-festspiele.de/en/the-festival/history/>, viewed on April 6, 2018.

³⁵ Bowman, Ned A., *Investing a Theatrical Ideal: Wagner's Bayreuth Festspielhaus*, (New York: 1966), 429-38.

³⁶ Kuritz, Paul, *The Making of Theatre History*, (Pearson College Div.: 1988), 263-265.

³⁷ Wagner, Richard, "The Work and Mission of My Life. Part II," *The North American Review*, Vol.129, no. 274 (September, 1879), 243, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25100791>, viewed on April 7, 2018.

³⁸ Wagner, "The Work and Mission of My Life, Part II," 109, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25100781>, viewed on April 7, 2018.

³⁹ Wagner, Richard., "The Work and Mission of My Life. Part I," *The North American Review*, Vol. 129, no. 273 (August, 1879), 109. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25100781>, viewed on April 7, 2018.

the behest of Richard Wagner, to ensure the continuing success of the Bayreuth Festival and to promote international co-operation.”⁴⁰ Currently, more than 26,000 members in 147 societies belong to this international organization.

In summary, Wagner was a true nationalist, yet an interventionist, who was far ahead of its time and shared unique thoughts on opera-making. His concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the annual Bayreuth Festival, The International Association of Wagner Societies, and his influence upon contemporary musicians, all illustrate Wagner’s long-lasting impact that even reaches the twenty-first century. It was mainly the passive, aerostatic mindset of his home country that encouraged the German opera composer to pursue his dreams and needs elsewhere, outside of Germany. To prevent the German spirit from being lost, he decided to change course and to draw his hopes on the free-spirited New World. Through German music he strove to awaken a new vibrant civilization in America, in which the German spirit could be restored to its full glory. In the subsequent section Wagner's influence upon American society will be discussed in greater detail.

1.2 Wagner in America

Wagner’s work unquestionably dominated European music-making, but it also created a significant cultural and intellectual reaction in America called ‘Wagnerism’, which peaked in the late nineteenth century until World War I.⁴¹ In order to place outcomes of the research on the American perception of Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* in historical American newspapers between 1880 and 1914 into perspective, it is important to reflect on the phenomenon of Wagnerism first. This section will explain how Wagnerism gained a foothold across the Atlantic Ocean.

In *Wagner Nights: An American History*, Joseph Horowitz, provides a history of Wagnerism in American society. He defines this phenomenon as a “[...] heuristic ideology, a means and a mirror. Aesthetically, it was both progressive and reactionary. Politically, it was on the left and of the right. Philosophically, it was utopian and parochial. Wagner himself was all of these.”⁴² According to Horowitz, Wagnerism significantly influenced America’s intellectual life and dominated its musical high culture at the turn of the twentieth century.⁴³

The reason why Wagnerism reached its peak during the 1880s and 1920s can be explained by placing it in the historical context of the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era that spanned across the

⁴⁰ *The International Association of Wagner Societies (RWVI)*, <http://www.richard-wagner.org/rwvi/en/about-us/mission-and-history/>, viewed on April 6, 2018.

⁴¹ Horowitz, Joseph, *Wagner Nights: An American History*, *California Studies in 19th-century Music Series*, (University of California Press: 1998), 1.

⁴² Horowitz, *Wagner Nights*, 1.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, 2.

New World. It was a time of social, political, economic, and constitutional change in America, which increased a massive growth in industrialization, trade and economic prosperity. However, the benefits of the Gilded Age were generally for wealthy white men only. African-Americans, Native Americans, immigrants and women were often suppressed under severe and unsafe working conditions and unfair wages.⁴⁴ Consequently, many Americans of the Progressive Era demanded solutions to the social injustices of the Gilded Age. While President Theodore Roosevelt attempted to eliminate industrial monopolies, numerous social reform movements supported equality between American citizens. It led to job opportunities and to work safety for all groups of people.⁴⁵

Wagner – also considered as a cultural activist – often felt embattled by the capitalist upper-class too. While analyzing Wagnerism, Horowitz describes how the Wagner’s aversion to the decadent aristocrats and greedy materialists of his time shaped the fundamental affinity between Wagner and America. Wagner’s controversial ideas in a relatively conservative time that was receptive to progress, was one of the main reasons why Americans of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era were willing to listen to his ideas.⁴⁶ Thus, even before Wagner became successful as a musician, Americans took him seriously as a thinker. The American scenery appeared to be the right place for Wagner’s progressive thoughts and modern work.

In *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, Lawrence Levine also reflects on Wagner’s influence on the musical high culture in America at the turn of the twentieth century. Levine supports Horowitz’ observations and mentions Wagner as the “giant destroyer of ancient opera traditions,” who introduced a distinction between “serious and frivolous opera” that soon gained great popularity in America and awoke Wagnerism.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Levine explored the oppositions between ‘high’ and ‘low culture’ in nineteenth century America. By explaining how “culture is a process, not a fixed condition,” but rather “the product of unremitting interaction between the past and the present,” he reveals that this division of American culture was more the product of historical conditions and social processes of the nineteenth century, than of any distinctive characteristics within the arts itself that refer to either ‘highbrow’ or ‘lowbrow.’⁴⁸

Like Horowitz, Levine states that opera in America at the turn of the twentieth century was dominated by traditional foreign-language opera – mostly Italian or German – and was performed in opera houses like the Academy of Music and Metropolitan Opera House in New York. These institutions were deeply influenced – if not controlled – by wealthy patrons whose managers and

⁴⁴ Norton, Mary Beth, Carol Sheriff, David W. Blight and Howard Chudacoff, *A People and a Nation: A History of the United States, Volume II: Since 1865*, (Cengage Learning: 2012), 622.

⁴⁵ Norton, *A People and a Nation*, 653-654.

⁴⁶ Horowitz, Joseph, *Wagner Nights: An American History, California Studies in 19th-century Music Series*, (University of California Press: 1998), 29-30.

⁴⁷ Horowitz, *Wagner Nights*, 102.

⁴⁸ Levine, Lawrence W., *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, (Harvard University Press: 2009), 33.

conductors tried their best to keep opera free from the influence of other genres and groups.⁴⁹ Wagner, who was far ahead of his time, offered something differently. His works awoke a relatively new opera genre that contrasted with the traditional, moralistic existing ones and elicited interest in this modern opera.

In *Opera in America: A Cultural History*, John Dizikes offers a walk-through opera history from its beginnings in the early eighteenth century through the present day, in which America has searched for its own identity. He explains how opera in America was affected by politics, war, events in Europe, and especially by the large flow of German immigrants to the New World. The unsuccessful revolutions of 1848 that had to establish democracy in Germany, caused thousands to leave their country to start a new life in America, pursuing the opportunities available there. Around the 1890's an estimated 2.8 million German-born immigrants lived in America.⁵⁰ Once settled in their new homes, German immigrants soon started to find their own churches, newspapers, periodicals, schools and libraries. Yet, it was music that permanently imprinted German-American culture.

In 'The Work and Mission of My Life,' Wagner described the magnitude of his German music, which he characterized by its "original, pure, vigorous style" which he asserted could be "the true, natural, living world-language."⁵¹ In addition, he called for the preservation of "the influence of the German mind upon a world, which will always need that influence, and shall not be perverted and false and therefore worthless, but true, noble, and vigorous, and therefore in the highest degree salutary, beneficent, and broadening in its effects."⁵² By doing so Wagner explained "the wish and hope of the German artist, who has here sought to give [...] the story of his ideal and the story of his life; and who now bids them farewell, in the hope that they and he may sometime meet again, as earnest co-workers in the domain of ideal, spiritual progress."⁵³ Americans of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era welcomed German culture, as they perceived Germany as a well-developed nation of science, medicine and philosophy.

According to Viola Emma Knoche's study *The Early influence of Richard Wagner in America*, the influence of the German conductor can be found everywhere in America.⁵⁴ Therefore, she refers to Wagner's involvement in American musical organizations and opera companies, and to the annual Bayreuth Festival as a medium to strengthen the interest in his work. Knoche reveals that many American spectators were present at the first performance of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in

⁴⁹ Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 33-35.

⁵⁰ Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/european/imde/germchro.html>, viewed on April 19, 2018.

⁵¹ Wagner, Richard, "The Work and Mission of My Life. Part II," *The North American Review*, Vol.129, no. 274 (September, 1879), 257-258. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25100791>, viewed on April 22, 2018.

⁵² Wagner, Richard, "The Work and Mission of My Life. Part II," *The North American Review*, Vol.129, no. 274 (September, 1879), 258. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25100791>, viewed on April 22, 2018.

⁵³ Wagner, Richard, "The Work and Mission of My Life. Part II," *The North American Review*, Vol.129, no. 274 (September, 1879), 258. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25100791>, viewed on April 22, 2018.

⁵⁴ Knoche, Viola Emma, *The Early Influence of Richard Wagner in America*, (A. B. North Western College: 1913), 1. <https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/52122/earlyinfluenceof00knoc.pdf?sequence=2>, viewed on April, 30, 2018.

1876 at the Festspielhaus at Bayreuth. Upon their return they expressed great admiration for the German composer through reports in American magazines and newspapers.⁵⁵ Knoche argues that the positive reception of Wagner in America can be explained by “[...] his appeal to the fundamental forces of human life. Himself deeply rooted in the Germanic life of the past, he calls upon his own and kindred nation to hold fast to that which is best in the long experience of race; faith, love and freedom and to uphold these ideals in every clime.”⁵⁶ The admiration for Wagner encouraged the American interest in German literature and German mythology of the Middle Ages. Knoche argues that before the appearance of Wagner in America, very little was known of German masterpieces of the Middle Ages. It was Wagner that triggered this movement.⁵⁷

Hence, Wagner left a significant mark on American society. Especially his refreshing, academic publications and musical masterpieces moved America’s intellectual and cultural life of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Prominent scholars as Horowitz, Levine and Knoche, who carefully studied the phenomenon of Wagnerism in America, acknowledge a strong American interest in German life and thought at the turn of the twentieth century. It can be concluded that Wagner’s progressive thoughts on opera-making through his ‘total work of art, along with the historical context of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, played a crucial role in activating an appreciation of German music and literature that strengthen the development of Wagnerism in America. To explore Wagner’s impact on American society even further, the next section will use one of Wagner’s most renowned operas, *Tannhäuser*, as a case study to obtain deeper insight into the American perception of European opera between 1880 and 1914.

1.3 Wagner’s *Tannhäuser*

It is clear that Wagner is an important figure within the musical field of European opera. To discover more about his influence in America at the turn of the twentieth century, this section will take Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* as an analytical lens to examine the American public discourse in relation to European opera expressed in American newspapers between 1880 and 1914. *Tannhäuser* had its world premiere on October 19, 1845 at The Semperoper opera house in Dresden and can be considered as one of Wagner’s major works.⁵⁸ The reason to look at the American perception of this early masterpiece, can be explained by the fact that it was the first of Wagner’s works to be

⁵⁵ Knoche, *The Early Influence of Richard Wagner in America*, 2.
<https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/52122/earlyinfluenceof00knoc.pdf?sequence=2>, viewed on April, 30, 2018.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, 70.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, 64.

⁵⁸ Horowitz, Joseph, *Wagner Nights: An American History, California Studies in 19th-century Music Series*, (University of California Press: 1998), 345-346.

performed in America, on April 4, 1859 in Stadt Theatre in New York. In 1884 the original Dresden version transferred to the largest classical music organization in North America: The Metropolitan Opera House in New York. This marked the first time that an opera was performed in German at the Met stage.⁵⁹

Wagner presented several revisions of *Tannhäuser* throughout his life, but the 1861 Paris version can be perceived as the most important one. The American premiere of the Paris version took place at the Metropolitan Opera House on January 30, 1889 and was conducted by Anton Seidl. In the five seasons from 1886 to 1891, Seidl conducted 128 Wagner performances. Wagner played a significant role in keeping the Metropolitan Opera House in good financial condition.⁶⁰ As a result of his musical triumphs, translations of his academic writings became widely available by 1880 and actively discussed in the presses and intellectual circles. Wagner's wide-ranging popularity makes it interesting to explore the American perception of one of his opera's.

Before moving on to the analysis of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, it is important to discuss the opera's narrative first since it expresses much of its European origin. The story takes the audience back to thirteenth century medieval Germany, describing the life of a Christian minstrel, Tannhäuser, who comes across the Venusberg, the forbidden home of the Goddess of love. He remains with Venus for a year, but longs for the life he left behind. Tannhäuser escapes and returns to the Wartburg Castle in Thüringen. Once there, he overhears announcements of a song contest about love, organized by Landgrave Hermann. The winner will marry the Landgrave's daughter, Elisabeth. Tannhäuser, who has already won Elisabeth's heart a long time ago, decides to participate, but rather sings about the sensual love and pleasures with Venus. Hereby the audience discovers that Tannhäuser visited Venus in the forbidden place and insist on his banishment. Elisabeth interferes on his behalf, but expresses she is deeply hurt. Landgrave Hermann orders Tannhäuser to visit the Pope to ask for forgiveness, but the Pope refuses him. When Tannhäuser decides to return to Venus, news arrives that Elisabeth is dead. She has sacrificed herself to provide salvation to Tannhäuser. Finally, he understands the extent of Elisabeth's pure love.⁶¹

Tannhäuser was given a historic, medieval German setting, including the Wartburg Castle, where the Hungarian princess, Saint Elisabeth, lived as the wife of the Landgrave of Thuringia. The protagonist, Tannhäuser, was a minnesinger that lived in the medieval thirteenth century. So, Wagner's opera is based on a combination of "historical, mythological, and German legendary

⁵⁹ Horowitz, *Wagner Nights*, 345-346.

⁶⁰ "Tannhäuser," *Metopera.com*, <https://www.metopera.org/metoperafiles/season/2015/operas/tannhauser/Playbill%20programs/-Oct%2015%20Tannhauser.pdf>, viewed on March 9, 2018.

⁶¹ "Tannhäuser," *Metopera.com*, <https://www.metopera.org/metoperafiles/season/20156/operas/tannhauser/Playbill%20programs/Oct%2015%20Tannhauser.pdf>, viewed on March 9, 2018.

texts.”⁶² Wagner believed that these powerful mythologies and legends offered universal truths about conflicts, such as power versus morality, man versus God, and love versus responsibility. These themes characterize the ideology of German Romantics of the nineteenth century. Wagner was a true Romantic and addressed those themes in many of his operas. While seeking a new spiritual truth, he proclaimed that Christianity had failed. Basically, the story of *Tannhäuser* portrays the eternal struggle between the forces of good: represented by the Christianity of the Minnesingers, against the forces of evil: represented by pleasures of lust and Venus.⁶³ With the creation of *Tannhäuser*, Wagner shows how the overwhelmingly Christian and medieval society is continuously challenged by rebellious human desires. It mirrors the distinctive nineteenth century zeitgeist and cultural conflict of German Romantics and can be perceived as a typical and relevant European opera for this research project.

After reflecting on key moments of Wagner’s life and career, it is interesting to examine in which way Wagner has been described in historical American newspapers in the period of 1880 to 1914; an era in which the cultural balance between Europe and America appeared to be uncertain. What was the role of European opera in American society during the turn of the twentieth century when global power and transatlantic relations changed significantly? To explore a possible shift of the cultural balance, this research project will start off with the examination of the American perception of Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* in historical American newspapers between 1880 and 1914.

Analyzing Wagner’s *Tannhäuser*

The online archive *Chronicling America*, facilitated by the Library of Congress, has played an essential role in this research project. Historical American newspapers published between 1880 and 1914 derived from this database have been selected for examination. Subsequently, the combination of the keywords ‘Wagner,’ ‘Tannhäuser’ and ‘opera’ has been used to *filter* out a large body of unwanted material. Yet, it resulted in a large number of hits; 106 to be precise. In order to break down the data and to focus on the relevant articles, all the results have been carefully examined and reviewed on their content.

Among the results, there were still a few foreign newspapers present, including *La Correspondencia de Puerto Rico*, *L’Italia* and *La Prensa*. Since the focus of this research project is placed on the mainstream American perception of European opera at the turn of twentieth century in English texts only, these foreign newspapers have been left out. *The Topeka State Journal* of December 2 1897 has also been excluded from examination, since it appeared twice with the exact

⁶² Fisher, Burton D., *Wagner’s Tannhäuser: Opera Journeys Mini Guide Series*, (Opera Journeys Publishing: 2002), 13-14.

⁶³ Fisher, *Wagner’s Tannhäuser*, 15.

same date and articles. So ultimately a sample size of exactly 100 American newspapers remained for the exploration of the American perception of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* between 1880 and 1914.

What became clear from the evaluation was that not each newspaper article was considered worth discussing. For instance, some referred to 'Wagner' or to 'opera' separately without providing any relevant information concerning the American perception of Wagner's opera *Tannhäuser*. Others presented nothing more than the title of a song from Wagner's *Tannhäuser* in a concert program. Thus, instead of providing a long list of newspapers in which Wagner's opera was addressed, articles have been categorized based on comparable story themes and thought. This to avoid fragmentation and repetition. This methodology resulted in the classification of five categories, consisting of laudatory advertisements and reviews, critical reviews, articles that reflected on German themes and culture, articles that reflected on American themes and culture, and articles that used Wagner's *Tannhäuser* for study purposes. Only the most significant newspaper articles have been selected and highlighted in this research project to provide a well-structured, reliable outline for each category. Thereby, attention has been paid to an article's structure, layout and tone. Even though not every newspaper article has been discussed in detail, all 100 have been included in an appendix to serve as supporting documents.

One of the first things that stood out from the selection of newspaper articles was that the substantial of consistent appreciation for the German composer and his work. This can be explained by the fact that the majority of the results consisted of paid advertisements, in which concerts, festivals and other musical performances at opera houses, theatres, schools, community centers, churches and parks were strongly promoted. Obviously, these texts were written for commercial reasons: to sell Wagner's work to the American people. While analyzing, two types of advertisements could be identified. The first one was characterized by a specific layout, depicting attention-grabbing headlines, borders and fonts to contrast with other news reports on the page. These ads encompassed only a few alluring slogans like: "Gems from the grand opera, Tannhäuser – Wagner,"⁶⁴ "METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE: Grand opera in German,"⁶⁵ Wagner's Great Opera, TANNHAUSER,"⁶⁶ and "Elaborate production of Wagner's Grand Opera – Tannhäuser."⁶⁷

The other type of advertisement could rather be perceived as one disguised as a laudatory

⁶⁴ Next Week's Band Concert." *The Kennewick Courier*, June 21, 1912, Page 8, Image 8. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90059523/1904-04-17/ed-1/seq-36/>, viewed on May 1, 2018.

⁶⁵ "Metropolitan Opera House." *New-York Tribune*, February 3, 1889, Page 9, Image 9. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1889-02-03/ed-1/seq-9/>, viewed on May 1, 2018.

⁶⁶ "Amusements." *The Washington Critic*, February 25, 1888, Page 4, Image 4. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82000205/1888-02-25/ed-1/seq-4/>, viewed on May 1, 2018.

⁶⁷ "Grand Opera Season." *National Republican*, February 25, 1888, Image 2. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86053573/1888-02-25/ed-1/seq-2/>, viewed on 1 May, 2018.

review or opinion piece. Although the distinctive advertising layout was not present, an aura of reverence and admiration around the German composer could still be noticed. For that reason, one can assert that these texts too were motivated by commercial intent. *The Saint Paul Globe* of April 17, 1904, for instance, shared a raving announcement of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* at the Metropolitan Opera House in Saint Paul, Minnesota – not to be confused with the famous Met in New York. Here, the Henry W. Savage's English Grand Opera company had planned to give American music lovers the opportunity to attend “Wagner's great tone drama, *Tannhäuser*,” in the closing week of the season.⁶⁸ The review was accompanied by a large, eye-catching image of a scene from Wagner's beloved opera. Both strive to point out the greatness of the musical drama, trying to convince the American public that *Tannhäuser* was definitely worth the watch:

Wagner's *Tannhäuser* begins at 8 o'clock promptly with the immortal overture, a composition that is played by all great orchestras the world over, and the warm voluptuous music of the Venusburg then follows, gliding into the grand harmonies of the "Pilgrim's Chorus". From that on the composer's brilliant orchestration is a series of inspired melodies. There is the great minstrel contest of the Minnesingers, the inspiring march, the poetic “Evening Star Song” and the saintly Elizabeth's tender aria, all of which are familiar to music lovers.⁶⁹

As if the opera was not promoted enough, *The Saint Paul Globe* assured its readers that Wagner's opera would be performed by ‘excellent casts and favored chorus and large orchestra,’ and, therefore, can be considered as one of the most popular contributions of the entire season.

The Minneapolis Journal of April 6, 1904 also referred to the presentation of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and Verdi's *Il Torvatore* in Minnesota and Minneapolis. “None of last season's productions aroused quite so much enthusiasm as *Tannhäuser*. Every opera goer is familiar with its wonderful "Pilgrims' March," "Evening Star Song," for the disconsolate Wolfram, and thrilling aria for the saintly Elizabeth in the last act. One of the chief treats of the opera is found in the immortal *Tannhäuser* overture that ranks as one of the master compositions of the last century.”⁷⁰ Once more, an extremely positive image of Wagner's opera is sketched.

In a Nebraska journal, the *Omaha Daily Bee* of April 4, 1897, Wagner's *Tannhäuser* is described as “too well known to need any extended comment. Its overture is one of the three greatest ever composed. Its story is from the exhaustless realm of German legend. Its music was a

⁶⁸ "Last of Grand Opera at the Metropolitan." *The Saint Paul Globe*, April 17, 1904, Page 36, Image 36. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90059523/1904-04-17/ed-1/seq-36/>, viewed on May 1, 2018.

⁶⁹ "Last of Grand Opera at the Metropolitan." *The Saint Paul Globe*, April 17, 1904, Page 36, Image 36. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90059523/1904-04-17/ed-1/seq-36/>, viewed on May 1, 2018.

⁷⁰ "Saturday Evening, At The Theaters." *The Minneapolis Journal*, April 16, 1904. Page 11 Image 11. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045366/1904-04-16/ed-1/seq-11/>, viewed on May 1, 2018.

step forward in the world's history. At its first performance in Dresden it was condemned: today he who condemns it disgraces himself and advertises his ignorance."⁷¹ This section expresses how much *Tannhäuser* is appreciated in American society, in which it has taken up the honorable position of an indispensable musical classic with German roots. Therefore, it should be considered as 'a valuable contribution to the development of good music in America.' *The Daily Morning Journal and Courier* – an important news source in New Haven, Connecticut – is another example of the many reviews that join this positive-minded vision of the German composer. In a similar way, Wagner's *Tannhäuser* is placed on a pedestal, to point out that Wagner's opera should be regarded as 'a light popular, public-pleasing, classic in the field of opera-making.'⁷²

Although only a limited amount of American newspaper articles has been highlighted up to now, it should be noted that all 100 results have been carefully examined. Analyzing the content, it is striking that the large majority shared a considerable positive image of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. This gives a valuable first impression of the American perception of Wagner's opera at the turn of the twentieth century that corresponds with the persistent popularity of Wagner in America described in *Wagner Nights: An American History* by Joseph Horowitz and *The Early influence of Richard Wagner in America* by Viola Emma Knoche.

Aside from the numerous jubilant advertisements and reviews, there were some examples which could be interpreted as a more critical note in relation to Wagner's work. For instance, a concise news report in *The Salt Lake Herald* of May 28, 1895 portrays a less idolate picture of the German composer. It discusses Wagner's 1861 Parisian premiere of *Tannhäuser*, which happened to be a fiasco. Due to all the opposition that was encountered at the time, Wagner was forced to withdraw his opera before the fourth performance. It is remarkable that – even though the emphasis of the article was placed on a possible revival of Wagner's work at the Parisian musical stage – *The Salt Lake Herald* did not bother to shed light on the embarrassing launch of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*.⁷³ The same can be said about an article in *The Saint Paul Globe* of October 26, 1899, which calls the unsuccessful start of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* "an unqualified failure."⁷⁴ Nevertheless, since both articles rather focus on the fact that forty years later the opera made its comeback and was successfully received in Paris, one can argue whether these articles should be interpreted as critical.

⁷¹"Music." *Omaha Daily Bee*, April 4, 1897, Page 13, Image 13. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn99021999/1897-04-04/ed-1/seq-13/>, viewed on May 1, 2018.

⁷²"Last Concert of the Season, Dorscht Series Closes Tomorrow Night With Second Regiment Band." *The Daily Morning Journal and courier*, March 14, 1903, Image 1. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020358/1903-03-14/ed-1/seq-1/>, viewed on May 1, 2018.

⁷³"Music in Paris." *The Salt Lake Herald*, May 28, 1895, Page 2, Image 2. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85058130/1895-05-28/ed-1/seq-2/>, viewed on May 1, 2018.

⁷⁴"Story of Tannhäuser." *The Saint Paul Globe*, October 26, 1899, Page 8, Image 8. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90059523/1899-10-26/ed-1/seq-8/>, viewed on May 1, 2018.

More criticism regarding Wagner's work can be found in *The San Francisco Call* of July 20, 1908. The author, Anthony Walker, reflects on an article in the *North American Review* written by Reginald de Koven, who is a music critic and shares a strong aversion for Wagner. Walker starts his column in a humorous manner, proclaiming that music critics regularly feel the urge to crucify Wagner at vacation time when there are no concerts or grand operas to complain about. "You can count with absolute certainty on his [Wagner's] assassination during every closed season; somebody is bound to bag him [...]. Thus, it has again happened."⁷⁵

Subsequently, Walker discusses Koven's article in which Wagner's music is referred to "dust to dust, ashes to ashes." De Koven believes that New York has taken the lead in projecting musical visions of the world and has become apathic about Wagner. For that reason, the German composer was declared dead. Walker does not agree with Koven's vision at all. "It was very pitiful, if true," was his witty response. As Walker reflects on another article in the *North American Review* by Lawrence Gilman, who is rather positive about the German composer – "Wagner's music is as great as ever" – Walker ends his column with a reassuring conclusion. 'Although there is always somebody who tries to kill Wagner, the German composer will remain for a hundred years.'⁷⁶

So what is quite remarkable about these aforementioned articles? What can be said about their content? Although they all expressed some forms of criticism concerning Wagner's work, it is striking that the appreciation for the composer predominated, as if it could wipe out the negative remarks and leave a positive image of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* in the first place. Still, there are articles that were quite critical of Wagner's work. The first critical news report that is worth mentioning comes from *The San Francisco Call* of April 16, 1895. It expressed the criticism that arose when Wagner's compositions from *Tannhäuser* were selected for an Easter celebration in the Emmanuel Baptist Church. "Serious-minded people are surprised that the pastor had taken selections from operas, the music of which is written around light and immoral plots to figure in his Easter program." Since *Tannhäuser* tells a story of a Christian knight who spends a full year with Venus enjoying the pleasures of sensual love over divine love, one can question whether its music is suitable for a church service. Given the fact that Wagner was a true Romantic who believed Christianity had failed, the choice of music is rather peculiar.⁷⁷

Although the article argues that Wagner's opera "reaches a higher musical plane" than

⁷⁵ Walker, Anthony, "Vacation Days Brings Rests in Music and Time to Write About Wagner." *The San Francisco Call*, July 20, 1908, Page 6, Image 6. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress.* <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/1908-07-20/ed-1/seq-6/>, viewed on May 1, 2018.

⁷⁶ Anthony, Walker, "Vacation Days Brings Rests in Music and Time to Write About Wagner." *The San Francisco Call*, July 20, 1908, Page 6, Image 6. Retrieved by *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress.* <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/1908-07-20/ed-1/seq-6/>, viewed on May 1, 2018.

⁷⁷ "Strange Church Music. The Masked Ball for Easter at Dr. Gibson's." *The San Francisco Call*, April 16, 1895, Page 5, Image 5. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress.* <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/1895-04-16/ed-1/seq-5/>, viewed on May 1, 2018.

Verdi's *Rigoletto* and *Un Ballo in Maschera* – which were also performed during the Easter celebration – the outrage and disapproval uttered by conservative Americans in this article is not entirely unexpected.⁷⁸ Wagner might have hoped that the ground was easier to plant on American soil, that his ideals could be easily transmitted in the free-spirited New World, however, it can be stated that in America people also experienced trouble with the immorality associated with Wagner's *Tannhäuser* that contrasted with Christianity.

The frustration that Christianity is often ridiculed via cultural art forms is also addressed in *The Intermountain Catholic* of July 30, 1910. This weekly newspaper that serves the Catholics in Utah, calls for the abolition of misplaced artistic expressions, in which monks are portrayed as unrighteous barbarians. Especially art stores and print shops are being accused of spreading "scurrilous pictures of monks." Consequently, Catholics were blamed for accepting "this vulgar monstrosity as a correct portrait." Ultimately, the article lashed out at Wagner. "[...] *Tannhäuser* is marred by the same defect the profession of monks in "the Pilgrims Chorus" resembling nothing so much as a motley band of dissipated outlaws." Although *The Intermountain Catholic* places blame on the stage manager rather than the German composer, it advocates to eliminate these unjust representations. "The effect on the audience either in play or opera is not in favor of the monk. These abuses have held sway too long and whether the mimic stage or looking out from the painted canvas they express and perpetuate an injurious falsehood and therefore they ought to be abolished."⁷⁹

Another significant example that draws attention to the more reserved attitude towards Wagner's operatic works, is presented in the *Omaha Daily Bee* of June 2, 1902. The headline reveals already much of the article's content: "Craze for Wagner Dying Out. Falls Under the Ban of the King and that Settles It with Society." What should be noted is that this news report refers to London but is presented by an American newspaper. It depicts a shift in musical preferences at the turn of the twentieth century. While operas by Italian and French composers were associated with barbaric taste during the glory days of Wagnerism, now Wagner is under attack. Although the popularity of the German composer is recognized, this article states that German opera needs to make way for a reconsideration of Italian and French opera. "There always was much affectation in the Wagner cult, and now people who set the fashion in music are tired of it." Apparently, the British King belongs to the "people who set the fashion in music," since one of his statements about Wagner is linked to the decline in appreciation for the German composer. In this statement he declares that he never listens to any Wagner opera anymore, except *Tannhäuser*, which he considers as "barely tolerable

⁷⁸ "Strange Church Music. The Masked Ball for Easter at Dr. Gibson's." *The San Francisco Call*, April 16, 1895, Page 5, Image 5. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/1895-04-16/ed-1/seq-5/>, viewed on May 1, 2018.

⁷⁹ "Scurrilous Pictures of Monks Should Be Abolished." *The Intermountain Catholic*, July 30, 1910, Page 7, Image 7. Retrieved by *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn93062856/1910-07-30/ed-1/seq-7/>, viewed on May 1, 2018.

occasionally.”⁸⁰

Although Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* does not come off unscathed, it is interesting that the King considers this opera as relatively acceptable. What is even more remarkable is that his message is shared by the *Omaha Daily Bee*. What could be deduced from this? From a nineteenth-century American perspective, Europe had a leading role in setting the tone for opera music. Therefore, new developments in one of the most culturally vibrant cities of Europe – London – were certainly worth observing.

The fact that opera finds its roots in Europe is frequently emphasized and praised in the examined newspaper results. In advertisements, reviews and general news reports it seems to be of great importance to mention every possible link to Europe, presumably to add authenticity to representation of Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* that is discussed. Especially Wagner’s German heritage is frequently emphasized. Songs from Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* were often advertised in their original form – in German. But at the turn of the twentieth century more advertisements presented the opera in English. The fact that the participating musicians had either German roots, lived, studied or had any other connection to Germany, never remained unmentioned. For instance, *El Paso Herald* of April 15, 1914 felt the need to mention that pianist, Miss Ruth McCurdy, returned earlier in the year from Germany. She had been studying there, which enabled her to play “The Spring Has Come” from Wagner’s opera *Tannhäuser* “with a fineness of feeling and expression that made a most favorable impression upon her hearers. Her mastery of piano technique was excellent and yet with the true artistic instinct it did not dominate her expressive interpretations of the various selections she played.”⁸¹

Also the *Minneapolis Journal* of July 22, 1906 expressed the strong appreciation of German music that is shared in American society. “Musical America is largely indebted to the Germans, who have brought their great love for music to their adopted country and the great ‘sangarfests’ and German choral societies have been of marked educational value in this country. From small beginnings they have grown and branched out everywhere until “das Deutsche Leid” has a home in nearly every city in America.”⁸²

Because of the high standards introduced by the German musicians, it was often quite a challenge to match the qualifications of German opera in American representations. As it appears in the *New-York Tribune* of February 22 1900, the New World still had to learn much from the Old. In

⁸⁰“Craze for Wagner Dying Out. Falls Under the Ban of the King and that Settles It with Society.” *Omaha Daily Bee*, June 2, 1902, Image 1. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn99021999/1902-06-02/ed-1/seq-1/>, viewed on May 1, 2018.

⁸¹ “Musical.” *El Paso Herald*, April 15, 1914, Page 7, Image 7. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88084272/1914-04-15/ed-1/seq-7/>, viewed on May 18, 2018.

⁸² “Sangarfest, St. Paul.” *The Minneapolis Journal*, July 22, 1906, Image 45, Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045366/1906-07-22/ed-1/seq-45/>, viewed on May 18, 2018.

this article the American representation of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* in New York was criticized. "The opera had a good representation on the whole, or rather one that could be voted good, if one were willing to forget the scenic and dramatic proprieties of the tragedy, which are sadly neglected at the Metropolitan and always have been."⁸³ It shows that Wagner's *Tannhäuser* was highly respected by Americans, but that distilling what the German composer meant was often difficult. American opera houses had to rise to the standard of the more advanced opera houses in Europe. Basically, the Old World was perceived as a role model for operatic performances in the New World.

Despite the great admiration of Wagner *Tannhäuser* expressed in American newspapers between 1880 and 1914, American pride and nationalism were not omitted. In numerous advertisements in which Wagner's music was presented, the program was concluded with the American national anthem, "The Star Spangled Banner." Another example in which European and American culture came together, is expressed in *The Topeka State Journal* of August 25, 1913. Here, the American film studio, The Thanhouser company, announced its dramatization of Wagner's Famous Opera: *Tannhäuser* (1913).⁸⁴ The newspaper assured its readers that "in its three-reel dramatization of the piece, the Thanhouser company followed closely the operatic setting and characters and brought to bear the advantages of beautiful outdoor scenery, and elaborate costuming."⁸⁵

Another example that showed Wagner's connection to American culture, was through the presentation of so-called 'Wagner lectures' in American newspapers. For instance, the *St. Paul Globe* of October 26, 1899 reported that "in all of Wagner's operas, and especially in *Tannhäuser*, the best parts were the baritone parts. Though the lecturer maintained that Wagner the dramatist, was superior to Wagner the musician, yet she claimed he was never sacrificing the music to the drama."⁸⁶ The fact that Wagner's legacy has been frequently presented and debated in American lectures shows how his influence is felt in the American conception of Western music and in the contemporary forms of opera and the complete spectrum of theater and literary arts between 1880 and 1914.

After examining all 100 newspaper results, it remains difficult to identify a shift in American public discourse in relation to the Wagner's opera *Tannhäuser*. Advertisements, reviews and other newspaper reports from the period 1880 to 1900 do not express a significant change in

⁸³ "Tannhäuser At The Opera." *New-York Tribune*, February 22, 1900, Page 9, Image 9. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1900-02-22/ed-1/seq-9/>, viewed on May 18, 2018.

⁸⁴ "Tannhäuser" (1913), *Internet Movie Database (IMDB)*, "<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0464694/>, viewed on May 20, 2018.

⁸⁵ "Tannhäuser at Cozy" *The Topeka State Journal*, August 25, 1913, Page 7, Image 7. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82016014/1913-08-25/ed-1/seq-7/>, viewed on May 20, 2018.

⁸⁶ "Story of Tannhäuser." *The Saint Paul Globe*, October 26, 1899, Page 8, Image 8. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90059523/1899-10-26/ed-1/seq-8/>, viewed at May 23, 2018.

perception or appreciation compared to American newspaper articles in the period from 1900 to 1914. Perhaps, more research is needed to detect a possible change in public discourse. However, what can be determined is that the positive American reception of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* was remarkably consistent during the turn of the twentieth century. This outcome was to be expected, since it is in line with the enduring popularity of Wagner in America described in the work of important scholars like Horowitz and Knoche.

To conclude, the American perception in relation to Wagner's *Tannhäuser* in American newspapers between 1880 and 1914 showed a very favorable picture of the German composer and his work. Although there were some expressions of criticism noticeable, Wagner's *Tannhäuser* was overall exceptionally warmly received by the American public. This can be explained by the fact that Wagnerism flourished in America during this period. Therefore, Wagner's work was highly valued by American newspapers. Yet the results showed that there was room for criticism, national pride and American input and adaptation. As certain themes could be identified while examining the newspapers results, it led to the structuring of five categories, consisting of laudatory advertisements and reviews, critical reviews, articles that reflected on German themes and culture, articles that reflected on American themes and culture, and articles that used Wagner's *Tannhäuser* for study purposes. It can be concluded that the American perception of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* is based upon this categorization.

Chapter 2: The influence of Giuseppe Verdi

2.1. Verdi's life and legacy

“[...] the success of our operas rests most of the time in the hands of the conductor. This person is as necessary as a tenor or a prima donna.”⁸⁷ – Giuseppe Verdi

After providing an analytical study on the American perception of Richard Wagner, this chapter will focus on the influence and reception of Giuseppe Verdi and his work expressed in American historical newspapers between 1880 and 1914. One who is even completely new to opera would most likely recognize famous opera themes like “La donna è mobile” by the renowned Italian composer from movies, television commercials or used in other forms of popular culture. Verdi was one of the greatest in Italian opera. Throughout his career he wrote a total of twenty-eight, including major revisions.⁸⁸ Italians have admired Verdi's musical style for centuries. In Italy he is, therefore, still perceived as one of the greatest composers in history.⁸⁹

But how was the position of Verdi described by the American public at the turn of the twentieth century? Were Americans just as enthusiastic about the work of the Italian opera composer like they were about his contemporary Wagner? Since this research project focuses on the American reception of European opera at the turn of the twentieth century, it is interesting to explore how one of Verdi's greatest operas – *Aida* (1871) – was received by American newspapers between 1880 and 1914. Prior to the analysis of the America's perception of Verdi's *Aida*, it is important to provide a brief outline concerning the key events in Verdi's life and musical career first. By doing so, the influence of these developments upon Europe and especially upon America can be explained, which will be valuable when the eventual outcomes of this research have to be placed into perspective.

Verdi was born on 10 October 1813 in a small Italian village nearby Busseto, Le Roncole, which was under Napoleonic rule at the time.⁹⁰ As a young child, Verdi became interested in music and started to play the organ at the San Michele church in his home village. In 1832 he moved to the intellectual heart of Italy, Milan, to apply for admission at the Conservatorio. His attempt was unsuccessful.⁹¹ As an alternative, Verdi decided to study privately under Vincenzo Lavigne, who was a famous composer at Teatro alla Scala.⁹² This eminent opera house in Milan was founded in 1778 and

⁸⁷ Horowitz, Joseph, *Understanding Toscanini: A Social History of American Concert Life*, University of California Press: 1994), 350.

⁸⁸ Rosselli, *The Life of Verdi*, 2.

⁸⁹ Operabase, <http://operabase.com/top.cgi?lang=en&break=0&show=composer&no=10&nat>, viewed on May 26, 2018.

⁹⁰ Rosselli, John, *The Life of Verdi, Musical Lives*, (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 9-12.

⁹¹ Budden, Julian, *Verdi: Master Musicians Series*, (Oxford University Press: 2016), 6.

⁹² Rosselli, John, *The Life of Verdi, Musical Lives*, (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 20.

hosted important premieres of influential musicians who dominated the early decades of nineteenth century Italian opera, like Gioachino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini and Gaetano Donizetti. Today the theatre is still considered as the appointed place of Italian opera.⁹³

During the years in Milan, Verdi regularly visited concerts and operatic performances in La Scala. He gained respect and appreciation among influential opera directors and composers, who were impressed by his musical drive. It was at this time that Verdi was determined to pursue a career in opera-making. In 1835, Verdi returned to Busseto and with the help of Antonio Barezzi – a merchant who supported the town’s musical life – he became the director of the local musical school and the Philharmonic Society for which he wrote church music, marches, and opera overtures.⁹⁴ While Barezzi encouraged Verdi’s musical ambitions, Verdi fell in love with Barezzi’s daughter Margherita. The two got married in 1836 and in the years after, Margherita gave birth to a daughter and a son.⁹⁵ While Verdi worked hard to complete his first opera *Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio*, a personal tragedy struck the young couple. Their first child, daughter Virginia who was born in 1837, died in 1838. Only one year later the couple’s second child, son Icilio, passed away.⁹⁶ While recovering from the tragic losses of their two children, Verdi struggled to finish his opera. Yet, on 17 November 1839, *Oberto* made its debut at Teatro alla Scala, where Verdi had developed his composing skills. The opera was received positively and as a result Verdi was asked by Bartolomeo Merelli, the producer at La Scala, to write three more operas.⁹⁷

While composing his second opera in 1840, *Un giorno di regno*, Verdi’s wife Margherita passed away too. The great personal losses in Verdi’s life caused him to fall deeper into despair. When *Un giorno di regno* turned out to be a fiasco, he considered to give up his musical career for good. It was Merelli who could prevent this from happening, who continued to believe in Verdi’s musical talent. Luckily, Verdi’s next opera, *Nabucco* (1842), became a giant success. It ran for 57 performances in La Scala in Milan, then toured across Italy and traveled to major centers in Europe, to New York, Algiers, Constantinople, Havana and Buenos Aires.⁹⁸ It brought him his breakthrough and international recognition as an opera composer.

With the appearance of *Nabucco*, the character of Verdi’s operas changed. His early compositions were always inspired by the traditional opera style of his Italian precursors, Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti, who expressed the conventions of *bel canto*, translated as ‘beautiful singing.’ In this opera style the emphasis is placed on the human voice and the role of the orchestra and its

⁹³ “Teatro alla Scala,” <http://www.teatroallascala.org/en/la-scala/theatre/history.html>, viewed on May 26, 2018.

⁹⁴ Sanders, Donald, *Experiencing Verdi: A Listener’s Companion*, (Scarecrow Press: 2003), 21-22.

⁹⁵ Sanders, *Experiencing Verdi*, 21-23.

⁹⁶ Ibidem, 25.

⁹⁷ Ibidem, 24-25.

⁹⁸ Steen, Michael, *Verdi: The Great Composers*, (Icon Books Ltd: 2004), 45-46.

dramatic effects are condensed to the minimum.⁹⁹ The Italian opera era of the *bel canto* was a period filled with “the melodramatic clichés of the romance, shunning complex characterization in favor of hackneyed amorous adventure and misfortunes.”¹⁰⁰ Although Verdi was schooled in *bel canto* opera, he felt the necessity to redefine his composing style and to break with tradition several times throughout his career. He decided to envision his own interpretation of Italian music. Therefore, he searched for “subjects that would be bold to the extreme, subjects with greater dramatic and psychological depth, subjects that accented spiritual values, intimate humanity, and tender emotions.”¹⁰¹ As a result, Verdi’s operas of the 1840s addressed difficult dilemmas of ordinary people who were always responsible for their acts and choices in life, and who’s emotions were expressed in the melody. In this way the traditional form and structure of *bel canto* was challenged, transforming Italian opera in the process.

The rising patriotic feelings of Italian nationalism in the post-Napoleonic era also played an important role in Verdi’s shifting opera style. It contributed to the success of *Nabucco*. The story of *Nabucco* was based on the invasion of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and the capture of the Hebrew slaves in the sixth century BC.¹⁰² When *Nabucco* had its premiere in 1842, Italy was a gathering of kingdoms as a result of the Napoleonic Wars between 1803 and 1815.¹⁰³ An important chorus of the opera ‘Va, pensiero’ – also known as ‘The Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves’¹⁰⁴ – reminded Italian patriots of the situation in their ‘homeland.’ Basically, it gave voice to Italian nationalism. The Israelites longing for freedom became a metaphor for the Italians’ own suffering and their national desires to realize a unified Italy. By the 1850’s, the letters V.E.R.D.I. were spelled out as an acronym to represent ‘Vittorio Emanuele, Re d’Italia,’ the man who became the first king of unified Italy in 1861. Meanwhile, Verdi’s popularity had grown to such an extent that he was offered a position in the Italian parliament that same year. Despite his nationalist sentiments, Verdi expressed little interest in governmental responsibilities. Nevertheless, he joined the Italian parliament until 1865.¹⁰⁵ Verdi became a symbol of patriotism and Italian culture.

During the 1840s – considered as the middle period of Verdi’s musical career – the Italian composer produced *I Lombardi* (1843), *Ernani* (1844), and *Macbeth* (1847). During the nineteenth century, Paris had become a leading cultural center, and the city attracted many opera composers. As an example, Verdi’s *I Lombardi* was revised and renamed *Jérusalem* in 1847, to be produced by

⁹⁹ Sanders, Donald, *Experiencing Verdi: A Listener’s Companion*, (Scarecrow Press: 2003), 12.

¹⁰⁰ Edwards, Geoffrey, and Ryan Edwards, *Verdi and Puccini Heroines: Dramatic Characterization in Great Soprano Roles*, (Scarecrow Press: 2000), xiii.

¹⁰¹ Fisher, Burton D., *Verdi’s Nabucco: Opera Journeys Mini Guide Series*, (Opera Journeys Publishing: 2003) 14.

¹⁰² Fisher, *Verdi’s Nabucco*, 4-5.

¹⁰³ Rosselli, John, *The Life of Verdi, Musical Lives*, (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 9.

¹⁰⁴ Fisher, Burton D., *Verdi’s Nabucco: Opera Journeys Mini Guide Series*, (Opera Journeys Publishing: 2003), 5.

¹⁰⁵ Steen, Michael, *Verdi: The Great Composers*, (Icon Books Ltd: 2004), 43-44.

the Paris Opéra; the primary opera company of France.¹⁰⁶ Since the Parisian Opéra conventions had to be respected, Verdi adjusted his opera to the French grand opera style. For the first time he included grotesque musical elements to create a great historical drama in four of five acts, with large orchestras, casts and extravagant scenery, costumes and ballets. Hence, *Jérusalem* became Verdi's first work in grand opera tradition.¹⁰⁷ Verdi continued to develop his style through *Rigoletto* (1851), *Il trovatore* (1853), *La traviata* (1853), and *Aida* (1871), combining elements of the Italian *bel canto* tradition with elements of the French grand opera.

Verdi ended his musical career with the successful opera *Requiem* (1874) and his Shakespeare-inspired works, *Otello* (1887) and *Falstaff* (1893).¹⁰⁸ He spent his years in retirement in Sant'Agata, with his second wife, Giuseppina Strepponi – who carried the leading soprano role in the premiere of *Nabucco*, and married Verdi in 1859.¹⁰⁹ After her death in 1897, Verdi decided to move to the Grand Hotel in Milan. By the time of his death in 1901, his house in Le Roncole became a national monument. His far-reaching reputation ensured that his funeral was greatly attended and that he was eulogized as a great Italian hero.¹¹⁰

In short, Verdi has taken a special position in Italian history. At the turn of the twentieth century his music became associated with the root of Italy's unification. Therefore, Italians still respect Verdi's work as a national treasure. Also outside Italy the Italian composer's influence is noticeable. The legacy of Italian composer became essential in the development of opera as it became a widespread European art form throughout the nineteenth century. Verdi's music dominates many operatic repertoires of today, as it has for more than a century. According to statistics of *Operabase* of 2017/2018 and *Bachtrack* – a leading music website for worldwide reviews and listings of classical performances around the world¹¹¹ – approximately 16122 performances of Verdi operas by major houses worldwide are presented through 2017/2018.¹¹² Even today, Verdi is ranked as the most-performed composer in opera houses worldwide.¹¹³

¹⁰⁶ "Opera National De Paris," <https://www.operadeparis.fr/en/lopera-de-paris/history>, viewed on 26 May 2018.

¹⁰⁷ Sanders, Donald, *Experiencing Verdi: A Listener's Companion*, (Scarecrow Press: 2003), 69.

¹⁰⁸ Sanders, *Experiencing Verdi*, 185, 191.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, 134.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, 231

¹¹¹ *Bachtrack*, <https://bachtrack.com/find-opera/category=2,freetext=Giuseppe%20Verdi;medium=1,3>, viewed on May 26, 2018.

¹¹² *Operabase*, <http://operabase.com/top.cgi?lang=en&break=0&show=composer&no=10&nat=it> viewed on May, 26, 2018.

¹¹³ *Operabase*, <http://www.operabase.com/top.cgi?lang=en&break=0&show=composer&no=10&nat>, viewed on May 28, 2018.

2.2 Verdi in America

Far from the familiarized rural environment of Italy, in Verdi Square Park in Manhattan, New York City, the Giuseppe Verdi Monument can be found. The sculpture of one of the world's most renowned Italian composer portrays Verdi encircled by four of his most popular opera characters, *Othello*, *Falstaff*, *Aida* and from *La Forza del Destino* (1862) the character Eleonora.¹¹⁴ The Verdi Monument was designed in honor of the 414th anniversary of Columbus Day, on October 12, 1906. More than 10,000 people attended the unveiling, which celebrated the cultural heritage of Italian-Americans. It was an initiative of Italian-American Carlo Barsotti, who was the head of the Verdi Monument Committee, an organization that raised money to realize public recognition of influential Italians. Barsotti was also the founding editor of the *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, an Italian-American newspaper that wished to reach and inspire the Italian-American community. The Giuseppe Verdi Monument was a reminder of Verdi's Italian influence upon American society, should not be forgotten.¹¹⁵

The fact that a huge sculpture of a European opera composer has been placed on American soil – and not in one of the least prominent cities of America and on the anniversary of Columbus's discovery of the New World – reveals much about the far-reaching mythical status of Verdi during his lifetime. Along with the popularity of Verdi's work, scholarly interest in the Italian composer arose. It resulted in the foundation of the American Institute for Verdi Studies in New York in 1974.¹¹⁶ It was preceded by the Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani in Parma established in 1959.¹¹⁷ Both organizations published numerous books and articles as well as making material available for research, conferences, lectures and performances.

Still, it remains remarkable how the interest in Verdi's operas spread from Western Europe to the New World. What was the overall influence and perception of Verdi's operas in America at the turn of the twentieth century? How did Verdi's work evolve there? While this section reflects on these issues to provide some historical context, it does aim to offer a complete comprehensive outline of these developments. It rather serves as an introduction to the research of the reception of Verdi's *Aida* in American newspapers between 1880 and 1914.

In Opera in America, John Dizikes explores how it is possible that such a typical European aristocratic culture form like opera has found its way to the democratic cultural environment of America. How did this happen? Dizikes explains this based on the correlation between demographics and musical taste, while describing the development of opera in American society. He

¹¹⁴ "New York City Parks," <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/verdi-square/highlights/6534>, viewed on May 26, 2016

¹¹⁵ "Verdi Square Festival," <http://www.verdisquarefestival.com/park-history.shtml>, viewed on May 26, 2018.

¹¹⁶ "American Institute for Verdi Studies," <https://www.nyu.edu/projects/verdi>, viewed on June 1, 2018.

¹¹⁷ "Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani," http://www.studiverdiani.it/presentazione_en.html, viewed on June 1, 2018

points out that immigration and geographic mobility can influence cultural outcomes. Over the course of the nineteenth century, a number of touring opera companies traveled across America, introducing French, Italian, and German opera to American society.¹¹⁸ Dizikes starts with a description of the Manuel Garcia company that toured across America in the early decades of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁹ It performed the first Italian opera in Italian at the Park Theatre in New York in 1825 and although it was successful in spreading more Italian operas in their original language during this era, Americans were slow in accepting Italian opera. Language was the major barrier to American acceptance of European opera, since foreign-language opera was often perceived as aristocratic.¹²⁰

In the eighteenth century and in the first decades of the nineteenth century, European opera in America was primarily represented by English-style ballads, performed in English, frequently without a named composer.¹²¹ While European operas in English predominated cities as New Orleans and Philadelphia, musical and theatrical taste shifted as more French Americans moved to these cities. Dizikes explored the development of opera in New Orleans during the 1790s and reveals that the interest in French opera increased, while the French population in New Orleans grew.¹²² Subsequently, he explains how the midcentury California gold rush – which boosted the local economy and triggered waves of immigration – brought Italian, French and Chinese opera to San Francisco.¹²³

Hence, because of the large numbers of immigrants who settled in the New World during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the interest in European opera increased. Especially the Italian opera flourished in large American cities such as New Orleans, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco and New York, where The Italian Opera House was launched in 1833 and became the city's first institute dedicated to opera. Americans insisted to hear Italian operas of well-respected Italian *bel canto* maestro's as Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti.¹²⁴

Since 1847, also early operas by Verdi were included to the American repertoire. Due to the successes of *Nabucco* (1842) and *I Lombardi* (1843) – which seriously launched Verdi's musical career – opera companies worldwide asked the Italian composer to write compositions for their theatres. On 9 March 1844, two years after the successful premiere of *Nabucco* at La Scala in Milan, Venetians welcomed Verdi's latest opera *Ernani* in Teatro La Fenice. Initially, the opera's popularity was quite moderate, but it grew very fast. The American premiere of *Ernani* took place on 15 April 1847 at the Park Theatre in New York. It became the first opera by Verdi, introduced and performed in America,

¹¹⁸ Edmondson, Jacqueline, *Music in American Life: An Encyclopedia of the Songs, Styles, Stars, and Stories that Shaped our Culture* [4 volumes]: *An Encyclopedia of the Songs, Styles, Stars, and Stories That Shaped Our Culture*, (ABC-CLIO: 2013), 822-826.

¹¹⁹ Dizikes, John, *Opera in America: A Cultural History*, (Yale University Press: 1995). 3.

¹²⁰ Dizikes, *Opera in America*, 3, 6-7.

¹²¹ *Ibidem*, 13.

¹²² *Ibidem*, 25-26.t

¹²³ *Ibidem*, 109-110.

¹²⁴ Martone, Eric, *Italian Americans: The History and Culture of a People*, (ABC-CLIO: 2016), 253-254.

since *Nabucco* did not make its entrance until 4 April 1848 at the Astor Opera House in New York.¹²⁵

In *Verdi in America: Oberto Through Rigoletto*, George W. Martin explores opera life in nineteenth-century America with a central focus on the eminent Italian composer. He offers an analysis on the American perception of Verdi's early operas, from the first appearance of each through the present. As Horowitz discussed Wagnerism in *Wagner Nights: An American History*, one could question whether something like Verdiism existed too. Were Americans just as passionate about Verdi as they were about his contemporary Wagner at the time? Although Martin does not directly speak about a so-called Verdiism development, he does acknowledge Verdi's significant operatic influence in America.

As American premieres of Verdi's operas traveled across the New World during the 1850s and 1860s – like *Rigoletto* in 1855 and *Un Ballo in Maschera* in 1861 at the Academy of Music in New York, the American appreciation for Verdi's work sustained. However, Martin notes that American adaptations often detracted from the original work of Verdi performed in Italy. Considering that Verdi's operas were formally written for the large stage and auditorium of La Scala in Milan, the first operas performed in America had to be squeezed into smaller stages, with an orchestra and chorus of half the size or even less. Therefore, the overall quality frequently suffered.¹²⁶

One of the reasons Verdi's reputation came into decline was because of the rise of Wagnerism that raged over Western Europe and America at the turn of the twentieth century. Due to the large German immigration waves after 1848, German American communities increased, and German opera gained ground in New York during the 1850s. Once the city's Metropolitan Opera House opened its doors in 1883, a German opera house was born. German opera dominated the early years of the Met. Wagner's operas became the norm in its twentieth-century repertoire.¹²⁷ Consequently, Martin reveals that "in the four seasons 1893 through 1896, Verdi had 42 performances of six operas, Wagner 53 of six; and in the five seasons, 1903 through 1907, Verdi had 74 of five operas, and Wagner, 156 of ten."¹²⁸ Apparently, Wagner greatly surpassed Verdi just a decade later. Smaller touring companies did rectify the balance a little. They were unable to meet the costs of staging the large orchestra, chorus, and stronger-voiced soloists for Wagner's work, and therefore often chose to perform operas of Verdi instead.¹²⁹

When Italian opera manager Giulio Gatti-Casazza became the head of the Metropolitan Opera House in New York from 1908 to 1935, new Italian artistic life was infused into the Met's repertoire – as it was previously dominated by German opera. Gatti-Casazza was assisted by Italian

¹²⁵ "Ernani, Performance History," *Opera Stanford*, <http://opera.stanford.edu/Verdi/Ernani/history.html>, viewed on June 1, 2018.

¹²⁶ Martin, George W., *Verdi in America: Oberto through Rigoletto*, (University Rochester Press: 2011), 14.

¹²⁷ Martin, *Verdi in America*, 61.

¹²⁸ *Ibidem*, 4.

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*, 4.

conductor Arturo Toscanini. Both men had worked at la Scala in Milan and aimed for a reconsideration of Verdi's operas in America. They made their debut at the Met with the performance of Verdi's *Aida* in 1908. *Aida* had already been staged at the Met before in 1886, however that involved a production in German. The Italian version became a great success. Americans appeared not to expect anything else of the two Italian musicians who were at all familiar with qualities of opera in Europe.¹³⁰ To celebrate the centenary of Verdi's birth in 1913, Gatti-Casazza and Toscanini brought Verdi's *Un Ballo in maschera* that same year to the Met stage.¹³¹ Anniversaries played a significant role in boosting the international public interest in Verdi's work. It gave audiences the opportunity to reconsider the context of Verdi's classical masterpieces in new ways, rather than see the opera as a separated work of art.¹³²

Yet, what really triggered the reawakening of Verdi's operas, was the rise of scholarly interest in the Italian composer. Critics and scholars published several books and articles in the first decades of the twentieth century, showing that Verdi was valuable to study and exciting to read about, both as man and musician. Wagner – who was the sole focus of (scholarly) musical attention – now had to share it with Verdi.¹³³ The man who can be considered principally responsible for what Martin calls – the Verdi Renaissance – was the Austrian writer, poet and playwright Frans Werfel. He shared a great love for Verdi's operas, especially those created in the middle-period of Verdi's career which enjoyed less appreciation at the time. Werfel expressed a great aversion to Wagnerism and was determined to revitalize Verdi's reputation. In 1924 he published his novel *A Novel of the Opera* in which he addressed Verdi's fame that had been overshadowed by the rising popularity of Wagner. According to many scholars, the novel can be considered as the first landmark in this so-called Verdi Renaissance.¹³⁴ It developed in a reappraisal of Verdi's work in Europe in the 1920s and expanded into a global rediscovery of Verdi's oeuvre that reached America in the early 1940s.¹³⁵

As soon as Austrian-born opera impresario Rudolf Bing was assigned to be the new general manager of the Met in 1950, the Verdi Renaissance evolved. By reintroducing Verdi's *Don Carlos* (1950) *Ernani* (1956) and *Luisa Miller* (1967), *Macbeth* (1958) and *Nabucco* (1960), Bing staged some of Verdi's operas for the first time at the Met.¹³⁶ The opportunity to see early work of the Italian composer that had never been performed in America before, resulted in the growth of public interest in Verdi's operas. Aside from the Met, also smaller opera houses played an important role in

¹³⁰ Horowitz, Joseph, *Understanding Toscanini: A Social History of American Concert Life*, (University of California Press: 1994), 53.

¹³¹ *The Metropolitan Opera House*,
<https://www.metopera.org/uploadedFiles/MetOpera/7_season_and_tickets/911_playbill/Nov%2030%20Ballo.pdf,
viewed on June 1, 2018.

¹³² Martin, George W., *Verdi in America: Oberto through Rigoletto*, (University Rochester Press: 2011), 4.

¹³³ Martin, *Verdi in America*, 235.

¹³⁴ Barker, John W., *Wagner and Venice Fictionalized: Variations on a Theme Volume 89 of Eastman studies in music*, (University Rochester Press: 2012) 42-43.

¹³⁵ Martin, George W., *Verdi in America: Oberto through Rigoletto*, (University Rochester Press: 2011), 22, 65, 235.

¹³⁶ Martin, *Verdi in America*, 4-6.

this development. Even though these productions dealt with smaller orchestras, it was still considered as a valuable way to experience Verdi and his ideas of opera as drama.

In addition, the renewed interest in Verdi was supported by the audience's change in perception of operatic history, explains Martin.¹³⁷ Thanks to benefits of the technological revolution, it became easier to spread recordings and to get familiar with music of different times, places and composers. Suddenly an awareness arose, explaining that "composers of different periods, customs, and ideas had created masterworks of quite different types, equally good but wholly different [...]. The history of opera [...] was not a steady progression from good to better, but a record of past achievements built upon concepts that perhaps were no longer viable but could still be of interest for what they once had produced."¹³⁸ In this way, compositions that were previously understood as dated, were once again respected.

The Verdi Renaissance can also be perceived as a reaction to the complex and controversial operas of Wagner. After World War II, Wagner's work was repeatedly linked to the Nazis, who had identified themselves with the German composer. Therefore, Wagner's music lost some of its status. A longing for more accessible compositions and melodies of high musical quality grew. Since no contemporary composer was providing it, audiences turned back to Verdi.¹³⁹ Evaluating Verdi's opera's today, Martin makes the following statement. "Conductors and impresarios today might say that ten [operas of Verdi] are indispensable, another ten periodically revived, and a final ten reserved for anniversary years and cycles of the complete works. The last fifteen years every one of Verdi's operas has had at least four staged or concert performances in America and all are available in multiple recordings."¹⁴⁰ This shows the significance of Verdi's work. Over the years it continues to shape the musical repertoire of American opera houses today.

To conclude, even though the American reception of Verdi had its ups and downs throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Verdi remains a significant figure in the American musical world. His famous arias are still popular in many American opera houses today. Martin even compares Verdi's position in American opera several times with Shakespeare's position in theater.¹⁴¹ Verdi has left his mark on American society. To gain more insight in the way he was perceived by Americans in the period of 1880 and 1914 – an era in which transatlantic relations between Europe and America shifted – it is interesting to use one of Verdi's most renowned operas, *Aida*, as a lens to examine the American perception of Verdi's opera at the turn of twentieth century. Since *Aida* reflects on interesting themes, such as orientalism and exoticism, it is valuable to explore how these

¹³⁷ Ibidim, 235.

¹³⁸ Ibidim, 235-236.

¹³⁹ Ibidim, 7.

¹⁴⁰ Ibidim, 8.

¹⁴¹ Ibidim, 1.

issues were addressed in the American public discourse. The subsequent section will be focusing on the research on the American perception of Verdi's *Aida* in historical American newspapers between 1880 and 1914.

2.3 Verdi's *Aida*

"*Aida* is certainly not one of my worst operas."¹⁴² – Giuseppe Verdi

This section looks at the American perception of Verdi's *Aida* expressed in historical American newspapers between 1880 and 1914, provided by the Library of Congress. The reason to select this grand opera can be explained by the fact that *Aida* belongs to Verdi's most performed works worldwide. Throughout the years it has attained a fundamental place in the operatic canon. At the Metropolitan Opera House in New York alone, *Aida* has been staged more than 1,100 times since 1886.¹⁴³

The story of *Aida* is set in ancient Egypt and incorporates some of Verdi's main artistic features such as Italian Romanticism, human drama, rich melodies and profound vocalism. It combines themes of orientalism and colonialism, depicting a European nineteenth century romanticized impression of Egypt. Therefore the opera reveals much about Europe's origins and culture, perhaps even more than of Egypt's. Since America has dealt with European imperialism in the past as well, it is interesting to explore in what way *Aida* was received by Americans. Were Americans skeptical about stereotypes used in the European portrayals of *Aida* or rather mesmerized by it? Did they share a similar thought? Hence, what was the American perception of Verdi's *Aida* at the turn of twentieth century? This section will focus on these questions through an in-depth examination of American newspapers between 1880 and 1914. However, prior to this examination it is important to devote attention to the opera's background and content first to be able to place the eventual outcomes into perspective.

As one looks at the story of Verdi's opera, it can be interpreted as a melodramatic allegory. It presents a classic love triangle between Aida, Radamès and Amneris during the war between Egypt and Ethiopia. Aida – an Ethiopian princess – is captured and enslaved Egypt. Radamès a military commander who serves the pharaoh – falls in love with Aida. Although he struggles with staying true to his native country, he believes that Egypt's victory in war might free Aida. Therefore, he decides to prepare his troops for battle. Amneris, the daughter of the pharaoh loves Radamès, but soon

¹⁴² Fisher, Burton D., *Verdi's Aida*, (Opera Journeys Publishing, 2005), 23.

¹⁴³ *The Metropolitan Opera House*,

<https://www.metopera.org/uploadedFiles/MetOpera/919_education/1_met_in_schools/2_educator_materials/1_educator_guides/01_aida/Aida_PostShow.pdf, viewed on June 1, 2018.

discovers that the man she loves has true feelings for Aida. Aida, who is torn between her love for Radamès and her loyalty to Ethiopia, is forced by her father, the king of Ethiopia to trick Radamès to find out which route the Egyptian army will take to invade Ethiopia. When Radamès declares his love to Aida and reveals the secret route, Aida's father emerges from his hiding place. Radamès awaits a trial as a traitor. When he is brought before the priests, he is sentenced to death. Aida chooses to share his faith and hides in the tomb. In this way, the two can finally be together.¹⁴⁴

Aida can be perceived as a "truly majestic grand opera," as it presents "a vast panorama of ancient Egypt: exotic oriental atmosphere, gigantic and spectacular scenery and pageantry, hundreds of choristers, large crowds of people dressed in exotic costumes, ballets, six outstanding solo singers, offstage bands, and a very large orchestra."¹⁴⁵ This strongly 'oriental' view of Egypt created for European audiences gave reason for Edward Said to devote a chapter in his *Culture and Imperialism* to the analysis of *Aida*. According to Said, Verdi's opera can be perceived as a prime model of 'orientalism.' Said describes 'the orient' as "an essentially exotic, distant, and antique place in which Europeans can mount certain shows of force."¹⁴⁶ He criticizes *Aida*, because it only presents a nineteenth-century European perception of ancient Egypt that is subject to stereotypes and prejudices. "*Aida* embodies, as it was intended to do, the authority of Europe's version of Egypt at a moment in its nineteenth-century history [...]."¹⁴⁷

Although Said considers Verdi's *Aida* as the pinnacle of orientalism, this research project does not aim to determine whether *Aida* should be considered as an orientalist work or not. What truly matters is discovering how this European opera was perceived by historical American newspapers between 1880 and 1914. Certainly, it might be interesting how 'orientalism' played a role in this all. Therefore, Said's analysis is valuable for identifying signs of orientalism within the American public discourse.

It is often assumed that *Aida* was created for the opening of the Suez Canal, but that is incorrect.. Neither was the opera performed at the launch of the new Cairo Opera House on November 1, 1869. However, as part of the celebrations of the opening of the Suez Canal on November 17, 1869, the khedive of Egypt, Ismail Pasha, envisioned a performance that had to reflect the history of ancient Egypt. Since Verdi was considered as an eminent figure in the musical world, the khedive approached the Italian composer and asked him to write the music for this performance. Because the work had not been ready by the inauguration of the Opera House, Verdi's *Rigoletto* was performed instead. *Aida* made its world premiere two years later December 24, 1871.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Fisher, Burton D., *Verdi's Aida*, (Opera Journeys Publishing, 2005), 16.

¹⁴⁵ Fisher, *Verdi's Aida*, 20.

¹⁴⁶ Said, Edward, W., *Culture and Imperialism*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), 134.

¹⁴⁷ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 151.

¹⁴⁸ "Cairo Opera House," <http://www.cairoopera.org/history.php>, viewed on June 5, 2018.

As Verdi worked on his composition of *Aida* in the 1870s, Wagner had conquered the opera world with his multifaceted music dramas in the meantime. The differences between the musical styles of Wagner and Verdi are greatly discussed in *Verdi's Theater: Creating Drama Through Music* by Gilles de Van. He asserts that although both European composers were – and still are – leaders in the field of opera-making, Verdi and Wagner do not show much resemblance. Opposing to Wagner, Verdi was long seen as “a skillful composer who charmed the public.”¹⁴⁹ The fact that the two composers never met, did not stop them from speaking critically about each other’s work. Verdi once commented about Wagner: “He invariably chooses, unnecessarily, the untrodden path, attempting to fly where a rational person would walk with better results.”¹⁵⁰ While Wagner announced after listening to Verdi’s *Requiem* (1874): “it would be better to say nothing.”¹⁵¹ Wagner intended to make a complete break with the Italian and the French grand opera. Therefore, Wagner was more perceived as an “artist of modernity,”¹⁵² in opposition to the more traditional Italian composer. So in essence, Wagnerism can be perceived as a response to the traditional Italian *bel canto* style that long was associated with Verdi’s operas. “Wagner was the radical inventor and innovator; Verdi was the conservator of traditions.”¹⁵³

Although Verdi became inspired by German grand opera, he was determined to create a distinctively Italian musical drama with *Aida*. Thereby, he chose to integrate many arias, duets, striking melodies and rhythmic techniques to serve its dramatic purpose.¹⁵⁴ The world premiere in Cairo in 1871 was a success and led to the staging of *Aida* at major opera houses in Europe and in America.¹⁵⁵ The European premiere took place on February 8, 1872 at la Scala, Milan and on November 26, 1873, *Aida* was introduced in the Academy of Music in New York.¹⁵⁶

After reflecting on key moments of Verdi’s life and career, one could ask the following question. Do American historical newspapers between 1880 and 1914 reflect these successes and appreciation of Verdi’s work that were widely expressed by the American musical world at that time? In a time where global power and transatlantic relations changed, America appeared to take a more active role on the world stage. Therefore, one may assume that America started to adopt a more critical stance towards the classical cultural concepts coined by the Old World. In this respect, can a shift of the cultural balance be noticed? To better understand the role of European opera in

¹⁴⁹ De Van, *Verdi's Theater*, 2.

¹⁵⁰ Adler, Jack, *Soulmates from the Pages of History: From Mythical to Contemporary, 75 Examples of the Power of Friendship*, (Algora Publishing: 2013), 178.

¹⁵¹ Adler, *Soulmates from the Pages of History*, 178.

¹⁵² De Van, Gilles. *Verdi's Theater: Creating Drama Through Music*, (University of Chicago Press: 1998), 2

¹⁵³ Fisher, Burton D., *Verdi's Nabucco: Opera Journeys Mini Guide Series*, (Opera Journeys Publishing: 2003) 16.

¹⁵⁴ Fisher, Burton D., *Verdi's Aida*, (Opera Journeys Publishing, 2005), 16-17.

¹⁵⁵ *The Metropolitan Opera House*,

https://www.metopera.org/uploadedFiles/MetOpera/919_education/1_met_in_schools/2_educator_materials/1_educator_guides/01_aida/Aida_PostShow.pdf, viewed on June 2, 2018.

¹⁵⁶ “Verdi: *Aida*,” *Opera Stanford*, <http://opera.stanford.edu/Verdi/Aida/history.html>, viewed on June 8, 2018.

American society during the turn of the twentieth century, this research project will focus on the American perception of Verdi's *Aida* in historical American newspapers between 1880 and 1914.

2.4 Analyzing Verdi's *Aida*

For analyzing the American perception of Verdi's *Aida*, a similar research method has been applied as in the examination of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* presented in chapter 2. American newspapers between 1880 and 1914 from the database of *Chronicling America* have been selected for research. To get relevant references and to filter out the large body of unwanted material, the following keywords have been used: 'Verdi,' 'Aida' and 'opera.' It resulted in 274 hits. Since 100 newspapers have been examined for the study on Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, the decision has been made to limit the scope of research results to 100 for Verdi's *Aida* in chapter 2, and for Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* in chapter 3, as well. Again, only English texts in North American newspapers have been selected for research. Therefore, newspapers like *L'Italia*, *La Democracia*, *La Correspondencia de Puerto Rico* and *Dziennik Chicagoski* have been excluded. The American historical newspapers that have been used for this research are added to an appendix.

After obtaining a long list of 100 relevant articles, thereby leaving out the non-English texts and those that strangely did not match the applied keywords, each one has been examined and reviewed on its content. Since it would be impractical to discuss each article separately, this research project focused on recurring themes. Using this approach, a classification could be made. It organized the articles into eight categories, consisting of commercial advertisements and reviews, articles that emphasized elements of grand opera, articles that referred to *Aida*'s premiere in Cairo, articles that expressed signs of Orientalism, articles that reflected on Italian themes and culture, articles that reflected on American themes and culture and critical reviews. Only the most significant newspaper articles have been selected and highlighted to represent each category as truthfully as possible. By doing so, a reliable outline of the American perception of Verdi's *Aida* expressed in historical American newspapers between 1880 and 1914 can be provided. The articles that have been examined but have not been directly discussed in this research project are listed in an appendix to serve as supporting documents.

So, what can be obtained from the results? Foremost, a large part of the newspaper articles consisted of paid advertisements and reviews with strong commercialized messages, promoting Verdi's *Aida* to the American public. To give an impression, attention-grabbing headlines like:

“Verdi’s Grand Opera,”¹⁵⁷ “Verdi’s Spectacular Aida,”¹⁵⁸ “Verdi’s Superb Tragic Opera”¹⁵⁹ TONIGHT TONIGHT TONIGHT AIDA AIDA AIDA” set the tone.¹⁶⁰ These advertisements are frequently accompanied by comprehensive lists, presenting the names of the cast. Especially advertisements from *The San Francisco Call* stand out for their use of large pictures of renowned opera stars, who would perform in the announced *Aida* productions.¹⁶¹

What did not remain unmentioned in nearly every newspaper article, was that Verdi’s *Aida* was described as a true grand opera. *The Indianapolis Journal* of April 6, 1890 explains how Verdi’s work has been influenced by the grand operas of Wagner. At that time, it “made such a deep impression on Verdi’s mind that he forthwith began a new departure in his mode of composition, earnestly striving to follow in the footsteps of the great German hero of the so-called ‘music of the future’ school. The success of this endeavor is amply testified in Verdi’s opera *Aida*.”¹⁶² Having been inspired by Wagner’s grand operas, Verdi’s light Italian melodies that characterized his earlier work, made room for a more dramatic composition style. Americans could now expect enormous orchestras, large choirs, great ballets, dramatic plotlines, impressive stage effects and colorful sceneries and costumes from the Italian opera composer.

“*Aida* with its big opportunities for grand orchestration and choral work,”¹⁶³ had quite high expectations to meet. Therefore, it had to be made clear that essential elements of grand opera were not omitted in the American productions of Verdi’s *Aida*. *The Saint Paul Globe* of April 7, 1903 profoundly praised the performance of *Aida* at the St. Paul Theatres. Its main goal appeared to be highlighting these characteristic elements of grand opera, showing that the American production had big shoes to fill, but was successful in doing so.

[...] Its gorgeous stage pictures were a feast last night for the eye and its passionate music was a satisfaction to the ear. The opera demands much of the choruses, and nobly did these respond last night [...]. It demands much of the orchestra, and last evening each musician played as if inspired. A larger orchestra and a larger chorus might have attained bigger results, but artistically they could not surpass the work

¹⁵⁷ "The Auditorium, Grand Opening Musical Festival." *The Minneapolis Journal*, February 18, 1905, Page 15, Image 16. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045366/1905-02-18/ed-1/seq-16/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁵⁸ "Music Hall, Verdi's Spectacular Aida." *The St. Louis Republic*, December 1, 1901, Part II, Page 7, Image 21. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020274/1901-12-01/ed-1/seq-21/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁵⁹ "Amusements. Verdi's Superb Tragic Opera, Aida." *The San Francisco Call*, November 25, 1899, Page 7, Image 7. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/1899-11-25/ed-1/seq-7/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁶⁰ "Amusements." *Evening Star*, February 10, 1888, Image 1. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1888-02-10/ed-1/seq-1/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁶¹ "Madame Eames Sings Aida And Causes Perfect Furore." *The San Francisco Call*, November 30, 1901, Page 9, Image 9. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/1901-11-30/ed-1/seq-9/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁶² "Great Work of the Chorus." *The Indianapolis Journal*, April 6, 1890, Part One, Page 8, Image 8. Retrieved from , *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015679/1890-04-06/ed-1/seq-8/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁶³ "Verdi's Grand Opera Will Be Presented." *The Seattle Star*, February 18, 1909, Last Edition, Page 4, Image 4. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87093407/1909-02-18/ed-1/seq-4/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

that was done last night. The splendor of an Egyptian court, when Egypt was a power, affords an appropriate setting for such rich music as Verdi has written in *Aida*. And the stage pictures were not disappointing.¹⁶⁴

Staging a grand opera like *Aida* was considered to be a challenging undertaking. *The San Francisco Call* of August 14, 1910 emphasized that *Aida* called for a massive production and was rarely in the repertoire of traveling companies.¹⁶⁵ The difficulties of performing such grand opera were also discussed in the Illinois newspaper, the *Rock Island Argus* of November 4, 1910. This article described how the idea of establishing a grand opera company for the city was initially perceived as an unrealistic and impracticable plan of "visionary enthusiasts." Nevertheless, after arranging eighty musicians for the orchestra, one hundred and seventy opera singers for the chorus, the Chicago Grand Opera company succeeded in making the Auditorium theater the home of grand opera. However, this could not be realized without the expense of \$500,000 for the remodeling of the theatre.¹⁶⁶

Hence, bringing Verdi's extravagant grand opera *Aida* to life was quite an expensive and imposing project. From its start, the bar had been set high by Ismail Pasha, the khedive of Egypt who hosted the premiere of *Aida* in the Cairo Opera House on 24 December 1871. It is interesting that the majority of the selected American new reports referred to the opera's premiere in Egypt, as if its Egyptian background should not be left unnoticed.

Aida was composed at the request of the khedive of Egypt, who, rearing a beautiful and elaborate theater of the most modern design in his own metropolis of Cairo, desired a work of sufficient originality, magnitude and merit to make the occasion historic in the annals of music all over the world. Months were spent on the preparation, which was deciphered from an ancient hieroglyphic manuscript; still more months were taken up by Verdi in writing the unusual music which is to be found on every page of the great score. Scene painters and costumers were summoned from the four quarters of Europe; certain rare dresses were duplicated in Paris, then beleaguered by the victorious Prussians, and the most important diplomatic negotiations were

¹⁶⁴ "At St. Paul Theatres, The Story of Aida." *The Saint Paul Globe*, April 7, 1903, Page 4, Image 4. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90059523/1903-04-07/ed-1/seq-4/>> viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁶⁵ "Band and Opera at Idora Park." *The San Francisco Call*, August 14, 1910, Page 40, Image 40. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/1910-08-14/ed-1/seq-40/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁶⁶ "Chicago Opens its Grand Opera Season, Auditorium Completely Sold Out and Success of Undertaking is Assured." *Rock Island Argus*, November 4, 1910, Image 1. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn92053934/1910-11-04/ed-1/seq-1/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

indulged in to get them out of the besieged city. [...] So immense is the strange and mystic setting of *Aida* [...].¹⁶⁷

How Verdi's opera is described here in the *Los Angeles Herald* of November 4, 1906, stirs the imagination. This appeared to be the exact intention of many American historical newspapers. *Aida's* debut in Cairo is a significant, recurring theme that is frequently addressed by appealing descriptions of the unique, exotic setting where the performance had taken place. *The Bridgeport Evening Farmer* of December 24, 1912, used the term 'orientalism' coined by Edward Said's to refer to the exotic, Egyptian setting of the opera, stating that "*Aida* is one of the most showy and spectacular operas in the Italian repertory, and its alluring orientalism is a delight to the eye as well as to the ear."¹⁶⁸ The *Wood County reporter* of May 18, 1911, informed its readers that "*Aida* was written to celebrate the formal opening of the Suez Canal in 1871, and is distinctly Egyptian in character and the scenes and setting are all oriental."¹⁶⁹ *The San Francisco Call* of November 30, 1901 used stereotyping depictions to refer to Egyptian character of *Aida* as part of the orient. It described Emma Eames, the American soprano who interpreted the role of *Aida*, as a "[...] tender and womanly conception of the character," however, she was lacking a little the barbaric strain."¹⁷⁰ According to Said, these oversimplified portrayals of orient cultures in Western representations have often served to uphold an imperialist view of the outside world.¹⁷¹

Another idealistic, romanticized portrayal of the Egyptian scenery is provided by The Topeka state journal of February 27, 1912. What must be considered is that this article did not refer to the premiere in 1871, but to a performance of *Aida* in 1912, which also took place in Cairo. It announced that "[a]n event with much interest is to take place next Tuesday night, when Verdi's opera, *Aida*, will be performed at the foot of the great pyramid of Cheops. There will be no artificial lighting, in as much as the entire scene will be illumed by the moon, then at the full."¹⁷² Also *The Hawaiian Star* of March 13, 1912 offered an account on this special event. It described how *Aida* was performed "in the moonlight before the Egyptian pyramids by an Italian company and was witnessed by 5000

¹⁶⁷ "Aida, The Inaugural; Its Argument and Its Characters." *Los Angeles Herald*, November 4, 1906, Image 40. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042462/1906-11-04/ed-1/seq-40/>> viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁶⁸ "First Things." *The Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, December 24, 1912, Page 6, Image 6. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84022472/1912-12-24/ed-1/seq-6/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁶⁹ "Travel Class Meeting." *Wood County Reporter*, May 18, 1911, Image 1. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85033078/1911-05-18/ed-1/seq-1/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁷⁰ "Madame Eames Sings Aida And Causes Perfect Furore." *The San Francisco Call*, November 30, 1901, Page 9, Image 9. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/1901-11-30/ed-1/seq-9/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁷¹ Said, Edward, W., *Culture and Imperialism*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), 134-136.

¹⁷² "Aida at Foot of Pyramids." *The Topeka State Journal*, February 27, 1912, Last Edition, Image 1. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82016014/1912-02-27/ed-1/seq-1/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

people.”¹⁷³ *The Tacoma Times* of 26 March 1912 mentioned that “ten thousand persona, including several hundred American tourists, witnessed an open air performance of Verdi’s Egyptian opera *Aida* in the shadow of the Great Pyramid.”¹⁷⁴ Interesting is that all these newspapers used depictions of almost enchanting, Egyptian landscapes that gleamed in the moonlight, feeding the oriental feeling with which the opera was often associated.

Another example that fits the thought of appealing to the imagination, comes from Marshall P. Wilder, an American actor, comedian and storyteller. *The Laclede Blade* of June 13, 1908,¹⁷⁵ along with *The Virginia Enterprise* of July 17, 1908,¹⁷⁶ *The Elk Mountain pilot* of June 18, 1908,¹⁷⁷ and the *Twice-a-week plain dealer* of November 10, 1908,¹⁷⁸ shared a fragment from Wilder’s *Smiling ‘Round the World* (1908). This book contains an account of the American’s tour around the world. In the aforementioned newspapers, Wilder’s travel experience through Cairo has been highlighted. While Wilder provides lovely descriptions of the Cairo Opera House, the purpose of addressing his work in several American newspapers remains unclear. Any kind of introduction or end paragraph lacks. That is quite remarkable. The text is not presented as an advertisement to promote Wilder’s book. Still, it is interesting to reflect on Wilder’s work, since it addressed Verdi’s *Aida*.

What can be understood from Wilder’s writing is that he considers *Aida* as a very respected opera. Not only Verdi is praised, but also Mariotte Bey, the great Egyptologist and discoverer of the Rosetta stone. Thanks to her input “[...] every detail of scenery, costume and plot was historically correct.” The paragraph ends with Wilder’s remark that *Aida* should be perceived as “[...] probably the greatest stage production ever seen, or that ever could be given [...].” Although he sketched a positive image of the opera, one can notice some sarcasm when he points out that the production of *Aida* caused that “the Egyptian museum was ransacked for properties and jewels.” He also refers to the khedive of Egypt as the “royal spendthrift,” who at the time spent “\$21,000,000 on the celebration attending the opening of the canal that was, first and last, his country’s ruin.” Hence,

¹⁷³ “Latest News Bulletin.” *The Hawaiian Star*, March, 13, 1912, Second edition, Page 7, Image 7. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015415/1912-03-13/ed-1/seq-7/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁷⁴ “Cairo, Ten thousand persons.” *The Tacoma Times*, March 26, 1912, Page 8, Image 8. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88085187/1912-03-26/ed-1/seq-8/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁷⁵ Wilder, Marshall P., “Scenes in Cairo, The Funny Things One Sees in Smiling Round the World.” *The Laclede Blade*, June 13, 1908, Image 7. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn89066129/1908-06-13/ed-1/seq-7/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁷⁶ Wilder, Marshall P., “Scenes in Cairo, The Funny Things One Sees in Smiling Round the World,” *The Virginia Enterprise*, July 17, 1908, Image 3. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90059180/1908-07-17/ed-1/seq-3/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁷⁷ Wilder, Marshall P., “Scenes in Cairo, The Funny Things One Sees in Smiling Round the World.” *The Elk Mountain Pilot*, June 18, 1908, Image 3. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86063397/1908-06-18/ed-1/seq-3/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁷⁸ Wilder, Marshall P., “Scenes in Cairo, The Funny Things One Sees in Smiling Round the World.” *Twice-a-Week Plain Dealer*, November 10, 1908, Image 2. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88059319/1908-11-10/ed-1/seq-2/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

according to Wilder, *Aida* can be considered as an impressive, Egyptian-themed opera. Thereby, he attaches great value to the opera's historical authenticity. Yet, what can be deduced from Wilder's remarks is that he considers *Aida*, at least by American standards, as an overly expensive opera production, up to the point where it becomes a little absurd.

A different element that could not be ignored while reflecting on the selected material, was that American newspapers seized every opportunity to address the Italian roots of Verdi's opera. Not only the Italian inheritance had to be mentioned, also the realization of executing these stage productions all over America in the original Italian language thanks to the presence of renowned opera singers from Italy and other parts in Europe, seemed to be of great importance. For instance, *The Los Angeles Herald* of November 4, 1906 asserts that:

[...] the local cast is almost incomparable and includes five of the greatest stars of the Italian lyric stage. [...] The director will be Chevalier Fulgencio Guerriere, most prominent symphonic leader in Italy, who is now on his way to California, from New York, where he has just landed from Milan. The orchestra will number forty soloists, the chorus seventy singers from Milan's La Scala, the greatest opera house in the world. The scenery and properties for this inaugural production have been imported from the Royal Opera of Madrid, Spain.¹⁷⁹

Apparently, operas steeped in European traditions were very much appreciated in America. These eloquent descriptions had to convince the American public that the Italian authenticity of the opera was secured. Nevertheless, it also resulted in labeling *Aida* as a typical Italian opera, a so-called "Opera for Italians," if one must believe *The Evening Statesman* of February 13, 1909. This newspaper from Washington state announced a special performance of Verdi's opera *Aida* at the Metropolitan Opera House. The main reason why it referred to *Aida* in this manner can be explained by the fact that the event was arranged for the benefit of Society of Italian Immigrants and the Italian Benevolent Institute.¹⁸⁰ Nonetheless, among the results there were many other newspapers that automatically linked *Aida* to Italian opera. According to the *Los Angeles Herald* of January 17, 1909, for instance, spectators can prepare themselves for "[a]n afternoon with Italian opera," when attending a performance of Verdi's *Aida*.¹⁸¹

Yet, there are examples in which Verdi's *Aida* is not necessarily associated with Italian opera that should be performed for an Italian crowd, by Italian artists only. On the contrary, some news

¹⁷⁹ "Aida, The Inaugural; Its Argument and Its Characters." *Los Angeles Herald*, November 4, 1906, Image 40. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042462/1906-11-04/ed-1/seq-40/>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁸⁰ "Opera for Italians." *The Evening Statesman*, February 13, 1909, Image 1. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88085421/1909-02-13/ed-1/seq-1/>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁸¹ "Music." *Los Angeles Herald*, January 17, 1909, Page 2, Image 14. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042462/1909-01-17/ed-1/seq-14/>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

reports rather proudly announced that the opera was going to be performed by a full American cast, thereby showing that Americans too, are perfectly capable of carrying out leading roles in European operas.

For instance, *The Washington Herald* of January 5, 1908 introduces the American singer Lillian Nordica. She is addressed as “the greatest American dramatic soprano,” who takes the leading role of Aida in the production in Washington. In case the reader is not aware of her international reputation, it is noted that Nordica “[...] is the only American woman who sang in Bayreuth at the Invitation of Mme. Cosima Wagner.”¹⁸² Since the Bayreuth Festival can be perceived as one of the most prestigious opera festivals dedicated to Wagner, it is fair to say that Nordica was not just anyone. Her musical talent had been recognized worldwide. In addition, the article pointed out that Nordica will appear as Aida in Washington only, to accentuate the exclusivity of her presence there. In this respect, Nordica could be perceived as a worthy representation of the American musical world, almost serving as a justification that the expertise of the European opera world could be matched by American opera professionals. It is interesting that American newspapers felt the need to address these explanations.

While a eulogy was given to Nordica in the aforementioned review, the American actress is slated in *The Salt Lake Tribune* of November 17, 1907. This article asserted that “[...] this Aida did not attain the excellence of certain of its predecessors, and that in spite of the presence in the cast of Mme. Nordica.” Although the quality of her former performances is acknowledged, Nordica is now described as “[...] the most disconcerting obstacle to enjoyment, who fell far below expectation not only vocally but dramatically.” According to the author of this critical review, it appeared that Nordica did not make enough effort to embody the leading role successfully. Not having “the tawny skin of an African,” but exposing her pink and white complexion of an Anglo-Saxon while wearing costumes inappropriately, made her performance rather look like a parody. Also her vocal skills were heavily criticized. “It would be charitable to draw a veil. It seemed as if she could hardly finish the evening. The critic concluded his review by stating that the performance fell far short of the highest New York standard.

Although both laudatory and critical reviews can be identified, the American perception of Verdi’s *Aida* is primarily dominated by positive reports. An article in the *Washington Herald* of January 5, 1908 argues that one should be thankful that America delivers many outstanding performers. “Let us cherish our artists and not underestimate them. Performances are variable in

¹⁸² "Plans For The Opera." *The Washington Herald*, January 5, 1908, Page 5, Image 29. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045433/1908-01-05/ed-1/seq-29/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

quality in American opera houses, but the same can be said about the major European theaters.”¹⁸³

A significant example that clearly had to demonstrate that America is entitled to a place in the operatic world right next to Europe, is given in the *New-York tribune* of February 26, 1902. This noteworthy news report describes the state visit of Prince Henry of Prussia to New York in great detail. The honorable occasion formed the perfect opportunity to show the world what America was capable of musically.

[...] New-York wished to give him [the Prince] the most elaborate, brilliant and artistic exhibition of which it was capable, that exhibition would naturally take the form of an operatic performance. Again, the advancement of this country in musical art is perhaps its least understood claim to distinction in Europe. Hence, once more the appropriateness of letting the Prince see and hear a little of the best of Yankee opera. A glance through the list of names on last night's programme may cause the designation 'Yankee opera' to seem facetious. The fact remains that it is opera designed and brought about for Americans, even if it is not of or by Americans, it is such opera, too, as Americans may be glad and even proud to exhibit to a representative of the nation which holds the foremost place in modern music. it would be wrong not to give him an opportunity to judge what the country is capable of musically.¹⁸⁴

What is perhaps most interesting about this fragment, is the part where it stated that “[...] the advancement of this country [America] in musical art is perhaps its least understood claim to distinction in Europe.” Throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, the Old World captured an exemplary role towards the New World, thereby taking the lead on the international stage. However, as transatlantic power relations shifted at the turn of the twentieth century, America began to claim its role on the world stage. In view of this newspaper report, it appears that changes in cultural balance became visible as well. The way America presents itself here, does not implicate that it should feel subordinated to its European counterparts. On the contrary, America has an advancement in musical art and “[...] holds the foremost place in modern music.” The designation of American opera as “Yankee opera,” is clearly worn with American national pride.

To compete with Europe on a musical level, all the necessary means had to be implemented to leave the most indelible impression on the Prussian Prince, but also on the rest of the world. Thanks to large chandeliers, fresh flowers, light garlands and many other rich decorations, the Metropolitan Opera House in New York never looked as beautiful, if one must believe the *New York tribune*. The display of American and German flags and shields in the countries' national colors had to

¹⁸³ "Grand Opera Aida." *The Washington Herald*, March 10, 1912, Dramatic and Feature Section, Page 3, Image 21. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045433/1912-03-10/ed-1/seq-21/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁸⁴ "The Gala Opera Night." *New-York Tribune*, February 26, 1902, Page 3, Image 3. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1902-02-26/ed-1/seq-3/>> viewed on July 2, 2018.

add to a cross-cultural German-American experience. To top that, the musical program presented famous songs of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* performed in German, and of Verdi's *Aida* in Italian. Although not one composition by an American conductor was included, the concert did end with the iconic "The Star Spangled Banner," most likely to close the evening with a victorious American feeling.

This tradition of including America's national anthem to the musical repertoire can be identified in other American newspaper reports regarding Verdi's *Aida* as well. Even concerts filled with music of European opera classics, are accompanied by "The Star Spangled Banner." *The San Francisco Call* of July 20, 1913, for instance, announces a band concert in Golden Gate park, offering the American crowd "[...] the principal gems of popular opera." Thereby it refers to the famous "March" and "Overture" from Verdi's *Aida*, "the Petite Suite" from Tchaikovsky and "Mosaic" from Donizetti's *La Favorita*. All these compositions are created by some of the most well-known European conductors in opera history. Surprisingly, the program is also complemented by works of American origin, such as "The Star Spangled Banner," "A Medley of Hawaiian Songs," and a "Collection of Songs by Stephen Foster,"¹⁸⁵ who can be perceived as the father of American music according to the Songwriters Hall of Fame.¹⁸⁶

But there is more. Several advertisements in which Verdi's *Aida* is promoted, also strive to bring the American opera *Natoma* to the attention of the American public. An example can be found in *The Washington Times* of March 17, 1912. "The two operas to be sung are Verdi's *Aida*, in the afternoon, and Victor Herbert' new American opera, *Natoma* at night."¹⁸⁷ *The Evening Star* of 13 March 1912 shows another example "For the matinee, which will begin at 2 o'clock, Verdi's Egyptian opera, "Aida." will be sung [...]. At the night performance, which will begin at 8 o'clock, Victor Herbert's American opera, "Natoma," will be presented, with the composer conducting. [...]. This will be the first performance of this new opera in Washington, and the first time that Victor Herbert has ever conducted it."¹⁸⁸ *The Washington Times* of March 26, 1912 explains that the two grand operas were a great success since "the Chicago-Philadelphia Grand Opera Company, seen in Washington last Sunday in Victor's Herbert's *Natoma* and in *Aida*, is extending its territory constantly, with the further announcement that it will next year give a season in Washington, as well

¹⁸⁵ "Park Band Concert Today." *The San Francisco Call*, July 20, 1913, Page 32, Image 52. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/1913-07-20/ed-1/seq-52/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁸⁶ "Stephen Foster." *Songwriters Hall of Fame*, https://www.songhall.org/profile/Stephen_Foster, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁸⁷ "Herbert's Opera To Be Conducted By The Composer, Chicago Company Will Appear Here in Aida and Natoma." *The Washington Times*, March 17, 1912, Sunday Evening Edition, Page 15, Image 15. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026749/1912-03-17/ed-1/seq-15/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁸⁸ "Chicago Grand Opera Company." *Evening Star*, March 13, 1912, Page 12, Image 12. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1912-03-13/ed-1/seq-12/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

as on the Pacific coast.”¹⁸⁹

Aside from these aforementioned examples, there are many more advertisements in which *Aida* and *Natoma* are presented together. What is so remarkable about this observation? *Natoma* is a so-called American opera, created in 1911 by the Irish-born, German-raised American composer Victor Herbert. In *American Opera*, Elise K. Kirk explains that it is quite difficult to identify a clear American opera style – as one can speak of an Italian style or German or French style. What can be determined is an approach to opera that appears to be especially characteristic American, referring to subjects from American history to Indian legend and from folklore to current news.¹⁹⁰ *Natoma* was an opera based on American Indian themes. The story is set in the Spanish territories of the 1820’s, now part of California, and comprises the account of the Native American girl Natoma.¹⁹¹ The fact that a rather recent and unknown American opera, especially at that time, is placed next to a European opera classic, gives the impression that one does not detract from the other. Both are worthwhile to be staged and to be openly presented to the American public.

Looking back at the advertisements and newspaper reports that have been selected and examined for this research project, it appears that predominately a positive image of the European opera, *Aida*, has been sketched. Although, there was one usual complaint, directly written to the Italian composer in 1872, that cannot be left unmentioned. The *Bismarck Daily Tribune* of August 23, 1912,¹⁹² *The Adair County News*, August 28, 1912,¹⁹³ and the *New Ulm Review*, October 16, 1912,¹⁹⁴ all published the same letter by Prospero Bertani. After witnessing *Aida* in Parma for the second time, Bertani decided to write the Italian opera composer a letter to express his disappointment. He considered *Aida* as “[...] an opera in which there is absolutely nothing which causes any enthusiasm or excitement, and without the pomp of the spectacle the public would not stand it to the end. When it has filled the house two or three times it will be banished to the dust of the archives.”

Bertani ended this critical review of Verdi’s opera by demanding a refund. Not just for the purchased opera tickets, but for his food and travel expenses as well. Verdi, who appeared to be rather entertained than offended, forwarded the letter to his publisher, Giulio Ricordi, with the instructions to give Bertani his money back for everything he asked, except for the costs of the

¹⁸⁹ "Capital May Have Season of Grand Opera." *The Washington Times*, March 26, 1912, Last Edition, Image 1. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026749/1912-03-26/ed-1/seq-1/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁹⁰ Kirk, Elise K., *American Opera*, (University of Illinois Press: 2001), 1-3.

¹⁹¹ Miller, Leta E., *Music and Politics in San Francisco: From the 1906 Quake to the Second World War*, (University of California Press: 2012), 40.

¹⁹² "Verdi's Cool Critic." *Bismarck Daily Tribune*, August 23, 1912, Image 4. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042242/1912-08-23/ed-1/seq-4/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁹³ "Verdi's Cool Critic." *The Adair County News*, August 28, 1912, Image 3. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86069496/1912-08-28/ed-1/seq-3/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

¹⁹⁴ "Verdi's Cool Critic." *New Ulm Review*, October 16, 1912, Image 9. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn89081128/1912-10-16/ed-1/seq-9/>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.

"detestable supper at the station," since he could have eaten at home, Verdi jokes. The fact that the letter is openly published in American newspapers forty years later, suggests that Verdi encouraged Ricordi to publish the correspondence in newspapers as well. By doing so, the tables turned.

Bertani's criticism backfired, as *Aida* became one of the most popular operas of all time. Anyone who thought differently, proved his or her ignorance and inability to judge operas on their value.

In conclusion, looking at the American perception of Verdi's *Aida* in newspapers between 1880 and 1914, it can be said that Americans were primarily positive. In case of criticism, it mostly referred to misrepresentations of Verdi's *Aida* in America, not to the opera or the Italian composer himself. High expectations were placed on the American productions. It had to be proven that the European artistic quality could be matched. Hence, over the course of time, *Aida* was consistently praised and perceived as a well-respected opera classic. A significant change in perception could not be detected, based on the image presented by the 100 American historical newspapers that have been selected for this research project. Further research is needed to acquire more insight in the American perception of Verdi's *Aida* in American historical newspapers between 1880 and 1914.

Chapter 3: The influence of Giacomo Puccini

3.1. Puccini's life and legacy

“The music of this opera [Madama Butterfly] was dictated to me by God. I was merely instrumental in getting it on paper and communicating it to the public.”¹⁹⁵ – Giacomo Puccini

Giacomo Puccini is regarded as one of the greatest opera composers in Italian opera of the late nineteenth and twentieth century. Many biographies on Puccini acknowledge that – after Verdi – it was Puccini who became the leading composer in Italian opera.¹⁹⁶ Both composers received a similar degree of fame and even their musical careers share some similarities. Since this chapter will focus on the study of the American perception of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* in American historical newspapers between 1880 and 1914, it is important to draw attention to the life of the composer first. This section is, however, not meant to provide a comprehensive biography of the composer. Instead, it should give an outline of the key events in his career, his accomplishments and his impact upon the New World as an introduction to the research study.

Puccini was born in Lucca, Tuscany, on December 22, 1858. His family consisted of musicians who had been church organists and composers for generations, and tried to inspire Puccini to participate in the local musical life. After a short career as a church organist, Puccini dreamed of becoming an opera composer. A visit to Verdi's *Aida* in Pisa in 1876, encouraged the young Puccini to pursue a career in opera-making. Hoping to realize his dreams he went to the Conservatory in Milan in 1880, where he studied under renowned musicians Amilcare Ponchielli and Antonio Bazzini.¹⁹⁷

Throughout Puccini's education, he was exposed to French grand opera and music by maestro's in opera-making like Wagner and Verdi. In 1882 he joined a one-act opera contest and although his *Le Villi* did not win, Teatro Dal Verme in Milan agreed on producing his work for its opera season in 1884. Under the watchful eye of envious fellow composers, Puccini was able to garner the attention of the influential publisher Giulio Ricordi. He recognized Puccini's talent and was convinced that his search for Verdi's successor was over. He commissioned the young composer to write a second opera. Puccini's *Edgar* premiered at la Scala in 1889 but made little impression on the Italian audiences. Thus, Puccini continued to improve his composing style, focusing on opera in particular.¹⁹⁸

It was his third opera, *Manon Lescaut* (1893), that provided him the international recognition he was longing for. The opera was praised for its effective orchestration, romantic melodies,

¹⁹⁵ Cameron, Julia, *The Right to Write: An Invitation and Initiation into the Writing Life*, (Hay House, Inc: 2017), 217.

¹⁹⁶ Philips-Matz, Mary Jane, *Puccini: A Biography*, (UPNE: 2002), 3, 128-129.

¹⁹⁷ Girardi, Michele, *Puccini: His International Art*, (University of Chicago Press: 2002), 3-5.

¹⁹⁸ Philips-Matz, Mary Jane, *Puccini: A Biography*, (UPNE: 2002), 3, 55-61.

rhythmic simplicity and profound realistic human portrayal of the opera's heroine. The Italian composer had found his trademark. His subsequent operas all portray a psychological journey of a heroine, who is willing to sacrifice anything for love. The first performance of *Manon Lescaut* was staged on February 1, 1893 at Teatro Regio in Turin and was an instant success. The opera toured all over the world. It reached America in 1894 and was performed at the Grand Opera House in Philadelphia and in 1898 at Wallack's Theater in New York.¹⁹⁹ On January 18, 1907 the Metropolitan Opera House in New York produced *Manon Lescaut*.²⁰⁰ The opera marked the beginning of a collaboration with Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, who worked with Puccini on his three most successful operas, *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Madama Butterfly*.

La Bohème is regarded as one of Puccini's best works, as well as one of the most romantic operas ever composed.²⁰¹ Its world premiere performance took place on February 1, 1896 at Teatro Regio in Turin and was presented in America in 1897 at the Los Angeles Theater. It reached New York in 1898 through the Palmo's Opera House and later on December 29, 1900 by the Metropolitan Opera House.²⁰² His next opera *Tosca* had its world premiere on January 14, 1900 at Teatro Costanzi in Rome. Its first performance in America took place on February 4, 1901 at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York.²⁰³ *Tosca* was Puccini's first acquaintance with *verismo*, a popular opera style in Italy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Operas in *verismo* style are linked to *realism*, portraying ordinary people in everyday situations with relatable emotions, with whom the audience could identify with. Puccini wished to depict universal human experiences in his operas, especially the one of falling in love. Thereby he expressed the protagonist's emotions through his melodies.²⁰⁴

Different from the operatic realism from the style of *verismo*, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* made a step into musical exoticism. Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* premiered on February 17, 1904 at La Scala in Milan. In spite of Puccini's high expectations, the premiere was a fiasco. Rivals who appeared to be jealous of Puccini's successes and favored position with Ricordi attended the premiere and were determined to mock the performance. Due to the disastrous first performance, Puccini made several revisions and gave *Madama Butterfly* a second change in Brescia in May 1904 and in Paris in 1906. These revised versions were eventually received very well.²⁰⁵

While it was difficult to meet the popularity of *la Bohème* and *Madama Butterfly*,

¹⁹⁹ "Manon Lescaut," *Opera Stanford*, <http://opera.stanford.edu/Puccini/ManonLescaut/history.html>, viewed on July 18, 2018.

²⁰⁰ "Manon Lescaut," *The Metropolitan Opera House*, https://www.metopera.org/metoperafiles/season/201617/operas/manon_lescaut/programs/111416%20Manon%20Lescaut.pdf, viewed on July 18, 2018.

²⁰¹ "Bohème," *The Metropolitan Opera House*, <https://www.metopera.org/metoperafiles/season/2017-18/operas/boheme/programs/022418Boheme.pdf>, viewed on July 18, 2018.

²⁰² *La Bohème*, *Opera Stanford*, <http://opera.stanford.edu/Puccini/LaBoheme/history.html>, viewed on July 18, 2018.

²⁰³ Philips-Matz, Mary Jane, *Puccini: A Biography*, (UPNE: 2002), 3, 80-81.

²⁰⁴ Philips-Matz, *Puccini: A Biography*, 100.

²⁰⁵ *Ibidem*, 3, 143-146.

Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West* became a massive hit too. But the high productive period of Puccini's career abruptly came to an end when his publisher Ricordi died in 1912. Not many years later, Puccini was diagnosed with cancer. As he went to Brussels for a special treatment in September 1924, he showed signs of recovery. However, the surgery could not save him, and he died eventually of heart failure on November 29, 1924.²⁰⁶

The news of Puccini's death spread rapidly over Belgium and Italy, and the rest of the world. The Catholic Pope and the Royal families in Italy and Belgium were informed, a national state of mourning was announced, and the Italian government decided to give Puccini a funeral paid by the state. On December 3, 1924, the famous Italian composer was hailed at the cathedral in Milan, where music of Puccini's first opera *Edgar* was performed. Many musicians, intellectuals and officials from all around the globe attended the funeral and large crowds lined the streets in silence to share their grief for the loss of their respected maestro. In *Puccini: A Biography*, Mary Jane Phillips-Matz describes what a major happening Puccini's funeral was.

On December 3, the day of the funeral in Milan, the streets were draped with black mourning silks and ribbons. La Scala remained closed. Archbishop Tosi and the national and local authorities planned a state ceremony and requiem Mass in the great gothic cathedral, the Duomo. Over the bronze doors was hung a drapery with an inscription reading, "Tears and prayers for Giacomo Puccini, who from earthly glory has ascended to glory in Heaven." Inside the church, which held thousands of people, the family group was seated near the altar. [...] Official committees came from Viareggio and Lucca, and near them were the Milanese dignitaries and a cabinet member who had come from Rome for the day. During the service Puccini was hailed not just as a musician, but as a protagonist of history. [...].²⁰⁷

Hereby Phillips-Matz shows how much Puccini was appreciated. His operas did not merely touch the hearts of many Italians, but also those of admirers over the whole of Europe and beyond. Since Puccini's death came rather unexpected, he was unable to finish his last opera, *Turandot*. To honor the Italian composer, Arturo Toscanini offered to complete Puccini's opera with the assistance of Franco Alfano, a successful composer and pianist. Toscanini staged *Turandot* for the first time at La Scala in Milan on April 25, 1926.²⁰⁸ Nonetheless, only Puccini's music and not Alfano's additions were exposed to the public. Toscanini chose to interrupt the opera to explain to the audience that Puccini died at this point, unable to finish his work. Although Alfano's ending has been performed in other productions, the ending scene was often heavily shortened at Toscanini's request. On November 16,

²⁰⁶ Ibidem, 296.

²⁰⁷ Ibidem, 304.

²⁰⁸ Fisher, Burton D., *Puccini's Turandot: Opera Journeys Mini Guide Series*, (Opera Journeys Publishing: 2003) 31-32.

1926, Toscanini performed *Turandot* also at the Met in New York. In recent years, the full Alfano ending has been revived. Yet, Toscanini's abbreviated version appeared to be favored.²⁰⁹

Today, Puccini's post-Romantic operatic work in *verismo* style belongs to the most treasured and most performed works of the operatic canon. According to statistics by *Operabase*, ten of the twelve operas by Puccini are numbered among the 200 most-performed operas worldwide. Only his early work including *Edgar* and *Le Villi* are not top-rated.²¹⁰ Each year during the Summer months nearby the Villa Museum in Torre del Lago, where Puccini lived for thirty years and composed many of his opera melodies, the Puccini Festival takes place. The Festival hosts some of the most renowned figures in the opera world and even rewards a prize for the best interpretation of Puccini's opera – the Puccini Award. The festival has been a successful annual event for decades. Each year it attracts 40,000 opera admirers from all over the world, all excited to relive Puccini's most beloved operas.²¹¹

Aside from the Villa Museum and the annual Puccini Festival in Torre del Lago, Puccini's house in Lucca serves as a unique place where new understanding of Puccini's legacy can be found. The house – where the composer was born and where he has spent most of his childhood – is transformed into the Puccini Museum and is open to the public. Visitors can view all sorts of documents, music scores, family photos and even costumes from Puccini's operas.²¹² Outside of the museum at Piazza Cittadella a large statue of the Italian composer is located. It was created by sculptor, Vito Tongiani, and revealed on November 28, 1994.²¹³ By honoring and remembering Puccini, dedicating monuments to him, staging his operas or writing about him, has kept him alive.

The composer's granddaughter, Simonetta Puccini, has also played a significant role in the preservation and publication of material about Puccini. In 1996 she initiated the non-profit organization known as The Association Friends of the Homes of Giacomo Puccini. The organization focuses in particular on the protection and development of Puccini's artistic and musical legacy and the promotion of cultural activities as concerts and releases.²¹⁴

Hence, Puccini can be perceived as an honorable successor to Verdi in Italian opera. The many tributes devoted to this Italian composer reveal the indelible impression he has left upon the opera world and show how much the composer is still respected, even in the twenty-first century. Considering the high status of Puccini in the musical world and the lasting popularity of his operas today, it makes sense that Puccini is selected for a research on American perceptions of European

²⁰⁹ *The Metropolitan Opera House*, https://metopera.org/uploadedFiles/MetOpera/8_live_in_hd/Summer%20HD%20Playbills/Nov%207%20Turandot.pdf, viewed on June 14, 2018.

²¹⁰ *Operabase*, <http://operabase.com/top.cgi?lang=en&break=0&show=opera&no=500&nat=>, viewed on June 14, 2018.

²¹¹ "Puccini Festival," <https://www.puccinifestival.it/en/>, viewed on June 14, 2018.

²¹² "Puccini Museum," <http://www.puccinimuseum.org/it/visita-la-casa-natale/museo/storia/>, viewed on June 14, 2018.

²¹³ Di Monaco, Bartolomeo, *Guidebook - Lucca in a Day*, (Lulu.com: 2012), 13.

²¹⁴ Giacomo Puccini, <http://www.giacomopuccini.it/en/associazione/>, viewed on June 14, 2018.

opera. Prior to the examination of American newspapers between 1880 and 1914 in relation to the Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, the next section will present an overview of Puccini's influence in America.

3.2 Puccini in America

Puccini, the Italian maestro whose operas had enchanted the whole of Europe, has left an indispensable mark on the New World as well. His works – along with Verdi's and Mozart's – are the most frequently performed operas in America today. This section explores how his work gained a foothold across the Atlantic Ocean during the late nineteenth and twentieth century.

Aside from America's operatic life, Puccini's influence reaches the repertoire of American musical life. In *Opera in America: A Cultural History*, John Dizikes asserts that opera and musical theater share a long history together, thereby calling Broadway musicals so-called "New York operas."²¹⁵ Dizikes describes how twentieth century composers were eager to borrow artistic qualities from influential opera composers to ensure the successes of their musical works. Especially Puccini should feel appreciated by contemporary composers of American musical theater, since some of the greatest musical successes of the twentieth century are closely linked to Puccini's best-loved operas.²¹⁶

Musical works of iconic composer, Andrew Lloyd Webber, are often associated with Puccini's operatic heritage. The musical *Miss Saigon* could be perceived as an adaptation of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, where the story has been reimaged. *Miss Saigon* portrays the tragic romance between an Asian woman and her American lover. Instead of Japan during World War I, the location was moved to 1970s Vietnam. The geisha had become a bargirl, and the Lieutenant became a U.S. Army sergeant. Their love story remained unchanged and just as dramatic. In Webber's personal memoir, he has admitted that Puccini had inspired him while creating his Broadway musicals. In this respect, Puccini can be perceived as the ancestor of some of the most successful musicals of the twentieth century.²¹⁷

The reason that Puccini became famous all over the world had much to do with the numerous trips he made throughout his musical career. During these visits he coordinated rehearsals and attended performances of his own operas in Europe and in America.²¹⁸ In 1906 he made his first visit to the New World. The Met in New York had staged operas of Puccini before – *La Bohème* on 26

²¹⁵ Dizikes, John, *Opera in America: A Cultural History*, 89.

²¹⁶ Philips-Matz, Mary Jane, *Puccini: A Biography*, (UPNE: 2002), 4.

²¹⁷ Patinkin, Sheldon and Phillip Patinkin, *No Legs, No Jokes, No Change: A History of the American Musical Theater*, (Northwestern University Press: 2008), 27

²¹⁸ Philips-Matz, Mary Jane, *Puccini: A Biography*, (UPNE: 2002), 156.

December 1900 and *Tosca* on 4 February 1901 – however, Puccini never attended any of these performances. Heinrich Conried, the general manager of the Met at that time, had invited the Italian composer to visit New York for multiple reasons. That same year a new opera house the Manhattan Opera Company was originated in New York by Oscar Hammerstein.²¹⁹ The Manhattan Opera Company offered grand opera with exclusive orchestra, celebrated singers and great stage productions for low ticket prices. The Met suffered profoundly from the influence of its competitor. As a response, Conried looked for a way to outsmart Hammerstein's company; to compensate for their publicity. He invited the great Italian maestro and planned a season with four of Puccini's famous operas between 1906 and 1907. The Puccini's presence was of great importance. For six weeks the operas were performed under the watchful eyes of the Italian composer. They were greatly received both by the press and the American public.²²⁰

While in New York, Puccini attended a Broadway performance of David Belasco's play *The Girl of the Golden West*. It made a big impression on the Italian composer that it became the groundwork for his subsequent opera *La Fanciulla del West*.²²¹ In the meantime, the American productions of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, *Madama Butterfly*, *La Bohème* and *Tosca* had captured the hearts of opera-lovers in America. Consequently, when Puccini visited New York for the second time for the world premiere of his *La Fanciulla del West* on December 10, 1910, he was received as a well-respected, artistic genius in the field of opera making. His new opera became another great operatic success at the Met. At that time Giulio Gatti-Casazza was appointed as the new general manager at the respected opera house in New York. In the twenty-seven years he worked at the Met, he arranged the first American performances of fifty-two operas and eighteen world premieres. The most important one was Puccini's highly published *La Fanciulla del West*.²²²

As part of the triumphs in America, scholarly interest in the Italian composer and his operas increased over the years. It resulted in the American Center for Puccini Studies (ACPS) founded by leading Puccini artists and scholar Dr. Harry N. Dunstan in 2004. The main purpose of the ACPS is presenting "social, spiritual, and musical relevance of operatic works through innovative performances and active educational programs." The company is specialized in lesser-known works of Puccini and provides opportunities to introduce it to the public.

Hence, it can be said that America contributed considerably to Puccini's enduring worldwide recognition.²²³ As the American perception of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* will be analyzed through

²¹⁹ Affron, Charles and Mirella Jona Affron, *Grand Opera: The Story of the Met*, (University of California Press: 2014), 85-86.

²²⁰ Affron, *Grand Opera: The Story of the Met*, 86.

²²¹ Ibidem, 122-123.

²²² Philips-Matz, Mary Jane, *Puccini: A Biography*, (UPNE: 2002), 3, 183-184.

²²³ "Puccini," *The Metropolitan Opera House*,

https://metopera.org/uploadedImages/MetOpera/9_watch_and_listen/3_met_opera_on_demand/-MOoD%20Institutional/Puccini%20Spotlight/La%20Fanciulla%20del%20West_In%20Focus.pdf, viewed on July 18, 2018.

the examination of American historical newspapers between 1880 and 1914, one could expect to obtain a positive image of the Italian composer and his work.

3.3 Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*

To understand more about Puccini's influence in America at the turn of the twentieth century, this section will use Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* as a lens to explore the American public discourse in relation to European opera expressed in American newspapers between 1880 and 1914. Before passing on to the research section, it is important to discuss the opera's content first.

Madama Butterfly is based on a short story by John Luther Long, set in Nagasaki, Japan in the pre-war era at the turn of the twentieth century.²²⁴ The opera's tragic story focuses on Cio-Cio San, a young Japanese geisha, known as Madama Butterfly. She falls in love and marries an American lieutenant, named Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton. Shortly after their wedding, Pinkerton returns to America, leaving his Japanese wife behind. Obediently as she is, she waits for her husband to return while raising their son. Believing Pinkerton will come back for her, she decides to abandon her own religion and to convert to Christianity. After three years, Pinkerton returns to Japan. However, Cio-Cio-San discovers he is joined by his new wife, Kate, who he married in the United States. Brokenhearted, she decides to restore her honor through a drastic act. Pinkerton rushes in, but he is too late. Cio-Cio-San has already taken her own life.²²⁵

The tragic story of *Madama Butterfly* centers around interesting themes, such as American imperialism, exoticism, and the clash of two cultures, represented by the opera's two main characters. Like in Verdi's *Aida*, Edward W. Said's *Culture and Imperialism* serves as a valuable analytical framework to understand the concept of the orient. This time the Egyptian setting has been exchanged for the exotic land of cherry blossoms, geishas, and the samurai. Said explains how orientalism has helped to define the West as its contrasting counterpart. Thereby, the oversimplified portrayals of orient cultures in Western representations has served to uphold an imperialist view of the outside world.²²⁶ In Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* is illustrated how these simplistic, stereotyping concepts of the orient have been destructive for both Asians and Westerners.

As *Madama Butterfly* expresses a fascination with the orient, it also draws attention to the shifting transatlantic power relations between Europe and America at the turn of the twentieth century. According to Mary Nolan's analysis in *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890-2010*, the post-World War I era was a time of an uncertain shifting balance in which Americans and

²²⁴ Fisher, Burton D., *Puccini's Madama Butterfly: Opera Classics Library Series*, (Opera Journeys Publishing: 2005), 16.

²²⁵ Fisher, *Puccini's Madama Butterfly*, 29-30.

²²⁶ Said, Edward, W., *Culture and Imperialism*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), 134-135, 148.

Europeans were increasingly involved in networks of intellectual and cultural exchange.²²⁷ The change in global power in relation to the course of American foreign policy at the turn of twentieth century is discussed by Frank Ninkovich in *Global Dawn: The Cultural Foundation of American Internationalism*. After years of global dominance by Western Europe, the twentieth century brought America to the world stage as a superpower. The rise of America's interest in international affairs is defined by Ninkovich as a 'global dawn.' Since this research project reflects on the period between 1880 and 1914, it is interesting to use Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* to explore American perceptions of European opera at the turn of twentieth century.

3.4 Analyzing Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*

A selection of American newspapers between 1880 and 1914 from the database of *Chronicling America* have been examined for the research on the American perception of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. By using the following keywords: 'Puccini,' 'Madama Butterfly,' 'opera,' a large body of unwanted material could be filtered out. This method turned out to be so effective that only 12 hits remained. This small number of data is attributed to the way the opera's title was spelled. It was a deliberate choice to stay true to Puccini's original *Madama Butterfly*. However, to obtain more research findings, a second search has been put into operation with the keywords: 'Puccini,' 'Madame Butterfly,' and 'opera.' This resulted in 160 hits. Since 100 newspapers formed the sample size for both the study on *Tannhäuser* and the study on *Aida*, obviously, the same number of newspaper articles has been examined for the representation of the American perception of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. Only English texts in North American newspapers have been used, since this research project focuses on the mainstream American perception of European opera at the turn of twentieth century. Therefore, newspapers like *L'Italia*, *La Democracia*, *La Correspondencia de Puerto Rico* and *Dziennik Chicagoski* have been excluded.

After obtaining a long list of 100 relevant newspaper articles, each one has been examined and reviewed on its content. It would be impractical to discuss each article separately, therefore, this research project looked for recurring themes. By using this approach, a classification could be made. It organized the articles into six categories, consisting of advertising reviews with large images, articles that expressed signs of Orientalism, articles that referred to the opera's European roots and qualities, articles that praised American input, articles that expressed criticism, and articles that reflected on transatlantic relations. Only the most significant American newspaper examples have

²²⁷ Nolan, Mary, *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890-2010*. New Approaches to European History, (Cambridge University Press: 2012). 10-11.

been selected to represent each category as truthfully as possible. By doing so, a valuable outline of the American perception of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* expressed in historical American newspapers between 1880 and 1914 could be provided. Articles that have been examined, but not separately discussed in this research project, can be found in an appendix, and serve as supporting documents.

After carefully examining the research results, it was noticeable that less advertisements were represented than one could find while researching Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and Verdi's *Aida*. Instead, for an opera production as Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, American newspapers between 1880 and 1914 rather presented large pictures of the well-respected cast or iconic scenes of the opera to attract the American public. *The Evening Times* of February 15, 1907, for instance, showed an image that covered almost half the page. It portrayed the "Great Principles and Conductors of Mr. Savage's New English Grand Opera Company to Sing *Madam Butterfly* at the Metropolitan Theatre."²²⁸ *The Los Angeles Herald* of February 4, 1908, chose to present a large picture of the "Four English Madam Butterflies."²²⁹ Yet it was the *New-York-Tribune* of April 3, 1904 that really turned its amusement section into a visual spectacle. To support the text in which Puccini and the opera were highly praised, the *New-York-Tribune* added a large portrait of the Italian maestro, an image of the first scene from *Madama Butterfly* and a sketch of the music score of the opera's Act I.²³⁰

If attention-grabbing images could not generate enough curiosity, then there was always the power of words. While it appeared that there were fewer advertisements for Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* represented in this research in comparison with Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and Verdi's *Aida*, one may wonder whether the plethora of praising reviews might have been disguised commercial advertisements. It must be admitted that it was often very difficult to distinguish between the two, since nearly all obtained articles shared strong, praising messages. Examples are: "Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* is a superb production with a notable company of leading singers, superb orchestra and well-trained chorus."²³¹ "No opera presented in the last twenty years has quite accomplished the sensational conquest or been accorded the triumphs that has come to brilliant, fascinating *Madame Butterfly*. Successful in many parts of Europe, particularly in London, and overwhelmingly so in this

²²⁸"Madam Butterfly." *The Evening Times*, February 15, 1907, Image 6. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042373/1907-02-15/ed-1/seq-6/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

²²⁹"Puccini's Opera Is A Triumph." *Los Angeles Herald*, February 4, 1908, Page 6, Image 6. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042462/1908-02-04/ed-1/seq-6/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

²³⁰"Musical Notes, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* and Its Reception at La Scala." *New-York-Tribune*, April 3, 1904, Page 8, Image 22. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1904-04-03/ed-1/seq-22/>>, viewed on July 18, 2018.

²³¹"Ford's Grand Opera House." *Catoctin Clarion*, April, 27, 1911, Image 3. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026688/1911-04-27/ed-1/seq-3/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

country [...]."²³² It was magnificent, it was delightful. It was perfect."²³³ "It is hard to imagine a production or any sort that could be more exquisitely beautiful in all of its myriad of details than is "*Madam Butterfly*."²³⁴ Or simply: "there is nothing more to desire."²³⁵ This is just an impression of what many American newspaper articles between 1880 and 1914 uttered concerning Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*.

One of the reasons that *Madama Butterfly* appeals to the American public, can be explained by the increasing Western fascination with the 'orient' at the turn of the twentieth century. It evoked Westernized thoughts of exotic destinations and mysterious cultures, as explained by Edward W. Said's *Culture and Imperialism*. This concept of orientalism implied the idea that Western culture was superior to the exotic orient, which was considered uncivilized, mysterious and, submissive.²³⁶ Since *Madama Butterfly* presents an interracial tragedy, set during the westernization of Japan, Puccini's opera can be perceived as a principal artistic expression of the rediscovery of oriental culture.

Among the research results, the American interest in the orient was repeatedly reflected. Descriptions about the opera's typical Japanese character were often addressed and emphasized in articles related to Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. The *Omaha Daily Bee* of March 24, 1907 stated that "[t]he setting is itself a joy; add to this the costumes and the rich oriental music and one has a scene that fills the aesthetic eye and drowns the ear with luscious sounds."²³⁷ *The Daily Gate City* of February 2, 1910 highlighted a scene in which "*Madame Butterfly* twirled off a little dance, fan in hand, to show she still could dance as she used to do when she was a Geisha girl."²³⁸ Furthermore, *The Evening Times* of February 15, 1907, used oriental depictions to describe *Butterfly's* house, which appeared to be a small bamboo cottage covered in flowers, where the obedient little geisha wife prepared the reception of her husband by covering the floor with iris, cherry, peach and balsam petals.²³⁹

²³² "Coming Events." *Omaha Daily Bee*, March 17, 1907, Half Tone Section, Page 4, Image 20. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn99021999/1907-03-09/ed-1/seq-2/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

²³³ *The Salt Lake Tribune*, February 16, 1910, Page 4, Image 4. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045396/1910-02-16/ed-1/seq-4/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

²³⁴ "Madam Butterfly." *The Topeka State Journal*, February 29, 1908, Last Edition, Page 14, Image 14. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82016014/1908-02-29/ed-1/seq-14/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

²³⁵ "Footlight Flashes." *The Minneapolis Journal*, November 11, 1906, Part VIII, Dramatic and Social, Page 2, Image 51. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045366/1906-11-11/ed-1/seq-51/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

²³⁶ Said, Edward, W., *Culture and Imperialism*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), 134-135, 148.

²³⁷ "Musical Notes." *Omaha Daily Bee*, March 24, 1907, Page 4, Image 22. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn99021999/1907-03-24/ed-1/seq-22/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

²³⁸ "Music Club Gave Melodrama." *The Daily Gate City*, February 2, 1910. Image 5. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83025182/1910-02-02/ed-1/seq-5/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

²³⁹ "Amusements, Madam Butterfly." *The Evening Times*, February 15, 1907, Image 6. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042373/1907-02-15/ed-1/seq-6/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

While a large part of the examined American historical newspapers presented romantic portrayals and poetical formulations to depict the "the witchery of *Madam Butterfly* from the magic of cherry blossoms and moonlight,"²⁴⁰ others rather focused on upholding the authenticity of the Japanese culture in Puccini's opera. *The Spokane Press* of February 22, 1907, informed its readers that *Madama Butterfly* staged by Mr. Henry W. Savage produced "elaborately correct stage investiture. In the East, columns were devoted to describe the artistic manner in which Mr. Savage has reproduced the fragile and airy architecture and the charming landscape effects obtained by the Japanese in the arrangement of their gardens."²⁴¹ A reminder of ensuring an accurate Japanese setting for the staging of *Madama Butterfly* goes along with high expenses, is given by the *Evening Times-Republican* of March 02, 1908:

[...] Without an exception "Madam Butterfly" is the biggest theatrical organization on tour in the United States. The scenic production of the Puccini opera requires four baggage cars to transport. There are nearly 150 members in the company, and their belongings are packed in 361 pieces of baggage. One baggage car is set aside for the costumes, rich draperies and other costly properties used in the Japanese grand opera. There are a score of trunks tilled with the richest creations of the dress art of the "Flowery Kingdom." The thirty odd kimonos worn by the various prima donnas singing *Madam Butterfly* cost Henry W. Savage from \$500 to \$1,000 each, all being imported from Japan. [...]. *Madam Butterfly*, " as a production is said to represent an investment of \$75,000. It cost Henry W. Savage that much money before the curtain was raised on the first American performance in Washington.²⁴²

The American perception of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* is not merely based on valuing the realistic representations of its music, scenery or clothing, but also on the appreciation of the expertise of its performers. Once an opera performer was introduced in a newspaper article, their entire musical career had to be discussed to convince the reader that the person in question was qualified to carry out the part. Since opera finds its origin in Europe, it was of great importance to refer to a performer's European background or to other possible links to the Old World. *The Washington Herald* of October 5, 1913 stated, for instance, that *Madama Butterfly's* cast was outstanding in several respects, but mainly because it included two European opera performers who had attained worldwide recognition. It featured Giovanni Martinelli, one of the most celebrated Italian tenors at that time. Also the Polish-born prima donna, Rosa Raisa, had already won an enviable position on the

²⁴⁰ "Gay Crowds Gather to See *Madam Butterfly*." *Los Angeles Herald*, February 4, 1908, Page 6, Image 6. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042462/1908-02-04/ed-1/seq-6/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

²⁴¹ *The Spokane Press*, February 22, 1907, Page 3, Image 3. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88085947/1907-02-22/ed-1/seq-3/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

²⁴² "What It Costs to Bring *Madam Butterfly* here." *Evening Times-Republican*, March 02, 1908, Image 5. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85049554/1908-03-02/ed-1/seq-5/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

operatic stage in Europe. The article explained why one should perceive her as “an artist of superiority,” since she had sung at Parma to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Verdi. 243

The Topeka State Journal of February 24, 1908, introduced the Parisian Dora de Fillippe, who was also designated to the main role in *Madama Butterfly*. Before coming to America, she studied under well-known musicians in France and Russia and performed in nearly all the Puccini operas, as well as those of Verdi. Hence, De Fillippe had a noteworthy grand opera repertory, and the American public should consider her as a valuable addition to the American production of Puccini’s opera.²⁴⁴

The *New-York Tribune* of September 13, 1906, presented another well-respected representation of Cio-Cio-San, the Hungarian Elza Szamosy. While being the youngest prima donna, she was highly praised in her own country for roles in four Puccini operas, including *Manon Lescaut*, *La Bohème*, *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*. Remarkably, the American native of Minnesota, Rena Vivienne was also introduced in this same article. Although, she did not have the European roots, the *New-York Tribune* praised her for the fact that she studied for three years abroad. Moreover, she was favored with the patronage of Puccini, as she was selected by Tito Ricordi, the stage manager and publisher of all the Puccini operas.²⁴⁵

More admiration for American musical artists was expressed in *The Richmond Palladium and Sun-Telegram* of February 14, 1909. In this article Adelaide Norwood is presented to the American public. Although, little introduction was needed. Norwood held a high place among American singers, due to her involvement in leading American operatic organizations. In addition, she went to Europe to study Wagnerian music drama in Bayreuth. Her talent was noticed by Puccini himself. Because the Italian composer was so impressed by “the quality of her voice and splendid dramatic qualities,” he asked her to create the role of Butterfly in America.²⁴⁶

According to *The Washington Times* of April 28, 1912 Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* depicts “[...] the first modern American characters seen on the grand opera stage.”²⁴⁷ *The Los Angeles Herald*, February 4, 1908, takes it a step further and stated in its article that “[d]espite the fact that its composer is an Italian, *Madam Butterfly* stands today as the nearest approach to an American grand opera we have. Its story was written by an American and for its stage form, David Belasco, a

²⁴³ "Baltimore Opera Season Opens Soon." *The Washington Herald*, October 5, 1913, Society and Drama, Page 8, Image 18. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045433/1913-10-05/ed-1/seq-18/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

²⁴⁴ *The Topeka State Journal*, February 24, 1908, Page 6, Image 6. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82016014/1908-02-24/ed-1/seq-6/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018

²⁴⁵ "Notes of the Stage." *New-York Tribune*., September 13, 1906, Page 7, Image 7. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1906-09-13/ed-1/seq-7/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

²⁴⁶ "Madam Butterfly." *The Richmond Palladium and Sun-Telegram*, February 14, 1909, Page 3, Image 3. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86058226/1909-02-14/ed-1/seq-3/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

²⁴⁷ *The Washington Times*, April 28, 1912, Sunday Evening Edition, Page 10, Image 10. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026749/1912-04-28/ed-1/seq-10/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

Californian, was largely responsible. Moreover, there runs through it an American motif, a strain from "The Star-Spangled Banner" and three of its characters are Americans of the present day. [...]”²⁴⁸ Due to the presence of American themes and to the exceptional collaboration between American librettists and a distinguished composer as Puccini, America’s popular interest in *Madama Butterfly* can be explained. However, also considerable adverse criticism aimed against the misuse of well-respected American symbols – such as the flag and the national anthem – was expressed in American newspapers between 1880 and 1914. The *Omaha Daily Bee* of March 24, 1907 declared that the introduction of “The Star-Spangled Banner” as a herald of the lieutenant was clever, however, it appeared to be “a bit clap-trappy.” A scene from *Madama Butterfly* that was completely rejected by the *Omaha Daile Bee*, involved the tragic part where Cio-Cio-San commits suicide, while her child is blindfolded on the floor, holding the American flag. The article accused Puccini of “not being familiar enough with our American ways to perceive this rift.”²⁴⁹ This same scene was also ridiculed because of the substitution of a doll for the child.²⁵⁰

The *New-York Tribune*, February 7, 1909 uttered some criticism towards Rinaldo Grassi, who played the role of American lieutenant Pinkerton. Although it is recognized that Grassi is a “ruling tenor singer in Italy [...] who made a pleasurable impression – “singing in time, acting with fervor, phrasing correctly and exhibiting power of endurance which betokened a career of usefulness in the list of latter day Italian operas, the article concluded that “he looked and acted a little like an American.”²⁵¹

Although this research reflects on the uncertain cultural balance between America and Europe, it was very difficult to identify American perceptions of European opera that specifically addressed transatlantic relations. In respect to Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*, only the *New-York Tribune* of October 16, 1906, revealed that during the first production of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* in America, the opera was attended by the Japanese Ambassador, viscount Aoki and “a party of friends, members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of army, navy and social circles.” Also Tito Ricordi, the personal representative of Puccini came to the premiere in America and brought a party of distinguished Italians.²⁵² What can be concluded from this is that the exchange of cultural

²⁴⁸ "Puccini's Opera Is A Triumph." *Los Angeles Herald*, February 4, 1908, Page 6, Image 6. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042462/1908-02-04/ed-1/seq-6/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

²⁴⁹ "Musical Notes." *Omaha Daily Bee*, March 24, 1907, Page 4, Image 22. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn99021999/1907-03-24/ed-1/seq-22/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

²⁵⁰ *Los Angeles Herald*, June 5, 1910, Image 37. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042462/1910-06-05/ed-1/seq-37/>>, viewed on July 28, 2018.

²⁵¹ "New People in Madama Butterfly." *New-York Tribune*, February 7, 1909, Page 9, Image 9. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1909-02-07/ed-1/seq-9/>>, viewed on July 18, 2018.

²⁵² "Madame Butterfly Produced, Puccini's Latest Opera Well-Received in Washington." *New-York Tribune*, October 16, 1906, Page 7, Image 7. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.

<<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1906-10-16/ed-1/seq-7/>>, viewed on July 20, 2018.

artistic expressions contributed to the maintenance of good international relations.

To conclude, reflecting on the American perception of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* in newspapers between 1880 and 1914, it can be said that Americans were primarily positive, although more criticism was expressed in comparison to the results of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and Verdi's *Aida*. Most likely, this can be attributed to the fact that, despite its exotic Japanese character, Americans felt a stronger connection to *Madama Butterfly*, as it also addressed much of American culture and life.

4.1 Conclusion

This research project focused on American perceptions of European opera in the post-World War I period between 1880 and 1914. It marked a time in which global power relations changed and cultural encounters between America and Europe emerged. While the European balance of power was still guaranteed during the nineteenth century, its supremacy weakened at the turn of the twentieth century. Meanwhile, America's economic and political power increased, and the nation began to take a more active role on the world stage.

To reveal how Americans repositioned themselves towards Europeans during this time of uncertain global and cultural balances, the American perception of three noteworthy European operas have been examined through an analytical study of American historical newspapers between 1880 and 1914. Based on the results, a significant shift in American public discourse in relation to European opera could not be identified. Yet, this research provided valuable insights into the American perception of Richard Wagner's *Tannhäuser* (1845), Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida* (1871), and Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (1904). Overall, it exposed a remarkable persistent, positive image for all three European operas, while a more critical American perception was expected near the end of the selected period.

First of all, the American perception in relation to Wagner's *Tannhäuser* in American newspapers between 1880 and 1914 reflected the popularity of Wagnerism of the time. Despite a few expressions of criticism, the German composer and his grand opera was warmly received. The American newspaper results that have been examined for this research can be structured through five categories, consisting of laudatory advertisements and reviews, critical reviews, articles that reflected on German themes and culture, articles that reflected on American themes and culture, and articles that used Wagner's *Tannhäuser* for study purposes. All together they comprise the American perception of 100 examined American historical newspapers between 1880 and 1914 with reference to Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. It illustrated Wagner as a long-lasting musical genius, whose revolutionary thoughts on European opera-making enjoyed much appreciation among American society.

Secondly, the American perception of Verdi's *Aida* in American newspapers between 1880 and 1914 is built upon eight themes, consisting of commercial advertisements and reviews, articles that emphasized elements of grand opera, articles that referred to *Aida's* premiere in Cairo, articles that expressed signs of Orientalism, articles that reflected on Italian themes and culture, articles that reflected on American themes and culture and critical reviews. One can notice Americans' longing to meet European opera standards, thereby maintaining high expectations for their own productions. However, the overall image of the American perception praised Verdi's *Aida*, especially for its striking

melodies and dramatic oriental scenery.

Last of all, according to the American perception of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* in American historical newspapers between 1880 and 1914, Americans enjoyed being immersed in the opera's Japanese setting. Although the (mis)use of the American flag and the nation's national anthem aroused criticism – especially in comparison to the results of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* and Verdi's *Aida* – on the whole, *Madama Butterfly* appealed to the American public. Its American perception can be structured through six categories, consisting of advertising reviews with large images, articles that expressed signs of Orientalism, articles that referred to the opera's European roots and qualities, articles that praised American input, articles that expressed criticism, and articles that reflected on transatlantic relations.

To conclude, according to this case study on Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, Verdi's *Aida* and Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, American perceptions of European opera in American historical newspapers between 1880 and 1914 depicted a persistent positive image. Nonetheless, one should acknowledge that these conclusions are based on the research of a selective and relatively small number of 100 American historical newspapers for each European opera. Moreover, only digitalized newspapers presented by the Library of Congress have been examined that appeared after using certain keywords as a research methodology. Many other valuable articles might, therefore, have been excluded. Furthermore, in this research project the focus was placed on three noteworthy representations of European opera. While it provided great insight into the American perception of these selected operas, further research is needed to present a more all-encompassing look on American perceptions of European opera in the period between 1880 and 1914. This additional study could observe a larger sample size of American newspaper articles, explore other significant European operas or European art forms, or look at the period after World War I as well, to contribute to a better understanding of the shifting cultural balance between Europe and America at the turn of the twentieth century.

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- Verdi Square Festival, <http://www.verdisquarefestival.com>

Appendix A

List of American historical newspapers in relation to 'Wagner', 'Tannhäuser,' and 'opera'

- *Arizona Republican*, January 1, 1911. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020558/1911-01-01/ed-1/seq-17/>>
- *Ashland Tidings*, December 19, 1912. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042399/1912-12-19/ed-1/seq-6/>>
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Appendix B

List of American historical newspapers in relation to 'Verdi', 'Aida,' and 'opera'

- A Magnificent Piano." *Deseret Evening News*, April 19, 1902, Part 2, Page 11, Image 11. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045555/1902-04-19/ed-1/seq-11/>>
- "A Meharry Auditorium." *The Nashville Globe*, January 6, 1911, Page 4, Image 4. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86064259/1911-01-06/ed-1/seq-4/>>
- "Adaberto Makes Final Appearance in Gorgeous Performance of Aida At Opera House Tonight." *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, March 20, 1913, Page 8, Image 8. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82014682/1913-03-20/ed-2/seq-8/>>
- "Aida at Foot of Pyramids." *The Topeka State Journal*, February 27, 1912, Last Edition, Image 1. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82016014/1912-02-27/ed-1/seq-1/>>
- "Aida Charms Throng, Verdi's Opera Sung to Large Audience at Century." *New-York Tribune*, November 11, 1914, Page 7, Image 7. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1914-11-11/ed-1/seq-7/>>
- "Aida, The Inaugural; Its Argument and Its Characters." *Los Angeles Herald*, November 4, 1906, Image 40. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042462/1906-11-04/ed-1/seq-40/>>
- "Amusements, Belasco Theatre, Grand Opera." *The Washington Times*, March 13, 1912, Last Edition, Page 11, Image 11. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026749/1912-03-13/ed-1/seq-11/>>
- "Amusements, Grand Opera Season." *The San Francisco Call*, November 8, 1900, Image 7. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/1900-11-08/ed-1/seq-7/>>
- "Amusements, Grand Opera." *Evening Star*, March 13, 1912, Image 3. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1912-03-13/ed-1/seq-3/>>

- "Amusements. Verdi's Superb Tragic Opera, Aida." *The San Francisco Call*, November 25, 1899, Page 7, Image 7. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/1899-11-25/ed-1/seq-7>>, viewed on July 2, 2018.
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- "Art and Travel Club." *Mower County Transcript*, December 9, 1914, Image 2. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85025431/1914-12-09/ed-1/seq-2/>>
- "At St. Paul Theatres, The Story of Aida." *The Saint Paul Globe*, April 7, 1903, Page 4, Image 4. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90059523/1903-04-07/ed-1/seq-4/>>
- "Band and Opera at Idora Park." *The San Francisco Call*, August 14, 1910, Page 40, Image 40. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85066387/1910-08-14/ed-1/seq-40/>>
- "Benefit to the Milch Sisters, Purpose Is to Raise Funds for the Girls' Musical Education." *The Saint Paul Globe*, April 6, 1902, Page 20, Image 20. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90059523/1902-04-06/ed-1/seq-20/>>
- "Cairo, Ten thousand persons." *The Tacoma Times*, March 26, 1912, Page 8, Image 8. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88085187/1912-03-26/ed-1/seq-8/>>
- "Capital May Have Season of Grand Opera." *The Washington Times*, March 26, 1912, Last Edition, Image 1. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026749/1912-03-26/ed-1/seq-1/>>
- "Chicago Grand Opera Company." *Evening Star*, March 13, 1912, Page 12, Image 12. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1912-03-13/ed-1/seq-12/>>
- "Chicago Grand Opera Company." *Evening Star*, March 20, 1912, Page 13, Image 13. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1912-03-20/ed-1/seq-13/>>

- "Chicago Grand Opera Makes Its Bow." *Omaha Daily Bee*, November 5, 1910, News Section, Page 9, Image 9. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn99021999/1910-11-05/ed-1/seq-9/>>
- "Chicago Opens its Grand Opera Season, Auditorium Completely Sold Out and Success of Undertaking is Assured." *Rock Island Argus*, November 4, 1910, Image 1. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn92053934/1910-11-04/ed-1/seq-1/>>
- "Christmas Programma." *Arizona Republican*, December 24, 1910, Page 10, Image 10. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020558/1910-12-24/ed-1/seq-10/>>
- "Concert." *Alexandria Gazette*, November 14, 1907, Image 3. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85025007/1907-11-14/ed-1/seq-3/>>
- "Courteous Act By Apollo Club, Gala Opening of Auditorium is Made Possible." *The Minneapolis Journal*, January 26, 1905, Page 7, Image 7. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045366/1905-01-26/ed-1/seq-7/>>
- "Eighteenth Century Songs." *Los Angeles Herald*, February 15, 1905, Page 7, Image 7, Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042462/1905-02-15/ed-1/seq-7/>>
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- "For The Grand Opera Concert." *Perth Amboy Evening News*, February 24, 1910, Last edition, Image 1. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85035720/1910-02-24/ed-2/seq-1/>>
- "Ford's Grand Opera House." *Catocin Clarion*, May 4, 1911, Image 3, Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026688/1911-05-04/ed-1/seq-3/>>

- "Grand Opera Aida." *The Washington Herald*, March 10, 1912, Dramatic and Feature Section, Page 3, Image 21. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045433/1912-03-10/ed-1/seq-21/>>
- "Grand Opera at Allen's Grand Opera House." *Evening Capital*, February 29, 1896, Image 2. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88065721/1896-02-29/ed-1/seq-2/>>
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Appendix C

List of American historical newspapers in relation to 'Puccini', 'Madama/Madame Butterfly,' and 'opera'

- "Aborn Grand Opera Co." *The Pensacola Journal*, March 6, 1912, Page 12, Image 12. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87062268/1912-03-06/ed-1/seq-12/>>
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- "Artists in Henry W. Savage's American Production of Puccini's Japanese Opera, Madam Butterfly." *Truth*, February 8, 1908, Page 3, Image 3. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85058310/1908-02-08/ed-1/seq-3/>>
- "Baltimore Opera Season Opens Soon." *The Washington Herald*, October 5, 1913, Society and Drama, Page 8, Image 18. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045433/1913-10-05/ed-1/seq-18/>>
- "Coming Events." *Omaha Daily Bee*, March 17, 1907, Half Tone Section, Page 4, Image 20. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn99021999/1907-03-09/ed-1/seq-2/>>
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- "First Operatic Event of the Year in St. Louis." *The Montgomery Tribune*, December 28, 1906, Image 1. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90061056/1906-12-28/ed-1/seq-1/>>
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- "Gay Crowds Gather to See Madam Butterfly." *Los Angeles Herald*, February 4, 1908, Page 6, Image 6. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042462/1908-02-04/ed-1/seq-6/>>
- "Long Way Bound." *St. Tammany Farmer*, February 11, 1905, Image 2. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015387/1905-02-11/ed-1/seq-2/>>
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- "Salt Lake Theatre." *Truth*, February 8, 1908, Page 7, Image 7. Retrieved from *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85058310/1908-02-08/ed-1/seq-7/>
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