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American opera 1900 to 1940.

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AMERICAN OPERA 1900 TO 1940

by

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INTRODUCTION

Since specialized books and articles on American music of any media are comparatively few, the author of this thesis offers the technical musical aspects of characteristic opera written by American composers between the years 1900 and 1940. It is surprising to many students of music that the number of operas written by Americans totals to date over three hundred. Many of these works, of course, are still in manuscript; and, like many published operas, have never received a performance. The writer has selected approximately fifty works for discussion in this thesis. She has chosen primarily operas which have received performance but also works which demonstrate elements explicative of an American product.

The first question which arises in any work dealing with American music is "What is an American composer or an American work?"\(^1\) It is difficult to state an immediate concise definition for either term because in its three hundred years America has been a melting pot of all nationalities, races, and creeds. The problem, therefore, is whether or not the country has developed artistically without the influence of foreign materials. One author has said, "American music is, then, except perhaps for some recent trimmings,\(^1\)

\(^1\) The word American (or America) is used as synonymous with the United States throughout the thesis.
European music in America." He bases his statement on the idea that the history of America has begun in Europe and that since America is a part of the Western World, American culture is a part of Western culture. Therefore, European culture is not foreign, but it is a part of the heritage of every person in America as much as it was part of the heritage of the European ancestors. By this definition of American music, this writer would conclude that the author of that statement would say that there is no such thing as an American composer or anything else American, for that matter, since American culture is nothing but a heritage of European culture. Yet he has contradicted himself within his original statement by saying "except for some recent trimmings." Whatever these trimmings are, he does not reveal; but this writer assumes that he means the Twentieth Century individuality of his "non-American" composers of the "non-American" music. Be that as it may, the writer gives Mr. Finney the possibility of accepting his statement as pertaining to the works composed before this Twentieth Century individuality asserted itself.

Other authors feel that native born composers, whether or not they pay homage to the national spirit, have the sole right to the title of the American composer as long as they

follow modern tendencies. This definition is hindered by the qualification "modern tendencies." Who is to qualify what modern tendencies are? What was modern in 1900 may not be modern in 1950. It probably was meant that the word should be interpreted as contemporary. However, this definition does not include those composers who, though foreign born, have lived in the United States long enough to assimilate American life and who have felt and have admitted that they have been influenced by this life.

Roy Harris in his essay "The Problems of the American Composer" insists that an American composer must be able to be recognized as belonging to that race which the peculiar climatic, social, political, and economic conditions of the United States have produced. This contention is similar to the feeling that any man who is trying to express in his music what he feels to be the spirit of the country and who is using the materials that are largely indigenous is the real American composer. This proposes the question "What is indigenous or native material?" Most writers agree that Indian, Negro, folk music, and jazz are native sources. But cannot a composer be nationalistic without resorting to such means? A composer may use direct thematic material from one or more of these American elements and still be un-American.

The well-known example is Dvůrák's "New World Symphony," which uses thematic material from the New World but still is romantic Czechoslovakian and curiously similar to the music written before Dvůrák came to the United States. Certainly the phenomena may work in the opposite direction.

John Tasker Howard has said,

A composer is American, if by birth or choice of permanent residence, he becomes identified with American life and institutions before his talents have had their greatest outlet; and through his associations and sympathies he makes a genuine contribution to our cultural development.¹

This definition includes those composers who were not born in the United States and those composers who were native to our land. It includes music which does not necessarily have to recall the American folk lore or folk music. The contribution to the cultural and historical development, whether progressive or not, is sufficient. This definition has been the basis of the operatic selections presented in this thesis.

The operas have been divided into five categories: those revealing German influences, those revealing French influences, those revealing Italian influences, and those showing selective styles. The final category includes those few works written before 1940 which are independent enough to open the path to a national American opera.

These chapters are organized within two sections, 1900 to 1920 and 1920 to 1940; and within the chapters the operas are presented in as nearly chronological order as possible, with the grand opera preceding the comic opera. The writer makes no attempt to judge as a music critic but seeks to present the techniques used by the composer in the libretto, vocal treatment, recitative and aria, forms, harmonies, accompaniment or orchestration, and dramatic content.

In order to understand to the fullest extent the material presented in the main body of the thesis, the reader should have a brief historical background of operatic development in America before 1900. This section is divided into two chapters for clarity: the purely historical events and then the musical aspects of the American compositions. It is hoped that this resume plus the main discussion will open to the reader a new field of knowledge or at least further a deeper understanding of the problems of American opera as it continues to develop and, perhaps, a deeper understanding of American music in general.
THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
CHAPTER I

The Historical Development of Opera in the United States

The question of who introduced the first opera in America has been the subject of a number of theses; yet facts supported by documentary evidence are so scarce that most conclusions have been drawn from probabilities. A paper written by Charles P. Daly in 1864 is now the chief source on the introduction of drama into the United States.

In the supplement to this paper there is mention of a small volume published by Anthony Aston, an early eighteenth century actor and playwright. It is called

The Fool's Opera, or, The Taste of the Age, written by Mat Medley and performed by his Company in Oxford. To which is prefix'd a sketch of the Author's life. Written by Himself.¹

From time to time hints and even excerpts from this paper appeared in press. It would be easy, therefore, to date the introduction of drama into New York as early as 1702, as Aston is said by Daly and others to have played in New York that year.² Sonneck, however, in his thorough research into early documents found that the expedition with which Aston sailed (The Governor Moore expedition) landed at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1703 and at New York the winter of 1703-

¹. Sonneck, O. G., Early Opera in America, G. Schirmer (New York, 1915) p. 4.
1704. Having spent the winter in New York, Aston did not set up his medley until after he had returned to England. Furthermore, the libretto is followed by a ballad called "A Dissertation on the Beggar's Opera"; and since The Beggar's Opera was first performed in 1728, it is safer to say that "The Fool's Opera" was neither written nor performed by Aston while in America.

There is a possibility of other operas having been performed by the company, but the probability is slight. Italian operas of the period were too expensive and too complicated; English operas based on Italian ones had the same complications. The remaining possibility is the earliest English comic operas, the predecessors of the "Beggar's Opera" (such as Aston's Medley, Pastora, Carey's Contrivances; D'Urfey's The Two Queens of Brentford). If research brings forth comic operas written before 1702 which Tony Aston may have known, then there will be no argument, and not until it has been proved that these works did not exist can the possibility be discarded.

Between Aston's reference and 1735 there is little mention of theater life in publications. A letter of a Judge Sewell of Boston in 1714 protests the acting of a play in the council chamber, and Jones's Present State of Virginia (London, 1724) states that a playhouse existed there in 1722. The New England and Boston Gazette tells of a company's opening in New York in 1733, but that is the last
heard of the theater until 1739, when the theater reopened.

Since *The Beggar's Opera*, *The Devil to Pay*, *Flora*, and a host of others had by this time been produced abroad and since trade with London was frequent, there is a great possibility that such ballad operas were produced at New York from 1732 on.

However, 1735 is the date of the earliest known advertisement of an opera in America. On February 18, 1735, the South Carolina Gazette (of Charleston) printed the following:

> On Tuesday, the 18th inst. will be presented at the courtroom the opera of *Flora*, or *Hob in the Well* with the Dance of the two Pierrots, and a new Pantomime entertainment called "The Adventures of Harlequin Scaramouch." Tickets to be had at Mr. Shepheard's in Brook Street at 40/ each. To begin at 6 o'clock precisely.¹

Further performances are recorded in Charlestown, but it was Philadelphia that became the next center of interest. In 1749 a diary of a Mr. John Smith mentions a performance of Addison's *Cato*. But the company, Kean and Murray, was ordered from the city, and it went on to New York. In New York in 1750 Kean and Murray were granted permission to act, and the following operas were performed:

- *Fielding's "The Mock Doctor"
- *Hill's "The Devil to Pay"
- *"The Beggar's Opera"

¹ Sonneck, p. 12.
Cibber's "Demon and Phillida"
Fielding's "The Virgin Unmasked"
"Flora, or Hob in the Well"
"Colin and Phoebe"

The Kean and Murray Company was followed by the "Hallam's London Company of Comedians."

The voyage of Hallam and Company from London to America must have been a picturesque one. Rehearsals were held on the deck of the ship, and it is easy to imagine the fun of such rehearsals with an audience of weather-beaten sailors, always glad for any diversion on a long voyage. Williamsburg, Virginia, accepted the company, and Hallam found a building which he could remodel into a pit, box, gallery, and stage. It was a long house in the suburbs, probably erected by early immigrants as a storehouse. In 1753 they went to New York, where they tore down the old Nassau Street theater and erected another on the same spot. The repertory of this company was the same as had been presented by Kean and Murray.

When Hallam died in 1754, the company disbanded; but when Hallam's widow married a David Douglass, a new surge in drama took place. Douglass controlled the American Theater from 1758 until the Revolution forced him to Jamaica, where

he died in 1786.

Douglass added nothing to the operatic repertory in New York, but after being ostracized from the city, he went south into Philadelphia. There at the Southwark Theater, a rough, brick and wood structure painted red, with the stage lighted by oil lamps without glasses and the view interrupted by the pillars that supported the upper tier and roof, Douglass added the following: Thomas and Sally, The Chaplet, Contrivances, Love in a Village, and The Witches. Thus since commerce between Britain and American was growing stronger, the repertory was enlarging.

New independent organizations were appearing; the Virginia Company, soon to be called the New American Company, had an active season in Annapolis in 1769. Their repertory was much the same as Douglass', and in 1770 Douglass invaded the company's territory to blight their merits.

Douglass had great plans for the future, but on October 4, 1774, Congress, feeling the necessity for economical living due to the oncoming struggle with England, discouraged "plays and other expensive diversions and entertainments."¹ Douglass, notified by Peyton Randolph, President of the Congress, departed for Jamaica, ending the pre-revolutionary career of American opera and drama.

The reception by the different colonies of the opera (and the theater) is interesting and also had a great influence on the establishment of opera in the new country.

Puritan New England, Huguenot New York, and Quaker Philadelphia were hostile to the theater. Episcopalian Virginia and South Carolina and Catholic Maryland welcomed the first traveling companies. The reasons were temperamental rather than theological and were woven out of the social and economic constitution of the people.

The Puritan and the Quaker, as well as the New York burgher Dutch, felt that the theater was extravagant. To help counteract this feeling, a manager published the receipts and expenses; however, this feeling carried over, for frugality was Congress' reason for closing the theaters.

The age-old stigma of immorality of the theater held its place in the minds of the New Englanders and the Dutch. The Governor of Pennsylvania allowed Hallam and Company to act with the understanding that "nothing indecent and immoral" was to be performed. The South provided a more liberal scope for public entertainment. There were few large towns, and people had to travel for entertainment that was not provided in the home. They were willing to pay, for their money came easier to them than to their neighbors of the North. Nevertheless, it was in the College of

1. Quinn, op. cit., p. 2.
Philadelphia that Hopkinson in 1756-57 produced the first college performance of drama plus music. A forerunner of college dramatics, "The Masque of Alfred," with music by Arne, with alterations by Hopkinson, was produced. The younger people, as ever, were accepting the new and liberal ideas.

After the Revolution, around 1786, English opera resumed its prominence. From then on operatic development is most clearly discerned through its growth in the main cities, New York, Philadelphia, New Orleans, St. Louis, Chicago, and San Francisco.

In 1833 the first opera house was built in New York, but after two seasons of Italian opera, it became the National Theater. The second opera house, built in 1844, was turned over to spoken drama after four years. The third, the Astor Place Opera House, within a few years after it was built in 1847 became the Mercantile Library. From 1819 to 1854, when the New York Academy of Music opened, there was a fluctuating surge of impresarios giving performances at one or another of these theaters. Manuel Garcia had The Barber of Seville performed twenty-three times. Da Ponte, who was in America as a teacher, urged Garcia on. Da Ponte himself produced a poor performance of Don Giovanni. Max Maretzek,

1. Quinn, op. cit., p. 18.
at the Astor Place Opera House, produced a great number of
Italian operas. He controlled the Opera House for over a
quarter of a century.

The New York Academy of Music had no rival opera house
until 1880, when a group of wealthy gentlemen met with the
president of the board to register a complaint. There were
not enough boxes for the people who wished to purchase them.
The Academy's offer to enlarge the auditorium was not suffi-
cient, and on April 7, 1880, the New York Times announced
that $600,000 had been subscribed, with which to purchase
the site and to erect another establishment. It took three
years to build, but the Metropolitan Opera House was opened
with a performance of Faust on the twenty-second of October,
1883.

The managerial work was done by Henry E. Abbey, and the
cast he assembled included Marcella Sembrich, Christine
Nilsson, Italo Campanini, and many others. Competition be-
tween the Metropolitan and the Academy was keen; but finally
the Academy under Colonel Mapleson was forced to close.

In 1898 Maurice Grau began his independent directorship
with the "Golden Age" of all-star casts, which was to be the
most brilliant period of opera New York had yet seen. Some
of the casts he assembled were:

**Lohengrin**: Nordica, Schumann-Heink, the de Reszke
brothers.

**Les Huguenots**: Bames, Nordica, Jean de Reszke, Plancon.
Don Giovanni: Lilli Lehmann, Sembrich, Nordica, E. de Reszke, Maurel.

Grau resigned in the spring of 1903 because of ill health, and his successor came to the House with the unique position of having had no experience with either musical directorship or operatic management. Heinrich Conried was distinctly a theatrical man. Conried accomplished such things as the redecoration and re-assembling of the House. It was during Conried's management that the company went to California, where the tour was brought to a frightening close by the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. One of Conried's greatest achievements was the American stage performance of Parsifal. He weathered the company through the objections to Salome and through the strike of the chorus, the members of which were banding together for union protection. While Grau had built his success upon the casts, Conried was determined that people ought to listen to the music for the music's sake alone and not for the splendor of the "star."

Because of illness Conried was forced to resign in 1908; Gatti-Casazza, who was the Director of the Teatro al Scala in Milan, began in 1910 a directorship which lasted twenty-five years. Gatti's tastes were extremely broad. German, French, Italian, Russian, Spanish, Bohemian, and American works were mounted. Gatti also gave a willing ear to any singer meriting experience with the company. Even before the music world became conscious of national

Thus New York City became and has remained the center of opera for the United States. Though the Metropolitan is still the leader under Rudolph Bing, smaller companies have become the training houses for young singers--The New York City Center and The Lemonade Opera Company.

Philadelphia has a long history behind the present operatic productions and houses. In the last years of the eighteenth century an Englishman named Benjamin Carr opened a music store in the city. Mr. Carr was not only a publisher, conductor, and singer but also an operatic composer. He produced in 1796 *The Archers, or, Mountaineers, of Switzerland*, sometimes erroneously termed the first American opera.\(^1\) English ballad opera prevailed, and it was 1827 before the

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first extended series of "serious opera" was given; a French Opera Company from New Orleans came annually from 1827 to 1842.¹ In 1835 a Mr. and Mrs. Woods sealed the fate of ballad opera by giving a performance of *La Sonnambula*, after which Italian opera became extremely popular. The only audible dissent to the Italian supremacy was the presentation of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* by the Musical Fund Society. Important in the steps toward an American opera was the Philadelphia production in 1847 of William Fry's *Leonora*.

The Philadelphia Academy of Music attracted many professional companies, and even during the Civil War performances did not abate. Between 1876 and 1890 comic opera dominated, but the Metropolitan Company of New York began regular performances in 1889 and gave many important presentations. Around 1895 Hinrichs conducted and managed a season of operas in the Academy of Music. Hammerstein's Company too had its day in Philadelphia; its most important contribution was a performance of Herbert's *Natoma* in 1911 with Mary Garden and John McCormack. Since that time Philadelphia has seen many more premiers, especially through the Curtis Institute of Music.

Opera in New Orleans began in the last years of the eighteenth century, when Estevan Miro was governor of

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Louisiana and New Orleans had about 5000 people. There in 1791 Louis Tabary brought from Europe a "Spectacle de la Rue St. Pierre," and this theatrical group existed until around 1810.¹ By then New Orleans had three theaters, of which the Teatre d'Orleans was the important place for operatic performances. It was there that Mlle. Julia Calve made her debut in 1837 and there that Charles Boudousquie in 1840 brought from France the first important company of singers. The early presentations were opera comique such as Le Chalet, but by 1859 the true French opera had become the focus of social life for New Orleans. After the Civil War Paul Alhaiza reopened the French Opera House, and it continued under one company or another with very few interruptions until the First World War. Though opera consumed all the money the public cared to spend on music, it precluded the establishment of a symphony and made concert giving a hazardous undertaking. The result was that the taste of New Orleans developed in only one direction, but it must be admitted that this led to the establishment of French opera in the United States.

St. Louis, to the west and north of New Orleans, had her first taste of opera in 1837 with this result: "Cut out the music; it is tedious."² These early performances were

of the ballad operas; La Sonnambula seems to be the first opera of a higher type, even though it was sung in English and probably was spoken dialogue. The way for better performances was opened by Mr. and Mrs. Sequin, who arrived in 1843. Other companies followed, and during the ensuing year St. Louis heard almost all the standard works. In 1864 the Italian Grand Opera Company of Jacob Grau (uncle of the later Maurice Grau) gave the usual Italian works plus a number of French operas including Faust, the first of innumerable productions. The 1870's brought Clara L. Kellogg and 1878, the C. J. Freyer's German Opera Company. In the next fifteen years there were many touring companies, including the Metropolitan.

By 1917 St. Louis had a number of well-known musicians to its credit: E. R. Kroeger, Alfred Roby, and Carl W. Kern. Homer Moore wrote a grand Opera Louis XIV, which was presented at the Odeon in 1917 with the St. Louis Symphony, a chorus of sixty, and a ballet of forty. The Republic pronounced the work a triumph:

The opera is not of the Strauss type, nor of the ultra-modern frequently seen. Moore harks back to the tuneful operas of Bellini, Rossini, Donizetti, producing tuneful harmonies that had a very noticeable appeal.¹

Evolving into its own, St. Louis in 1914 produced a Pageant and Masque on a stage spanning the lagoon in Forest

¹. Ibid., p. 9.
Park. This led to the outdoor Municipal Theater finished in 1916. By 1918 the Municipal Opera Association began its summer productions, first dealing with light opera and later with larger works. From this time on through the 30's and 40's, St. Louis has done a great amount towards furthering American singers and opera.

The first operatic season in Chicago came to a sudden close during the summer of 1850 because of a fire which consumed the theater and half a block of buildings besides.¹ A new theater was opened in February, 1851, but the first operatic performance was not until 1853, when an Italian opera troupe performed Lucia di Lammermoor and Norma. This "second season" established Italian opera and Italian singers as supreme in Chicago opera.

In 1858 an English Opera Company, known as the New Orleans Opera Company, was followed by the Karl Formes Company, which opened with Weber's Der Freischütz. For the remainder of the nineteenth century, Chicago was well entertained by the many traveling companies frequenting the other larger cities of the United States.

The city began to develop musical organizations of its own around 1900 with the founding of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. About 1910 Oscar Hammerstein and the Metropolitan

Opera brought lavish performances such as have never since been given. The two companies, vying for popularity, teamed singers against each other with a result like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manhattan Opera Company (Hammerstein)</th>
<th>Metropolitan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary Garden</td>
<td>Caruso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John McCormack</td>
<td>Slezak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maurice Renaud</td>
<td>Gadkisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campanini</td>
<td>Scotti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Toscanini</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the Manhattan Company collapsed in 1910, the Chicagoans and the New Yorkers put themselves to the task of the formation of the Chicago Grand Opera Company, the New Yorkers joining to spite Hammerstein. With the general music direction under Campanini, they employed such singers as Garden, Farrar, Melba, Caruso, Gerville, Teyette, Renaud, Scotti, Tetrozzini, and McCormack. Of course, some of these were guests, kindness of the Met, but most were from the old Hammerstein Company. This new company created the fame of Mary Garden in Pelleas et Melisande, Louise, and Salome. The Chicago Opera Company took Herbert’s Natoma on tour for thirty performances. This tour, financially successful, was in 1912, when the company was over three hundred strong.

By 1914, however, financial problems were so great that the managers threw the company into bankruptcy. This ended opera in Chicago until after World War I, when the operatic productions were resumed by traveling companies.

San Francisco began to hear opera about the same time as Chicago, in 1851. La Sonnambula, the first complete opera heard in California, was presented by Signor and Signora Pelleguini. 1 A few years later grand opera won a hearing through the efforts of George Maguire, who organized a company in 1859. When that troupe deserted him, he imported an English Opera Company from New Orleans. In 1860 Maguire presented a combined Italian and English Company under the direction of S. Lyster. During the following ten years he brought in a number of troupes, but most of them were not successful financially. It seemed that comic opera, not grand opera, suited the San Francisco populace.

In the last years of the nineteenth century, Colonel Mapleson's Opera Company (The New York Academy of Music) appeared with Patti, and Melba appeared in 1899. Of the many visiting companies which arrived between that time and 1906, the Metropolitan's visit was the most dramatic, as after it had given one performance, the city was turned into a nightmare of crumbling civilization. Many stories have been told --of Caruso's praying on the street amidst tumbling chaos-- nevertheless, all of the company were uninjured but were unable to give further performances because of the loss of musical instruments, scenery, and costumes. When the company

returned to New York, a benefit performance was given for the stricken San Francisco people.

From the earthquake to World War I, the people were more interested in rebuilding their city than in building an opera. Only years later was operatic life resumed with the San Francisco Opera Company.

These short pictures of operatic growth up to the early decades of the twentieth century show a similarity in development in each case. First, ballad opera or, in the situations of the more western cities, the lighter Italian opera buffa or Gilbert and Sullivan, or (as in the case of New Orleans) the French opera comique. This light opera was followed by a surge of Italian opera, generally around the early years of the nineteenth century, with a gradual introduction of German works. The Italian works seemed more popular until Damrosch for seven years presented opera in German at the Metropolitan. From then on both Italian and German operas were given regularly. It was not until the twentieth century that an interest in American works began to awaken, but opera had been introduced and firmly established in the United States as an artistic musical form.
CHAPTER II
The Musical Aspects of Early American Opera

The English ballad opera which the Colonial public inherited had been in England a natural development. First, airs and songs had been introduced into regular comedy and tragedy; then disintegrating elements began to work into both tragedy and comedy of a serious nature. This decadence plus the desire to emulate the success of the Italian opera and the prevalence of burlesque and satirical motives led directly into the ballad or comic opera.¹

These operas could be grouped into five types: satire, burlesque, farce, sentimental drama, and pastorale. Usually in one, two, or (rarely) three acts, the operas contained spoken dialogue of prose, blank verse, or rhyme, the latter two appearing only in the pastorales or the burlesques.²

The characteristics of each of these operas are much the same, a collection of tunes by many composers. For instance, Lionel and Clarissa, or, A School for Fathers states on the title page "music by Eminent Masters." The "Eminent Masters" included Dibdin, Scolari, Galuppi, Vento, Dr. Arne, Vince, and Pontenza.


2. Blank verse is used in Cibber's Damon and Phillida, rhyme in Mendez' The Chaplet.
Following the overture in a b a form is one aria after another in the usual a b a, interspersed by one quartet or one quintet, the first of which is really a duet sung following another, in which thirds make up the harmonious parts.

The parts are all written with a figured bass, realizing the seventh chords. The words are very simple, and often each line is repeated for clear understanding. The following, with repetitions omitted, is typical:

To tell you the truth in the days of my youth as mirth and nature bid,
I lik'd a Glass and I lov'd a Lass and I did as younkers did,
But now I'm old, with Grief be't told
I must the freaks forbear
At sixty-three, 'twixt you and me
A man grows worse for wear.

Pictorialism is carried out in the music; for instance, in The Padlock:
Humor, even if mixed with a little "philosophy" prevails throughout:

These general characteristics were the same whether in America or in England, but the Americans were forced at the beginning to take liberties in orchestration. According to Sonneck, Kean and Murray used only the harpsichord, even though they could have recruited a half-dozen "fiddlers" in New York.¹ By Hallam's time America was becoming accustomed to small orchestra performances, and it is doubtful that Hallam would have dared to use only one violin in New York.

There is not sufficient evidence to designate any of the early operas as the first written on American soil, but there are a number, all written around the same time, which could claim the title as the first. Important only in that

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¹ Sonneck, op. cit., p. 16.
they were a beginning, they were mainly of the ballad opera type.

The year 1767 was nearly the birth date of the first comic opera written and produced in America. With music by an unknown composer, The Disappointment was written by Thomas Forrest under the pseudonym Andrew Barton. The story is based upon an old Dutchman in Philadelphia who is search for buried treasure. It was nearly ready to be performed by the American Company (Douglass) when the Pennsylvania Gazette informed the public:

The Disappointment (that was advertised for Monday) as it contains personal reflections, is unfit for the stage.

Had it not been for this announcement, this work might have been not only the first American comic opera but the first American play. It is also important to note that one of the sings is set to the tune of Yankee Doodle, thus disproving the theory that this song was of British authorship during the Revolution.

An oratorical entertainment, somewhat operatic, by Francis Hopkinson has claim to consideration as the first American opera. Entitled Temple of Minerva, the libretto was first printed anonymously in Freeman's Journal, Philadelphia, December 19, 1781, and the work was performed the

1. Howard, J. T., op. cit., p. 28.
2. Quinn, op. cit., p. 29.
same year. The libretto was again printed six years later in the Columbian Magazine and signed H. This plus Sonneck's discovery of a fragment of the manuscript in the second volume of Hopkinson's collected poems and prose seems to establish the authorship.¹

Another early work, The Archers or Mountaineers of Switzerland, by Benjamin Carr was an adaptation of Schiller's William Tell which antedates Rossini's setting by thirty-three years. Only a few pieces have been preserved, simple but charming.

In 1796 Pelissier, an accomplished French musician who appeared in Philadelphia, collaborated with Elihu H. Smith on a work called Edwin and Angellina. The librettist wrote a romantic plot which was highly illogical and offered great surprises for the audience. A singers' opera, it was designed for a people who delighted in a sentimentality that overcame stage villainy.

George F. Bristow wrote the second native grand opera to be produced, but its production caused a feud between the writer of the first native grand opera, William Fry, and Bristow. Though Mr. Fry's opera had been produced in Philadelphia ten years earlier, it had not been performed in New York. It seems that the theater managers feared the wrath of one of the New York critics who had criticized Fry

¹. Howard, op. cit., p. 40, also note p. 43.
severely from the moment his Leonora appeared. The critic, however, hailed Bristow's work with "Sebastopol has fallen, and a new American opera has succeeded in New York."¹

Willis discussed in The Musical World the American elements of the score: "... agreeable and fluent ... somewhat devoid of character ... exhibits an easy flow of melody."² He went on to say that the arias, though free, had no large conception nor rich development of ideas. The work was deficient in orchestration techniques, inanimate and lifeless.

As for Fry's Leonora, it is a "lyrical drama" in three acts.

A peasant is bribed into marrying a nobleman's daughter under pretense of being a prince. After the marriage, when his betrayal is revealed, he leaves her to return to her father and he goes to seek his fortune. When he returns, a successful gentleman, he finds Leonora about to nullify her marriage and marry the nobleman who bribed Julio, even though her love remains true for her husband. Julio, then, disguised as a friend bringing a message for Leonora from himself, tests her love, finds it true, reveals his identity and they are reunited.

The libretto is poor poetry of the early 1800's. A typical example follows this style:

2. Ibid., p. 251.
Oh fortune! In thy frown, how many a spirit fair,
By cold neglect cast down, knows none its fate to share.
Yes, how many like mine own, live unloved, unblest, unknown!
Ah, can this be true forever, that life can be so drear,
And on its pathway never one ray of joy appear.

The regularity of rhythm and meter prevented variety in the musical setting, and the music reminds one immediately of the Italian, particularly Bellini in operas such as *Norma* and *La Sonnambula*. The melody is flowing; there is coloratura display.

The recitatives are all accompanied; there is an attempt to follow the inflection of the English language, but in many places it seems forced and unmusical.
Then at times the recitative becomes very melodious.

The ensembles are quite similar to early Italian works, being nothing but thirds for measure after measure. Finally, in a farewell duet of Leonora and Julio, the two parts separate, but the style is deliberate and forced.

Harmonically the music is very simple. For instance, Julio's aria begins in the key of G minor--I-I-I-IV-I\textsubscript{6}--V\textsubscript{7}--I-I-I-IV, etc. The forms too are simple, with the traditional aria da capo. The Villains aria is an A B A B' form.

Fry wrote another opera which was performed around 1864. Although the score was not available, the author found newspaper clippings which described the opera. The Philadelphia Press, May 5, 1864, reviewed Fry's Notre Dame of Paris, presented at the music festival in aid of the Sanitary Commission. This critic said that Philadelphians were not aware of the artistic importance of this opera. Directed by Theodore Thomas, there was "amplitude of orchestra and chorus . . . wealth of stage decoration . . . rich instrumentation"
and "... the stride from Leonora to Notre Dame is prodigious."¹

The same paper on May 28, 1864, stated,

Our American composer has not received his naturalization. His brave efforts for his own music deserve that praise and thanks of the public. Will our music rise to the level of poetry, and shall we have creation instead of scholarship?²

Thus in the 1860's people were concerned with the progress of American music, and they realized that operatic music of America was neither on a par with operatic music of Europe, nor was the music of America developing originality.

In 1882 another opera appeared, hailed as the "first grand opera composed by an American."³ This was Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra by Silas G. Pratt. The story is not an American setting, as the scene is laid in Palmyra in the early days of Grecian conquest.

Zenobia, betrayed by her Egyptian slave and one of her generals, is forced to surrender to Aurelian, the Grecian conqueror. When Aurelian falls in love with Zenobia's daughter, all is happily ended with a philosophical note on the immortality of the new Christian religion just reaching the people of Palmyra.

Generally, it seems that the composer was trying to unite the German and the Italian schools, but the opera

1. The Philadelphia Press, May 5, 1864, clipping pasted inside the score of Fry's Leonora, Boston Public Library.
2. Ibid., May 28, 1864.
3. The Indicator, New York, June 3, 1882.
falls short of the graceful singing style of the Italian and the solidity and earnestness of the German. The story and atmosphere is reminiscent of Aida, which had been presented in the United States just ten years earlier. It is very possible that Pratt was attempting an American Aida.

The critics of the time were chiefly concerned with the constant introduction of modulation which gave the music restlessness. They claimed that the progressions were absurd in places such as the following:

In examining these progressions, this writer feels that Pratt may have been ahead of his time, that he could not accomplish a truly musical idiom because of his lack of experience and because of the time in which he was living. The critics, steeped in a Wagnerian or Verdi tradition, were not ready to understand.

The libretto is an advance of Fry's Leonora, but there is still a lack of contrast in dramatic situations, in characterization, and in climaxes.

It was pointed out that the Egyptian color in some of

the single numbers is due "to the use of an old mode in which the seventh degree of the scale is not raised either ascending or descending." ¹ From the following excerpt it can be concluded that this "old mode" is nothing but the natural minor scale; this author does not believe that the use of this scale indicates that Pratt was authentically reproducing the Egyptian music of the period in which Zenobia is set, for too little is known about Egyptian music to say; and besides, Pratt does not follow the historical events in the fall of Palmyra. He was probably using the natural minor scale because it was sufficiently contrasting to the major to set apart the music indicative of Egyptian characters.

The melodies in places are difficult to sing. The composer has made great use of sevenths, diminished fourths, diminished fifths, and augmented intervals.

Themes are repeated, but there is no development of the themes in a leitmotiv sense.

The critics may have disapproved of Pratt's modulations, but they did approve of his story:

It is gratifying in these immoral days to be able to state, on no less authority than that of the Rev. Drs. Locke and Ryder, Bishop Cheney, and Canon Knowles, that Mr. Pratt's Zenobia is wholly innocuous in a moral point of view. In this case, it can be said truly that it "Contains not one word which could call a blush to the cheek of innocence!"

Thus the musical foundations were laid. The English ballad opera was first copied by foreign immigrant composers such as Andrew Barton, Carr, and Pellissier. Attempts were furthered by American-born Fry and Bristow, the results being a copy of the Italian opera. This is reasonable; for, as can be seen from the historical events in the operatic field, Italian opera was popular with the American people at that time. Pratt's Zenobia opened the door to Twentieth Century works by trying individuality in harmonies and style. From Pratt on, the ideas of nationalistic opera began to evolve seriously.

1. Chicago Sunday Herald, June 18, 1882.
CHAPTER I
American Opera under German Influence

In various consequences the whole western world has felt the influences of German romantic opera. It was the nineteenth century development which has given rise to certain American operatic techniques of the twentieth century. Briefly, these German trends which are found in American works begin with the climax of the singspiel and the greatest melodrama, Leonora, by Beethoven. Carl Maria von Weber with Der Freischütz established the first fundamental characteristics of the German romantic opera. These can be summarized into four elements:

1. Romantic treatment of subject derived from national legend and folklore
2. A feeling for nature and the use of natural phenomena as essential in the drama
3. The acceptance of the supernatural as a means of dramatic development
4. The direct or implied glorification of German culture, land, and people.¹

Musically Weber set forth the use of Romantic expressive effects, the utilization of folk-song melodies interspersed with conventional operatic arias.

Wagner, then, after Heinrich Marshner, builds his great ideas on these principles but with further development. His

innovations, which became the topics for controversy in many nations, are as follows:

1. Music and drama are closely unified; the constituent arts lose their individual identity and become one super-art form.

2. The vocal line is emancipated from periodic rhythm and is free. There is no formal division into aria or recitative.

3. The orchestra creates the "inner action" of the drama by a polyphonic sub-structure, effective with its suspensions and appoggiaturas.

4. The words fulfill the "outer action," or the plot's necessary movement.

5. There is continuous orchestral movement, achieved by the avoidance of double bars and cadences, and the constant shift of a tonal center.

6. Unification is provided by the leitmotiv system.\(^1\)

American composers as well as French and Italian composers were interested in the dramatic and musical results which Wagner attained. In America's search for a national style, her composers, either through European training or their eclectic natures, were influenced by Wagner's principles. This is sufficiently clear when representative works of the period are examined.

Although the first opera illustrative of the German

1. A leitmotiv is a musical theme connected with a particular thing, idea, or person, or all three, which reoccurs having been varied and developed musically according to the reoccurrence variation, or development of the corresponding person, thing, or idea.
influences was written in 1895, it should, in this writer's opinion, be included among the works written in the twentieth century. This work, Walter Damrosch's *The Scarlet Letter*, is characterized by the styles and techniques found in other twentieth century American operas.

The book was based on the novel *The Scarlet Letter* by Hawthorne and was prepared by Hawthorne's son-in-law, George P. Lathrop. A short resume of the story as prepared by Lathrop is as follows:

Hester is persecuted by the Puritan people for adultery, yet even under torture she will not reveal the father of her child. Dimmesdale, a young minister, urges her to do so, and in his own anguish reveals to Hester's husband that he is the one responsible. Chillingsworth, the husband, vows revenge. Hester is finally banished to a cottage in the forest and is required to wear the scarlet letter upon her breast until death. Time passes; Hester persuades Dimmesdale to flee to England with her, but their plans are overheard and Chillingsworth plans passage on the same boat. When it is discovered at the dock that their plans have been spoiled, Hester poisons herself and Dimmesdale follows her to death.

Damrosch himself states that this opera was influenced by Wagner; in fact, Anton Seidl stated that "The Scarlet Letter" was a New England "Nebelung Trilogy." 1 There is only one chorale, "God's Voice Breaks Cedars," which suggests the Puritan nature.

A leitmotiv system is used throughout; yet it is used in a symbolic manner rather than as a characterization. The scarlet letter itself is portrayed in the following:

Then at different times it is heard somewhat altered:

Accompanies Hester as she Goes toward the pillory

Heard in the orchestra during the opening chorus

The work as a whole closely follows Wagner's plan of slow, elaborate development, with long and uninterrupted climaxes, but there is more cantalena treatment than is found in Wagner. The voice parts tend to assume the sustained arioso form in many places, but the declamation is
Wagnerian, and the heavy and dramatic scoring with the dramatic meaning to be found in the orchestral parts rather than in the voice parts is typically Wagnerian.

Damrosch was severely criticized in the Musical Courier for harmonic errors. Consecutive fifths and octaves with incorrect notation are found throughout. Said The Courier, "Cacophony is Mr. Damrosch's first musical law; it is the law which makes his music really original." Perhaps a very particular theorist would criticize the piano score which thrives on such errors, but, when orchestrated, this writer feels that such sounds would be characteristic of the situations. The opera is tense and dramatic, and with the background which Mr. Damrosch had when he wrote his opera, surely he knew what he was writing.

The forms are free; there are no set numbers, but Hester's "Ripple of the Brook" with the accompaniment imitating the brook and the Madrigal sung by the Pilgrims going through the forest are charming away from the stage environment.

This opera, though definitely Wagnerian, shows a great advancement over the previous operas written in the United States. There is more depth in the music, more dramatic interest, and the libretto is superior.

Following this work and in the twentieth century, there are a number of operas still depending upon the German principles for their foundations. John Knowles Paine's opera Azara never reached dramatic performance, although there were two concert performances in 1903 and 1907. There was a plan to produce the opera at the Metropolitan when Conried was manager, but the plan was abandoned because of the lack of a contralto and a bass who could sing well in English.

The libretto, written by the composer, tells the following story; the scene: Provence, the era: Medieval.

As a reward for the defeat of the Saracens, Gontran, son of King Rainaulf, asks the hand of Azara, a ward of Aymar. Denied Azara, Gontran frees Malek, the captive chief, and is disowned. Azara and Aymar flee. Malek with his followers kill Rainaulf and capture Azara, who is the lost daughter of the Caliph. Azara escapes, returns in disguise, and is pursued by Malek, who, when she reveals herself at the court festival of the now King Gontran, vainly tries to kill her, then stabs himself. The lovers, Azara and King Gontran, are united, and all ends happily.

At one time Paine had been very hostile towards Wagner and his methods, but in Azara there are found definite traces of Wagnerian influence which show that Paine had begun to change his opinion. Leading motives are used sparingly but to a clear purpose; they are indicative of personality rather than dramatic development, and they are reserved for special significance.

The Saracen battle phrase which opens the opera is heard again whenever the evil characters are about to act.
The Azara motive is heard as Gontran leads her forth as his choice:

It is heard again as Aymar is watching over the slumbers of Azara in the forest. Malek's entrances are characterized by the following:

Rainault's entrance to the shrine in Act II is accompanied by this theme:

It is also heard in the prelude to the same act and is associated only with him as the cruel, oppressive tyrant.
Of great interest are the Moorish dances, which provide ballet and add variety to the score; each of the two dances is in different sections which change mood and rhythm several times. The following examples show the melody and rhythm of these dances, one of which is lively and the other stately:

This ballet music has often been performed on orchestral programs. Its character depends partly on the unusual melodic intervals used and also upon the singular roulades or flourishes which appear to be part of Saracen vocal convention. These roulades occur again as Malek expresses his unwillingness to receive back his sword and in Act III when he is about to kill himself:
The Moorish element occurs too, in the Saracen's chorus just after Rainaulf's death. For example:

Paine's vocal technique is particularly effective. There is interest in the part writing and the ranges and vocal techniques are well suited for the voices designated. There is an advance in the use of the English language, as the recitative is melodically suited to the inflections of the language. For example:

The opera is not a number opera, and Paine seems concerned with form only as it fits the drama; this writer could find no use of the old da capo forms, but neither is there any great over-all form as is found in Wagner. Paine did not seem to feel that form was vital to the drama or to music.

Harmonically, Paine was quite modern for his day, and he made use of dissonances which were quite startling to his contemporary listeners. At times he changes the tonality more than Wagner; nevertheless, there is a definite tonal scheme in all the music. For example:
In many ways the music seems to furnish a commentary upon the drama rather than being the medium for dramatic expression. It is all very human and comprehensible, but if the opera were staged, the dramatic action would be slow, held back by the musical qualities. Nevertheless, it is a step toward individuality, more so than Damrosch's *The Scarlet Letter*, even though *Azara* was founded upon the principles of Wagnerian opera.

The third opera to be considered in this chapter is *Poia* by Arthur Nevin. Nevin (1871-1943) was born in Sewickley, Pennsylvania. His older brother became well known as the composer Ethelbert Nevin. Arthur studied at the New England Conservatory in Boston and, subsequently, abroad with such men as Klindworth, O. B. Boise, and Humperdinck. He spent the remainder of his career composing and teaching in the Middle West and in the East. Although he composed a number of orchestral pieces, his principal
product was an opera based on a summer's experience with the Blackfoot Indians in Montana. Here in 1903 and 1904 he heard the story of Poia; which became the basis of the opera of that name.

In 1907 the composer was asked to illustrate his work before President Roosevelt at the White House; but in spite of the endorsement, the first performance was in Germany instead of in the United States. J. T. Howard in Our American Music gives the date of this performance as the summer of 1909. This date, however, is incorrect. The author refers the reader to the Boston Herald of April 24, 1910, which says,

Jealous Germans condemn Poia . . . produced last night with hissing, and intemperance of comment. It was a concerted demonstration against Americanization of the Kaiser's operatic stage.

A clipping from the New York Times of April 23, 1910, also tells of the mingled hisses and applause. With a third proof—a Helena, Montana, newspaper clipping of 1909 which announces the Berlin plans for production—this writer concludes that the first performance was not in 1909 but in 1910.¹

The Blackfoot legend tells of a Blackfoot brave who loses his love to another brave because the gods have placed a scar across his

¹. These clippings are available in the score of the opera in the Boston Public Library.
face. He sets out for the land of the Great God. There the great Sun God promises to remove the scar from his face in reward for the fulfilling of certain tasks. Poia succeeds even unto the last, and although asked to remain at the court of the Sun God, he returns to claim his love. The Indian Maid realizes her love for him, but the other Brave stabs her in jealousy. Poia picks her up, and as the heavens open, he ascends to the Court of the Sun God for a life of eternal happiness.

The libretto, by Randolph Hartley, was written as near to Indian poetry as possible, although it was impossible to put into translation all the actual songs of the Indians. One song, however, was used in its entirety, and it gives a fine example of the poetic thought of the Indian.

Oh Thou great Sun —
Great red robe of day —
Which art the Father.

Oh, Mother Moon
Great queen of light
Watch o'er us through the night.

Oh, Morning Star, we pray you
Shine into our lodge
And give us peace
Oh, Sun, Moon, and Morning Star.

Nevin set such poetry in free forms with one exception. The Poia Song of Love is in A B A form.⁠¹ In the other arias the unification may be achieved by the repetition of the first phrase only, but this is not a sufficient amount to be termed an A B A form. Although the opera is not a number opera, the arias, recitatives, and ensembles are

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differentiated by a change of tempo and by a change of key.

All recitative is accompanied, although a speaking type is used twice, once to depict Sumatsi's anger and domineering will towards Natoya and again for Poia when the Sun God appears and he cries, "Father."

From this "speaking" recitative, other sections vary to a very melodious, almost arioso, type of recitation.

The choruses are homophonic with much unison singing, the latter in keeping with the Indian story. The melodies and moving figures in the orchestra fill out the block-like treatment. A number of authentic Indian melodies are used as a thematic basis for the opera. Although not used as leitmotivs, the following themes are heard repeatedly:

1. Indian's love song which is passed through the strings, through modulations by the reeds and woodwinds, to a horn trio. The interruptions by the brass suggest the taunting Indians surrounding Poia.

2. Poia's love theme.
3. Poia's incidental music.


5. Indian ceremonial song from Act II, Scene 2, the court of the Sun God.

6. The Indian War song, used as Poia's Song of Daring as he vows to journey to the Sun God.

7. The Indian Night Song is used as a serenade sung by Poia as he wanders through the forest.
8. The "Joy of a Horse" is used as a grace note pedal tone. This is as Nevin heard it sung by the Indians. Although this native song is used in the opera, the setting is at a time before horses were in America.¹

In harmonization of these themes Nevin has used his knowledge of Indian rhythms in combination with his knowledge of counterpoint. Note the following examples:

a. One immediately notices the 5/4 time with the triplet and syncopation.

b. The pedal point in the tomtom rhythm against the sustained low open fifths and the minor sixth followed by another open fifth is interesting.

¹ The Cleveland Reader, January 13, 1907.
c. The chromatic lines vie with each other to express the Poia's anguish.

d. The rhythm predominates, 9 against 6 in 6/8 time.

The opera was evidently written with theatrical effects in mind. The entrance of Natoya, paddling downstream in her canoe, and the sudden appearance of the court of the Sun God are both picturesque scenes. The final stabbing of Natoya is the weakest portion of the play; however, this scene is short and is not accented. Nevin has included a ballet in the court of the Sun God representative of the Winds and the Seasons. While this gives ample opportunity for ensemble choral work and for choreography, the scenes would have to be planned with the Indian theme in mind; classical ballet would be inappropriate.
The work of Nevin has been placed in this chapter not because it adheres to Wagnerian principles but because it fits into the elements of the early German romantic opera of Weber. Nevin has treated first a subject derived from the national folklore of the United States; second, the Indian's love of nature is exemplified through the travels of Poia in the forest; last, Nevin has used the supernatural, the appearance of the Sun God, as a means of a dramatic development leading to the denouement.

Musically Nevin has utilized folk melodies of the Indian both in the underlying orchestral passages and in the vocal song. Although he has not relied upon the leitmotiv system, he has used the melodies polyphonically and has also treated his whole accompaniment from a contrapuntal technique. It is noticed, however, that Poia, like Azara, is another step away from the imitation of the German romanticists' musical techniques. Poia is, nevertheless, a direct attempt to achieve an American national opera; in the attempt, though, Nevin resorted to the same steps taken by the German nationalists.

The last work illustrative of the German influences in the category of serious opera is written by a composer who was very prolific in the operatic field. As a young man, Henry Hadley (1871-1937) wrote a one-act opera Safie. This was in 1909, and in 1912 he finished a masque called The Atonement of Pan; then in 1917 Azora, Daughter of Montezuma
was presented by the Chicago Opera Company in Chicago and in New York. In 1918 *Bianca*, adapted from the Goldoni comedy *The Mistress of the Inn*, won a prize of $1000 offered by the Society of American Singers. His best opera, *Cleopatra's Night*, was given a very colorful production at the Metropolitan in 1920, and it remained in the Metropolitan's repertoire for two seasons. His last opera, *A Night in Old Paris*, was given by the National Broadcasting Company in 1933, was a short one-act opera for radio.

Of these works three will be discussed: *Azora* in this chapter, *Bianca* in Chapter III (since it falls under the styles of Italian opera), and *Cleopatra's Night* in Chapter IV. The last is the climax of Hadley's work in that it is the most independent.

*Azora*, with libretto by David Stevens, is set in Mexico during the fifteenth century.

A captured warrior, converted to follow Montezuma, leads a triumphant battle to win Montezuma's daughter *Azora*. When she is refused him, he and *Azora* are both condemned to die in sacrifice to the gods. Just as the sacrifice is to take place, a band of Spaniards, led by Cortez and Spanish priests, appears. The sacrifice is stopped by the Redeemer, an outcome prophesied earlier. The opera closes with "Gloria in Excelsis Deo."

According to the *New York Times* the libretto is a duplicate of *Aida*, written for Verdi by Ghislangoni. Whatever the source, the libretto is not straightforward enough to be

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understood from a stage, even if projected clearly. For instance,

Hear then the rest, were I a captive slave condemned
to perish by the scourge, and life were granted at
the price of wedding you, Think you that I would live?

These words are set in a duplicate rhythm of the speaking lines:

Hear then the rest, were I a captive slave<br>condemned to perish by the scourge.<br>

The vocal arrangement of the opera is weak, since two of the main singing roles are tenors; the one bass, Montezuma, has no major aria. This lack of contrast does not supply interest.

One outstanding vocal number is the contralto aria of Act I. In two large sections, one in which Azora predicts her death and the second in which she tells of her vision of Christ, the aria is comparable in form only to Beethoven's treatment of Leonora's vision of the "Rainbow of Promise." Beethoven's sudden modulation to the key of A and Hadley's sudden modulation from F minor to G minor at the vision of Christ are similar in thought. Another Beethoven device has been used in a duet which is a canon at the octave between the tenor and the soprano.1 Otherwise, there are no numbers; the recitatives lead smoothly into the ensembles and into

the solos, which are of free forms.

Like Wagner, Hadley has at times put the voice as an inner part of the orchestration.

Harmonically the opera contains many step-wise or chromatic passages. Modulations are numerous and are usually effected to emphasize an event or a meaning in the drama.

Hadley has employed the off-stage trumpets to announce the entrance of Xalla. Although this does not present the Deus ex Machina (the Spaniards), it is a device similar to the trumpet fanfares of Fidelio.

By the infiltration of German elements into the music, Hadley has not created an atmosphere of Mexico or of the Aztec peoples. The Wagnerian vocal treatment and the
Beethovian references are evidences that a truly American opera had not yet been created by this composer.

In conclusion, it can be stated that Walter Damrosch was foremost in his adherence to Wagnerian style. John K. Paine was known to be adverse to the Wagnerian principles in his early years but later turned to them in his *Azara*. Arthur Nevin's work is considered German only through the general nationalistic ideas and not through musical qualities. In the last work considered, the influences are significant only in various vocal treatment and forms. Thus from 1900 to 1920 there were American composers who, if not actually imitating Wagnerian principles, were influenced by the German Romantic styles. However, it should be noticed that proceeding chronologically into the twentieth century, the German influences become less and less predominant.
CHAPTER II
American Opera Under French Influence

There are four characteristics of French opera which have been prevalent since the establishment of French opera as an individual type by Lully in the seventeenth century. These are:

1. The opera is fundamentally drama in words, to which music has been added.

2. The musical interest centers in the divertissements, not in the continuous orchestra nor in the solo aria. In the early works this included the ballet and chorus.

3. The deliberate choice of measured objective, well-proportioned and rational dramatic actions tempered with subtle symbolism is made. This is in contrast to the uninhibited Italian purpose and the exhaustive details of Wagner.

4. The opera is created for the appreciation of the most refined and complex sensory stimuli. That is, the artist appeals to an aristocratic sensualism, creating moods by motives, harmonies, and timbres, leaving to the assumed intellect of the listener the interpretation.¹

It is in Debussy's Pelleas et Melisande that American composers found a model. Debussy's individual treatment of the four basic ideas of French opera may be summarized in the following paragraphs, related in order to the previously stated principles:

1. The text is unimportant, as it is little altered from the original play; the orchestral background is only a shadow. The voice is independent of bar line, narrow in range with small intervals, frequently chanting on one tone.

2. Preludes and interludes are the only music in which the orchestra has the foreground. However, its function is the reiteration of past action and the prophecy of the drama to come.

3. The story is vague and symbolic, with a mysterious and spiritual quality typical of the drama.

4. Debussy's moods are created by impressionistic principles of:
   a. Modal, whole tone, or pentatonic melodies
   b. Free linking of seventh and ninth chords
   c. Parallel movement
   d. Indefinite tonalities, complex harmonic treatment through overtone relationships

Although not all characteristics are found in each American work discussed, the free text (#1) and the impressionistic harmonic principles (#4) are the most prevalent and are predominant enough to give the works a French character.

Frederick S. Converse has the distinction of being the first American composer to have an opera produced at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. Born in Newton, Massachusetts, in 1871, Converse studied both at home and abroad, returning from Germany in 1898. He then taught at the New England Conservatory and at Harvard University and became well known for his orchestral works (Flivver Ten Million, American Sketches, Three Symphonies). Converse died in 1940.
His one-act opera, a tragic fairy tale, *The Pipe of Desire*, was published in 1907 but was not performed at the Metropolitan until 1910.

The story revolves around a mortal, Iolan, who by insisting that he play the pipe of the Elfan King (which is the symbol of power and the control of desire), causes the death of his loved one and finally his own death. The main characters are supported by a chorus of "little people"--Sylphs, Undines, Salamanders, and Gnomes.

Though Converse had studied in Germany under Rheinberger, the opera shows a definite influence of impressionistic trends. The vagueness and sylvan beauty of the forest setting are vividly portrayed through a great use of tremolo, chromatic scales, and arpeggios, giving a shimmering background. The following example is typical.

![Musical notation]

The recitatives are very lyrical, and there are very smooth connections into the arioso numbers. At times it is difficult to determine exactly where the recitative stops and the aria begins. Nevertheless, the melodic lines fit the English Language well.

![Musical notation]
Converse makes use of certain themes as characteristic of certain characters, and the theme of the pipe holds the whole work together. These themes are not used in a leitmotiv sense but in a recurring style similar to Debussy's recurring themes. Of most interest is the theme of the pipe, which is first heard when the instrument is mentioned:

\[ \text{HELLO A-BOVE THERE WHO CALLS} \]

This theme is contrasted with the theme of Iolan, which is first heard as he comes joyfully through the forest:

\[ \text{[Musical notation]} \]

When Iolan is forced to dance, the pipe theme continues until Iolan snatches the pipe from the Old One; then his own theme is heard triumphantly mocking the Old One, first in the bass:

\[ \text{[Musical notation]} \]
then in the oboe. Note the word "ironico"—mockingly:

When the Old One explains the curse of the pipe and its consequences, the pipe theme runs through the accompaniment as follows:

Iolan is still doubtful, and his ironic theme is heard again:

Even after the Old One has said:

\[
\text{Let thy tune, now sad, now merry,} \\
\text{Wax and wane with every breath} \\
\text{Let the joy of love's beginning} \\
\text{Blend into the chant of death.} \\
\text{Let the mortal who dares play thee} \\
\text{Without knowledge of thy mood} \\
\text{Pale with terror at thy meaning} \\
\text{And die when he has understood.}
\]

Iolan still insists upon playing the pipe, and at first one hears fragments of a new pipe theme as Iolan is trying to get a sound from the instrument. Finally Iolan plays:
The theme runs through the accompaniment of his aria, which expresses his desires, and when the Old One says "'tis done" and his "desires help rule the world," the first pipe theme comes back together with a reminiscence of the second pipe theme.

In the final scene the pipe soothes Iolan into death sleep.

The only other theme of importance is the motive which is significant of the Old One. It is first heard as the Old One enters:

It is heard again as the Old One expresses his bewilderment at the action of his elfin people:

As Iolan and the Old One argue about the pipe and its consequences, the theme of Iolan and the rhythm of the Old One are mixed:
The impressionistic tendencies are indicated first by the mysterious spiritual qualities of the drama which can be interpreted a number of ways, that being left to the listener; second, by the harmonic treatment--open fifths, chromatic runs, arpeggios, etc.; third, by the arioso declamation which blends with the orchestra; and fourth, by the repetition of themes used merely for orchestral continuity with the dramatic events.

Among the works of Charles Wakefield Cadman (born in Pennsylvania in 1881), the next opera with impressionistic tendencies is found. Cadman did not begin his musical studies until a comparatively late age; in fact, the family did not own a piano until he was thirteen years old. After studying composition from Leo Oehmler and Luigi von Kunitz, he was unknown for years until his song "At Dawning" was featured by John McCormack. His fame then spread, and today he is known for a large amount of orchestral music as well as his operas and operettas. *A Garden of Mystery, Shanewis, The Sunset Trail, The Witch of Salem, The Willow Tree, Lelawala, or The Maid of Niagara* are of value in the development
of American opera and operetta.

The Sunset Trail and The Willow Tree and Lelawala will not be discussed, as the former and the latter are operettas and The Willow Tree is a twenty-five-minute opera written for radio and concert performance, setting forth a dramatic situation rather than a plot.

The earliest opera, written in 1916, was The Garden of Mystery, with libretto by Nelle Richmond Eberhart. She based the story on Rappaccini's Daughter by N. Hawthorne.

Rappaccini is an experimenter in poisons. He has a garden in which he carries on his research. To him science is everything, even dearer than the life of anything, including his daughter. Giovani Guasconti, a university student, gains access to the garden and makes love to Beatrice, the daughter, only to find that she has been raised on poisons and that even her embrace is death. Giovani finds himself the object of experimentation and becomes as poisonous as Beatrice. Another professor gives him an antidote which he believes will cure Beatrice and Giovani. It does cure Giovani, but the poison is an integral part of Beatrice; therefore, what kills the poison also kills her. Beatrice dies begging Giovani to drink the antidote and lead a normal life.

The libretto itself is awkward at times. For instance, "What mean thy fearful words?" and "Awful is my father's science, and awful is my doom!" Note the rhythmic setting of the last quotation with the emphasis on the last syllable of the word awful.
Cadman has used a "French" declamation on one tone for the typical recitative. For example:

These vocal lines are declamatory, and there is a tendency to spoil the declamatory mood by the insertion of arias. These are usually begun with the declamation,

but are then weakened by a change of style to a song-like quality. Had Cadman continued in an arioso style such as Debussy's, continuity would have prevailed. The true aria portions are based on the repetition of verses rather than on dramatic movement. He has included a duet between Beatrice and her maid which is continuous thirds and sixths. This is of course a break from the impressionistic qualities.

Impressionism is obvious in the harmonic treatment, however. In the following example from page 4 of the score, the consecutive fifths in the bass plus the repeated chromatic sequence is noticeable not only in the first measure but also between measures two and three.
Note similar qualities in the two examples following:

The music is descriptive of the three parts of the opera: 1. The Garden, 2. Love, 3. Death. (These three parts are subtitled Early Morning, Moonlight, and Sunset.) For instance, in the intermezzo of Part III, Death, bass and 'cello solos begin the ominous melody, and a gong closes the interlude. In the prelude to the same section, a pedal point in the bass gives a dark character to the chords above. It should also be pointed out that these intermezzi and preludes, like Debussy's, are the important functions of the orchestra. They plus such sections as the Poison Imp ballet, in which consecutive fifths are used constantly, are descriptive of what is to follow and are a reiteration of what has been.

Therefore, because of the vocal declamation, the

First Picture: Where autumn trees are mirrored in the stream, When evening shadows fall.

Second Picture: An humble fireside that a daughter's love Hath made a father's throne.

Third Picture: The trees and streams are strangers at the dawn
harmonic treatment, and the orchestral intermezzi, The Garden of Mystery shows the influence of French impressionism. The work, however, has been "Americanized" by the insertion of melodic arias and also by the use of an American author's novel as its basis.

Arthur Nevin, whose Poia was discussed in the previous chapter, wrote another opera called Twilight (1911). It was not performed, however, until January of 1918, when the Chicago Opera Association presented it under the name A Daughter of the Forest. This work was an attempt to portray a psychological tragedy rather than a physical tragedy.

A young girl is raised in seclusion by her father, a woodcutter living on the edge of the forest. The trees, flowers, and animals have been her only companions until she falls in love with a young man who soon must leave her to serve his country. Bewildered at the passions which besiege her and frightened by her father's commentary on the good and evil of nature, the young girl goes into the forest and kills herself. The soldier returns to find her father grieving not only for his daughter but for himself, as he believes that he did not teach her to bear civilization.

There is little action in the play; Nevin has built a series of three tonal pictures, as the acts are entitled:

First Picture: Where autumn trees are mirrored in the stream, When evening shadows fall.

Second Picture: An humble fireside that a daughter's love Hath made a father's throne.

Third Picture: The trees and streams are strangers at the dawn
The cold, gray light destroys all nature's dreams.

The result is a serious pastoral, with words and melody used to paint the tonal pictures; there is little action. The sylvan setting is further described in the orchestral accompaniment by the prevalent use of harp, oboe, and strings.

The vocal treatment is smooth. Although the declamation is not on one tone, it is melodious, and it is blended into the orchestration. There are no arias, just continued vocal declamation such as is found in Pelleas et Melisande.

In the accompaniment such passages as the following give the impressions of the sylvan setting:

Note the major sixth-minor seventh repeated in the treble clef and the diminished seventh broken arpeggios; also found are frequent uses of complex rhythms. An interesting effect is the use of a soft snare drum roll as the accompaniment of a chromatic line of declamation:
With such devices as this Nevin was evidently not interested in producing a drama; but, like Debussy, he wished to convey the subconscious aspects. In doing so, he resorted to the techniques of the impressionists.

In the final summation, American opera in the first two decades of the 1900's shows the influence of French nineteenth century opera through the works of Converse, Nevin, and Cadman. The main devices which they have used are the impressionistic harmonies, the vocal declamation in French recitative style, and symbolic dramas with little action—dramas in which the composer may present tonal pictures or suggestions. Of the three works, The Pipe of Desire tends toward strict impressionism more than does The Daughter of the Forest, while The Garden of Mystery is the least impressionistic, since arias have been inserted.
CHAPTER III
American Opera under Italian Influence

Because the opera originated in Italy, there is not a country of the western world which at some time has not been touched in one way or another by Italian operatic development. The essential styles of Italian grand opera and opera buffa were copied by composers of other nations before the first American opera was written. These characteristics, greatly condensed, are primarily the following:

1. Predominance of the voice and vocal techniques
   a. The subordination of the orchestra to accompaniment functions only
   b. The unimportance of the chorus in relation to the dramatic action

2. Rigidity of vocal forms and style
   a. The A B A aria and the number operas
      (1) Exclusive of the last operas of Verdi, where "numbers" are connected by transitions

3. The subordination of the drama to the music
   a. Simple, unimportant librettos

4. In the nineteenth century the verismo opera of Verdi and Puccini
   a. A naturalistic, melodramatic plot with violent contrasts, intense passion through declamation and the aria, sensational harmonies, successive moments of climatic excitement, chorale or instrumental interludes which establish a mood only to be rent apart in the next scene. Humanistic drama.
It is perhaps not so strange then that the first opera discussed in this chapter was written by an American composer who lived in Italy and who, while there, wrote a number of operas to an Italian libretto. Born in Massachusetts in 1882, Paul Hasting Allen spent twenty years studying and composing in Italy after his graduation from Harvard in 1904. Allen's works cover many media: choral works, symphonies, orchestral poems, and chamber music. In the operatic field he wrote seven operas: O Munasterio, performed in Florence in 1911; Il Filtro--Genoa, 1912; Milda--Venice, 1913; The Last of the Mohicans--Florence, 1916; Cleopatra, 1921; and La Piccola Figaro, 1931. It will be noted that all but the last were written in Italy, and of these only The Monastery (O Munasterio) is published with an English libretto.

Since Allen was an American composer working abroad, the question immediately arises "Are those operas which he composed to an Italian libretto entitled to be called American opera?" By the definition which states that American opera must be opera in English, the answer is "No." Therefore, the only opera which can be considered under the category of American opera is The Monastery, which has been published in English.

It is also interesting that the works written to an Italian libretto are singers' operas. Note the example from
Il Filtro with the embellishments in the chorus and in the recitative:

The arias are singers' arias. For instance, In frenar con ferrea mano tutti i venti, written for tenor with numerous passages to display the upper range, is in an A B A B form, the latter A B in a new key. With so many Italian elements prominent in the score, the work cannot be considered "American music."

The Monastery presents a less simple analysis. The short dramatic opera is a lyric poem in two parts for baritone and is based upon a Neapolitan text by Giacomo. It is interesting that the first Friar Salvatore was sung in Florence by Eugenio Giradolni, who created the role of Scarpia in Tosca. The work was performed throughout Italy and in Holland, Finland, and Russia.

The plot is the brief sentimental story of Salvatore, a sailor of the Santa Lucia quarter in Naples, who seeks to forget unrequited love as a friar in the solitude of a Franciscan monastery. He cannot, however, forget the past; slowly his mind wanders back to his mother, his sweetheart, and finally to the sea. He compares his fate to that of a drowning mariner; then, in a state of delirium, he dies.

The English translation of Giacomo's poem is free prose of short phrases:
Scene 9, p. 2:

Ah! Had I heeded mother mine
No friars sad fate for me
For solely love of mother mine
Could make me live again
Is there a heart that's tenderer
Than in a mother's bosom
What tears be tears, Beloved Friends,
If not those from her eyes?
Awake, Mothermine, call me, too.
If ever thou didst love me
From thy cold grave arise again
And take me in thy heart.

Scene 7, p. 5:

With guitar hung about my shoulder,
When twilight shadows fall
In a trice I'd soon be singing,
And this should be my lay........
The bright new moon shines over the ocean
Pure silver crescent of love's devotion
Mark in his fairy boat the fisherman
Near fast asleep with his nets still casted
Slumber Not! Fish may bite
Oh My Sailor, Nets should be emptied!
Sleepily sighs with longing the sailor boy,
Dreaming no doubt of dark eyes beloved.
Placid ..... (recit) Again knocking!

It is amazing to the writer that the English libretto
and the music are so well fitted both rhythmically and
dramatically. The translation of the Italian must have been
closely supervised by Allen or even done by him, for it is
certain that the translator had a thorough knowledge of Eng-
lish. Note the setting of the texts in the examples that
follow.

The opera is constructed in a number form; each of
those numbers, in reality a long aria for the baritone, is a
scene named according to the aria. Each scene is in a free
form following the setting of the text, a fact which, in
this writer's opinion, creates the strength of the work. In this manner the composer has been able to depict in each scene a further step toward the friar's madness. Had Allen used the set da capo form, the drama would have been lost.

With nine tenths of the singing done by one character, the work might lose interest, but The Monastery does not. A talented baritone who could depict the disintegration of the friar's mind, who could change the mood of the lullaby, the boat song, etc., would make each number a new experience. The following examples will give an idea of how the loss of rational mind is portrayed in the music.
The skill with which the accompaniment is written has further warded off all chances of boredom. Even in the recitative, where the melodic movement is nil, note the harmony:
In Scene 5, as the friar is singing of the sea, there are fast chromatic runs which depict the movement of the waves. Of interest also is the bass line:

The instrumental prelude and interludes are appropriately treated. The "Stabat Mater" is used in the prelude in a sixteenth century imitative style. A section is quoted in the following:

The interlude between Scenes 6 and 7 is interesting in its form. With large sections of an A B A, these are subdivided thematically and in their key relationships to make a cross between a chiastic and a rondo form:

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<table>
<thead>
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<th>a</th>
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A  | B | A |   |   |   |   |   |

Tonic  
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Another interlude, the Marcia Funabre of Scene 11, is based
on a ground bass. Noteworthy ton are the measures just preceding the funeral march:

![Musical notation](image)

Basically Italian in the vocal treatment and the form, *Il Monasterio* is suited in its declamation to the English language. The lack of chorus and the lack of festive tragedy mark its non-Italian characteristics. Allen's American background does exert itself, but it does so in an Italian media.

Only two years after Charles Wakefield Cadman's *The Garden of Mystery* was finished, Cadman was ready with another opera. *Shanewis, or The Robin Woman,* is entirely different from the first opera, which was discussed in Chapter II. Cadman writes in the *Foreword* of the score that *Shanewis* is

not a mythological tale nor yet an aboriginal story, and since more than three-fourths of the actual composition of the work is within the boundaries of original creative effort (i.e., not built upon native tunes in any way) there is no reason why this work should be labeled an Indian opera. Let it be an opera upon an American subject, or if you will . . . an American opera!

Although Cadman states that he has not used native themes as the basis of the opera, he has used a number of Indian melodies in connection with the Indian scenes.

1. The intermezzo is based upon an Omaha Indian song from a collection of game songs by Alice Cunningham Fletcher.

2. The Spring Song of the Robin Woman is founded in part on a Cheyenne melody recorded by Natalie Curtis, and is based upon a Tshismian legend. The Ojibway canoe song is unaltered except for the English translation.

3. The finale of the first scene and the two narratives of Shanewis have suggestion in themes from "Burton's American Primitive Music."

4. An Osage Ceremonial Song is used in the Powwow scene just as recorded by Frances La Flesche.

Cadman thoroughly studied Indian life and Indian music before he combined it with opera. In the summer of 1909 he lived among the Indians with Frances La Flesche, son of Chief la Flesche of the Omahas. There he procured many records of songs and native flageolet love melodies. With La Flesche he spent weeks in research among Osage Indians of Oklahoma and transcribed certain ceremonial songs; and in 1911 he spent several months in New Mexico studying the San Domingo Indians. In fact, the story of Shanewis is based upon a situation not impossible in Northern California:

A wealthy woman of Southern California has become interested in a young Indian woman, Shanewis, and has sent her to New York for vocal training. In Scene 1 Shanewis sings her Indian songs for a party in honor of Mrs. Everton's daughter Amy, who has just returned from Vassar. Shanewis' charm fascinates Lionel Rhodes, whom Amy is to marry. Unaware of his engagement and at first shy, Shanewis yields to his wooing on

the condition that he will go to the reservation to see if her family is any bar to his regard.

The second part takes place on the Oklahoma Indian Reservation where Shanewis has returned, Lionel having secretly followed her. They are watching a big summer powwow during which a fanatical young Indian gives Shanewis a poisoned arrow once used by an Indian maid to poison a white betrayer. Horjo is assured Shanewis will never use the weapon. A jazz band of young people serenade Lionel and Shanewis as the Evertons arrive dressed in traveling clothes. They strive to check Lionel's infatuation for Shanewis; and Shanewis, learning for the first time of his engagement, scornfully rejects his love. As Shanewis repulses Lionel, Horjo (the young Indian) snatches the bow and arrow and shoots Lionel in the heart. Shanewis kneels beside him saying "Tis well, in death thou art mine," as Mrs. Everton drags Amy away.

Nelle Richmond Eberhart has written a libretto of free prose, scholarly even in the speech of the jealous young brave:

For half a thousand years your race has cheated mine with words and noble sentiment, offering friendship, knowledge, protection. With one hand you gave--niggardly; With the other took away greedily--The lovely hunting grounds of my fathers you have made your own; The bison and the elk have disappeared before you; The giants of the forests are no more. Your ships infest our rivers; Your cities mar our hills. What gave you in return? A little learning--restless ambition, a little fire water, and many, many cruel lessons in treachery!

Such recitatives or conversations are in arioso style, very melodious and fully accompanied.

![Musical notation](image)

1. Vocal score, p. 116
Shanewis' explanation of her song in Act I, which ordinarily would be recitative, is strictly an arioso. The directions for the "Song of the Robin Woman" read "like an incantation." This Robin Song is in a free A B A form, but the Canoe Song which she sings as an encore is in three strophes and refrain, with short coda. Throughout the opera there are no numbers, just double bars with indications of change of tempo.

In the duet between Lionel and Shanewis (Score, pp. 43-500), the poetic form is A B A with the two verses of the same words treated differently musically. A few motives are repeated in the last A, but there is not sufficient repetition to be termed da capo.

The opening of Act II gives a fine example of Cadman's choral treatment. The Indians, the spectators, the balloon vendors, Shanewis, and Lionel all have separate parts; the Indian chorus is differentiated by unison singing, the balloon vendors by full triads. As the Indians go into their powwow, the tenors and baritones sing in falsetto an Indian Ceremonial song used by permission of the United States Bureau of American Ethnology.¹

The accompaniment, especially in the Indian songs, is pictorial. With the word "zephyrs" (Vocal score, page 15), there are harplike runs; with "native forest bird," the

¹ Vocal Score, footnote, p. 19
imitation of a bird. Cadman has used a piano on the stage to accompany the Indian maid in Act I as she sings her native songs. The orchestra is only embellishment. In places he has used "tomtom" bass of fifths and first inversion chords. In Act II the actual drum is used on the stage (Vocal score, page 76). In the Canoe Song the accompaniment imitates a paddling motion.

Dramatically there is only one weak place in the opera. The powwow is only for the entertainment of the listener; it has nothing to do with the drama. Here, however, the music is interesting so that the ear will feel no lull. There are two high points in the final scene, the first when Shanewis learns of Lionel's engagement and the second when Horjo shoots the fatal arrow. The first situation could be termed the climax and the latter the denouement. Cadman has done the wise thing by closing the opera quickly after the death scene; the story has ended; he does not drag it on with chorus or final arias.

Although the opera has been Americanized by the use of the Indian story, melodies, and rhythms, the basis of the style is the Italian verismo opera. The plot is realistically human, and the final tragedy is typical. Some vocal are the Italian da capo, and throughout it is the melody,
not the accompaniment, which predominates and carries the drama.

It is because of the verismo character that the next opera is placed in this chapter. The Temple Dancer, although not fundamentally human in its elements, has that same violent passion and gruesome details, such as snakes on the altar, as the Italian verismo opera.

John Adam Hugo, born in 1873, wrote three operas besides a symphony, two piano concertos, a piano trio, and many songs and instrumental pièces. Only one of his operas was produced by the Metropolitan. The Temple Dancer was staged in 1919 in New York and in 1922 in Chicago.

The book, by Jutta Bel-Ranske, tells of the leading dancer of the temple of Mahadeo, who falls in love with one not of her faith. She realizes the immoral and unjust demands made on the dancers and decides to help her lover by stealing from the god the jewels that were purchased with the money the temple received by selling her virtues. The guard hears her and threatens her with death. To protect herself, she takes the snake from Mahadeo and places it around her, thus making herself sacred. She then prays, through her seductive dance, and fascinates the guard, who promises her protection. He discovers her love for another and her motives, but as the dancer dances again, she poisons him. As the guard dies, she defies him and the gods, calling curses upon the temple. The gods answer by a bolt of lightning which strikes her dead. The priests enter in terror, singing a hymn of redemption and praying for the forgiveness of the erring dead.

The poet has written the libretto in rhyme; at times it is such strict poetic that the conversation is stilted and not descriptive of the drama. For example:
I feel my senses swooning  
My throat is hot and dry.  
I pray thee give me water  
Or I will faint and die. 

Such trochaic verses (i/:i:/;i/:) have been set to a melodic recitative with an accompaniment which is full and melodious and in this case contains a repetition of the same measure sequentially six times.

Note in the example the skips of the augmented fourth (Measure 1) and the minor seventh (Measure 3).

The vocal ranges are not difficult; in the soprano role the highest note is a B flat. However, there is not one aria (all in free form) that is outstanding. The choruses are used only for variety and form no part of the dramatic action, serving merely as an opening and closing device, another Italian characteristic.

In one act the opera is not a number opera, but certain sections are entitled Prelude (page 7), Romanza (page 26), Snake Dance (page 33), Duetto (page 38), Chorus of the Nuns (page 41), Dance of Temptation (page 55), Final Chorus(p.68).

1. Vocal Score, Published by J. A. Hugo (Bridgeport, Conn., 1918) p. 57.
In the accompaniment and orchestral score, Hugo has used effective rhythms for the dancing.

The winding scale passages are used to depict the snake.

Harmonically Hugo makes great use of sequences, but the outstanding technique is that of building chords around a repeated pattern or two or more common tones.

Despite the untheatrical text and the fact that the orchestral scoring could have been lighter, with the fluent melody and with effective choreography of the dances plus a singer who could fulfill both roles as singer and dancer, the work could be an interesting production.

1. Transcript, March 14, 1919.
It is reasonable that the first comic opera to be discussed should fall under Italian influences rather than French or German, since the majority of the great comic operas are in the Italian buffa style.

Bianca, by Henry Hadley (first introduced in Chapter I with his opera Azora, Daughter of Montezuma), is a gay, witty story prepared by Grant Steward from the comedy "La Locandiera" or "The Mistress of the Inn."

A willful, coquettish, youthful mistress of a Florentine Inn of the seventeenth century woos her many suitors of high and low breeding with little thought but fun. She finally captures the humblest of all, her own servant and champion, Fabriccio.

Although there are no set numbers, the melodious declamation slips into arias in a few places. Such lyrical songs as Bianca's "Ironing Song" and Fabriccio's "Serenade" are typical of Italian comic arias but are freely composed. There are no ensembles until the quintet at the end of the opera, which makes up a finale.

Certain characters are represented thematically--only for reminiscence and not as leitmotivs.
In the orchestral accompaniment Hadley has followed the lyric comedies of Wolf-Ferrari, in which the orchestra fills an important and descriptive place without interfering with the play. Although Hadley has been able to describe the situations on the stage, he has not accomplished humor in the orchestral parts. There is much repetition of phrases in two and three sequences. Harmonically the music is very conventional, though chromatic in places. It is not contrapuntal.
Bianca is an attempt to write a comedy similar to the Italian comic opera, even though the orchestral accompaniment is of Wolf-Ferrari style. Hadley, in trying to avoid a direct imitation, has not achieved the melodic flow or the comic recitative that the true Italian comedies have. In Hadley's personal development this work is a transition between Azora and Cleopatra's Night, the former being strictly German in treatment, the Bianca Italian, and the last opera in an eclectic style.

The conclusions which may be drawn from a study of the American operas written under Italian influences are various. No one composer has incorporated a full imitation of the Italian techniques. The Monastery is nearest, having been written by an American living in Italy. The other works assimilate the Italian verismo plots (The Temple Dancer and Shanewis) with a partial lyric vocal treatment. The Italian comedy was attempted, but even then the famous vocal treatment was not used continuously. Although they did not succeed in avoiding the Verdi achievements, American composers may have been trying to do so, for it can be noted that these works were all written between 1910 and 1920. This is only ten to seventeen years after Verdi's death in 1901 and only seventeen to twenty-four years after Verdi's last opera Falstaff (1893).
CHAPTER IV

Eclecticism in American Opera

Often it is the fusion of the best characteristics from many artistic trends or developments which leads to a culmination even better than the greatest of the individual styles from which the new trend is derived.

International "grafting" has often been followed by productive results by new music which would never have appeared otherwise.

Mozart in his great operas combined the height of Italian vocal writing with the Mannheim symphonic style, which at that time represented the peak of orchestral development. The formal developments of the pre-classic composers opened the path to musical continuity; this Mozart applied to the Italian buffa (The Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni), the German singspiel (Die Entführung), and the Italian opera seria (Idomeneo). In Die Entführung Mozart had taken in elements of the Italian seria and buffa and of the French opera comique, with the warmth of German song.

Of Gluck it has been said that, although he was rooted in Germany, called German by the Germans and French by the French (Lavignac, Encyclopédie), the fruits of his muse were Italian. If roots were all that mattered, there would have

Our problem in this chapter is to decide whether such a process has taken place in American operatic development up to 1920, and, if so, to what degree. Let us look into the American works.

In 1907 Victor Herbert signed a contract with Oscar Hammerstein for "an American grand opera" to be produced the following season. Hammerstein wanted an American novelty for his Manhattan Opera House; therefore, he offered a thousand dollars to the man, preferably an American, who would provide a suitable libretto for Herbert. By the time a libretto for Natoma was written and the music finished (1911), Hammerstein was in financial difficulties and was unwilling to risk its production. He gave Herbert the excuse that the opera was too late, and the composer was left with the work on his hands. The work was finally produced in Philadelphia with Mary Garden and John McCormack.

The libretto was by Joseph D. Redding, who had written a number of pageants which were given in the open air in the Redwood Forest of California. The tale is that of an Indian girl in the days of the Spanish regime in California.

Natoma, the Indian maid, falls in love with a young U. S. naval officer who in turn falls in love with Natoma's mistress, Barbara. The plot is complicated by Barbara's Spanish cousin, who wishes to have her for himself. Natoma saves Barbara from abduction by killing the Spaniard

and finally takes refuge in the convent.

Joseph Kaye in his biography of Victor Herbert says:

At any rate, he (Herbert) was satisfied with the libretto, and thus placed himself in the unique position of being the only one who was.¹

This writer agrees with Mr. Kaye that, in general, the libretto is so poor that at times it is absurdly humorously. For instance,

Natoma: Oh, Paul, take me, beat me, kill me, but let me be your slave!

Paul: You little wild flower!

Love Duet Act I

I love thee!
In secret hear my vow,
I love thee!
For none shall know but thou
I love thee!
Ah, chide me not, I pray,
I love thee!
'Tis all my heart can say--
I love thee!
May heaven hear my prayer!
Beneath the stars I swe--ar!
With all my soul I love thee!

In Natoma's first act aria, in which she tells the story of her people, one may note the similarity to the poem Hiawatha by Longfellow. It is obviously the part of the whole libretto, and for these two reasons it is quoted:

---

From the clouds came my first father
Out he stepped upon the mountain
Over there—upon the mainland
In the early dawn of morning
And his people followed after.

Soon there came an awful famine,
And his people paled with hunger,
Paled with hunger and the famine.

Then he went down to the ocean
Where the water rolls unceasing,
And he prayed unto the Spirit
To the Spirit of the mountain,
To the Spirit of the waters,
And lo, his prayer was answered,
At his feet in untold numbers
Tossed up by the mighty ocean
Found he there the Abalone
Rich with meat the Abalone.

Musically too the opera is poor. It is a potpourri of
so many types of music and situations that it is similar to
a glorified Herbert operetta. It is as if the composer were
trying so hard that his result is a conglomeration of Indian
theme and Spanish melodies and rhythms—-with everything from
a church chorale to a dagger dance, including a habanera, a
minuet, and a lullaby. To the composer’s credit one must
admit that many of these individual numbers are quite lovely
—the lullaby that Natoma sings in Act III, for instance:
The opera abounds with Victor Herbert's fluent melody.

The use of Indian themes characterizes Natoma throughout. The following is typical.

The harmonies used at the end of Natoma's aria in Act I are predominantly consecutive fifths and fourths over a pedal point for four measures; otherwise, Herbert's harmonic treatment is quite conventional.

The dagger dance, performed by the half-breeding and Natoma just before the climactic killing of the Spaniard, is tense in rhythm and action--a dance of death.

In attempting the creation of an American opera, Herbert has not relied upon any specific techniques of foreign styles of grand opera. If any progenitor can be distinguished, it would be the operettas and light operas of England and Germany. Herbert has elaborated his famous
operetta talents into an opera form, the resulting product being a confused mixture of various melodies and dances.

The Metropolitan was not to be outdone by Hammerstein's offer for an American opera. Guilo Gatt-Casazza announced that a prize of $10,000 would be offered for the best grand opera written in English by an American. Horatio Parker heard of the offer, and with the collaboration of his friend Brian Hooker, professor of English at Yale, composed Mona. The contest closed on September 15, 1910, and on the day before the deadline this manuscript, along with twenty-three other operas, was submitted to the judges, who were Alfred Herz, conductor of the Metropolitan; Walter Damrosch, conductor of the New York Symphony; George W. Chadwick, director of the New England Conservatory; and Charles Martin Loeffler, concert master of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. On May 2, 1911, the decision was reached and the winner announced; it was Parker's Mona.

Like Converse, Parker and his librettist had chosen a non-American subject. The story takes place in England during the Roman invasion.

Gwynn, son of the Roman governor and a British captive, is in love with the British princess, Mona. She loves him, yet she hates him because he is a Roman. Mona defies his love to lead the British against the Romans and unknowingly loses all chances for peace and happiness through a treaty. The tragedy ends with the death of Gwynn at Mona's hands and her subsequent remorse.

The librettist is trying to "express the idea that
woman derives her strength from her womanliness and not from usurping the functions that belong to man.\textsuperscript{1} This idea is most likely characteristic of the times, a century when women were beginning to exert their independence and their desire for equal rights with men, and many people disapproved.

Written in Tennysonian blank verse, the libretto is far superior in literary quality to many other works of the period. For example, in Act I Mona sings of a dream which she has had three times, and she describes it thus:

I walked upon a windy beach between
Dark forest and dim sea. Low, swollen clouds,
Heavy with storm, gloomed overhead and hung
Bellying against the treetops. Close ashore
Towered one huge wave, curving over me
As a serpent curves to strike, created with cloud
And foam, the hollow gulf beneath alive
With tremulous lights and angry glints of green.
High overhead looming; so that I seemed to walk
In a long cavern roofed with cloud
And walled with foam and forest. And I have
Upon my breast a naked sword, close held
As a mother holds her child. So when the surge
Poised to plunge down on me, I thrust forth
The sword, shaking it seaward, and the sea
Bent backward and forebore. Meseemed one stood
Beside me veiled in a white shroud, whose face
I could not see, that strove to snatch away
My sword. Therefore, I smote and slew him.

Then,
The surge plunged, the clouds burst, and the trees
Fell, thunder rent, and whelmed me. And I woke
Trembling and seeming still to see the sword
And the grim cloud and green surge. And now,
Three nights together I have dreamed this dream.

The final scene of the opera summarizes the whole

\textsuperscript{1} Boston Herald, October 23, 1911.
thought and feeling of Mona in her "Farewell" to Gwynn after she has killed him and the Roman soldiers are waiting to take her away:

Love, I could not be  
A woman, loved and loving, nor endure  
A motherhood and the wise, ordinary joys  
Of day by 'day. All that I had to give  
I gave thee. I have known thy heart. Farewell.  
Forgive.  
(to the Soldiers) Do your will now.  
I have had dreams,  
Only great dreams. A woman would have won.

Parker has set the blank verse to music as if it were prose. The ideal seems to be to set the declamation to the cadences, accents, and rhythms of the words and the speaking voice as closely as possible. The orchestral foundation is used to interpret the immediate content of the lines. In doing so, Parker leans on no composer but himself. For instance, note the declamation in the following example:

In the next example the accompaniment is significant. The governor is telling Gwynn of the insurrections which have, as he describes it, been "humming like a hive in a swarm." The humming is depicted in the upper instruments and in the bass.
The declamation and the airs pass into each other so smoothly that it is difficult to pick out any direct aria. The degree of expressiveness is much the same in both aria and declamation. There are few duets and choruses, but what there are are well written. Parker has been noted for his choral works.

The composer changes keys and rhythms as he pleases, to express the words. The following excerpt is typical.

It is interesting to note that on page 98 of the piano-vocal score, the signature in the piano is two sharps and in the voice five flats.

Parker has made use of the leitmotiv in the sense that certain themes are used to represent ideas or symbols. The
sword, which seems to represent the pending tragedy, is characterized by the following theme on page 27 (vocal score):

![Musical notation]

Then on page 34, changed somewhat, the theme is as follows:

![Musical notation]

The prophecy of Mona's leadership is sung by Caradoc with the following accompaniment:

![Musical notation]

Later in the opera, when the governor tells of the uprisings, the same theme comes back even stronger as Gwynn tells him of the people's belief in Mona.

Thus it can be seen that Parker has chosen an early English subject, used a Wagnerian leitmotiv treatment plus his own talented vocal treatment in the declamation, and arias which are of no set number or form. It is sad that Mona was given only one performance. If done well, the opera would prove as interesting as many others that grace the stage today in the regular repertoire of most companies.
The next opera, Narcissa, was of special interest to the writer because the book, by Sarah Pratt Carr, is the story of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. Dr. and Mrs. Whitman built a small mission at Waillatpu, a few miles from Walla Walla, Washington. It was in memory of the Whitmans that a fellow pioneer, Cushing Eells, founded in Walla Walla the Whitman Seminary, which later became Whitman College.

The composer, Mary Carr Moore, living now in California, was born in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1873. Mrs. Moore has been known throughout the West for her choruses, songs, and instrumental work. She has five operas to her credit: The Oracle (1894), Narcissa (1912), Los Rubios (1931), Davide Rizzio (1932), and The Leper (1912). A letter was written to Mrs. Moore asking where scores to her other operas could be obtained, but to date no answer has been received. Therefore, the discussion must be limited to Narcissa.

The opera opens in Rushville, New York, when Whitman, accompanied by four Indians, returns for his bride, Narcissa. The Indians have come to beg for people to return to the West to teach the Christian religion. Whitman's song "They Come With Me to Beg of You the Message of the Christ" is representative of the missionary spirit, and this theme dominates the whole opera.

In Act II the Whitmans and their party arrive at Fort Vancouver. McLaughlin, head of the Hudson Bay Company, greets them as allies. The Indian Chief, Yellow Serpent, invites Whitman to his land to teach his people. In this act Indian themes are used, including a sun dance.

Act III opens on the mission in Eastern Washington, known as Waillatpu. It depicts the life
at the mission and the arrival of an Immigrant train. Act IV takes place just before Dr. Whitman's return from the frantic winter ride to Washington, D. C. Whitman returns to find sickness among the Indians. As death comes to the lodges of the Cayuse, the Nez Perce come to convince the Cayuse to lead a massacre. The Whitmans were only two among many who did not escape.

Although the story does have a basis for good drama, the movement of the opera is slow. There is no climax until the massacre, which is nothing but a befuddled chorus. There is no development of plot that moves to a climax; the scenes and acts are just a series of events. Characters which have been inserted for historical propriety weaken not only the dramatic plan but also the musical structure.

Although the sections are not all numbered in the score itself, the index has listed Prelude, Chorus, Ensemble, Scene, Solo and Narration, Recitative for Bass, Hymn of Praise, Scene, Duet, etc.

The recitatives are a melodious declamation but with chordal accompaniment.

The treatment has obviously been made to sound heroic; consequently, it loses its artistic qualities.
The arias usually have two or three sections, in each of which the mood changes. In fact, these sections may be of such a contrast that they might be separated into two small arias.

Harmonically the music is very simple. Mrs. Moore has used Indian rhythms and melodies and at times an ostinato to depict tomtom beats.

The pattern into which the opera falls has been drawn from the general Italian form. Arias, recitatives, and choruses are the skeletal structure, and the general accompaniment has attempted a setting of mood rather than pictorialism. Vocally and musically the opera is not outstanding. It is interesting only from the point of historical subject matter. The following opera, though more eclectic in style, is stronger musically.

Joseph Carl Breil (1870-1926) had only one opera produced; The Legend was given in 1919 at the Metropolitan.

The story of the opera is a complicated, bloody affair in true Italian style. The text is by Jacques Byrne.

Hacareff, an impoverished Russian nobleman, lives a double life—a bandit by night and a nobleman by day. His daughter Carmelita knows of this and, being in love with a young officer,
Stephen Pauloff, fears that she will be cast off if her lover knows that she is the daughter of a rogue. Mara, a servant, tells of the legend that on this eve the Evil One walks and knocks on doors. Opening the doors means that death comes into the household. Carmelita scoffs and answers a knock, believing it to be Stephen. She finds no one there, but Stephen comes later and reveals to her father that he is looking for the Black Lorenzo. The Black Lorenzo (the father by night) escapes; Stephen goes after him. Torn between protecting her father and losing her lover, Carmelita stabs Stephen. The soldiers enter with the badly wounded Black Lorenzo, and seeing their captain dead, they kill Carmelita.

The libretto is not natural English vernacular, nor is it good prose. For instance, Stephen's aria to Carmelita:

Heavenly eve, that brings one again to see my lady's face
And take her kisses warm and tender after the and weary years apart
The face that haunted me in wintry camp
When wounded on my cot I prone did lie
Now I swear we'll never parted be again
I'll bind you with sweet and holy bonds
That naught can break but death, but death.

Their argument:

Stephen: Unhand me, girl, Unhand me, girl.
Carmelita: Oh, pity me.
S: Unhand me, girl.
C: Oh, pity me.
S: Spawn of such a thing as he; My oath's a thing of naught.
C: Never, Stephen.
S: When sworn in favor of a love as base as this
C: Never shall you leave me, Stephen
S: Stand you now aside--let me do my duty, stand you now aside.
C: Never, Stephen, never, Stephen, No!!!
S: Away, Away, away, away, Go!

Vocally such scenes are not difficult but of a conventional treatment--a high note or an odd interval or rhythm
for emphasis. The recitatives are melodious, at times accompanied, at other times unaccompanied.

There are no numbers labeled as such, but certain pieces could be taken out as individual arias. For instance, *A Woe is Me*, sung by Carmelita. It is in the following form:

Recitative

Aria

Recitative

freely composed

Certain themes are used repeatedly to remind the listener of the evil that lurks. The following example depicts the Black Lorenzo and the Evil One who knocks:

The dotted rhythm is expressed whenever evil lurks.

Carmelita's love for Stephen is portrayed by the following theme:

The maid, who tells of the legend of the Evil One, foretells Carmelita's death from a deck of cards. This scene recalls to mind the card scene in *Carmen* by Bizet;
there Carmen predicts her own death. Breil's treatment of the same subject matter is not comparable to that of Bizet. In contrast with Carmen's beautiful and dramatic soliloquy, the maid's remark in The Legend is:

![Music notation]

In the orchestra the dealing of the cards is pictorialized by syncopation.

Breil's scoring calls for a Wagnerian orchestra of three flutes, two oboes, one English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, strings, tympani, drums, triangle, carrillon, xylophone, large and small cymbal. With the vocal lines written as they are, few singers could be heard over the orchestra unless their voices were of the Wagnerian type. Such an orchestra, however, is completely adequate in the description of the storm.

Thus Breil has been more obviously eclectic than the other composers. His vocal treatment is nineteenth century Italian, the story a verismo horror drama, his orchestra Wagnerian, and the stage techniques attempted from the French of Bizet.

When Cleopatra's Night by Henry Hadley was presented at the Metropolitan in 1920, it was guaranteed a full house by the appearance of Enrico Caruso in I Pagliacci on the
same bill.¹ The story which the audience saw that evening was based on Gautier's work with text by Alice L. Pollock. Because of stage limitation and the necessity of respecting certain conventions, the operatic version does not have the dramatic meaning that the Gautier book has. Nevertheless, Sigmund Spaeth said, "Cleopatra's Night not only has this 'sure fire' atmosphere of liberated sex-instincts in abundant measure, but it also possesses a concise plot of unlimited possibilities."² The plot is as follows:

Cleopatra is bored. She believes that she is loved only because she is a queen. She expresses to the gods her desire for a true lover who would hold her above anything else. Her wish is granted immediately, for an arrow falls at her feet with a written message attached, "I love you." A moment later a swimmer arrives via subterranean passage to the baths. He explains his love and his willingness to give his life for only one night of Cleopatra's love. She agrees to bargain that at the dawn Meiamoun shall drink poison. They have their night. At the dawn Cleopatra begs him to live, but Meiamoun, true in his love, drinks the poison as Anthony approaches. Cleopatra mourns Meiamoun's death as the curtain falls.

Hadley has reproduced the prose text with correctness of declamation, but it is more fluent and idiomatic than in his earlier works. Note the laughter and unaccompanied recitative.

². Transcript, February 7, 1920.
The chorus is not used to a great extent except in the hailing of Cleopatra. In the choral writing is found the use of octave "unisons" and chords without the third; the style is homophonic with little polyphony.

Not a number opera, there is no aria based on a da capo form. All numbers are fused into one another, and a very few places are marked as recitative.

With an Egyptian atmosphere there is a lack of Egyptian strains in either the vocal melodies or in the instrumental harmonies. Finck in the New York Post (no date) explained:

(Hadley) visited all cafes, chanlants, and native theaters in Cairo determined to take down some material, but found it all so crude and primitive that I (Hadley) fled into the country to seek inspiration from nature.

Hadley has used chromatic harmonies moving from one key to another. He has used key signatures, but the use of accidentals is so prevalent that the key signature has nothing to do with the tonality. This technique is exemplified in the orchestral prelude to Act I:
He also uses fourths and fifths over a pedal point with an ascending chromatic melody between:

The following example shows both his use of sequences and the pictorialism describing the swishing of oars.

In the scene of Cleopatra and Meiamoun's night, one might, after examining Hadley's earlier works, expect to find an imitation of the Tristan and Isolde love scene. However, Hadley was individual; he did not use the repetition of thematic material nor the contrapuntal treatment of orchestra and voices; he obtained his movement by the sequential movement of chords in the following manner.
Dramatically, vocally, and orchestrally, Cleopatra's Night shows great advancement over the earlier Azora. There is no wasted movement, song or accompaniment; the story is told and the drama finished with little ceremony. The vocal lines are written with the singer in mind, but there is some trace of French exoticism in the orchestral lines (the open fifths, sequential movement of chords). The chromatic harmonies and continual shifting of tonality are traceable to Wagner, but on the whole, Hadley has added a great amount of individuality.

The comic opera becomes more prominent under eclectic influences than under French, German, or Italian. Foremost is another Damrosch opera, Cyrano, which was originally produced in 1913 at the Metropolitan Opera House. It is based on the Rostand comedy Cyrano de Bergerac.

The story concerns a cavalier who because of a long and hideous nose has considered himself no man for any woman. He has compensated for his physical defect by becoming an expert swordsman and soldier as well as a philosopher, a poet, and a playwright. Secretly in love with his cousin Roxane, he agrees to help one of his soldiers, Christian, win Roxane's hand because he knows that Roxane is in love with Christian. He writes Christian's love letters and coaches him in the finer arts of verbal love making. After a war in which Christian is killed, Roxane retires to a convent. There she learns, quite
by accident, that Cyrano has been the soul behind all her ideals and that she has been in love with him all this time. Cyrano never admits that he has written the letters. As a result of his war wound, he dies, delirious, with sword in hand, knowing that he has finally won Roxane's love.

In a style completely different from The Scarlet Letter, Damrosch has turned away somewhat from the Wagnerian touches of the first opera. He is quoted as having said that he is "Striving to give a lyric, humanistic vocal form without resorting to the Italian aria da capo." In this he followed the example of Verdi in Othello and Falstaff. The music is melodic both in the voice and in the orchestra and the disclosure of themes is reserved for focal points.

The most obvious theme is first heard in the opening measures of the prologue.

1. Transcript, February 24, 1943.
A whole tone scale, it represents Cyrano's huge nose; it is used throughout the opera whenever the nose is mentioned.

The melodies associated with Roxane change and develop into stronger and broader themes as her love changes from the light, girlish love to the mature love of a married woman.
The letter theme, representing Cyrano's influence in the romance, is introduced in the prelude to Act II by a violin solo. It returns as Roxane tells Cyrano of her love for Christian and again at the balcony scene as Cyrano is telling Christian what to say to Roxane. The letter theme:

Another theme, heard as Cyrano speaks to Roxane, his identity unknown, and tells her of his love

is heard again at the end of the opera when Roxane realizes that the letters which she has cherished so dearly were written by Cyrano and not by Christian.

This excellent thematic treatment, along with a melodicness lacking in the first opera, has made Cyrano an outstanding comic work. In Roxane's first aria the Italian style is noticeable in the great vocal display:

This aria is an A B form fusing into a choral ending. It is one of the few which Damrosch has put into a set form. Another is the ballad which Cyrano sings in the first act
as he is dueling. The use of the ballad-refrain form is clever. Cyrano, in singing the first two stanzas, explains that not only will he win this duel, but he also will recite a ballad as he fights and touch at the end of the refrain. The duel begins; Cyrano repeats the first two stanzas (or really begins his ballad). This time he adds the refrain and touches his opponent. All in all, it becomes an A B A B refrain form.

Now ladies and gentlemen fair, look well on this dullard, and Good brother I prithee dispair of stopping my ballad or I rhyme a rhyme desponding, my sword will be into the air, for I am void of spirit, and the chime of my ballad shall be I touch as I end the refrain, on queen of our hearts do you see how the sword beats time to the refrain and the chime of the ballad shall be I touch as I end the refrain.
Harmonically Damrosch makes great use of the same chromaticism that he used in his first opera. It is more characteristically used in *Cyrano*, however, and does not seem to be "filling space," as it sometimes did in the earlier work. He is striving for a sound to depict his actions and drama, and he is not interested in conventionality.

Summarizing, then, Damrosch has reserved the repetition of melodies for focal points, as Verdi might have done; however, the theme of Roxane is developed in a leitmotiv technique. The vocal treatment is based on the late Italian lyricism with two arias in a set form. The chromaticism and treatment of harmony is romantic and flavored by Wagner, although the use of a whole tone scale as a main theme stems from the late romantic music of the French.

Let us look further, into two operas by the same composer, *Canterbury Pilgrims* and *Rip Van Winkle* by Reginald DeKoven. DeKoven's life was just the opposite of that of most American composers. Born in Connecticut, he received all his university training abroad, in England and on the Continent. Later he came back to America, where he was active as a music critic and as a composer. He is better known for his operettas, but he did write these two grand comic operas. The *Canterbury Pilgrims* was produced in 1917 at the Metropolitan, and *Rip Van Winkle* was presented in 1920 by the Chicago Opera Company.

The earlier opera is based on a book by Percy Mackaye.
and is set in the England of April, 1387.

Chaucer, poet laureate of England traveling incognito with a band of pilgrims from London to Canterbury, encounters the Wife of Bath, who, having had five husbands, is looking for a sixth. She immediately falls in love with Chaucer, who instead of returning his affections, becomes interested in a Prioress. The Prioress, a gentlewoman holding a sacred position, is still unbound by vows. The Wife of Bath devises a plan by which she tricks Chaucer into a compact to marry her. Chaucer appeals to the King, Richard II, who says the Wife of Bath may marry a sixth time but only to a miller. This is delightful, as a devoted miller, one of the Wife's swains, accepts the task joyfully. Then the Prioress and Chaucer are reconciled.

The intrigue and humor of the libretto puts the work into the class of opera buffa. Yet with great caution the composer has maintained dignity throughout the work, for he has treated the orchestral scoring with a German bigness. He has adopted a method of recurring themes which are short, rhythmical, and often repeated. At times, however, the rhythm of the recitatives covers the humor.

The recitatives are fully accompanied and are a melodious speech-song. Arias as individual numbers are not conspicuous, and the accompaniment is strong and important throughout.

DeKoven has made ample use of a chorus, often combining soloists and chorus into a huge ensemble. For instance, in
the chorus (pages 99-101 in the vocal score) "St. Thomas is a goodly soul," the fugual entrances work into a section for double chorus, the soloists versus the chorus—all parts entering antiphonally. Then, ending the first section is a homophonic section of alleluia. Three sections of similar form make up the full number.

The chorus is also used to the fullest extent in the finales of the last act, when everyone joins to "Hail the Wife of Bath."

Ensembles are prevalent. The humorous quartet of swains of the Wife of Bath remind one of the trio in Turandot by Puccini. Always singing together, the swains are especially clever as they swear to secrecy on Allison's scheme, answering antiphonally Allison's melodic demands (page 235, vocal score).

The duet between the Prioress and Chaucer is melodious, sentimental, and Italian in character.

Considered as a whole, this is a comic opera
reminiscent of the Italian buffa but strengthened by a
grander treatment typical of German comic works.

DeKoven's second opera, *Rip Van Winkle*, is a folk opera
in three acts, the story based on the old legend of the
same name. However, in the opera Rip tells some children
the ghostly story of Henry Hudson and his crew, who sud-
denly appear and promptly invite him to join them in a mid-
night game of ninepins. They give him a flask from which
he drinks a portion and falls asleep. Years later he re-
turns, and Peterkee, the child who followed him to the
ghostly game, has guarded the flask. Rip drinks again,
returns to youth, and marries Peterkee.

A lighter opera than *Canterbury Pilgrims*, it is filled
with gay songs such as *The Song of the Goose Girl* and Peter-
kee's *Song of the Mermaid*. The recitative is depicted as
close to speech as possible. Even stuttering is realis-
tically sung:

The accompaniment duplicates rhythmically and melodi-
cally the voices, and the harmonies are conventional. At
times DeKoven uses pictorialism (tremolo) to enhance the
action.

The chorus work is lively and full of dancing, and it
would be a fascinating spectacle for children. The ghosts
of Henry Hudson are not treated differently musically than are the mortals. The ghostly sailors' chorus is rollicking, based on a hornpipe tune and rhythm. It is in the antiphonal form of soloist and chorus. Amusing too are the remarks of the chorus to the mortals in short phrases repeated in answer to the latter's remarks: "So, most decidedly so!" or "No, Most decidedly No!" or "So, unreservedly so." Note a similarity to Gilbert and Sullivan chorus such as is found in the Pirates of Penzance:¹

The last scene of Act III is a true buffa finale; everyone, including the ghosts, returns for a final chorus in which the action continues in the giving of the half moon to Peterkee.

In conclusion, it can be said that the merry songs and the humorous recitative give the Italian characteristics. Yet in the choruses is found the influence of the lighter

operetta forms. Thus in *Canterbury Pilgrims* the buffa elements have been subordinated to the dignified German romantic qualities, but in *Rip Van Winkle* the buffa has been enhanced by the English comic style.

The opera which closes the chapter on the eclectic influences was in the process of composition for a number of years. Although the premier of *The Blonde Donna*, by Ernest Carter, was given in Brooklyn in 1913, the title was copyrighted in 1907 and the libretto in 1911. In 1922 the music and the revised libretto were copyrighted, and the opera was published in 1936.

*The Blonde Donna* is a comic opera in three acts, and the story has its background in the California of 1824.

In that year the Indians, tired of the strict, stern Padres, planned an insurrection, the first blow to be struck at Santa Barbara. (The plan failed at this point, for some reason not made clear in the histories of that period. This opera is supposed to supply the missing link.) The plot itself is a love maze between a young man cast up on the California shore by shipwreck and adopted by the Padres, his sister, adopted by a wealthy Spanish widow, and the widow's daughter, *The Blonde Donna*. After due humorous action the relationship of the brother and sister is disclosed, and the young man and the blonde donna are united.

The libretto, by Ernest Carter himself, is in verse. The rhythms of the poetry remain similar throughout the opera and are at times awkward. In the following example there is a distinct similarity to Gilbert and Sullivan's "I am the very model of a modern major general" from *The
Pirates of Penzance.

If the works of Theban Cebes, or the progress of the press
Plant a thirst for deeper knowledge in your mind
Of Aristotelian theories and the cuss words of Queen Bess
Or the modes of teaching music to the blind....

This work is a number opera in the Italian tradition, and the names given are "Duet," "Quartet," etc. It can truly be placed in the category of a melodrama, since there is speaking in rhythm to the orchestral accompaniment. In No. 8, the Dialogue Scene, neither pitch nor rhythm is designated. Only the measures in which the sentences are to be spoken are indicated. Another melodramatic treatment is found on page 20 of the score, where the recitation rhythm is given but no proper pitch.

The accompanied recitative is in Italian style; not the chordal accompaniment:
Vocally the opera is singable; the melodies are catchy though sometimes uneven in the interval pattern. These arias are supported by an appropriate light style always in the background and supplementing the voice. Harmonically the accompaniment is very simple.

The score gives opportunities for ballet and ensembles. The choruses are lively and full but strictly homophonic in treatment.

Ernest Carter has therefore elected to combine the melodrama of the singspiel with the Italian number form and the Italian vocal treatment. With this he has added a touch of Gilbert and Sullivan light humor in the verse and the music.
CONCLUSION OF SECTION I.

From the four preceding chapters, the first general conclusion is the fact that opera by American composers from 1900 to 1920 falls into four large categories: those works influenced by German nineteenth century romanticism; those influenced by French operatic development; those influenced by Italian nineteenth century operatic art; and finally, those which show eclectic trends. From these general divisions other deductions should be made.

It should be noted that the number of basically foreign operas within the individual chapters is approximately the same, while the eclectic operas number twice the total of one of those categories. However, the total number of operas influenced by foreign schools is approximately the same (11 to 9) as the number of eclectic works. What is the significance of this fact? It points out that American composers, in seeking a nationalistic opera during these twenty years, were about equally divided in their fundamental approaches between basing their works on a single style or on a combination of styles. Eclecticism was not due to the melting pot of people in the United States but to the fact that most composers went abroad for their training.

A national subject has been used in only six of the twenty operas discussed, and one of those is Mexican. Of these six operas, three fall into the eclectic chapter.
(Natoma, Narcissa, and The Blonde Donna) and three into the foreign chapters (Poia, Shanewis, and The Daughter of Monte-
sum). From these observations one can conclude that the search for American opera was not being made through the problem of subject matter as much as from the standpoint of musical treatment.

In the detailed analysis of this musical treatment, it is noticed that the German school has given more diversified influences than either the French or the Italian. The leitmotiv system, the Sprechgesang, the contrapuntal techniques, the melodrama, and the nationalistic use of folk material are all found in the four operas of Chapter I. Proceeding chronologically, however, the leitmotiv system becomes more sparingly used in Azara than in The Scarlet Letter, and then in Poia and Azora it is abandoned. The use of contrapuntal harmoni treatment and the Wagnerian vocal style is prominent in the works, but the melodramatic technique was employed only in Hadley's Azora.

From Chapter II the reader will readily see that the impressionistic school of France exerted its features in American works. The harmonic innovations are more predominant than the arioso vocal declamation, which is not applied in all cases. In each work, however, the French influences have been applied to a mystic, spiritual, and psychological story, a background to which impressionism is most applicable.
From the Italians the American composers gleaned mainly vocal treatment, melody and the singer carrying the drama, and vocal forms plus the verismo idea. The verismo style was applied to an American subject in Shanewis.

These same general techniques separated from one another are found united in the operas of the eclectic group. It is readily seen that no one combination is standard and that no one individual procedure is more prominent than another, although within one opera a certain method may be. If one technique must be singled out as more eminent than the others, the Wagnerian harmonic treatment is found in more eclectic works than is any other single trend. This may be contrapuntal chromaticism in one work or the use of leitmotifs in another. In The Legend the Wagnerian influence is seen in the instrumentation.

Of the three nationalistic schools, there are numerous single Italian principles scattered throughout the eclectic works. In The Legend and Narcissa it was the verismo ideas in Natoma, Cyrano, Cleopatra's Night, and The Legend, the flowing melody is important. The buffa found its place in portions of DeKoven's works and in The Blonde Donna.

In the majority of eclectic works only one truly French innovation has become a part of the operatic plan. The ballet is found in some degree or style in almost every work.

In a review of the American opera during the first
two decades of this century, another question arises. Is there any opera which has succeeded in reaching the goal of a fully nationalistic American opera? In reading the critics' reviews of each new production, one would be led to believe that the goal had finally been reached with each one and that the previous success was not truly the destination after all. However, this writer would discard all critics' ideas and answer the query with one word: "No." The goal had not been reached by 1920; foreign influences were too prominent even in those works based upon American subjects and eclectic in technique.

The reason for this is simple. The operatic environment of the United States was almost completely European during the whole period; the number of American works performed was very small in comparison to the number of foreign works produced. Therefore, since there was no influence other than foreign, it is no wonder that American musicians were having difficulty in breaking away from the European traditions. It is certain that if foreign opera had never been introduced and if the first settlers had developed an opera of their own, the picture of American opera would be very different today.

The works discussed are at the threshold. They are compositions which in any country must be written as steps in evolutionary growth. It is questionable whether the goal will be reached in the years from 1920 to 1940,
whether the preparatory works will be cast aside or remem-
bered only as a small part of history.
SECTION II

1920 TO 1940
CHAPTER I

American Opera under German Influences

The influences of the German romantic opera of the nineteenth century were still felt by American composers at the beginning of the third decade of the twentieth century. The composers were working away from direct imitation not only because of the gradual emergence of Americanism but because during and following the first World War, there was a definite campaign against anything German or Wagnerian.

In the discussion of the three operas, each of which was written before 1930, the same principles which were summarized in the introduction of Chapter I, Section I, are to be followed.

It is not surprising that Frank Patterson's *The Echo* shows influence of German romanticism, for he studied with Rheinberger and Thaïlile in Munich. Patterson, born in Philadelphia in 1871, first studied music at the University of Pennsylvania. He delved deeply into the subject of tone relationships and became well known as a theorist. A member of the editorial staff of the *Musical Courier* for a number of years, he is the author of *Practical Instrumentation, How to Write a Good Tune*, and *The Perfect Modernist*. In sympathy with modernist trends, he still tries to combine melody with the new harmonies.

*The Echo* was awarded the prize by the "Opera in Our
Language, Inc." in 1922 and then was performed in 1925 at the Biennial Conference of the National Federation of Music Clubs in Portland, Oregon. The libretto, also by Patterson, is similar to the setting of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* with the contrast of mortals cast against the creatures of immortal realms.

The scene opens upon a young girl who has been cast upon a rock cave in the ocean. Almost mad from fear and loneliness, she throws her weight vainly at a large boat too high on the shore to be set afloat by the tide. Suddenly she hears a call, a different sound from the calls of the Echo Folk who haunt her from the cave. She pulls a drowning shipwrecked sailor. The two soon fall in love, but their happiness is marred by the attempts of the Echo Folk to entice the man into their world, having once been repulsed by the girl. The girl's pleas and love are stronger than the taunts of the Echo Folk, and the man dashes the drugged wine to the ground. The Echo Folk retreat, leaving the two to escape.

The play itself is filled with symbolism: the legendary Echo Folk may be only filaments of the mortals' imaginations or they may be echoes from the sea; however, the composer has painted a very musical picture of a situation, not of a moving drama, by choral and orchestral sounds. There is a speech song similar to that of Wagner. The declamation is melodious, and no single numbers by one character can be singled out.
The accompaniment is kept moving by polyphonic treatment in order to symbolize the picture of the sea. Notice the Wagnerian chromatic harmonic idiom.

Harmonically Patterson's music is interesting and yet appropriate to the situation. The following excerpt exemplifies his use of sevenths and seconds to depict the mysterious
If numbers which break the continuity of the whole must be selected, the choral pieces are the most outstanding. The opening chorus, in which the Echo Folk cry for a savior, is given as an example. It is interesting that Patterson depicts the fusion of the sounds of echoes by the overlapping of voice parts.

Harmonically Patterson's music is interesting and yet appropriate to the situation. The following excerpt exemplifies his use of sevenths and seconds to depict the mysterious
fright of the girl, lost and alone.

In summation, Patterson may be said to have employed the Wagnerian declamation as well as the contrapuntal treatment of harmony.

Deems Taylor was born in New York in December, 1885. After graduating from New York University in 1906, he studied harmony and counterpoint with Oscar Coon. This unknown man was Taylor's only teacher, and beyond that he is virtually self-taught. He won recognition as correspondent, critic, commentator, master of ceremonies for radio programs, editor, author, and composer. Aside from his operas, Taylor has been noted for his orchestral works such as Jurgen, Marco Takes a Walk, A Christmas Overture, and Fanfare for the People of Russia as well as incidental music for numerous plays.

Of his three operas only the first will be discussed in this chapter. The King's Henchman was written during 1925 as a result of a commission from the Metropolitan Opera Company. It was 1931 before he finished the second, Peter Ibbetson, which also was produced at the Metropolitan. The
third opera, Ramuntcho, was completed in 1938 but was not produced until 1942 by the Philadelphia Opera Company.

Edna St. Vincent Millay furnished the book for Taylor's first opera; she chose an old legend, the basic ideas of which have been the plots of Tristan and Friscilla.

Aethelwold, Earl of East Arglia, is sent by King Eadgar, his friend and half-brother, to Devon to woo and win for him the daughter of the Thane of Devon. Aethelwold, however, falls in love with the maid Aelfrida and marries her, sending back a false message to the king. A number of months later the King comes to Devon, and disobeying her husband's orders, Aelfrida appears in all her array, betraying his trust in her. Aethelwold, forsaken by his bride and haunted by the thought that he has betrayed his king, stabs himself before the King, his wife, and the courtiers.

The poetic prose is prose that only Millay could write:

Up, Sun, stir in thy straw!
Night yawns and sighs to give over the watch to thee!
All saddled, all bridled, without thy gate,
Thy stallion, the milk-white wind, doth wait!
With silver-hoof beginneth to stamp and paw!
We have saddled and bridled the wind for thee!
We have cut thee a whip from the withy tree!

Throughout the work the librettist has used the formal second person, which adds a mysterious touch to the conversation, a touch appropriate to the early Saxon setting; yet the old language is not without humor.

The musical setting of the work has a Wagnerian basis vocally and instrumentally; the voices are often an instrument with the orchestral whole; the recitatives are very melodious, and all are fully accompanied. Taylor has used a number of motifs which are used similarly to leitmotifs.
The following are the most prominent:

There are no set arias in any definite forms, but certain vocal settings can be separated from the work as a whole; for instance, Aelfrida's Prayer on All Hallow'd Eve.

The love scene of Aethelwold and Aelfrida in Act I, though not a perfect well-rounded form, is similar in style to the second act of Tristan. Their duet is broken by Aelfrida's maid calling to her from a distance, just as (in Tristan) Brangaena sings her warnings from the tower.

Note the following example of harmony from The King's Henchman. The same polyphonic melodic treatment is discernable in Tristan.

The harmonic changes of the following example from Taylor's work are similar in chromatic feeling to the accompaniment of Wagner's song Traume, an excerpt of which is quoted
Thus in the first opera of Deems Taylor is found a basically Wagnerian style in both vocal treatment and harmonic techniques. The next step is to examine Taylor's other operas (which will be done in later chapters) for different foreign trends and for a development of individuality.

The final opera in the chapter is interesting because it is the first American opera treated in this thesis which is a choral opera or morality play. This work is Everyman by William Lester.

Lester was born in England but came to America at the
age of thirteen. He received his education in Chicago and has been a choral conductor, an organist, and a teacher. His works include solo songs, part songs, cantatas, piano, organ, and chamber works.

*Everyman* is the same tale that is given each year in Salzburg, Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Jedermann*.

The play involves a rich man who, when visited by Death, asks for more time on earth to find someone who will go on his long journey with him. He finds that his friends, his wealth, and even his knowledge cannot make the journey. But finally Good Deeds enters the grave with Everyman, and Faith stands by.

Lester's text is an English version of the play with quotations from the Bible (Psalms, Job, Isaiah, and Revelations). The original poetry is written in a Biblical rhythm, with superfluous words which make comprehension less easy.

What shall I do now for to excuse me!
I would to God I had never begot
To my soul a full great profit it had be;
For now I fear pains huge and great.
The time passeth, The time passeth:
Lord, help, that all wrought.
For though I mourn, it availath naught!
The day passeth, and is almost ago;
I wot not will what for to do.

Written for soli, chorus, organ, or orchestra, all the dialogue has been given an arioso treatment. There are no long arias sung by soloists, and small sections divided by double bars go into recitative and arioso without break. The treatment is much like the ariosos found in the Bach *St. John* and *St. Matthew Passions*. With the arioso technique
are many degrees of recitative styles—the secco-recitative, a recitative with sustained accompaniment, and a fully accompanied recitative. Following are examples of these and the arioso.
Choral anthems are interspersed periodically throughout the work in the same manner that the chorals are placed in the St. Matthew and the St. John. The chorus is to be partially unseen, since it is not a part of the dramatic action. These homophonic anthems could be called the arias of the work, the comment on the action, and the philosophy of the tale. Some contain incidental solos. The curtain is closed for each choral interlude; then it opens again to continue the action.

In the form of a Prologue, Four Scenes, and an Epilogue with choral interludes, Everyman contains musical motives, all of which are listed on page iii of the foreword to the score. These are used in a progressively developed form and are associated with the individual characters. For instance, Everyman's discouragement

![Musical notation]

and his discouragement

![Musical notation]

Note that the discouragement is a sigh motive.

The work is therefore Wagnerian in treatment, since the motives represent a character; and since there is no drastic change in any of the characters' moods, actions, or
personalities, there is little development of the motives. The Goods Motive, however, is treated polyphonically at one point:

![Musical notation image]

The Death Motive, heard under Death's vocal declamation, shows the chromatic passing chords which are a basis of Lester's harmonies.

![Musical notation image]

Note also the following examples, which are also basically Wagnerian:

![Musical notation image]
Instructions give a very colorful costuming and staging plan. Since the curtain is closed for each choral interlude, the action itself is never stopped as long as the curtains are parted. As a morality play, it would be appropriate for either a church or the opera house. In either place it would be most interesting as an opera rather than as an oratorio because the action would enhance the vocal declamation. This declamation might seem endless if sung from a choral platform. In the opera house Everyman would be an interesting change from the usual tragedy or comedy. In the church the work would be a modern return to the mysteries of the fourteenth to sixteenth century, retrospective yet prospective.

In conclusion, it must be emphasized that again it is the harmonic treatment which is predominantly Wagnerian in all the operas discussed. However, in only two has the vocal declamation of Wagner been employed. In Everyman the types of recitative and arioso similar to Bach have been used. In Everyman and The Echo the individualism has exerted itself in the use of the choruses and in the subject matter. In The King’s Henchman the whole operatic technique is founded upon Wagnerian principles, and the individualism asserts itself only in the curtailment of length and breadth.
CHAPTER II
American Opera under Italian Influences

In a study of the operas written between 1920 and 1940, once more a number of works are found which are similar to Italian opera in style. As in Chapter III of Section I, the same principles developed in Italian opera are the criterion.

Although Eleanor Everest Freer has contributed little to the quality of American opera, she has made up for the lack in quantity. Besides her ten operas, eight of which will be discussed briefly here, she has written many vocal works, quartets, trios, a song cycle, 150 songs, and many piano pieces. Born in 1864 just after the Civil War, Mrs. Freer studied with Marchesi, Godard, and Ziehn. She was an ardent supporter of American composers and founded the American Opera Society of Chicago.

In studying Mrs. Freer's operas in chronological order, one may immediately discern the development and improvement of the composer. But never did she reach the height of any of the other composers whose operas are discussed in this thesis.

The Legend of the Piper, published in 1922, was written in memory of her granddaughter; a frontispiece reads "The Piper of Fate charmed her little spirit away."

The librettist, Josephine Peabody, has given the old Pied Piper of Hamlin legend a new thought.
The Piper is a member of a strolling band and leaves the listener with the question in mind: Is he the Christ or a Saint who takes away the children to a better land?

The libretto is set in a recitative with only slow chordal accompaniment. There is only one place which could be called an aria, and that is the Piper's song of his Mother. The Piper's melody is the basis of the whole work and is usually employed in the accompaniment. The accompaniment itself is of many simple types:

a) \[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{\textfigured symbol} \\
\text{\textfigured symbol}
\end{array} \]

c) \[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{\textfigured symbol} \\
\text{\textfigured symbol}
\end{array} \]

d) \[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{\textfigured symbol} \\
\text{\textfigured symbol (alberti)}
\end{array} \]

The choruses are very simple and homophonic, and the chorus is used as a spectator, not as an integral part of the drama. The harmonies supporting both choral parts and solo lines are not elaborate.

The Chilkoot Maiden, published in 1926, is based on a Chilkoot Indian legend in Skagway, Alaska.

An Indian brave and his sweetheart quarrel, and when the Indian maid falls in love with a white man, she is charmed away by the song of Dugek, the Indian Mystery Woman, and disappears in a crack in the mountain.

Mrs. Freer has used jazz rhythms to portray the Indian
life. In this opera the recitative is accompanied, and there is more aria treatment. The libretto is in rhyme, and a modern two-step dance is used in a scene with the miners. Ralph's song is in a strophic form with an answering miners' chorus. Again the harmonies are simple, and there is repetition of sections and phrases for unity.

The Legend of Spain tells of Queen Isabelle invading a Moorish castle.

In a vision from the Virgin, the secret passageway to the castle is revealed to the Queen. The Moorish King kills himself. A Curate then reveals his dreaming thrice of a treasure hidden by the Moor, the hiding place of which is revealed to the Queen in another vision. All dance, Spaniard and Moor, and a young Spanish captain falls in love with the Moorish King's daughter. King Ferdinand arrives, and the royal conquerors with the Moorish princess leave for Arajan.

Again are found sections characterized by repetitious melodies and the repetition of harmonic phrases. There are distinct methods of accompaniment, arpeggio, alberti, etc. The vocal and choral treatment is no different than in the two preceding works.

A Christmas Tale, published in 1928, is similar to the composer's other works.

A Frenchman, out on a Christmas eve drinking spree, leaves his wife and baby. He is a wood carver, and the Saints he has carved come to life, leave toys for the child, and reprove the father when he returns. He vows to be faithful and returns to his wife.

Preciosa, based on a book by H. W. Longfellow, was also published in 1928. It is a series of incidents not easily
followed in the libretto.

Preciosa, daughter of a Nobleman of Spain, was stolen as a baby by an old Gypsy and forced to live the nomadic life. As a young woman, Preciosa has three suitors—a Gypsy with whom she quarrels, a count who is distasteful to her, and a Spanish Student whose love she returns. Through a misunderstanding and jealousy the two true lovers are separated, but they are happily reunited just at the time the Gypsy confesses her crime, and Preciosa's father returns to Madrid to claim his daughter.

Again there is no polyphony; the opera is in the same style as the others, although there is not as much repetition of phrases. The same academic accompaniment prevails. In the chorus of Gypsies, Mrs. Freer has depicted the folk rhythms of Spain for dancing.

Frithiof, published in 1929 and based on a Norse Legend, is similar to the Tristan tale but has a happy ending.

One melody predominates in the prelude and is used both in the introduction of Act II and in a number of songs throughout the work. In this opera Mrs. Freer has managed a better development of plot, despite the fact that in her vocal treatment many arias are of the same style.

Joan of Arc, also published in 1929, contains a greater use of moving parts. Sections are more modulatory, and there is greater harmonic interest; she has even employed a basso ostinato. Once more, however, are found repetitious motives and melodies in no formal manner. The aria of Act II repeats each phrase continually.

This opera is more of a spectacle than the others. It
has pageantry in a victory procession plus musicians with flutes on the stage.

The Scenes From Little Women, in Two Acts, is based on a story by Alcott but is written by Mrs. Freer. Like Frithiof, the prelude contains a violin or 'cello solo. The libretto is in the Freer "1880" style:

It's dreadful to be poor when young
While others thrive
With father off to battle fields
We'll keep our pride.

The quartet of sisters is homophonic and like a chorale. Although the opera is more melodious than the previous works, the same motives are used again and again.

Freer's works are all of an academic nature—as if they had been composed with a composition textbook on the desk. The harmonies are proper and simple, the melodies repetitious and even to the point of being tiring. The accompaniment is of several stereotypes, and each type is found in each opera. Her choral writing in all is homophonic.

These operas have been placed in the Italian chapter because each one has been conceived from a vocal standpoint and not from the orchestral view; the accompaniment is unimportant. The singer executes the plot even though in a manner which is not elaborate.

The second operatic composer of this chapter has given a stronger work to the field of American opera. Franke W.
Harling was born in London in 1887 but was brought to America before he was a year old. Educated in Boston, London, and Brussels, he was active as an organist and a conductor. He later went to Hollywood, where he composed and arranged music for moving pictures. Interested in the use of jazz, he has used this idiom in such works as *Jazz Concerto*, *Chansons Populaires* (based on the melodies of Berlin, Kern, and Gershwin), and *Venetian Fantasy*. Among his other works are songs, works for chorus, and incidental music for plays.

Of his two operas, *A Light from St. Agnes* and *Deep River*, only the first is strict opera. *Deep River* contains spoken dialogue of such a manner that it has been considered two acts of operetta separated by one act of opera.

*A Light from St. Agnes* is a setting of a lyric tragedy by Minnie Maddern Fiske. The scene is a village near New Orleans. The plot revolves around an unseen character, St. Agnes, a nun who has recently died. The nun had been interested in aiding Toinette, a young girl of immoral character, who had repulsed the nun's approach.

The opera opens on the arrival of a priest at Toinette's cottage. There is a storm breaking, and he asks for shelter. When Michel, Toinette's lover, enters, he insults the priest, who immediately leaves. Michel then reveals his scheme to steal the cross of diamonds from the tomb of St. Agnes in the chapel. Toinette tries to cajole him out of his madness, but he is too drunk to listen. She warns him of the convent bell which would be rung before he could escape, so he asks her for a large knife to cut the rope. Toinette takes the knife and, to aid him, goes to cut the rope herself. Then in a few minutes the convent bell
rings. Michel knows immediately that Toinette has betrayed him. They meet at the cottage door; Michel stabs her with the knife. After he places her on the cot, the sun strikes the window of the chapel in the background, and a crucifix suddenly appears clasped in Toinette's hands, A Light from St. Agnes. Michel walks over to the sink, washes the bloodstains from his hands, and slinks out as the curtain falls.

Throughout the work the jazz rhythms portray the rough people. In many places the tempo reading is "A la fox trot" or "In a slow fox trot tempo." With many triplet and dotted eighth and sixteenth note rhythms and syncopation, as well as modern seventh chords such as are found in popular music, the following example is typical:

![Musical notation]

The language of the libretto is rough, a language of uncouth people.

Get out! This door ain't open to men o' your trade
The old girls gone!
Your high and mighty St. Agnes! Ha! Ha!

There is no rhyme or poetry suited to the contemplative aria. There are three sections which might be called arias, one for each actor; the priest sings the letter written by St. Agnes; Toinette in the last scene begs for a true love; and Michel relates of his escape in the chapel and tells of the diamond cross. Note that each of these, in the free
form, aids the action of the story and is not just a reflection of an actor's thought.

The remainder of the libretto is conversation set in a declamatory style, both secco and accompanied recitative. As a whole, the recitatives are set to a pattern of one pitch followed by a sudden higher pitch, such as the following.

The conversations are broken by two- or three-measure or even half-measure orchestral phrases. These passages slow the movement of the drama and do not enhance the action on the stage—that is, what little action there is.
Harling has used a chorus of village folk with four soloists, two tenors and two basses, contrasted with the humming and imitation of a guitar ("plm, plm, plm") in the full vocal parts. In the orchestra he has used saxophones, banjo, and xylophone for characterization.

A critic from the Literary Digest of March 13, 1926, said "The story savors of Italian opera." What is of greater interest, a fact which that critic apparently did not know, is that Puccini owned the musical rights of the libretto until his death, when they were acquired by Harling. With the murder on the stage of the condemned evil girl, who is saved only through her death, the story would be one which a verismo composer like Puccini would have enjoyed. It is strange also that an opera which is predominantly Italian was the first American musical drama to be presented on the Paris stage.

The last opera to be discussed in this chapter is another work by Charles Wakefield Cadman, The Witch of Salem. First performed in 1926 at the Chicago Civic Opera Company, the opera centers around Salem, Massachusetts, during colonial days.


An innocent young girl, Claris, is accused of witchcraft by a jealous friend, Sheila, who is in love with Claris' fiance, Arnold. The situation is saved when Claris goes to the gallows, for Sheila confesses and is hanged instead of Claris.

The libretto has been written with no rhyme scheme, but the prose is stiff and unesthetic. For instance,

Arnold: You who were once as glowing as a maple in the fall
Are pale as any silver birch.

Claris: Sometimes I am a maple red with shame
To know the evil thoughts of those I love.
Sometimes I am a birch tree wan and grey,
So pale I grow with anguish. Oh promise me,
Oh promise me to be a little kind.

With such free prose there are no set arias or recitatives, nor are there choruses and ensembles set out as numbers. The listeners, however, will hear separate from the rest of the opera Sheila's Irish folk songs and her song to Arnold. Cadman has used coloratura writing in Sheila's song to Arnold, perhaps with the same thought which Mozart had when he wrote the well-known coloratura aria for the evil Queen of the Night. These motives depict the evil scheming of the unbalanced Sheila.
Except for this aria Cadman has used the same musical treatment for all types of emotion; expression is indicated by the use of English adverbs. Twelve different ones are found in nine pages, but there is little change of musical treatment in a passage marked bitterly and in a passage marked wildly, furiously, emphatically, etc.

Like other Cadman works, the music is chromatic, with repetitious phrases, sequences, and many modulations. Although some writers have stated that The Witch of Salem is Cadman's most successful attempt at grand opera,\(^1\) this writer is inclined to disagree on the basis that there is not enough strength in the music to balance the weak climax and the ending, where there is no singing, just the appearance of Claris. The characters "look their parts" but do and sing nothing. Is the man in the last row of the second balcony going to comprehend a look of surprise on the hero's face?

Like Cadman's Shanewis, this opera has been classified as showing the influences of Italian opera, first because of the plot. The situation is one which certainly might have happened, and it depicts the neurotic hysteria which grasped the superstitious minds of the colonists.

Thus the reader can conclude from the three composers whose works have been discussed in this chapter that with

\(^1\) Howard, op. cit., p. 410.
the exception of Freer, whose Italian styles lie in her vocal treatment, the verismo plot is the predominant factor. Composers were more than ever trying to avoid a numbered singer's opera, but in looking for moving plots, they reverted to verismo.
CHAPTER III
Eclecticism in American Opera

In glancing through this chapter, the reader will immediately notice that the number of operas showing eclectic tendencies is greater than the number in both the Italian and the German chapters of this section. Obvious too is the lack of operas which imitate the French impressionistic school. These facts are not surprising. Throughout the 1920's the opera, like other fields of business, was profiting. The wealthy "Wall-Streeters" were its ardent supporters, and with this support Hammerstein's Company in Chicago and the Metropolitan were able to foster new works, especially those by Americans. After the economic crash came in 1929, Hammerstein soon closed, and the Metropolitan curtailed its season and its budget. However, the search for a nationalistic opera continued, and a number of works were produced.

The operas discussed in this chapter may be looked upon as the transition. Though still eclectic, there is more independence asserted than in the eclectic works of 1900 to 1920.

Beginning the discussion is a work written after the composer had been in American only four years. Therefore, some authorities might question its designation as an American opera. Nevertheless, Lazare Saminsky's The Gagliadara
of a Merry Plague exhibits an independence of style which warrants investigation. Saminsky himself has stated that American has given him directness, rhythm, and a Western clarity.¹

Lazare Saminsky was born in 1882 near Odessa in Russia. His early education was not in music but in languages, mathematics, and political economy. At the age of twenty he received a scholarship at the Moscow Conservatory but was expelled for political reasons. He then went to Petrograd, where he began to compose, and gradually he became known as a composer. After the Revolution he left Russia and spent some time in Paris and in London; then in 1920 he came to the United States.

While still abroad, Saminsky composed one four-act opera; but it was at Peterborough, New Hampshire, in 1924 that the chamber-opera-ballet, The Gagliadara of a Merry Plague, based on Poe's Mask of the Red Death, was written. The French preface of the score (Senart, 1926) states that the translation of the text from Russian into French was made by Eugene Vinaner and the translation into English, by Lillian Morgan Saminsky. This was a strange sequence for the work of an American poet--English to Russian to French and back to English.

It is therefore not surprising to find the opera a

¹. Howard, op. cit., p. 431.
mixture of American and Russian characteristics. A chamber opera for fourteen musicians and eight singers (a double quartet), the work describes the Plague which dances among the courtiers of the castle, taking its victims irrespective of age, beauty, or sex. It soon takes the sweetheart of the prince, and the opera ends with the priests and nuns changing the Dies Irae, the requiem which opens the opera.

The music, both vocal and instrumental, is a background for the dancing rather than a means of furthering the drama or of demonstrating vocal talents. The emphasis on the ballet and the subordination of vocal parts imply the importance of the ballet found in Russian opera. Seminsky's Russian education verifies itself in the parallel movement of chords, chromaticism, open fourths and fifths, syncopation, polyrhythms, and even polytonality.

The form of the chamber opera, which is traceable to the seventeenth century Florentine and Roman opera and the operas of Purcell, has in the last fifty years found favor
in England and in America. Saminsky's *Gagliadara* was one of the earlier attempts made in America. The combining of this form with the Russian harmonic flavor and the American directness has resulted in a delightfully interesting work.

The next two operas in this chapter of eclectic works are the second and third operas of Deems Taylor. His first work, *The King's Henchman*, is found in Chapter I of Section II. His second opera was based on a novel by George du Maurier with the libretto arranged by Constance Collier from the play she had written on the same novel.

Peter Ibbetson, a young Frenchman living with his uncle in London, knows little of his childhood, remembering only his happiness with his father, his mother, and his childhood playmate, Mary. His uncle, a scheming Don Juan, insinuates the falsity of Peter's father and is blasphemous towards his mother. Peter reproaches the uncle, who attacks him, and in the fight the uncle is killed. Before Peter is sentenced to die, he discovers that Mary, his childhood sweetheart, is alive and now the Duchess of Towers. Peter's execution is commuted to a life sentence. In prison he and Mary meet in dreams through their power to "dream true." Years pass, and when Mary dies, Peter Ibbetson joins her in their world of dreams.

The libretto of this opera is a curious mixture of French and English. The main conversations are in English, but more than half of Act II, which opens in a French Inn, is in French. Peter's dreams of his childhood in France are sung in French. The English is prose such as the following.

---

The only thing that would cure her poor little head
Was her mother's voice singing to her....
The loveliest voice I ever knew.
Sometimes I would hear the two,
Wandering in the garden,
Until Mimsey would fall into a deep sleep,
And, waking, be well again.

The recitative follows the English accents for the En­
lish and the French for the foreign language.

There is only one set number in the whole opera, and
that is a poetic recitation which the Colonel, the uncle,
sings in Act I. It is sung in French and is similar to a
French art song; there is a similarity to \textit{Si Mes Vers
Avaient Des Ailes} by Hahn, and examples from each follow.
The other vocal soliloquies and ensembles fuse into one another and into recitative in such a way that they are not independent.

The chorus is behind the scene; its treatment is as mysterious as possible. The dream sequence in France is sung in French, but in many places the polyphonic movement is sustained on the vowel "Ah..." In the death scene, however, Taylor has fashioned the choral background into a four-part chorale.

In *Peter Ibbetson* the composer realized two minor ambitions—first, to write a waltz in the Strauss manner and, second, to make thematic use of French folk songs. These folk songs are scattered throughout the score simultaneously in contrapuntal fashion. Note how the composer carefully

simplified the rhythmic and notational complexities.

The waltz in the Strauss manner is found in Act I. The score calls for an orchestra on the stage and one in the pit. The orchestra on the stage, entertaining at a formal ball, blends the Strauss-like melodies with the other orchestra, which accompanies the serious recitative and the action of the plot.

The composer stated that though he expected the opera to be Wagnerian with the use of leitmotifs, the work did not fall into that pattern. There are no characteristic themes; the music follows the situation rather than the individual. However, the music is of the solid German character for the action scenes, but it is French in sound for the dramatic sequences and in some vocal treatments. Note the arpeggios up the scales which are found with repetition of phrases Debussyian in character:

1. Ibid., p. 18.
Sections of the accompaniment of vocal lines seem German in the polyphonic lines against the vocal declamation.

The murder scene has a touch of Italian horror; the drama is emphasized by spoken lines. The realism is stressed by the knocking at the door, heard in the orchestra.

Thus Deems Taylor has appropriately chosen French, German, and Italian characteristics to illustrate the drama which in the sense of its setting is also eclectic.

In the spring of 1936 Deems Taylor began his third opera. It was finished in 1938, and for it Taylor wrote his own libretto.
Ramuntcho, a young Spanish smuggler, is in love with Gracieuse, the sister of his friend Arrochkoa. Because of Ramuntcho's poor background, Gracieuse's mother will not allow a marriage. Ramuntcho goes to serve his country for the required three years. During that time the mother confiscates both his letters to Gracieuse and her letters to him. The young woman, after waiting faithfully for two years, is convinced that Ramuntcho is dead. With her mother's consent, she goes into a convent. Ramuntcho returns, pleads with Gracieuse to annul her vows; but she, her heart breaking, says that they shall meet in another world, God permitting. Ramuntcho leaves after crying to the crucifix, "God, how can You!"

Taylor has written in an everyday speech for normal conversation and in a poetical prose for the love scenes. It would be clearly understood and easily sung. For instance,

Pantchuka: But what of the dancing, Arrochkoa was taking me!

Gorostegny: I am taking Arrochkoa! Never mind, you'll find another partner, eh, Pantchuka!

Poetically Taylor set Ramuntcho and Gracieuse's duet:

We know a valley, you and I, where a little river wanders through still green meadows, Under the open sky. And, sky and river are close, However far asunder: For when the night passes, and the dawn comes over the hills, And from the east the rising sun comes to bid the sky awake and hail the new born day, Then too, the river greats the dawn.

In Ramuntcho Taylor has sought the Italian vocal treatment. In many places he has used an A B A aria form. The recitative is accompanied and active except for the speeches of the nuns, where a sustained chordal accompaniment is used. Nothing is marked as recitative, but a tempo marking or an
expression indication is given. Taylor has contrasted two choruses, the gay drinking song with dancing and flowing melody and the slow, dignified Latin chorus of the nuns.

He has used two themes repeatedly, one in a truer leitmotif sense than in his earlier works. The following theme represents Ramuntcho:

It is then developed, first, as Ramuntcho speaks of himself and, second, as he doffs his beret to the mother. Supporting his melody is a descending chromatic bass.

The second theme is that of Gracieuse; the melody which begins her handkerchief aria is repeated as Ramuntcho is pleading for her to return to him.
The same melody is used when Gracieuse and Ramuntcho are on the stage together for the first time.

Although the movement of the drama is in the love story, stage action is accomplished by a smuggling scene and by a pelota game. Taylor was wise to use a less heavy treatment of melodic development; the music exemplifies the action, carrying the movement to the climax at the end and keeping the listener attentive.

The most individual of all his operas, Ramuntcho is eclectic only because of the Italian vocal treatment and the slight use of the leitmotiv treatment. It is possible that a libretto written in Taylor's own manner of thought encouraged his personal musical development.

The next opera, Caponsacchi, was written by Holland-born Richard Hageman. Born in 1882, he studied at the Brussels and the Amsterdam Conservatories. He came to the United States in 1907 as assistant conductor of the Metropolitan. Prominent as a voice teacher, Hageman has also been an accompanist and has written orchestral music for the films, but he is better known for songs such as "At the Well" and "Do Not Go My Love." The opera, Caponsacchi, was performed at the Metropolitan in 1937.
The curtain rises on a courtroom in Italy where Caponsacchi is on trial for the murder of Pompelia, her mother, and her father. Unknown to the court, the Pope is observing the trial of the friar from a curtained throne. Act I begins as Caponsacchi finally agrees unwillingly to tell his version of the crime. Flashback scenes reveal Pompelia pleading for Caponsacchi's aid. Her husband, a wicked and cruel nobleman, is trying to kill her parents in order to retain their money, which he has stolen. She knows that he will eventually try to kill her to obtain her parents' property. Caponsacchi helps her escape, but the nobleman follows and finally succeeds in sending Caponsacchi to prison. Time elapses, and Pompelia, having given birth to a son, hides the child to protect him from his cruel father. Caponsacchi returns from prison just after the nobleman has come seeking the child. The nobleman has murdered Pompelia's parents and has turned to kill his wife when Caponsacchi enters. The Nobleman then has Caponsacchi sent to court for the murders. As Caponsacchi tells his story, the crowds outside the courtroom cry for his death; but in the final scene the Pope reveals himself to say that he has received a verdict from Heaven. Frightened by the Divine words, the Nobleman confesses.

Arthur Goodrich has based the prose libretto upon "The Ring and The Book," a poem by Robert Browning; even Pompelia's Lullaby to the Innkeeper's child is without rhyme or verse.

I'll wake him not, so soft he'll lie within my arms, the pretty thing
Who is it makes the soft gold hair turn black, and sets the tongue which lies so long at rest, trying to talk?
Who makes wide baby eyes so blank, impersonal at first, to know and recognize and trust?
Who brings each day new strength to tiny feet that soon, too soon, will patter to the door and then beyond, in added pulsebeat to the Mother's heart?
Who is it stirs the sleeping soul awake? And starts it grasping after truth and grace?
And adds the miracle of smiles and tears and tenderness?
The God who can do all this will scarcely fail protect a Mother—who does all in turn to save her all, her child.

With a libretto of this type, Hageman has used no set forms, neither numbers nor da capo arias. The melody of the previously quoted aria is a good example of the vocal treatment; note how the melody rises and falls.

The types of recitative vary from a thinly accompanied style to an arioso. In the last scene the villain cries in a declamatory style which is denoted only by time value; no pitch is given. It is accompanied throughout.

In the crowd scene of the prologue, the chorus is similar in mood to the mocking of the crowds depicted in various Passions and Easter Oratories. The chorus sings "Hail to Guido" and follows with "But Caposacchi, kill him, kill him." Note the range of the tenor to a high A flat and of the bass to an F.
Harmonically there is nothing which will disturb the general ear. One critic has stated that the music is like that of Wagner at one moment, Strauss at another, Puccini or Debussy at another.¹ However, Debussy's impressionism is not used to portray such a realistic murder story. With all the horror taking place on the stage and with instructions such as "Let the body slide upon the floor,"² it would not be surprising to find traces of Puccinian influence. In fact, the moving of block-like chords in the tragedy scene is similar to Puccini scores:

2. Act III.
The harmonies, though at times dissonant, are not expressionistic, nor are they atonal or polytonal; there are many modulations, but none are startling. There is some use of open fifths in the accompaniment, which may have prompted the critic's comparison to Debussy. These fifths, however, are used more in the manner of Moussorgsky than of Debussy; note the following examples.

The reference to Strauss may have been made with the dissonance in mind.

Therefore, Caponsacchi has been given a verismo plot with free melodic forms plus the harmonies of Strauss and the smooth modulations of Wagner.

The final three operas in this chapter fall under the category of American comic opera. The first of these

three was published in 1923 and is a type of light opera which is useful for amateur groups. Somewhat above the category of the operetta, it would be an introduction to operatic production for the secondary schools. This work is The Pied Piper of Hamlin by Joseph Waddell Clokey.

Clokey was born in New Albany, Indiana, and was a pupil of Edgar Stillman Kelley. Although he has been active in the field of orchestral music and opera, he is better known for his choral works. His transcriptions of American folk music such as Cocaine Lil and Frankie and Johnnie, plus arrangements of Billins and Stephen Foster, are very effective. He has studied church music, and this influence has made his style tend towards the modes rather than towards chromaticism.

The Pied Piper of Hamlin is based on the traditional tale of the Piper who pipes away the rats from an infested city.

Promised a reward of 1000 guilders, which he does not receive, the Piper retaliates by piping away all the children of the city with the exception of one little lame boy, who cannot keep up. The opera pictures the children in Act II in the happy land of the Piper, playing with wonderful dancing toys and being watched over by a beautiful Moon Lady, who sings them to sleep when playtime has ended. In Hamlin, however (Act III), are stricken people lamenting the loss of the children. The Piper returns there and scolds them for their greed and their treachery. He declares that he led the children away not for revenge but to save them from their parents' evil ways. The Lame Boy pleads for the return of his playmates, and the Piper, unable to resist his simple pleas, blows the magic melody to bring
the children home. The Mayor expounds the lessons that all promises must be kept, and the Piper disappears as suddenly as he came, only his echo remaining.

The light simple verse which is used throughout is thoroughly appropriate to the fairy tale theme. For instance,

I followed thy piping, I heard the notes clear
That told of a country so fair and so near
Where happiness reigns and all is new,
And the flow'rs have a fairer hue,
Where no dreary clouds ever hide the bright sun,
Where the sick are made well and the lame boys can run.

Such simple poetic meter (in this case dactylic //)// has been placed into very clear-cut forms. There is a distinction made between a "Song" and an "Aria." The "song" has other singers taking part along with the soloists, usually just short entrances of one or two phrases at a time. An "aria" is an individual number sung by one person. Vo-cally the music is extremely simple. The ranges are such that the opera could be performed by a good high school group. Most recitative is accompanied by sustained chords, but there is some which is unaccompanied.


The two outstanding sections of the opera are in this
act. The first is the Rat Fugue, which is played as the Piper pipes the rats away. Although just the thematic entrances are quoted here, it is a complete fugue with thematic entrances in new keys and a return to the tonic.

The other section is the Prologue. It reminds the writer of the Prologues and post-scene poetic remarks used in the operas of Lully and in the plays of Moliere. Sung or declaimed before the curtain, these "soliloquies" were usually amusing and philosophically pertinent to the action. In the case of the Piper Prologue, the singer sets the scene by describing in great detail the city of Hamlin with the rats.
Harmonically the accompaniment throughout the opera is one of simple chords with chromatic sequence in certain places for pictorialism. One theme unifies the work; this is the melody piped by the Piper during his entrances and exits. This theme is also heard throughout the orchestral score, predominantly in the flute part. The opera, however, has satisfied the purpose for which it was written—the young amateur. In so doing, Clokey has borrowed from the
French opera comique and from the Italian vocal forms.

Another comic opera, published in 1933 and based on a fairy tale, is Louis Gruenberg's *Jack and the Beanstalk*. An opera for "the child-like" in three acts and thirteen scenes, the work is not a triumph dramatically or musically, but it would be entertaining for a youthful audience.

The story is based on the ancient fairy tale of the boy who sold his cow for a handful of beans, only to find the beans growing into a large beanstalk. After climbing the stalk, Jack encounters a giant, from whom he rescues the golden hen, the bag of gold, and the magic harp which once belonged to his father. For his gallantry Jack wins the fairy princess and is able to buy back his favorite cow.

There are a number of spoken lines in the opera, but it is not an operetta, since the bulk of the narrative is handled by the recitative. Even the cow sings and talks. The recitative is at times secco and at times accompagnato, the rhythm depicting the words in a free manner. Throughout the spoken dialogue the orchestra comments with musical remarks. For instance, as the cow weeps, one hears:

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\begin{align*}
\text{The solo songs are of various types, all in free form. The songs of the Princess grow longer as she changes by degrees from the old woman into the princess. Each song, though, is based on the same melody. For variety Gruenberg has introduced a jazz song, a love song in modern ballad}
\end{align*}
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style, and a lullaby sung from back stage by the magic harp. The chorus of villagers is treated in a gay manner typical of country songs at a country fair. Characteristic songs are sung by the Butcher and the Tanner as they look over the cow.

The Gruenberg individuality creeps out in such places as the chorus in which the glissandos are in seconds.

A harp and a celesta are noted in the score. Modern rhythms such as

are used for pictorialism. The example represents the cow and is supported by a low melody in the 'cellos and the basses. This work, a nice combination of opera comique and opera buffa plus American jazz, was presented by the Juilliard School of Music in 1931. For all the satiric fun, the work is marked by melody which is not found in Gruenberg's earlier works.

The final opera of the chapter is a comic opera but more on the grand opera lines than the two previous works.
Albert Stoessel's *Garrick*, termed by Grout a chamber opera, was also presented by the Juilliard School of Music in 1937. Albert Stoessel led an extremely active musical life. Born in St. Louis, Missouri, he studied first from St. Louis teachers and then abroad in Berlin. He began his activities as a concert violinist, but in 1923 he became head of the music department of New York University. In 1930 Stoessel became director of the orchestra and opera departments of Juilliard Graduate School. Along with these duties he was conductor of the Oratorio Society of New York, Conductor of the Worcester Festival, and director of the Chautauqua Institution. He died in 1943.

*Garrick*, the book by Robert A. Simon, concerns the trials and triangles of a group of actors, the main one, David Garrick of Drury Lane Theater in 1774.

Garrick and his girl friend, Peg, quarrel because Garrick declares that he is in love with an unknown beauty. Garrick's friend, Harry, later declares his love for a certain Julia, saying that Julia is in love with Garrick and will not return Harry's love. Garrick, having never met Julia, invites Harry and Julia to his home, where he promises to play the part of a drunkard, an undesirable man, in order to make Julia love Harry. To his horror Julia is the unknown beauty whom he has been admiring. This state of affairs is carried through to a climax in which Peg and Garrick, Harry and Julia are all reunited properly.

As a triangle comedy, the story is appropriate; as an opera it is weak. There is not enough action to enable the

listener to follow the story unless he hears and understands every word of the libretto. The characters are not developed, and the music is therefore not characteristic of any development either. Stoessel has used a number of vocal styles—a recitative with sustained chordal accompaniment, a secco-recitative, a declamatory recitative, serious arias in free form, and comic folk-song pieces in strophe form. With this mixture and with the play humorous, the music is not in keeping except in the light spots. The serious arias are unpretentious.

Secco Recitative

The chorus is used as a commentary section. Answering repetitious phrases are found similar to those of Gilbert and Sullivan. There are a few spoken lines; but contrary to other writers, this author believes that the dialogue is not used for any special dramatic effect; or if that was the purpose, the goal has not been attained.

The music itself is a collection of many styles. Modern sevenths and ninths are used in chromatic counterpoint;

even tone clusters are used:

At places the music is of Wagnerian quality:

Early Italian styles are found in Cibber's Serenade with the light accompaniment and the coloratura embellishments:

From these seven representative works, it can be concluded that the number of eclectic works is greater than any single group of foreign derivations. The combinations of styles and techniques are different in each opera; and during this period is found a greater step towards individualism
than previously was found in eclectic works.

The Italian vocal forms and styles are found in Ramuntcho, The Pied Piper, and Garrick, while the verismo plot is used as a basis of Peter Ibbetson and Caponsacchi. The Italian buffa find its place in Garrick and in Jack and the Beanstalk. The influence of Wagner is seen only in the harmonic structures of Caponsacchi, Peter Ibbetson, Ramuntcho, and Garrick. There is a definite lack of adherence to the Wagnerian vocal techniques.

Although there were no operas which were entirely of French derivation, Peter Ibbetson shows the influence of Debussy in harmonies and of the French folk song. The opera comique is seen in The Pied Piper of Hamlin and in Jack and the Beanstalk. Russian harmonies and ballet are found in the chamber opera The Gagliadara of a Merry Plague by Saminsky. Russian characteristics are newcomers in this period of American opera. In this author's opinion, it verifies the theory that eclectic styles are caused partially by foreign training.
CHAPTER IV

The Independent American Opera

Within the boundaries of eclectic American Opera, if there are such things as boundaries in art, a nationalistic opera began to evolve. Before one proceeds further, the term "evolve" or "evolution" must be more clearly defined as to its use here. In modern usage there seem to be four concepts of the word evolution: development, progress, differentiation, new growth.¹

Although the appearance of an independent opera was certainly a development, it cannot at this date be absolute that the development was progress in the field, even though it may have appeared so in comparison with the immediate predecessors. Time may change this outlook, and it is not within the scope of such a thesis as this to attempt a criticism of quality or progress. However, it is our problem to differentiate those characteristics which make an opera independent and national. The term differentiate is not synonymous in this case with the term evolve, but it is to be used together with the meaning of evolution in the Darwinian sense—that new form or new styles are constantly evolving from the old. Thus from the eclectic, blending sometimes with it as all artistic trends fuse, the national idiom evolves as a new growth, first to be differentiated as a new

¹ Allen, op. cit., p. 285.
growth and then to be developed. Finally, if this succeeds as the ultimate, it has become progress.

It was in the 1930's that an opera emerged with characteristics which warranted being called "independent" or "American." To be sure, an analysis by another person may bring conflicting ideas--some works are still very close to the eclectic or to the foreign styles. In these cases it should be emphasized that this analysis was made with the comparisons drawn not against works written in the last ten years (after 1940) but against works written before 1930. With these concepts in mind the reader may be introduced to the five operas of the first forty years of the twentieth century which, in the opinion of this author, are defined as independent: Blitzstein's *Triple Sec*, Gruenberg's *Emperor Jones*, Hanson's *Merry Mount*, Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts*, and Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, all in chronological order.

Marc Blitzstein's list of teachers is very impressive. He was a piano student of Silot and a composition student of Scalero, Boulanger, and Schoenberg. Philadelphia born and bred, he did his preparatory work at the University of Pennsylvania and at the Curtis Institute. He was recognized as a type of experimenter for a number of years; his early works included a piano concerto, pieces for orchestra, and pieces for chamber groups. These early works also included two operas, a short *Triple Sec* and *The Cradle Will Rock*, the
latter of which was really a play with music. During the 1940's another opera, *No For An Answer*, was based on the struggle between unionism and social injustice.

*Triple Sec*, subtitled an "opera farce in one act," would fall under the category of American comic opera. A play within a play, the opera opens with a prologue in which a none-too-elite night club mistress-of-ceremonies announces that there will be "for your entertainment" a short play.

Much is left to the imagination, but the one act concerns a wealthy gentleman about to marry the beautiful blonds, only to have his wife return unexpectedly. The play is given as seen from the eyes of one sitting in the night club, and the atmosphere becomes more and more complicated by the appearance of two of each character and finally of three of each character. At the end EIGHT maids appear, the windows rock, the room weaves, a green red-eyed dragon comes on stage, and the stage goes dark.

The interpretation is left to the reader after he knows that "sec" in the literal definition means "with wine."

The libretto is strictly vernacular:

Perkiné, the maid: 'Tis queer his Lordship never married 'til now and him so wealthy.

Hopkins, the butler: Queer it is, Miss Perkins, to them that knows no better.

Perkins: Why what ever do you mean, Mr. Hopkins?

Hopkins: I knows what I knows, Miss Perkins, that's all.

Such conversation is set to a melodious recitative in the rhythm of the language. For example:
Most surprising is the fact that there are no arias. The conversations grow into the proportion of a chorus in the last scene. These are gradually built by having each character as he is doubled or tripled sing in two or three parts with identical words. The last chorus, however, is a very mixed-up and dissonant finale which dies out with the rocking windows, the dragon, etc. It is based on the same melody which the maid sang as the curtain rose. Here Blitzenstein uses only four parts, dividing the singers according to range.
The composer has scored the opera for 2 B flat clarinets, 1 bassoon, 1 trumpet in C, 1 trombone, Traps I (kettle drum, snare drum, xylophone, ratchet), Traps II (Bass-drum, wood block, cow-bell, tambourine), piano (two players), 1 violin, 1 viola, 1 contrabass. The orchestration is dry and open, with use of the dance band style of trumpet playing and even the cowbell.

In the harmonic treatment the influence of Schoenberg's twelve tone techniques asserts itself. No key signatures are used. The following passages are typical:
In addition to the harmonic background, *Triple Sec* is defined as an independent opera first, because of the unique subject; second, because of the lack of traditional aria in any form; third, because of the vernacular libretto; and fourth, because of the individualistic orchestration and staging.

Born in Russia, Louis Gruenberg was brought to America at the age of two and received most of his education in this country. He was at one time, however, a pupil of Busoni. His works are varied in type as well as in style. Once he was interested in the symphonic treatment of jazz, the result of which was the *Jazz Suite*. He has also written chamber music in that idiom, *Four Indiscretions* for string quartet, *The Daniel Jazz* for high voice and eight solo instruments, *The Creation* (a Negro sermon) for high voice and eight solo instruments. Other works include symphonies, piano concerti, a violin concerto, and three operas, *Emperor Jones*, *Jack and the Beanstalk* (discussed in Chapter III), and *Green Mansions*, a radio opera. In the latter work the music was to replace the color and action of a stage, but the opera did not accomplish its purpose.

The first opera, and the most important, is Gruenberg's setting of Eugene O'Neill's play *Emperor Jones*.

The plot revolves around an escaped convict who sets up his own empire on a small island in the West Indies. He builds himself a fortress and enslaves all the natives. The operatic action begins with the news of the native rebellion--all
have run to the hills, where they wait for Jones to escape through the forest. Jones attempts to do so, but his superstitious nature and the beating of the tomtoms cause him to see visions of his crimes. He goes mad, finally killing himself with his last silver bullet, while the natives and the witch doctor surround him with wild dances of death.

This plot has been derived from the play in a way that weakens the strength of the drama. O'Neill's play itself was a model which would have been a perfect form for musical development. The play itself could be compared to a sonata-form.¹

Introduction: Smithers and Old Woman dialogue, includes hints of past and future.

Exposition: Jones is introduced--main theme Smithers is the subsidiary theme

Development: Jones only--his escape and resulting madness--Smithers neglected. The exposition ends and the development begins with the first distant beats of the tomtom. The development is symbolized by the increasing pace and loudness of beats which continues uninterrupted to the end of the play.

Recapitulation: Jones' death and Smithers' return

Coda: The shooting of Jones and the bringing in of the body. A Reiteration in which Smithers tells Lem the confidence of both himself and the Emperor that Jones is too big a match for the natives.

This pattern is so definitely laid out that it is amazing that Gruenberg did not follow it to some extent even as

Wagner used a rondo form in the second act of Tristan. In the operatic libretto the character of Lem is left out. Smithers appears only as a secondary character who helps set the scene, and then, for no reason, he reappears in the last scene. There is no contrast between Smithers and the Emperor as there is in the play. The drum beat, which is so effective with no other sound in the play, becomes lost in the orchestration, and as a result it loses its significance. In the opera the witch doctor is a real person, while in the play he is a figment of Jones' imagination. The total result is that the opera the psychological meaning of the drama is lost. Gruenberg models his dramatic form as follows:

**Introduction:** Smithers and Old Woman--only dialogue hints of past and future

**Expositions:** Jones' entrance: Smithers leaves

**Development:** Jones' flight: Three independent parts of activity (1) chorus below or on the stage, (2) Jones on the stage itself, and (3) the second stage on which the hallucinations take place (Two-thirds across and seven feet higher than main stage)

**Coda:** Witch doctor and Natives' dance of death

Without Smithers' contrast and without the other characters, the result is a "one-man" opera.

The music itself is based on sounds and rhythms without any regard for the dramatic form. Most recitative is accompanied. Notice the wide interval jumps.
In contrast, there is the despairing recitative on one pitch:

In Act II as the Emperor is running away, a dry-recitative is used to emphasize his fear.

The nearest to aria forms is the melodious passage based on the spiritual "Itsa me, itsa me, Oh Lord, Standin' in the Need o' Prayer." These melodious passages grow shorter as Jones loses his mind.

The chorus, unseen until the last scene, is usually in unison; often, however, imitative entrances of each voice precede the unison passages:
Gruenberg has scored discordant choral actions:

\[ \text{Music notation image} \]

Besides the drum beats which are discontinuous, Gruenberg has asked for an "SSSSSSS" sound to represent the formless fears (described as 'Grubworms the size of children'). The music accompaniment and drumbeats continue through this noise.

The harmonies tend to be atonal but are not continuously so. The Literary Digest quotes J. W. Henderson of the New York Sun as saying, "... it (Emperor Jones) is a full blooded African brother of Alban Berg's Wozzeck." This may be true harmonically, but it is not true of the formal structures. The harmonies of the following excerpt are chosen because the section is one of the most lyrical placed in the opera.

\[ \text{Music notation image} \]

1. Literary Digest, January 21, 1933, p. 15.
Note also the sequences on the tones of the scale, each in a different direction:

Gruenberg also uses open fifths in chromatic passages:

The final dissonance which ends Act II is a mass of irregular resolutions:

Although the opera is an excellent opportunity for a singer to show his acting ability, there is no chance to display the voice. Lawrence Tibbett was praised for his portrayal of the Emperor in the premier of 1933 at the Metropolitan.

The independence of Emperor Jones asserts itself in three ways; first, the play is an American product; second, there is a distinct lack of aria and emphasis on the voice—the action is the important media of expression; and third, the use of sound ("SSSS") in the dissonant orchestration is novel.
Howard Hanson was born in Wahoo, Nebraska, and was educated at Luther College, Northwestern University, and the Institute of Musical Art in New York. He taught theory at the College of the Pacific and later became its dean. In 1921 he went abroad to study under a Fellowship at the American Academy at Rome, and in 1924 he accepted the Directorship of the Eastman School of Music at Rochester.

Besides four symphonies and five symphonic poems, Hanson has written chamber works, choral works, and one opera, Merry Mount.

Merry Mount was produced by the Metropolitan Opera Company in 1934 and was given nine performances during that season. The libretto was a poem by Richard L. Stokes and had been published as such several years before the opera was produced. In 1930 it was announced that the opera had been accepted for production by the Metropolitan. There were many speculations as to the story itself, for details had not yet been published. The Outlook stated that the opera would probably be based on the Bradford History and "will suggest the jolly career of Thomas Morton and his settlement." The article further refers to the "retaining of slaves and the scandalizations of Bradford by drinking, dancing, etc. He endangers a group of Pilgrim fathers,

1. The Outlook and Independent, April 23, 1930, pp. 653-654.
Miles Standish among them, by selling arms to the Indians."

These calculations were not correct. Here is the story as summarized by Lewis Bannet of the New York Herald Tribune of January 16, 1932, after the details were known:

A Puritan pastor, stirred by the beauty of women in his dreams but not at all by the little Puritan girl to whom he becomes engaged, is Mr. Stokes' central character. When Marigold, one of the Mount's company of gay cavaliers, steps into the Puritan settlement, Pastor Bradford loses his head completely. He stops Marigold's marriage to a fellow cavalier; he provokes his fellow Puritans to rout the wedding festivities, killing her fiance; he wrestles for her soul and loses his own. In the night he dreams of selling his soul for Marigold's body and bringing death and destruction upon the Puritan colony as a penalty. When he awakes to find the drunken Indians sacking the Puritan village, it seems but confirmation of his demented imaginings. He seizes Marigold and marches with her into the flames, while the returning Puritans chant the Lord's Prayer.

Stokes has set the story in a literary dialogue, simple, expressive, and singable because of its rhythmic possibilities. It is this dramatic story which makes the good libretto, not the characters who tell the tale. The cavaliers are presented in verse to depict their carefree life, in opposition to the prose of the stricter Puritans. For instance, a cavalier good fellow jests with the minister:

Right Reverend Priest, our holy joy...
Is aye to fondle, kiss and toy,
Whilst thou, a doze, with mops and mows
Shall snuffle anthems through the nose!

The Puritan Minister preaches as follows:

1. Ibid.
Indeed, Sirs, fall on your knees, and pray r'fully
Search out your hearts for all offense to God!
But chiefly, friends, O be ye aware of Satan,
Whose damned imps and bitter, burning devils
Swarm round about us like the frogs of Egypt.

One of the strongest sections of the libretto is Mari-
gold's aria of Act II, Scene 2, sung after the Puritans have stopped the wedding and killed her fiance.

Let them strike twice and I will come to thee!
Woe unto them that slay; Woe to them in life, in death,
And in the darkness of the tomb:
Woe, woe, woe, at the judgement seat of God!

Lift up your voices, 0 ye hills--and cry aloud with me for vengeance!
Let them strike twice, and I will come to thee
Woe to them in life! Woe to them in death!
And in the darkness of the tomb!
Let them strike twice, and I will come to thee!

Musically Hanson has contrasted three elements: (1) the gay life of the Cavaliers through the little game songs sung by the children and through the folk songs used in the Maypole scene; (2) the sensuous mind of Bradford in a subtle romantic touch to the musical sound; (3) the stern, religious Puritan life with the use of old hymn tunes, which are usually broken into polyphonic treatment after one or two stanzas. One of these old chorales is of special interest, being in the dorian mode (D natural minor).

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1. There is a similarity to the Biblical Psalm Twenty-four, Verse 7, "Lift ye up your heads, oh ye gates,"
These choral numbers are of utmost importance because the chorus is second only to Bradford in dramatic importance. The main action of the plot is not one man's mind pitted against another man's but one man's mind and instincts fighting against the mores of the whole Puritan colony represented by the chorus. This principle is a new approach in operatic drama structure.

The choral numbers are the strongest of the opera. The recitatives are not effective, since in many places the rhythm of the words has been ignored.
The aria of Marigold, the libretto of which was previously quoted, is set in an ABA' form, the final A' being derivative of the first. Hanson has employed more arias than has Blitzstein or Gruenberg; this fact seems to cause the drama to mark time in places rather than to move ahead. The most obvious case is Marigold's aria of the last scene; its entirely contemplative nature causes a hesitation just before the climax.

There are a number of instances in the aria structures in which Hanson repeats verses in different keys. However, he does alter the melodic structure and change the accompaniment. Harmonically the opera is strictly tonal with many modulations, but no key signatures are used. The scoring for orchestra is heavy with many passages for brasses in a nineteenth century romantic style, heavier than Schubert, but lighter than Wagner or Strauss.

Dramatically the opera is weak only in the characterization of the individuals. The leading character, Bradford,
is portrayed only as an intensely frustrated individual. The carnal manifestations of his nature are not relieved by humanitarian qualities. During the last scene there is no alleviation from the bloody scalping and the fighting to the final words of Bradford, "Beloved, beloved, come and drain with me the Wine of Death!" The Puritans sing "Amen," giving no consolation or pardon, for they firmly believe in Bradford's and Marigold's damnation, thus carrying their dramatic thread--the strict moral code, the omniscient religion--to the final curtain.

In Merry Mount one recognizes a complete fusion of foreign elements into a subjectively "new" work. There are elements of English folk song; there is a ghostly pageantry in Bradford's scene with the Devil; there is the bloody conflagration of the last scene; there are arias without purpose. Each of these elements, which could with little trouble be traced to foreign sources, is not given an individual treatment. But through the strictly American setting, the importance of the Puritan Colony as a dramatic element, and the use of Puritan hymn tunes, the foreign elements are completely fused. Herein lies the secret of its independence.

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1896, Virgil Thomson attended Harvard University, from which he was graduated in 1922. During his college career, however, he spent a year in Paris studying organ and composition with Nadia
Boulanger. His studies at Harvard were supplemented by accompanying singers and by playing the organ. He served a number of churches including King's Chapel, Boston. From 1920 to 1925 he was an assistant instructor at Harvard, but he returned to Paris to study until his opera, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, was produced in New York in 1934. He then went back to Paris, where he remained until the outbreak of World War II, returning to New York in 1940 to succeed the late Lawrence Gilman as music critic of the *New York Herald Tribune*. Aside from *Four Saints in Three Acts*, Thomson has written two symphonies, quartets, a suite for orchestra, a ballet called "Filling Station," and a set of variation and fugues on hymn-tunes for the organ.

Having come under the influence of Satie and Cocteau, Thomson is as individual in his music, without deviating from his professed romanticism,¹ as he is opinionated in his criticisms. His taste for Gertrude Stein librettos supplements his unique conceptions, and it was she who furnished the dramatic design for *Four Saints in Three Acts*.

The outline of the opera is best given by describing each act.

**Act I: Avila, Spain, Sixteenth Century:** A pageant or Sunday School entertainment is given in which St. Theresa enacts for the instruction of Saints and visitors scenes from her own life. These tableaux are performed in a closed-off section of the stage:

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1. Choral prologue: Compere and Commer announce the Saints. (There are two choruses.)

2. The Seven Tableaux:
   
a. St. Theresa paints Easter eggs, welcomes guests.
b. St. Theresa II, photographed by St. Settlement, holds a dove.
c. St. Theresa II is serenaded by St. Ignatius. At end she asks, "Can women have wishes?"
d. St. Ignatius offers her flowers.
e. St. Theresa and St. Ignatius—he standing, she seated—admire a model of a large house, a Heavenly Mansion.
f. St. Theresa shown ecstasy, an angel hovering over her.
g. St. Theresa rocks an unknown child.

The Act ends with comments, congratulations, and general sociability.

Act II: A garden party in the country near Barcelona. The Commer and the Compere observe scene from an opera box without taking part. St. Theresa and St. Ignatius join them in the opera box. There is performed for them a dance of angels. St. Chavez enters, introduces himself, and organizes a party game. At the end everyone goes out, leaving the Compere and the Commer to present a scene. The Saints play games and congratulate the couple. Theresa I and II look through a telescope and see the vision of the mansion again. St. Theresa I wants the telescope. St. Ignatius refuses it to her. St. Chavez consoles her, and all leave slowly except St. Chavez, who remains alone on the stage.

Act III: The Garden of a Monastery on the Seacoast: St. Settlement tells of a vision; the men disbelieve, and voices are heard. St. Ignatius calls his men to order, and a military drill is held while St. Chavez lectures to them. Sailors and young girls dance. Women saints enter and are reproved by Ignatius for not believing in the vision. Ignatius predicts the last judgment—the procession goes out singing hymns.
Act IV: The Compere and the Commere in front of the curtain: They discuss whether there is to be a fourth act. Finally they decide yes, and the curtain rises revealing all the Saints in Heaven. They sing of their memories of life on earth and join in the last hymn of communion, "When this you see, remember me."

This summary was taken from the Scenario of the score, for unless a complete explanation were given, it would be impossible for a reader to interpret the verse. In fact, the author of the scenario has marked the measure numbers where each of the indicated events occur.

Miss Stein's prose is a series of cryptograms; that is, she uses words for sounds and feelings rather than for any accepted meaning. This does not mean that it is not to be interpreted, but it does mean that it should not be interpreted too literally. For instance:

Does it show as if it could be that very suc- cessful that he was very successful that he was with them with them with them as it was not better than at worst that he could follow him to be taking it away away that way a way away to go.

If one uses for comprehension only the underlined words, does not the following interpretation seem logical?

Does it not appear that St. Ignatius was very successful with his followers and that they could do far worse than to follow his example in discovering a way of life through renunciation?

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2. Commonweal, March 9, 1934, p. 525.
In many cases the libretto may be interpreted in many meanings at once. The Vision of the Holy Ghost is an example.


Chorus: If they were not pigeons, what were they?
St. Ignatius: If they were not pigeons on the grass alas what were they?
Compere: He had heard of a third and he asked about it.
Chorus: It was a magpie in the sky
St. Ignatius: If a magpie in the sky on the sky cannot cry if the pigeons on the grass alas can alas and to pass the pigeon on the grass alas and the magpie in the sky on the sky and to try and to try alas on the grass alas the pigeon on the grass the pigeon on the grass alas.

Chorus: It might very well, very well very well they might be they might be very well they might be very well very well them might be

Heavenly Saints: Let Lucy Lilly Lilly Lucy Lucy Let Lucy Lucy Lilly Lilly Let Lily Lilly Lilly Lilly Lucy Lucy Let Lilly, Let Lucy Lilly.

St. Ignatius has seen a vision of pigeons flocked on grass—probably a field. He then explains the vision again, just verifying the truth of his first statement, when the chorus suggests that it was a magpie in the sky, a remark which means nothing but an expression of disbelief.

It may also be interpreted in a symbolic sense. The pigeons on the grass are the Saints, their fellow monks, and the nuns. A magpie in the sky, silent (on the sky), was the Holy Ghost which descended to the crying pigeons on the grass (the world over) to give spiritual aid.
Stein's style has been termed very well by Joseph W. Krutch as a "modern roccoco."¹ A similarity can be seen when it is remembered that the roccoco style too had for its basis a simple plan around which were ornaments, frills, and excess adornment to the extent of obliterating the simple. Stein has based her poems on a skeleton idea, capable of infinite interpretation, which she has adorned with words for the sound and the feeling.

The plot of the whole drama may also be interpreted in several ways. It may be the story of St. Theresa of Avila, represented by two persons, the inner and the outer, and of St. Ignatius and his followers and his aid in the welding into one the spiritual unity of the inner and the outer St. Theresa. With this is the translation of all saints into the unity of a Heavenly State.²

The work may also be interpreted as a satire on the church and the people who become saints. The two St. Theresa may be representative of the conflict between her love of freedom and a normal life and the call of her church. The relations between the woman and St. Ignatius, the parlor games organized by St. Chavez, and the sudden regimentation into a military drill may be indicative of the writer's idea of saints at play halted by the rules of their orders. The

2. Commonweal, March 9, 1934, p. 525.
Commere and the Compere may represent the laity observing and commenting on the actions of the saints.

Such a work has been treated by Thomson as drama, ballet, and opera combined. He used in the New York production a completely Negro cast because the Negro singers have such fine diction and because there would be no intellectual barriers to break down. The Negro was satisfied with the beauty of the word and did not worry about its meaning.

Many times these words are treated in a declamatory style, the rhythm of which is left to the singer:

\[\text{(We had - etc.)}\]

We had intended if it were a pleasant day to go to the country it was a very beautiful day and we carried out our intention. We went to places that we had been when equally pleased and we found very nearly what we could find and returning saw and heard that after all we were rewarded and......

In other places the rhythm is clearly defined:

\[\text{Likewise it makes necessary to go - gain}\]

The short motivic treatment of conversation is at times extremely amusing. The following example is a conversation between St. Chavez and St. Ignatius.
The musical treatment of the toast which St. Chavez makes to his company is strictly designated as to rhythm, but the use of declamatory musical speech is indicated.

Progressing from no designated rhythm to a repeated pattern, Thomson goes a step farther by repeating the same word pattern but with different rhythms:
Thomson has given no means by which the singer may display melodious emotion. There are no A B A arias; in fact, it is difficult to distinguish any section which might be termed an "aria." The nearest is St. Ignatius' Vision of the Holy Ghost, "Pigeons On The Grass, Alas." Even here the chorus breaks in with questions and the Compere with remarks. This aria has been based on a variation form which is the closest (of any set form) to a primitive chaccone.

\[G:3\]

\[
\begin{align*}
  & I I \backslash I \text{IV.IV} / I I \backslash I \text{IV.IV} / I I \backslash I \text{IV.IV} / \\
  & I I \backslash I \text{IV.IV} / \text{etc.}
\end{align*}
\]

The solo and chorus parts are all based on the same melodic pattern with different rhythms:
Throughout the whole opera the harmonic schemes are kept extremely simple. The following is the harmonic basis of the opening of Act I:

C: IV / IV / IV / IV / IV / IV / IV / IV /
   IV / IV / IV / IV / IV / IV / IV /
   IV / IV / IV / IV / IV / IV / IV /
   IV / IV / IV / IV / IV / IV / IV / IV /

Modulations are effected often but very clearly, as in the following example:

The accompaniment is a background for the voices rather than an integral part of the drama. In many places there is nothing but sustained chordal accompaniment with only two or three chords per measure. Another characteristic is the repetition of the same motive as an accompaniment to a conversation.

The chorus is kept as a commentator in all the opera except in Act III, where the monks rebuke St. Ignatius'
vision. Thomson has scored the work for two choruses for contrast of antiphonal singing and for contrast of many voices versus few. The harmonies, however, are not altered even in the choral parts.

The work as a whole is not dramatic in the sense that its interest depends upon a plot. The plot itself is unimportant. To this author Four Saints in Three Acts is a setting of Gertrude Stein's poetry, its rhythm, and its vocal sound, which has been arranged for soloists and chorus under the guise of a stage presentation. The repetition of words compensates for the repetition of harmonic patterns. The work may be compared with William Walton's setting of Edith Sitwell's poems. There the rhythm of words and the sound of the speaking voice are integral parts of a sonorous background. In Four Saints the word sound plus the singing voice and the light harmonic scheme are used to represent a tale, a philosophy, or a satire, whatever or however the listener pleases. The appeal to the spectator is made through the ostentatious settings and the ballets.

Within these elements—the lack of an obvious dramatic plot, the use of cryptogrammic libretto, the emphasis of rhythm and vocal sound rather than harmony, and the spectacular choreography and staging—lies the originality of Thomson's work. Four Saints in Three Acts and Merry Mount both were based on religious themes and, having appeared the same year, were bound to be compared. Although many
comparisons made by critics were unimportant and unintelli-
'gent, Kenneth Burke of The Nation pointed out a number of
ideas of consequence.¹ He believed that while the settings
are very different--Thomson's a choreographic spectacle
blended with scenery and costumes and Hanson's a mechanical
and realistic conflagration--the works were alike, since
both were ecclesiastic in feeling. Here the similarity
stops. Thomson is at times comical in thought; Hanson is
never so. Thomson's work is not based on melody; Hanson's
opera is. The text of Merry Mount is a vehicle for opera;
the text of Four Saints is theatrical--it stages well and
sings well, perhaps better than Merry Mount.² Neither work
ventures into dissonance, but Hanson does use modal feeling,
while Thomson does not hesitate to use broken fragments of a
tune.³ The works should be termed antipodes, two extremes--
from stark reality to fashionable entertainment.

Brooklyn, New York, was the birthplace of perhaps the
most widely known composer of America. George Gershwin,
born in 1898, began his early musical training with Charles
Hambitzer and Edward Kelenyi, but by the age of sixteen he
had become a "song-plugger" for J. H. Remick and Company in
New York. He first wrote songs of the popular, rhythmic,

². Opinion of this writer.
³. This refers to the Military Drill, which quotes the
"Stars and Stripes Forever."
melodic idioms of the day; then in 1919 was produced his first musical comedy, *La, La, Lucille*.

From that time on George Gershwin's music plus the lyrics of his brother Ira were a combination Broadway knew would be a success. Such songs as "Fascinating Rhythm," "The Man I Love," "Lady Be Good," and "Embraceable You" have again and again been revived, each time with popularity.

Gershwin had always been ambitious to learn and to become a composer of serious music as well as of musical comedy. He was constantly studying and at one time studied orchestration with Rubin Goldmark. It was when Paul Whiteman approached him for a "piece de resistance" for a program called "Experiment in Modern Music," to be given at Aeolian Hall, that Gershwin publicly attempted a more serious idiom. A jazz band in a concert hall was something new, and Whiteman wanted a work which would give the critics a reason to come. Gershwin obliged with a piano work with orchestral accompaniment based on jazz syncopations, modern harmonies, and the blues given development and symphonic treatment. Written in ten days, the work was orchestrated in a colorful, idiomatic manner by Ferde Grofe, as Gershwin did not feel equipped to do the orchestration himself. This work, *Rhapsody in Blue*, performed by the composer, opened a new field for Gershwin and for other jazz men. From that followed his *Piano Concerto*, the symphonic piece *American in Paris*, and *Three Preludes for Piano*. 
It was natural for Gershwin, after association with the theater in his musical comedies, to attempt a serious form in that field. *Porgy* and *Bess*, based on the play *Porgy* by Du Bose and Dorothy Heyward, was written in the early thirties after Gershwin had spent some time in the South studying the colored dialect.

Of his work Gershwin said,

I planned the opera for the theater rather than the opera house because I wanted it to be popular. I wanted to reach masses of people rather than the wealthy few. And, I wanted to write an opera that would be entertaining and that would have a widespread appeal.

The success of the opera is partially due to this plan, but it was also due to the fact that Gershwin brought forth the first truly American folk opera.

The story itself is solidly American. The Negro has had a prominent part in the development of the United States from its beginnings. The slum life of the American cities has been a problem since the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century. The play has combined these two elements, the uneducated Southern Negro people with their simple superstitious natures and slum living with a conflict of the weak against the strong.

*Porgy*, a crippled beggar, falls in love with *Bess*, the sweetheart of *Crown*, the strong man of *Catfish Row*, Charleston, South Carolina. *Crown* becomes involved in a murder and is forced to hide for a number of weeks. This fact brings

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Porgy and Bess together, and Bess for the first time knows the happiness of gentle love. Crown returns for Bess; however, Porgy, his arms and hands strengthened by necessity, overcomes Crown and kills him. Taken to police headquarters only to identify the body, superstitious Porgy refuses to look at the body and is therefore detained. Bess during his absence is persuaded to go to New York for a new life by Sportin’ Life, the peddler of the "Happy Dust." When Porgy returns, he sets out slowly in his goat cart for the distant land of New York to find his Bess.

The following conversation is an example of the libretto, which is not beautiful poetic prose but which is the tough "Nigger" dialect of the southern slums.

Jake: Listen to Porgy. I think he's sof' on Crown's Bess.
Porgy: I ain' nebber swap two words with Bess.
Maria: Porgy's got too good sense to look twice at that liquor guzzlin' slut.
Serena: That gal Bess ain't fit for Gawd fearin' ladies to 'sociate with.
Porgy: Can't you keep yo' mouth off Bess. Between the Gawd fearin' ladies and the Gawd damnin' men that gal ain't gotta chance.

In the arias and the choruses the characteristics of the Negro spiritual are found:

Oh, de Lawd shake de Heaven an' de Lawd rock de groun'
And where you goin' to stand, my brudder, an' my sister,
When de sky come a tumblin' down?

Oh, de sun goin' to rise in de wes'
An' de moon goin' to set in de sea
An' de stars goin' to bow befo' my Lawd
Who died on Calvarie!

Ira Gershwin has in the lyrics he wrote for certain arias the strophic form, the rhythmic flow, and the repetition found in the spiritual:
It ain't necessarily so, It ain't necessarily so,
De 'tings dat yo' lible
To read in de Bible
It ain't necessarily so.

Lil' David was small, but oh my!
Lil' David was small, but oh my!
He fought by Goliath
Who lay down and dieth
Lil' David was small, but oh my!

The recitative of Gershwin's musical setting suggests
the inflection of the Negro English. There is no heavy, re-
tarded declamation such as is found in some English opera.
Compare the following two examples.
Such recitative Gershwin has used in several ways. For straight conversation a "speaking" recitative is designated in which the pitch and the rhythms are given but with notes.

Serena's prayer, "Oh, Doctor Jesus," is a secco-recitative with one chord held throughout as accompaniment, not measured but normally notated. The singer wails the verses while the chorus answers "Amen" at the end of each phrase.

A very interesting number is Maria's "aria" of recitative, "Frien' With You, Nigger, Hell No!" It is completely recitative, but the length, the thought, and the accompaniment make it a spoken aria. It would perhaps be the most difficult of all arias in the opera to portray musically and dramatically. The repetition of the phrase identifying the number unifies the whole. For a final emphasis the last phrase is left unaccompanied. The aria was written in a recitative style, and action is carried throughout; Maria is threatening to "carve up" Sportin' Life, the dope peddler.
Moving to the other extreme, one finds that an arioso style is employed as Porgy breaks away from the crap game conversation of Act I:
Although Gershwin did not separate any of the arias as individual numbers, there are many which have become famous as such. These melodious songs are written in several different forms. "My Man's Gone Now" is a varied da capo form; the first section is repeated, and a contrasting section is added to make the number an A A B A C form. Jake's song, "I'm Goin' Out To Meet de Blackfish Banks," is a strophe form, three verses and chorus, in which the men act as if they are rowing a boat and their strokes are heaved in rhythm to the rowing. "Summertime," the famous lullaby, is a repeated strophe, A A', the A' being rhythmically changed to fit the words. Porgy's aria, "Buzzard Keep On Flying," is an A B A form with the B section rhythmically free tending toward a recitative.

The choruses of the opera are particularly outstanding, as Gershwin was well acquainted with the techniques necessary to create drama in choral singing. In the "Saucer Burial" chorus the heavy, sad, and weird atmosphere is achieved by the doubling of the alto and bass parts, a Negro band playing such instruments as combs, mouth
S.A.A.T.B.B. instead of a full doubling of S.A.T.B. Very effective in this chorus is the glissando first sung by Serena, the dead man's wife; it is then taken by the chorus and built softly, slowly, and unpretentiously into a tremendous climax.

The antiphonal singing of Act I, Scene 2, portrays a train as it answers with "rollin', rollin'" Bess's solo, "Oh, de train is at the station an' you better get on board!"

Although ensembles were not emphasized, the duet "Bess, Yo' Is My Woman Now" has become a symbol of the opera. Its main motiv characterizes the love of Porgy and Bess, and it is heard again and again in the orchestral background throughout the whole opera.

The orchestral scoring is an assimilation of jazz, popular dance band techniques, Negro melodies, and the blues with a serious orchestra basis. The score calls for a banjo and a saxophone, three percussion instruments and a piano, two flutes, two oboes, five clarinets (with saxophone), one bassoon, three horns, three trumpets, three trombones, three tubas, and strings. An interesting comparison to Peter Ibbetson can be made in the use of orchestras or bands on the stage. In contrast to Taylor's "Strauss waltz," a Negro band playing such instruments as combs, mouth
organs, washboards, and washtubs is found in Act II, Scene 2.

The New York Tribune of October 2, 1935, states that polytonal passages are found in the harmonies of the choruses. Gershwin has not used polytonality, although his harmonies are modern in the use of added sixths, seventh, and ninth chords with irregular resolutions. There are many chromatic passages with abrupt modulations. The following examples are typical.

Through the harmonies and the orchestration, a realistic characterization of the drama is found throughout the score. In the crap game scene the shaking and the rolling of the
dice are heard in the orchestra. It is logical too that this crap game is carried on musically in a very free fugue-like the dice, which are passed from one man to another, the subject is taken by different voices.

The orchestration, as well as the action, pictures the libretto. The swooping buzzard of "Buzzard Keep on Flyin'" is heard in the chromatic ascent and descent of the thirty-second notes of the following example.

In the staging, as well as in the music, the actual drama is never forgotten. Even in the choral scenes, which in many operas are often stagnant and inert, the story is moving, and so are the people. Gershwin's chorus is stationed at windows, or, are hanging clothes, beating rugs, calling street wares, sweeping streets and doorsteps; or, as in the Saucer Burial, the choir is kept in motion by bodies and arms swaying in contrapuntal motion to match the music. This staging, acting, and quality of characterization are
aimed at the level of good theater, while the music and treatment of libretto is completely operatic. It is this good theater as well as good music which is the main attribute American composers have given to the operatic field, and it was Porgy and Bess which first contributed this combination to the American folk-opera.

American opera, and through this period no opera characteristic of the American idiom was brought forth.2

During the years of the depression (1930-1935), however, an independent idiom began to emerge. The word "independent" has been used rather than "nationalistic" or "American" because four of the five works discussed in the preceding chapter have few similar characteristics in common.


2. Since the United States is so large geographically and so varied sociologically, what is idiomatic for one section of the country may not be so for another. The Amer-
CONCLUSIONS

Sir Herbert Perry said,

True style comes not from the individual but from the products of crowds of fellow workers who sift and try and try again 'till they have found the thing that suits their national taste . . . .

This process of "sifting" and "trying" which took place in the period of 1900 to 1940 has brought forth the American opera. While composers first tried to imitate European styles, the nearest to national elements during the first thirty years was found in an eclectic type in which the characteristics did not blend to create a greater accomplishment. These works were the trials and errors of the American opera, and through this period no opera characteristic of the American idiom was brought forth. 2

During the years of the depression (1930-1935), however, an independent idiom began to emerge. The word "independent" has been used rather than "nationalistic" or "American" because four of the five works discussed in the preceding chapter have few similar characteristics in common.


2. Since the United States is so large geographically and so varied sociologically, what is idiomatic for one section of the country may not be so for another. The American idiom, therefore, must be defined as those qualities which present themselves as a result of the climatic, social, political, economic, and educational environment of the artist.
Elements of a single school of foreign opera did not prevail, but the "American" elements were noticeably different in each one: In **Merry Mount** Americanism asserts itself mainly through the setting and the story; in **Four Saints** and **Triple Sec**, through the theatrical emphasis; in **Emperor Jones**, in the dramatic construction. Only one of the five works, **Porgy and Bess**, exemplifies a consolidation of those characteristics plus others which warrant its classification as an American opera.

Here are summarized those general principles upon which even later operas written after World War II are still based:

1. A contemporary subject, or a subject related to contemporary thought or imagination.
2. The use of the musical idioms of that contemporary subject.
3. The use of the prose vernacular of that subject.
4. A theatrical approach which appeals to the musician, the dramatist, the choreographer, or the artist.
5. A thoroughly realistic treatment with appropriately descriptive music and action.

It is true that it was for his own people that Gershwin wrote **Porgy and Bess**. In doing so, he achieved a folk opera—not fancy entertainment for the society of New York.
but a setting of one aspect of everyday life in America, pleasant or unpleasant. This type of opera would not have an appeal outside the United States. But

Is music that is good music for one country or one community necessarily good music for another? It may be enjoyed by others but it is truly appreciated by the native. Every composer can not expect to have a world-wide message, but he may reasonably expect to have a message for his own people.¹

The growth of American opera from 1900 to 1940 passed through various stages to its epitome in Gershwin.

1900 to 1920: Complete Dominance of Foreign Influences

Composers were equally divided between basing their works on a single foreign style or on a combination of styles. This is not surprising, since almost all American composers went abroad for musical training.

1920 to 1940: The Exploration Period

Though some composers still went abroad, many remained in the United States for their advanced education, since by this time American educational centers were equipped for advanced training. Foreign elements are prevalent, but attempts of individualism are made through idiomatic libretto, theatrical emphasis, use of jazz, folk songs, and modern harmonies.

It may be that in fifty years these elements will not be looked upon by the historian as important, for

When an idiom is new we cannot detect the difference between the really original mind and the mere imitator. But when the idiom passes into the realm of everyday commonplace, then and then only, can we tell the true from the false.²

"Everyday commonplace"—this brings to mind the well-

¹ Williams, op. cit., p. 15.
² Ibid.
realized fact that opera in the United States, American or foreign, is not a part of the common living as it is in Europe, where many small areas have their own companies.

The ideal thing would be for the whole community to take up music as it takes to language from its youth up, naturally and without conscious thought for its specialized training.¹

If the common man had acquired a musical taste from his environment and each center had its own thriving musical life with the opera a part of it, then our young composers would have a place for their works to be heard. Also young singers could gain experience and be active in at least a small way. Hans Busch said in his article "Fitting Opera Into American Life, Part II" in the Music Journal, April, 1951, that in choosing the principals and chorus for Verdi's Macbeth and Mozart's Così fan tutte for the New Opera Company's season in 1941, he heard fifteen hundred singers in one month.² To continue in the words of Busch,

The auditions were a revelation to me. I have never, in all my European travels and work, heard so many fine voices, ripe for the professional stage. I asked a colleague, "Why aren't all these people working? They are ready, they need only the basic elements of operatic interpretation and a good grounding in stagecraft." He shrugged his shoulder, "We can't use them until they are seasoned for the stage, and besides, where are the opera houses to absorb them?"

Opera as a part of the community would provide a place for

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the many conductors, instrumentalists, and dramatists (actor or manager) as well as for the singer, either amateur or professional. When the American public demands opera of any kind, it will have it, but the demand must come first; then opera, and especially American opera, will have its place not only on Broadway and at the Metropolitan but in the neighborhood theater. Let us hope that the music educators can raise their standards and succeed in giving the American public a will for good opera. Then American opera will not be only in the minds of the historians and musicologists, but it will be in the minds of the young composers and performers and in the hearts of the American people.
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E. Programs

APPENDIX 1

Traveling Companies in the United States: 1790 - 1910

1790  French Company, New Orleans, La.
1793  French Company, Charleston, S. C.
1825  Garcia's Company, New York, New York
1827  French Company, New York, New York
1832  L. da Ponte's Company, New York, New York
1838  Seguin's Company, New York, New York
1847  Havana Company, New York, New York
1848  Maretzek Company, New York, New York
1849  Artists' Union Co., New York, New York
1850  First Opera in Chicago, Ill.
1853  First Opera in San Francisco, California
1855  German Co. (J. Ungher's Co.), New York, New York
1857  Strakosch, New York, New York
1867  Opera Bouffe, New York, New York
1869  Russian Opera, New York, New York
1878  Mapleson's Co., New York, New York
1883, Henry E. Abbey's Co., New York, New York
1890  Abbey and Schieffel, New York, New York
1893  Abbey and Grau, New York, New York
1895  Damrosch's German Co., New York, New York
1897  Damrosch-Ellis Co., New York, New York
1902  H. Conried, New York, New York
1906  Hammerstein, New York, New York
1908  Gatti-Casaza, New York, New York
1909  Boston Opera Col., Boston, Mass.

ABSTRACT

Opera was established in the colonies as early as 1765. To be sure, it was the light English ballad opera which found its way to the New World and which first was successful. Various traveling companies provided entertainment up to the time of the Revolution, when all theater entertainment was curtailed. Following the Revolution, the serious opera of Italy and France gradually became popular. From then through the influx of German romantic works in the nineteenth century, the operatic growth in the United States can be studied in each major city as a civic development.

American musicians became interested in writing an "American" opera soon after the Revolution, but since the majority of musicians went abroad for study and did so until the twentieth century, no works were produced which were free from obvious foreign elements until after 1930.

Of approximately three hundred works written by American composers, most of which are still in manuscript and have never been performed, the author has chosen for discussion about fifty works written between 1900 and 1940. An analysis of the libretto, the vocal techniques, the formal aspects, the harmony, orchestration, or accompaniment, and the dramatic content has shown that American opera written during these years falls into certain categories, as follows.
American Opera under German Influences

Damrosch: The Scarlet Letter
Paine: Azara
Hadley: Azora, Daughter of Montezuma
Nevin: Pola
Lester: Everyman
Patterson: The Echo
Taylor: The King's Henchman

American Opera under French Influences

Converse: The Pipe of Desire
Cadman: The Garden of Mystery
Nevin: Daughter of the Forest

American Opera under Italian Influences

Hugo: The Temple Dancer
Allen: The Monastery
Cadman: Shanewis
Harling: A Light from St. Agnes
Cadman: The Witch of Salem
Freer: Eight One Act Operas

Eclecticism in American Opera

Herbert: Natoma
Parker: Mona
Hadley: Cleopatra's Night
Breil: The Legend
Moore: Narcissa
Saminsky: The Gagliadara of a Merry Plague
Stoessel: Garrick
Taylor: Peter Ibbetson
Taylor: Ramuntcho
Clokey: The Pied Piper
Gruenberg: Jack and the Beanstalk
DeKoven: Canterbury Pilgrims
Damrosch: Cyrano
Carter: The Blonde Donna

The Independent American Opera

Hanson: Merry Mount
Thomson: Four Saints in Three Acts
Gruenberg: Emperor Jones
Gershwin: Porgy and Bess
Blitzstein: Triple Sec
The basically foreign and eclectic works were the "trials and errors" during the search for an American idiom. The emergence of American characteristics is found in the independent works which appeared between 1930 and 1940. The principles which are common in various degrees to all the works are the following.

1. A contemporary subject or a subject related to contemporary thought or imagination.
2. The use of the musical idioms of that contemporary subject.
3. The use of the prose vernacular of the subject.
4. A theatrical approach which appeals to the musician, the dramatist, the choreographer, or the artist.
5. A thoroughly realistic treatment with appropriately descriptive music and action.

Of all these works Porgy and Bess is the nearest to the true American folk opera. Based upon the above principles and written with the purpose of reaching as many people as possible, Porgy and Bess opened the path of development for theater opera which continued after World War II. Through the theater, perhaps, opera will become an integral part of the American people so that American opera will find its place in the evolutionary scheme of musical growth and will be called in the future histories of music "The American School of Opera."