

Verfremdungseffekt in Busoni's *Turandot*: A Modernist Opera

by

Annie Shum

B.Mus., University of Victoria, 1998

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ABSTRACT

Although well-respected as a pianist, teacher, and theorist, Ferruccio Busoni is overlooked as a composer. His works are viewed as being old-fashioned and conservative, especially in light of his avant-garde ideas. However, his ideas and music, especially his operas, reflect early twentieth-century Modernist aesthetics. This thesis examines Busoni's objective approach, eclecticism, and anti-realist stance in his opera *Turandot*. Busoni's libretto and his use of the *commedia dell'arte* and exoticism encourage critical, active participation from the audience. The conscious theatricality in *Turandot* is remarkably similar to Bertolt Brecht's very Modernist idea of the *Verfremdungseffekt*. The parallels between Busoni and Brecht demonstrate that Busoni's *Turandot* mirrors contemporary interests, and even anticipates future developments.

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This thesis would not have been possible without the unconditional love and support from my family. I am especially grateful to my brothers, Edmond and Edward, who have always been there for me, and my parents, who fostered my love for music. Thank you.

The stage represents the gestures of life,
artificiality is stamped on its forehead.
It should not become a reflected caricature;
but as a magical mirror it has a beautiful effect.
Admit that theatre only undermines the truth,
and is only fair to unbelievable things.
Whereas you laugh at theatre when you think it's true,
it forces you to be serious when you see it purely as a game.

Ferruccio Busoni

Doktor Faust: Dichtung für Musik (1918)

(translated by Tamara Levitz)

INTRODUCTION

During his lifetime, Ferruccio Busoni resented the fact that he was celebrated more as a concert pianist than as a composer. In a letter to his friend, Henri Petri, he lamented that he was first and foremost known as an “acknowledged master of the pianoforte,” but wryly noted that “at least that much has been achieved!”¹ After his death, his theoretical works eclipsed his compositions – more has been written on what Busoni said *about* music than on what Busoni said *through* music.² His sympathizers claim that he was misunderstood; his critics see him as a minor composer whose friends have placed him, without just cause, on a pedestal. When it comes to discussing his significance as a composer, there does not seem to be any neutral ground. The little that is written about his music is primarily introductory in nature, often with the aim of convincing readers of the value of his works.³

One of the main criticisms against Busoni is that his music is outmoded and conventional. To his critics, Busoni’s progressive theories never materialized in his music – Busoni the theoretician was incompatible with Busoni the composer. However, one cannot simply dismiss his works as old-fashioned. Although his musical language may seem conventional, a closer look at Busoni’s works reveals that they were

¹ Busoni to Henri Petri, Berlin, 13 October 1897, in *Selected Letters*, trans. and ed. Antony Beaumont (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), 60.

² Marc-André Roberge, *Ferruccio Busoni: A Bio-Bibliography* (New York: Greenwood, 1991). Eighty articles about Busoni’s essays are listed compared with only fourteen articles on *Turandot*, most of which are introductory.

³ Roberge, “Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924),” in *Music of the Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde: A Bio-critical Sourcebook*, ed. Larry Sitsky (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002), 86.

congruent with the Modernist aesthetics of his time, and in some respects, even forward-looking.

Busoni's views on opera are central to my argument that he was a Modernist composer. His ground-breaking ideas are outlined in his most famous theoretical work, *Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik (Sketch for a New Aesthetic of Music)*, first published in 1907. In the second edition (1916), Busoni incorporated addenda into the text and added a small amount of material. The additions included a number of remarks on opera that clearly reflect Busoni's Modernist outlook. These remarks, written in 1913, were extracted and translated by Rosamond Ley, and appear under the title "The Future of Opera" in *The Essence of Music and Other Papers*.⁴ Later chapters draw on Ley's translation and other writings of Busoni when demonstrating the connection between his theories and his music.

In these extracts from the second edition of the *Sketch*, Busoni establishes his anti-realist, anti-sentimentalist views. According to him, the supernatural or the unnatural are the "only proper sphere of representation and feeling."⁵ Since opera is inherently unrealistic, he maintains that composers should not try to hide this fact, but make it apparent by using dances, masks, apparitions, and pantomime. Nineteenth-century artists were also preoccupied with the fantastic; however, Busoni's theatricality draws attention to itself, a technique that is distinctly Modernist – some would even say

⁴ Busoni, "The Future of Opera [1913]," in *The Essence of Music and Other Papers*, trans. Rosamond Ley (New York: Dover, 1957), 39-41.

⁵ Busoni, "The Future of Opera," 40.

Postmodernist⁶ – in aesthetic. His aim was not to provide an escape for his viewers, but to break the illusion that they are watching an actual event, and in turn, encourage them to be more active in the viewing process. Busoni disapproved of the kind of theatre that “deals out these excitements without involving the audience in the accompanying dangers and disasters and, above all, sparing them any exertion;” being incredulous, he averred, is essential to critical, objective viewing.⁷

Busoni’s vision of a consciously unrealistic opera in 1913 is remarkable because it anticipates Bertolt Brecht’s vision of epic theatre, especially his idea of the *Verfremdungseffekt*, which came twenty years after Busoni’s statements. Although the two never met, it is likely that Brecht became acquainted with Busoni’s music and writings through the collaboration with Busoni’s pupil, Kurt Weill (1900-1950). Brecht owned a copy of Busoni’s *Sketch*, which may have had an impact on Brecht’s early model of epic theatre in the late 1920s, particularly its anti-Wagnerian stance.⁸ It is impossible to determine whether Busoni had a direct influence on the formulation of Brecht’s theories of theatre; nevertheless, their aesthetic aims are remarkably similar.

The *Verfremdungseffekt* is one of the most quintessentially Modernist concepts in twentieth-century theatre. Finding an English equivalent of this term is somewhat tricky: it is sometimes translated as alienation, estrangement, or disillusionment in

⁶ Silvio Gaggi, *Modern/Postmodern: A Study in Twentieth-Century Arts and Ideas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 12. This would indicate that Busoni’s ideas were progressive for his time.

⁷ Busoni, “The Future of Opera,” 41.

⁸ Vera Stegmann, “Brecht Contra Wagner: The Evolution of the Epic Music Theatre,” in *A Bertolt Brecht Reference Companion*, ed. Siegfried Mews (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), 241; Luigi Pestalozza, “Busoni und Brecht?” in *Studien zur Berliner Musikgeschichte: Vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Traude Ebert-Obermeier (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1989), 332-41.

English, but these terms are inaccurate and negative because they imply that the audience is disinterested.⁹ The *Verfremdungseffekt* does not cut off the audience from the action – in fact, it does quite the opposite. Like Busoni, Brecht criticized the kind of theatre in which the audience watches passively and unthinkingly: “True, their eyes are open, but they stare rather than see, just as they listen rather than hear. They look at the stage as if in a trance.”¹⁰ To prevent the audience from falling into a stupor, the events and characters must be presented as extraordinary and unfamiliar. This technique, which Brecht called the *Verfremdungseffekt*, included every aspect of theatre: acting method, story, lighting, costumes, props, and music. The *Verfremdungseffekt* forces the audience to question what they are watching, to form an opinion. Since the spectators are aware that what they are watching is an illusion and not something that is natural and inevitable, Brecht hoped that they would then realize that change is possible, and be motivated to take action against the social injustices portrayed in his plays.¹¹ Although Busoni’s works are not as overtly political as Brecht’s, their theories are nevertheless similar.

Busoni’s theories are most evident in his operas: *Die Brautwahl* (1912), *Arlecchino* (1917), *Turandot* (1917), and *Doktor Faust* (1924). All four of his operas support Busoni’s idea of theatricality on the stage, especially the last three, which were influenced by the *commedia dell’arte* and puppet theatre. However, musicological study has focused

⁹ John Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht: A Study from Eight Aspects*, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen, 1967), 177. Since the term cannot be described satisfactorily in English, the German name is used in this thesis.

¹⁰ Brecht, “A Short Organum for Theatre [1949],” in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 187.

¹¹ Brecht, “Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction [1935-36?],” in *Brecht on Theatre*, 71.

primarily on *Doktor Faust*; sources include journal articles and a Masters thesis (Phillip Murray Dineen, University of Victoria, 1982). Although it is illustrative of Busoni's Modernist aesthetics, *Turandot* has been ignored in academic studies. Two exceptions are "Ping, Pong, Pang: Die Gestalten der Commedia dell'arte in Busonis und Puccinis Turandot-Opern" (2000), an article for a symposium, and "*Turandot*" *auf der Opernbühne* (1989), a book about Gozzi's play on the operatic stage, both written by Kii-Ming Lo. These works focus on comparing Busoni's opera with Puccini's; however, there are no extensive analyses devoted exclusively to Busoni's *Turandot*. It is seldom recorded or performed, and the full score remains unpublished.

Turandot is often regarded as being as a somewhat uninspired work: in Antony Beaumont's opinion, it is "neither dramatically nor musically on a par with *Arlecchino*."¹² However, *Turandot* is as much of an expression of Busoni's Modernist tendencies as *Arlecchino* or *Doktor Faust*, though this may not be readily apparent. Although the music appears to be conventional, Busoni achieved a kind of theatre that predated Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* by two decades years. The unique and eclectic mix of *commedia dell'arte* and exotic elements present contradictions and incongruities that force the audience to take a critical stance, just as in Brecht's theatre. Subsequent chapters will use quotations from Brecht's theories of theatre to support the argument that Busoni was a Modernist – a forward-looking Modernist – and to illustrate the early Modernist traits of *Turandot*.

¹² Antony Beaumont, *Busoni the Composer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), 245.

Outline of Chapters

The first chapter consists of definitions: definitions of Modernism, definitions of Busoni as a Modernist, and definitions of the *Verfremdungseffekt*. In the twentieth century, there was no predominant style or aesthetic; instead, artists embraced a multitude of disparate, sometimes conflicting, movements. However, from the beginning of the century onwards, assessments of Modernist art have tended to favour avant-garde works; as a result, Busoni, who refused to revoke tradition entirely, was dismissed as a minor composer.¹³ This section identifies three characteristics of Modernism – eclecticism, objectivity, and artificiality – which were common to Busoni and many of his peers. The expression of these traits in the libretto, use of the *commedia dell'arte*, and exoticism in *Turandot* are analyzed in subsequent chapters. This discussion of Modernism concludes by demonstrating the similarity between Busoni's vision of opera and Brecht's concept of the *Verfremdungseffekt*. Although he is criticized for being unimaginative – a pasticheur, even – a comparison of Busoni's writings with those of his contemporaries and Brecht shows that his ideas and music were both current and progressive considering the historical framework.

In the second chapter, Busoni's libretto is compared to Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni's libretto for Puccini's opera *Turandot* (1926). Although both are based on

¹³ Vânia Schittenhelm, "The Dangerous Issue of Modern Music in the Controversy Between Busoni and Pfitzner," *Electronic Musicological Review* 2, no. 1 (1997), http://www.humanas.ufpr.br/rem/remv2.1/vol2.1/the_dangerous_issue.html

Carlo Gozzi's play *Turandot* (1762), Busoni's libretto is much closer to the original than Adami and Simoni's. As with any fairy tale, Gozzi's play demands a suspension of belief, and Busoni did not rationalize, transform, or omit the improbabilities in the plot. Adami and Simoni, on the other hand, smoothed over the jarring elements in the play, making it more unified in sentiment, but in doing so, the complexity and ambiguity of the play were largely lost, as well as the humorous elements. Their omissions, changes, and additions transformed the play into an opera in the grand, late-Romantic tradition, whereas Busoni retained Gozzi's irreverently comic mood. Although they were written less than ten years apart, the two works are markedly different from each other. This comparative study highlights the Modernist traits in Busoni's libretto by contrasting it to Adami and Simoni's.

The third chapter discusses the role of the *commedia dell'arte* in Busoni's opera. In Gozzi's play, the servants Pantalone, Tartaglia, Truffaldino, and Brighella are part of the *commedia dell'arte*, an improvised Italian theatrical tradition. The *commedia* theatre consisted of improvised dialogue, intrigue, slapstick comedy, acrobatics, farce, young lovers, and humorous masked characters, collectively known as the Masks. For Busoni, the Masks are essential to the fantastical nature of the tale: "...[the Masks] throw a bridge from the Venetian public into the fictitious Orient of the stage and in this way destroy the illusion that what is going on is real life."¹⁴ Unlike Adami and Simoni, Busoni preserved the distinct characters of the Masks. Their personalities are clearly drawn through both their words and their music so that they are conspicuously out of

¹⁴ Busoni, "The *Turandot* Music [1911]," in *Essence*, 61.

place in Peking. This technique of making something strange or unfamiliar is central to Brecht's *Vermfremdungseffekt*. In addition to emphasizing the theatrical nature of the opera, the *commedia* characters also provide comic relief, lessening the tension of potential tragedy and preventing the audience from becoming emotionally swept up in the love story. This rejection of unthinking emotion foreshadows Brecht's views on objectivity.

The fourth chapter is an examination of exoticism, a key contributor to the realization of Busoni's Modernist goals. His use of exotic material is bewildering at first glance: he borrowed from A. W. Ambros's historical survey *Geschichte der Musik* (1862-68), but he used only one Chinese melody – the others are Turkish, Arabian, Indian, and Persian in origin. Busoni also used traditional exotic signifiers, including gongs, augmented seconds, and pentatonic scales. This eclectic jumble may seem random and culturally insensitive; however his exoticism was used not to depict China, but to create a backdrop for his fantastical tale. Furthermore, his juxtaposition of disparate – albeit conventional – materials is very Modernist as it draws attention to the use of exoticism. This technique closely resembles the technique of collage that was particularly prevalent in Postmodernist works from World War II onwards.¹⁵ The exoticism of *Turandot* may appear conventional, but it is actually used in an unconventional, Modernist manner. As his other operas do not use exoticism, *Turandot* is a unique example of Busoni's eclecticism.

¹⁵ Albright, ed., *Modernism and Music: An Anthology of Sources* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 12; Gaggi, 12.

The musical analysis of *Turandot* involves the notion of the “topic.” The term, derived from rhetoric, refers to the language shared between a composer and the audience. The idea of topics has been applied to musical analysis by three authors: Leonard Ratner in *Classic Music: Form, Expression, and Style* (1980), Wye Jamison Allanbrook in *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le Nozze di Figaro and Don Giovanni* (1983), and Kofi W. Agawu in *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music* (1991). In music, topics are “‘commonplace’ musical styles or figures whose expressive connotations, derived from the circumstances in which they are habitually employed, are familiar to all.”¹⁶ Allanbrook proposes that by using topics, the composer “can articulate within certain limits the shared response a particular passage will evoke.”¹⁷ The use of topics, then, can be seen as a way in which the composer can communicate with the listener. Topics are used in this thesis to demonstrate how Busoni used conventional devices in surprising, paradoxical ways in order to achieve his Modernist aims.

The source for this analysis is the conductor’s score, used with the kind permission of Breitkopf and Härtel, Wiesbaden (see Appendix). Since the handwritten score is difficult to read at times, the examples have been compared to the piano/vocal score prepared by Busoni’s student Philipp Jarnach, published by Breitkopf and Härtel in 1946. All musical examples have been reduced for ease of reading and in the interest of saving space. Translations of the lyrics are my own.

¹⁶ Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le Nozze di Figaro and Don Giovanni* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 329.

¹⁷ Allanbrook, 3.

Although he was not as outwardly radical as some of his peers, Busoni's aesthetics certainly belong to early Modernism. This is most evident in his operas.

Busoni asserted:

The sung word will always remain a convention on the stage, and a hindrance to any semblance of truth; to overcome this deadlock with any success a plot would have to be made in which the singers act what is incredible, fictitious, and improbable from the very start, so that one impossibility supports the other and both become plausible and acceptable.¹⁸

This move away from realism and Italian *verismo* opera was particularly symptomatic of early twentieth century; anti-realism is often considered a cornerstone of Modernist thought.¹⁹ According to Busoni, enjoyment does not depend on the veracity of the opera – on the contrary, when an onlooker is incredulous, he or she will be “unimpeded in mental reception and keen enjoyment.”²⁰ Busoni's sentiments were echoed by Brecht thirty-six years later: “...pleasure given by representations of...different sorts hardly ever depended on the representation's likeness to the thing portrayed.”²¹ By identifying the manifestation of Busoni's forward-looking theories in *Turandot* and comparing them to Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, Busoni's significance as a Modernist composer becomes apparent.

¹⁸ Busoni, “The Future of Opera,” 39-40.

¹⁹ Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, “The Name and Nature of Modernism,” in *Modernism 1890-1930*, ed. Bradbury and McFarlane (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1976), 43-44.

²⁰ Busoni, “The Future of Opera,” 41.

²¹ Brecht, “A Short Organum for the Theatre,” 182.

CHAPTER ONE: DEFINITIONS – BUSONI THE MODERNIST

Although well-respected as a theorist and pianist, Busoni is overlooked as a composer. His writings, especially the *Sketch*, are included in the anthologies of twentieth-century musical thought; yet his compositions are not part of the repertoire in concert halls, and they remain largely outside the realm of musicological research. A possible reason for this exclusion is the apparent gulf between Busoni's ideas and musical practice. His critics claim that although his ideas were progressive, his works remained in the Romantic idiom. Harold C. Schonberg's assessment of Busoni's music is typical: he praised Busoni as "one of the greatest and most original of pianists" and as a theorist, but as a composer, he "never composed the daring kind of music his ideas would indicate."²²

A fair and accurate assessment of Busoni's significance as a composer involves contextualization and clarification. This chapter establishes parallels between Busoni and his contemporaries, and identifies the similarity between Busoni and Brecht's theories of theatre, challenging the notion that his music is antiquated. To determine the tie between Busoni and Modernism, a better understanding of his theories is needed, especially since his *Sketch* is sometimes misinterpreted as a rulebook for composition, when, in fact, it is statement of possibilities. This introduction to his theories bridges the gap between Busoni's theories and his music, and will provide a backdrop for discussing Modernism in *Turandot*.

²² Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Composers* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), 523.

Defining "Modernism"

To establish Busoni as a Modernist, we must first begin with a clarification of terminology. The terms "modern," "modernity," "modernization," and "modernism" are often used interchangeably. For this thesis, the term "modernization" refers to the industrialization, urbanization, globalization, and secularization of the world; "modernity" describes the way of experiencing and living in this environment; and "Modernism" denotes the reaction, reflection, and representation of this experience.²³ The term is capitalized when discussing the arts in the twentieth century – particularly the first three decades – and to distinguish it from the more general term "modern," which often simply means "new."

What was Modernism, when did it occur, and how did it arise? Establishing its characteristics is problematic. The Modernist attitude resulted in a glut of new styles and techniques in the early twentieth century, some of which oppose each other aesthetically. Such variety makes it difficult to decide which trends are Modernist and which are not; for example, Christopher Butler places Impressionism under the Modernist umbrella, while Sara Cornell see it as the last vestige of Romanticism.²⁴ Definition is especially challenging because there is no common methodology used to determine what this word denotes. In his book *Modernism – Dada – Postmodernism* (2000),

²³ Peter Childs, *Modernism* (London: Routledge, 2000), 14-15; Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, eds., *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 126.

²⁴ Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe, 1900-1916* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994); Cornell, *Art: A History of Changing Style* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1983).

Richard Sheppard identifies several ways of defining Modernism, the most common being the chronological approach and the stylistic approach.²⁵ An examination of these models serves to illustrate how limiting, narrow definitions of Modernism have led to the marginalization of Busoni's music.

In a chronological approach, Modernism is defined by time or its place in time. The term is sometimes used simply to designate the twentieth century; however, deciding when Modernism begins and ends is a debate in itself. Clement Greenberg, for instance, sees Modernism as beginning in France with Manet's paintings in the early 1860s, whereas Robert P. Morgan argues that Modernism really took hold after 1914, as a reaction to the horrors of World War I.²⁶ Another approach involves placing Modernism within a linear historical context, but this, too, is problematic. Raymond Williams, for example, defines Modernism as a rejection of tradition, whereas Daniel Albright sees Modernism as including Neoclassicism.²⁷ This evolutionary approach is particularly narrow and limiting as it implies that one movement succeeds another, without fully acknowledging the fact that two or more movements may overlap or co-exist.

A stylistic approach, whereby Modernism is identified by common characteristics, key features, or concepts, is also inadequate to comprehensive definition.

²⁵ Sheppard, *Modernism – Dada – Postmodernism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2000).

²⁶ Greenberg, "Beginnings of Modernism," in *Modernism: Challenges and Perspectives*, ed. Monique Chefdor, Ricardo Quinones and Albert Wachtel (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 19; Morgan, ed. *Modern Times: From World War I to the Present* (Houndsmill, UK: Macmillan, 1993), 1.

²⁷ Williams, "The Politics of the Avant-Garde," in *Visions and Blueprints: Avant-Garde and Radical Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. Edward Timms and Peter Collier (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 4; Albright, *Modernism and Music*, 276-77.

The multifaceted nature of Modernism defies this kind of approach; nevertheless, it is often used by historians. Even those who admit that Modernism has neither a uniform practice nor a unified vision revert to this method: Eugene Lunn, for example, defines Modernism by identifying its common characteristics, despite acknowledging the futility of the stylistic approach.²⁸ Differing opinions on Modernist traits result in controversy over which works – and which artists – to include. Leon Botstein, for instance, identifies Busoni as one of the first proponents of the movement, whereas Robert P. Morgan places him in a chapter entitled “Some Transitional Figures.”²⁹ Since Modernism resulted in a myriad of eclectic styles, the defining criteria need to be broader and more flexible.

Considering these numerous problems, it is more useful to define Modernist art not by establishing limiting parameters, but by describing it in terms of its spirit and impetus – as an attitude rather than a distinct movement. Daniel Albright has a more comprehensive definition of Modernism, calling it “*the testing of the limits of aesthetic construction,*” which can take contradictory forms.³⁰ Using this definition, the term “Modernism” can be applied both to Expressionism and Neoclassicism, dodecaphony and jazz, Satie and Boulez, Busoni and Brecht. Three aspects of Modernism are relevant to this study of *Turandot*: plurality, the rejection of sentimentalism, and anti-realism.

²⁸ Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

²⁹ *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, s.v. “Modernism,” (by Leon Botstein), <http://www.grovemusic.com/> (Accessed 27 April 2006); Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991).

³⁰ Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 29-30.

In the twentieth century, there was a marked fracturing in art, so that there was no predominant language, style, aesthetic, or method. Music in previous eras was much more unified, especially after the advent of tonality. However, from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, there was a gradual eroding of tonality; increased chromaticism and the use of alternative scales and harmonies resulted in a much more diverse musical language.

Modernist art also tended to move away from lush expressions of emotion. In opera and theatre, Modernists sought not to transport their audiences to the heights of passion or the depths of anguish, but rather to encourage critical thinking – this aim is essential to Brecht's idea of epic theatre and the *Verfremdungseffekt*. Related to anti-sentimentalism is the Modernist preoccupation with form. In the early years of the twentieth century, opera composers strove "not to exuberate into a passionate melody, but to *think*; not to do the expected thing, but to do something contrived and studied, artificial."³¹ Since events and characters were not presented in an obvious, natural manner, this movement towards abstraction required the audience to adopt a critical, objective stance.

These Modernist concerns are present in Busoni's writings, both theoretical and musical. His belief that music is beyond convention is reflected in the eclecticism of his music; the mix of tragedy, humour, romance, exoticism and the *commedia dell'arte* in *Turandot* exemplifies Busoni's liberal approach. His valuing of objectivity and rejection of sentimentality are also part of Modernist thought; this is most evident in his idea of

³¹ Albright, *Modernism and Music*, 104.

Junge Klassizität, which involved “the casting off of what is ‘sensuous’ and the renunciation of subjectivity.”³² Finally, the Modernist eschewal of realism is mirrored in Busoni’s operas, in which the improbable, impossible and fantastic are celebrated.

Defining Busoni as a Modernist

Categorizing Busoni is as difficult as defining Modernism, for the two tasks raise some of the same questions and issues. Seen as somewhat of a “musical Janus,”³³ he was both Italian and German, pianist and composer, moderate and visionary. For Busoni’s admirers, these diverse, sometimes opposing, aspects of his career and personality are integral to understanding and appreciating the complexity of the man and his music; for his critics, they are at the heart of his shortcomings as a composer. Various described as “problematic,” “puzzling,” “controversial,” and “difficult,” Busoni is not easy to place in a linear scheme of musical development. Musicologists fail to come to a consensus when discussing Busoni’s compositional identity: Harold C. Schonberg, for example, considers Busoni a traditionalist, while Herbert Russcol calls him “one of the boldest adventurers of music.”³⁴ While some consider him to be one of the first Modernist composers, others see him as someone who could not break free from the past. However, considering his liberal approach to composition and his rejection of

³² Busoni, “Young Classicism [1920],” in *Essence*, 21.

³³ Larry Sitsky, *Busoni and the Piano: The Works, the Writings, and the Recordings* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986), 4.

³⁴ Schonberg, 522; Russcol, *The Liberation of Sound: An Introduction to Electronic Music* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 34.

sentimentality and naturalism/realism on the stage, Busoni and his works should be considered as part of early twentieth-century Modernist thought.

At the heart of the criticism against Busoni is the allegation that he lacked originality. Early twentieth-century Modernism is often associated with novelty, creativity, and the rejection of convention. The first two decades of the twentieth century was a time of radical experimentation in the arts: Filippo Tommaso Marinetti published *The Futurist Manifesto* in 1909, Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire* was written in 1912, and a year later, *The Rite of Spring* premièred in Paris. Tradition was regarded with apprehension, even suspicion. Composer Edgard Varèse declared, "We cannot, even if we would, live much longer by tradition. The world is changing, and we change with it. The more we allow our minds the romantic luxury of treasuring the past in memory, the less able we become to face the future."³⁵ Ezra Pound put it even more strongly: "The artist is always beginning. Any work of art which is not a beginning, an innovation, a discovery, is of little worth."³⁶

Busoni, like many other artists of this era, embraced experimentation. In 1911, he warned against routine, exhorting, "every problem, once solved, should experience no repeated attempts at solution."³⁷ His radical years, which lasted from 1907 to 1915 according to Antony Beaumont,³⁸ are best exemplified by his most famous piece of prose, the *Sketch for a New Aesthetic of Music* (1907). In this pamphlet, Busoni calls for an

³⁵ Varèse, "Music and the Times [1936]," in *Modernism and Music*, 185.

³⁶ Pound, "How I Began [1913]," in *Ezra Pound: Early Writings, Poems and Prose*, ed. Ira B. Nadel (London: Penguin, 2005), 211.

³⁷ Busoni, "Routine [1911]," in *Essence*, 184-185.

³⁸ Beaumont, 25.

expansion of tonality, and predicts the use of dodecaphony, microtones, and electronic instruments. He argues that music must be free from the straitjacket of rules, rigid forms, conventions, and mundane business interests: "music was born free; and to win freedom is its destiny."³⁹ When his "little book" was published, it was heralded by some as a defiant statement of support for new music – Schoenberg, for one, admired it for its "audacity."⁴⁰ Ironically, it was also vilified by conservatives – most notably by the composer/critic Hans Pfitzner – for being too radical.

Composer/writer Ernst Krenek, who attended Busoni's soirées in Berlin in the 1920s, remembers Busoni as having "great qualities of imagination, and great visionary powers – far beyond his abilities as a composer to realize his ideas."⁴¹ This objection to the apparent disparity between Busoni's ideas and his music is common among his critics. However, the *Sketch* was never intended as a rulebook. In fact, Busoni deliberately avoided establishing a "technique" or a "system," insisting that a composer should be able to draw upon whatever means necessary to achieve the desired expression. Far from being prescriptive, "the whole tenor of [*Sketch for a New Aesthetic of Music*] is against the drawing up of general rules as being a hindrance to a free art."⁴²

Although he was open to new musical developments and encouraged young composers, Busoni's musical language also included conventional material and

³⁹ Busoni, "Sketch for a New Aesthetic of Music," in *Composers on Modern Musical Culture: An Anthology of Readings on Twentieth-Century Music*, trans. Theodore Baker [1911], ed. Bryan R. Simms (New York: Schirmer, 1999), 12. This is a reprint of the first edition. A translation of the second edition in English is unavailable.

⁴⁰ Schoenberg, Letter to Busoni, Steinakirchen am Forst, 24 August 1909, in *Selected Letters*, 395.

⁴¹ As recorded by Robert Craft, *Stravinsky: Chronicle of a Friendship 1948-1971* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 69.

⁴² Busoni, "Open Letter to Hans Pfitzner [1917]," in *Essence*, 17.

methods. Unlike some of his fellow composers, he never completely abandoned tonality, and his musical language included the use of traditional techniques, including counterpoint. As radical as some of his ideas may have been, Busoni's intention was not to sever himself completely from the past: his vast universe of possibilities included traditional musical methods, as well as the newest developments. He recognized the necessity of innovation, but he also abhorred experiments devoid of taste and intelligence. The only thing worse than barring progress, he says, is "forcing it stupidly."⁴³ Although Pfitzner linked him with the Futurists, Busoni was not a member of that group, nor was he a supporter of atonality.⁴⁴ Rather than viewing new music as an obliteration of the old, Busoni saw the future as being inextricably linked to the past – "one does not destroy, one builds up!"⁴⁵ However, this moderate approach seems to have relegated Busoni to the outskirts of the musical canon. Busoni himself lamented how progressive critics tend to "[reject] good things moving in older directions and [honour] bad productions with the newest tendencies."⁴⁶ Undoubtedly he would have agreed with Carlo Carrá, an ex-Futurist painter, who noted that "arrogance, ostentation, frivolity, vacuity, wantonness and every excess nowadays are the most positive characteristics of today's artists."⁴⁷

Throughout his life, Busoni maintained that the most important thing in music is not novelty but beauty. Although he supported new music, he also felt that the new

⁴³ Busoni, "Report on the Division of the Whole Tone into Three Parts [1922]," in *Essence*, 29.

⁴⁴ See "Open Letter to Hans Pfitzner," 17; and his comment on the "anarchy" of atonality in "The New Harmony [1911]," in *Essence*, 24.

⁴⁵ Busoni, "Report on the Division," 30.

⁴⁶ Busoni, "Concerning Harmony [1911]," in *Essence*, 25.

⁴⁷ Carrá, "Our Antiquity [1919]," in *Art in Theory*, 233.

compositional devices should be “applied aesthetically and intelligently”⁴⁸ – he opposed innovation for innovation’s sake. Busoni urged younger composers not to be satisfied with “self-complacent experiments and the glory of the success of the season,” but rather encouraged them to “turn towards the perfection of the work.”⁴⁹

According to Busoni, extravagant and excessive experiments are necessary to the evolution of musical development. The next step is “the mastery, the sifting and the turning to the account of all the gains of previous experiments and their inclusion in strong and beautiful forms.”⁵⁰ He called this stage *Junge Klassizität* [Young Classicism]. His concept of classicism, first mentioned in 1920, involved three aspects: unity of music – that is, music that is not defined by its function; the importance of melody and counterpoint; and economy and objectivity. Busoni was not advocating a simple revival or imitation of former techniques and styles, but rather envisioned this art as being “old and new at the same time.”⁵¹ Busoni was not alone in his respect for the aesthetics and techniques of the past – there was a resurgence of interest in the classics, especially after World War I. *Junge Klassizität* is often seen as an important precursor to Neoclassicism – Scott Messing, for one, notes that Busoni’s classicism and Stravinsky’s were “contemporary and even sympathetic developments.”⁵² Busoni’s concept of *Junge Klassizität*, especially the admiration for objectivity, complements his rejection of sentimentality on stage. This objectivity was to become the cornerstone of epic theatre

⁴⁸ Busoni, “The New Harmony,” in *Essence*, 27.

⁴⁹ Busoni, “The Oneness of Music and the Possibilities of the Opera [1921],” in *Essence*, 16.

⁵⁰ Busoni, “Young Classicism [1920],” in *Essence*, 20.

⁵¹ Busoni, “Young Classicism [1920],” 20.

⁵² Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept Through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1988), 74.

and the *Verfremdungseffekt*: according to Brecht, “[t]he essential part of the epic theatre is perhaps that it appeals less to the feelings than to the spectator’s reason.”⁵³

Besides being dismissed as a conservative, Busoni is often criticized as unimaginative. He re-set and re-used material from his own works and those of other composers. Busoni often re-worked and revised his pieces: the *Turandot Suite* (1905), for example, became the basis for the incidental music used in Max Reinhardt’s production of Gozzi’s play in 1911, and the suite was expanded to an opera in 1917. Busoni also freely borrowed from other composers: the ‘*Carmen*’ *Fantasy* (1920) contains material from Bizet’s opera, while *Fantasia nach J.S. Bach* (1909) is a mix of his own original material with three separate organ pieces by Bach. To his critics, this aspect of his compositional process is evidence of his lack of imagination and ability. John C. G. Waterhouse goes as far as to say that Busoni was a “pasticheur” and “kleptomaniac” and that his “wholly personal, underivative works are extremely few.”⁵⁴

However, to label Busoni as unoriginal is unfair. He may have borrowed liberally, but he was certainly not the first – nor the last – composer to use material other than his own. Throughout history composers have re-worked music, emulated others’ styles, and drawn upon folk tunes, popular songs, and other musical traditions for inspiration. “Imitation masses” in the sixteenth-century borrowed material, Monteverdi paid homage through the practice of *imitato*, Beethoven used a simple Diabelli melody as

⁵³ Brecht, “The Epic Theatre and its Difficulties [1927],” in *Brecht on Theatre*, 23.

⁵⁴ Waterhouse, “Busoni: Visionary or Pasticheur?” *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 92 (1965-66): 79-80; 85.

a basis for his thirty-three variations, Chopin was inspired by *bel canto* arias in writing his nocturnes – in short, musical borrowing and imitation are not unique to Busoni.

In twentieth-century art, borrowing became a common technique, even a defining feature; Constant Lambert, a composer, sees it as being especially common following World War I.⁵⁵ There are folksongs and hymns interspersed throughout Charles Ives's music, quotations in Berg's operas, and references to the past in Stravinsky's ballets, just to name a few examples. In Modernist works, borrowing often resulted in a juxtaposition of dissimilar, sometimes contradictory elements, not unlike collage.⁵⁶ This method is characteristic of Neoclassical works, in which allusions to the previous techniques or forms were distorted to draw attention to the gap between the present and the past – Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* (1920) is one example. Although Busoni is criticized for his borrowing, his use of earlier material resembles Neoclassical techniques, and is much more interesting and creative than mere quotation. The connection between Busoni and Neoclassicism is further discussed in his use of the *commedia dell'arte* in the third chapter.

Busoni's re-working of material is consistent with his belief that music is free and that composers should be able to use any and all available resources. His technique of borrowing is also a nod to previous developments, recognizing that all innovation in the present and future is rooted in the past. The revision of Busoni's own work indicates that he was continually evaluating his progress, unwilling to rest on his achievements.

⁵⁵ Lambert, "The Age of Pastiche [1934]," in *Modernism and Music*, 297.

⁵⁶ Glenn Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture and Collage from Stravinsky to the Post-Modernists* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1994), 3.

He felt that a composer's work is never finished, for "every work is a study for the next one; every life's work a study for those who come after."⁵⁷ Busoni's practice of borrowing reflects his eclecticism and his belief that music includes all possibilities, even traditional models. It does not necessarily say anything about his shortcomings as a composer; on the contrary, it can be counted among his strengths. Busoni's embracing of all possibilities – old, new, or borrowed – mirrors the growing plurality that was a prominent characteristic of Modernism.

Defining the Modernist Stage and the *Verfremdungseffekt*

In his historical and philosophical survey of music, Brian K. Etter notes that "nothing has been feared so much in the twentieth century as sentimentality, the expression of emotional idealism rooted in a vision of happiness or love."⁵⁸ Eschewing lush harmonies, amorous topics, and grand-scale works, Modernists favoured a more economical and objective approach to art. This development is most clearly seen in their anti-sentimental aesthetic and their preoccupation with form. Busoni's operas and Brecht's idea of epic theatre and the *Verfremdungseffekt* are manifestations of this Modernist attitude.

Like his Modernist contemporaries, Busoni shied away from grand, over-the-top gestures. In his article "The Oneness of Music and the Possibilities of the Opera" (1921),

⁵⁷ Busoni, "Self Criticism [1912]," in *Essence*, 47.

⁵⁸ Etter, *From Classicism to Modernism: Western Musical Culture and the Metaphysics of Order* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2001), 122.

he stated that “[s]ensual or sexual music...is obviously out of place owing to the very nature of this art [opera], which is purely abstract.”⁵⁹ He scorned love duets and regarded Puccini’s operas as “indecent.”⁶⁰ Although Busoni has been accused of being a cold intellectual, his aim was not to disengage the audience from the action, but to encourage them to be active in the receptive process by appealing to their intellect, rather than indulging in emotional outpourings. Busoni averred that opera should be “a rare half-religious and elevating ceremony which is at the same time stimulating and entertaining.”⁶¹ At about the same time, a young Brecht expressed the same opinion, stating that theatre should be “[w]itty. Ceremonious. Ritual.”⁶² This aim of objectivity is central to both Busoni’s idea of opera and Bertolt Brecht’s idea of the epic theatre and the *Verfremdungseffekt*.

Brecht was critical of the passivity of theatre-goers who “hand in their hat at the cloakroom, and with it...their normal behaviour.”⁶³ He envisioned a kind of theatre where spectators are critical observers, not passive receivers; this would be achieved by forcing them to make judgements, rather than allowing them to lose themselves in the sensual experience.⁶⁴ Brecht used the term “epic theatre” to describe the kind of performance he had in mind. As an explanatory model, he used an example of an eyewitness re-enacting an accident for other bystanders. In this situation, the viewer is

⁵⁹ Busoni, “The Oneness of Music and the Possibilities of the Opera [1921],” in *Essence*, 7.

⁶⁰ Busoni to Gerda Busoni, Vienna, 16 December 1907, in *Letters to His Wife*, trans. Rosamond Ley (New York: Da Capo, 1975), 123.

⁶¹ Busoni, “The Oneness of Music,” 18.

⁶² Brecht, “A Dialogue About Acting [1919],” in *Brecht on Theatre*, 26.

⁶³ Brecht, “The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre [1930],” in *Brecht on Theatre*, 39.

⁶⁴ Brecht, “The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre,” 37.

aware that the demonstration is a representation and not the real event. The actor, who detaches himself from the character portrayed, uses a complex technique for this performance, "[forcing] the spectator to look at the play's situations from such an angle that they necessarily [become] subject to his criticism."⁶⁵ Watching such a re-enactment, the audience is conscious of the fact that the performer's version is *one* interpretation and not the *only* interpretation. This kind of performance invites discussion among the onlookers.⁶⁶

The primary method of promoting critical thought in epic theatre is through the *Verfremdungseffekt*. Brecht's idea of this technique has its roots in Victor Shklovsky's concept of *ostranenie*. Shklovsky, an important Russian Formalist critic, coined this term in his essay "Art as Technique" (1917). He observes that when perception becomes familiar, it becomes automatic: compare the experience of holding a pen for the first time and contrast it with the ten thousandth time, for example.⁶⁷ "Habitualization" deadens our senses and emotions; it makes us complacent, obedient, and passive; it renders life boring, senseless, and banal. Shklovsky argues that it is art's job to awaken us from this slumber:

...art exists so that one may recover the sensations of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stones *stony*. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult...⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Brecht, "The Street Scene: A Basic Model for an Epic Theatre [1950]," in *Brecht on Theatre*, 121.

⁶⁶ Brecht, "The Street Scene," 125-26.

⁶⁷ Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, ed. and trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 11.

⁶⁸ Shklovsky, 12.

This process of “defamiliarization” is similar to Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt*. Both John Willett and Marjorie Hoover have found more than a simple resemblance between the two concepts – they see Brecht’s visits to Russia in 1935 as instrumental to the origin of the *Verfremdungseffekt*.⁶⁹

Brecht first used the term in his essay, “*Verfremdungseffekte in der chinesischen Schauspielkunst*,” possibly written at the end of 1935 or in 1936. In a pencilled note on the typescript, Brecht describes the essay as “[arising] out of a performance by Mei Lan-fung’s company in Moscow in spring 1935.”⁷⁰ Brecht noted that through their acting, the Chinese performers were able to remove the “fourth wall” – that imaginary barrier between the stage and the audience – acknowledging the audience’s presence and inviting them to be critical spectators rather than passive voyeurs. In Chinese theatre, the viewer is prevented from empathizing with the characters, but “the spectator’s empathy [is] not entirely rejected. The audience identifies itself with the actor as being an observer.”⁷¹ The objective distance between the audience and the action and characters on stage, which Brecht named *Vermfremdung*, allows the viewers to fulfill their roles as critical observers. In epic theatre, the audience is just as involved as in non-epic theatre, but in a different, more cerebral way. The *Verfremdungseffekt* is the way in which *Verfremdung* is achieved; this may involve any of the dramatic elements, including music.

⁶⁹ Willett, 206-7; Hoover, “Brecht’s Soviet Connection: Tretiakov,” in *Brecht Heute-Brecht Today* 3 (1973-74): 39-56.

⁷⁰ Quoted in *Brecht on Theatre*, 99.

⁷¹ Brecht, “Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting [1935-36?],” in *Brecht on Theatre*, 92-93.

The rejection of sentimentalism resulted not only in the preference for objectivity but also an emphasis on form and artificiality. Modernist artists turned away from representational art and looked towards other forms of artistic expression. This aesthetic resulted in a diversity of styles, including Expressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism. In 1912, Guillaume Apollinaire, a French poet and writer, declared, "Verisimilitude no longer has any importance, for the artist sacrifices everything to the composition of his picture."⁷² Modernist artists were not interested in creating an illusion of reality; they were more concerned with the formal aspects of the work itself.

Busoni also rejected the idea of verisimilitude, insisting that the very nature of opera is artificial. In "The Oneness of Music and the Possibilities of the Opera," he asks, "What can and shall the opera be other than something unnatural? What could produce a 'natural' effect in opera? When developing the opera we must start consciously from these premises."⁷³ Attempts at hiding its impossibilities are futile – better to celebrate and play up the absurdities. The true sphere of theatre, Busoni insists, is that of the supernatural or unnatural – theatre should "create a pretence world in such a way that life is reflected in either a magic or a comic mirror."⁷⁴ This statement closely resembles Brecht's opinion in an appendix to "A Short Organum for the Theatre," thought to have been written near his death in 1956: "if art reflects life, it does so with special mirrors."⁷⁵

⁷² Apollinaire, "On the Subject in Modern Painting [1912]," in *Art in Theory*, 180.

⁷³ Busoni, "The Oneness of Music," 12.

⁷⁴ Busoni, "The Future of Opera," 40.

⁷⁵ Brecht, "Appendices to the Short Organum," in *Brecht on Theatre*, 277.

Conclusion

Though his theoretical writings are regarded as a cornerstone of early modern musical thought, Busoni's compositions remain on the periphery of the musical canon. The chief reason for the exclusion of this music is the alleged gap between his theories and his music – his music seems fairly conservative in comparison to his ideas. Edgard Varèse, for example, greatly admired the *Sketch*, but was somewhat disappointed in his mentor: “[I]t was as though [Busoni's] heart, loyal to the past, refused to follow his adventurous mind into so strange a future.”⁷⁶ There are two possible reasons behind such negative assessments. One has already been mentioned – the erroneous belief that Busoni's theories were intended as rules. The second reason involves the dearth of thorough analyses of his works. Since his Modernist tendencies are not always apparent at first glance, the dismissal of his music is not only hasty, but unfair as well.

Evaluations of Modernist art have tended to privilege avant-garde works over more traditional ones; this bias has led to comments like Ernst Krenek's: “Busoni, as a composer, was not blessed with a spontaneously streaming, rich and immediate creative vein. This explains why the example he set was soon forgotten.”⁷⁷ *Turandot* has been overlooked for the same reason: as *Arlecchino* and *Doktor Faust* are more overtly Modernist than *Turandot*, they are more esteemed. Busoni's *Turandot* is only mentioned in comparison to Puccini's, hardly more than an historical footnote.

⁷⁶ From a copy of his speech for the Ferruccio Busoni Centennial (1967), reprinted in Louise Varèse, *Varèse: A Looking Glass Diary*, vol. 1 (New York: Norton, 1972), 50.

⁷⁷ Ernst Krenek, “Busoni – Then and Now,” *Modern Music* 19 (1942): 90.

There is no question that Busoni uses traditional techniques and material in *Turandot*; however, the way in which they are used is distinctly Modernist. The diversity of borrowed music reflects his eclecticism; this “hodgepodge,” in turn, prevents the audience from being deluded into thinking that what is happening on stage is real, and forces them to be critical. Busoni’s ability to make this conventional – some would say clichéd – material surprising and provoking is what makes *Turandot* such a fascinating work.

CHAPTER TWO: PLOT – A TRAGICOMIC FAIRY TALE

Since its première in 1762, Carlo Gozzi's play *Turandot* has inspired incidental music and several operas, most notably the operas of Ferruccio Busoni (1917) and Giacomo Puccini (1926). Although these composers were contemporaries, their versions of *Turandot* differed widely; in fact, Puccini's biographer Mosco Carner says that "no two works dealing with the same subject and written within five or six years of each other could be more dissimilar in dramatic concept and aesthetic aim."⁷⁸

Although they retained the same basic story, Puccini and his librettists, Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni, made drastic changes to Gozzi's play. From its ominous beginning to the emotional conclusion, Puccini's work is very much in the tradition of Italian grand opera, full of melodrama and spectacle. Busoni's opera, on the other hand, remains much closer to the spirit of the original. Gozzi's *Turandot* is a curious mix of tragedy, comedy, fairy tale, and romance. Instead of aiming for a unified mood – as Puccini did – Busoni emphasized the difference between these elements. The solemnity of ceremonies is undermined by comic prattling; an execution scene is followed by the head eunuch's cheeky aria; heroic and noble characters in China rub shoulders with Italian Masks. These disruptions keep the audience's empathy at bay. Through the setting, plot, and characters, Busoni's libretto embodies the Modernist principles of eclecticism, objectivity, and self-conscious theatricality.

⁷⁸ Mosco Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, 3rd ed. (London: Duckworth, 1992), 534.

The Origin of *Turandot*

Italian theatre in the mid-eighteenth century was divided into two camps: the conservatives, who wanted to uphold traditional Italian theatre and language, and the liberals, who were influenced by French Enlightenment thought.⁷⁹ The reformists – led by Carlo Goldoni (1707-1793) – strove for greater realism in their plays. They rejected implausible stories and turned away from the fantastical stock characters of traditional *commedia* theatre, using realistic, recognizable characters instead. According to Goldoni, the intention of this reform was needed to “bring back reason to a public accustomed to hyperboles, antitheses, and everything ridiculously gigantic and romantic.”⁸⁰

Goldoni’s main rival was Carlo Gozzi (1728-1806), a staunch supporter of the conservative group. Gozzi, who was born into an aristocratic family, was a member of the conservative literary group, the Accademia di Granelleschi [the Testicular Club]. Gozzi and his cohorts resented the encroachment of French Enlightenment ideals and saw the new theatre, in which servants were often more noble and intelligent than their masters, as being socially subversive and a threat to the status quo.⁸¹ The purpose of the Academy, according to Gozzi, was to “promote the study of [the] best old authors, the simplicity and the harmony of chastened style, and above all the purity of the Italian

⁷⁹ Marvin Carlson, *The Italian Stage: From Goldoni to D’Annunzio* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1981), 11.

⁸⁰ *Memoirs of Carlo Goldoni [1784-87]*, trans. John Black, ed. William A. Drake (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), 160.

⁸¹ John Louis diGaetani, *Carlo Gozzi: A Life in the 18th Century Venetian Theater and Afterlife in Opera* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2000), 97.

tongue."⁸² Gozzi published polemical pamphlets and poems that mocked Goldoni and his sympathizers.

In the heated exchanges of the 1750s, Goldoni dismissed Gozzi as a mere critic who would never dare to enter the fray as a playwright. As proof of his superiority, Goldoni pointed to the popularity of his own plays. To this Gozzi replied that "crowded theatres proved nothing with regard to the goodness or the badness of the plays," and decided to prove his point by "drawing more folk together than [Goldoni's plays] could do...by simply putting the old wives' fairy-story of the *Love of the Three Oranges* upon the boards."⁸³ The play premiered in 1761, and was an instant success. Gozzi's opponents attributed the popularity of the play to magic and trickery rather than literary merit. In response, Gozzi wrote two plays in which magic was deliberately absent: *Turandot* (1762) and *The Lucky Beggars* (1764).

The origin of the legend of *Turandot* is unknown, but it is thought to be an ancient Persian story, as "Turan" is the Persian word for China, and "doht" means "daughter."⁸⁴ The story is from *Les mille et une nuits* (1001 Nights) or *Arabian Nights*, a collection of tales drawn from Indian, Persian, and Arab cultures. The model for structure of the literary versions was a Persian book *Hazar Afsaneh* (*A Thousand Tales*) from the ninth century.⁸⁵ A French translation (1707-1717) by Antoine Galland brought the *Tales* to Europe, where they became an important literary influence. Gozzi used the

⁸² *The Useless Memoirs of Carlo Gozzi*, trans. John Addington Symonds, ed. Philip Horne (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 160.

⁸³ Gozzi, *Memoirs*, 181.

⁸⁴ Beaumont, 78.

⁸⁵ Harriet Goldberg, "Arabian Nights, The," in *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, ed. Jack Zipes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 22.

tale "Calaf" as the basis for the romance between the Prince and Turandot,⁸⁶ but the inclusion of the *commedia* Masks was his own invention. The play was produced in 1762 by the troupe of Antonio Sacchi, who was famous for his role as the *commedia* figure Truffaldino.

Gozzi wrote ten *fiabe* (fables) in total. Although they initially surpassed Goldoni's plays in popularity, their success was short-lived, and Gozzi's works soon disappeared from the Italian stage. However, the *fiabe* were popular among the German Romantics. Goethe and E.T.A. Hoffmann were among Gozzi's admirers, and Franz A. C. Werthes was the first to translate the *fiabe* into German (1777-1779).⁸⁷ Other translations and adaptations soon followed, including Friedrich Schiller's *Turandot* (1802), which was used by Puccini and his librettists. Despite his popularity in Germany, Gozzi was virtually unknown in Italy when Busoni wrote his *Turandot Suite* in 1905.⁸⁸

Busoni's Adaptation

Busoni had a life-long interest in literature: during his tours, he spent many hours rummaging in used bookshops, and was on friendly terms with several authors, including Oscar Wilde and Rainer Maria Rilke. As well as writing scores of letters and

⁸⁶ A summary is in Victor Chauvin, "Calaf," in *Bibliographie des Ouvrages Arabes ou Relatifs aux Arabes*, vol. 5 (Liège, 1901), 191-93. Identified in David Nicholson, "Gozzi's 'Turandot': A Tragicomic Fairy Tale," *Theatre Journal* 31 (1979): 468.

⁸⁷ For a discussion of Gozzi's influence on German literature, see Hedwig Hoffmann Rusack, *Gozzi in Germany: A Survey of the Rise and Decline of the Gozzi Vogue in Germany and Austria, With Especial Reference to the German Romanticists* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930).

⁸⁸ Beaumont, 79.

essays, Busoni composed libretti. He recognized the difficulty a composer faces when collaborating with a librettist, and felt that "the only way out of the difficulty is to write his text himself."⁸⁹ He wrote the libretti for all four of his operas, as well as several others that were either left unfinished, unrealized, or used by other composers. He tended to favour exotic or fantastic subjects: his choices included the tale of Aladdin, the puppet play of Faust, Amerindian stories, Chinese stories, and the tales of E. T. A. Hoffmann.

Busoni was drawn to the story of *Turandot* because of its contradictions. It was "the continuous gaily-coloured changing of passion and make-believe, of reality and unreality, of the commonplace and the fantastically exotic which charmed [him] the most."⁹⁰ Indeed, Gozzi's play is full of strange combinations: the romance between Calaf and Turandot is interspersed with violent incidents as well as moments of farce.

Turandot is a tragicomedy,⁹¹ a unique literary genre in which the tragic and comic elements are equally important. According to David Nicholson, the tragicomedy and the fairy tale have common features: both include a heroic quest and a happy ending, and both take place in a special world where special laws apply and unlikely events occur, inviting the audience to respond with astonishment and wonder.⁹² Furthermore, in both the fairy tale and the tragicomedy, the formal elements are highlighted. The fairy tale draws attention to its form through formulaic plots and characters; the tragicomedy

⁸⁹ Busoni to Gerda Busoni, Trient, 3 August 1906, in *Letters to His Wife*, 103.

⁹⁰ Busoni, "The *Turandot* Music," 61.

⁹¹ The full title of the play is *Turandot: A Tragicomic Tale of China for the Theatre in Five Acts*.

⁹² Nicholson, 467-78.

draws attention to its form through “the kind of self-conscious theatricality in which the characters seem to wink at the audience.”⁹³ Gozzi’s tragicomic fairy tale, an inherently unrealistic work, was a suitable source for Busoni, as the unlikelihood of events and hodgepodge of emotions contributed to the kind of dramatic work he had in mind.

The opera *Turandot* began its life as an instrumental suite in eight movements. Although he expressed interest in staging Gozzi’s play, Busoni felt that the situation in pre-war Italy made such an endeavour unlikely – perhaps because of the expense – so the suite was originally written for the concert hall and not the stage.⁹⁴ In an article for *Blätter des Deutschen Theaters* (1911), he describes how he wrote the suite:

I had the original Italian text at hand, of course, as I composed my *Turandot*, without taking into consideration Schiller’s adaptation: for I regard Schiller’s work as an adaptation and not as a translation and had I used it I should have had the feeling of alienating myself from the spirit of Gozzi. For me, the essential thing in the original text was the feeling – even the scenes bordering on the tragic – of always being concerned with a matter of fantasy.⁹⁵

The suite was first performed in Berlin in 1905, and went on to be moderately successful.

In 1907, Busoni approached Max Reinhardt about staging the play in Berlin, but financial concerns and the lack of a suitable German adaptation delayed production. Using a German translation by Karl Vollmoeller, Gozzi’s play was finally staged by Reinhardt and the Deutsches Theater in 1911. Busoni provided incidental music for the play, adding an additional piece, “Verzweiflung und Ergebung,” as well as other musical episodes. In 1913, Busoni attended a London performance of the play. His

⁹³ Nicholson, 468.

⁹⁴ Beaumont, 76-77,

⁹⁵ Busoni, “The *Turandot* Music,” 61.

incidental music was used for the production; however there was little respect for the integrity of the score. Music by Saint-Saëns and Rimsky-Korsakov was sporadically “shoved in between” his own, and the performance enraged Busoni so much that he walked out.⁹⁶ It was after this debacle that he considered making an opera out of the suite.

In 1908, while he was working on his first opera *Die Brautwahl*, Busoni was already considering writing a new work for the stage – a work that would be “Italian” in style. Busoni felt that Italian composers had lost their musical identity because they had to work under the shadow of Wagner and German Romanticism. He himself felt this burden: “...things are better for [the new generation of composers] than they were for my generation, who from birth were obliged to drag round Wagner on their shoulders!”⁹⁷ However, the Italian *verismo* style of opera in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was considered “untenable” by Busoni because it failed to acknowledge the inherent fictitiousness of opera. Busoni envisioned a new theatrical form: “I should like to give this Italy a national opera, as Wagner gave one to Germany, and which the Italians have not got yet.”⁹⁸

In 1913, Busoni accepted directorship of the conservatory in Bologna so that he could reconnect with his Italian roots. He hoped that the atmosphere would provide him with the necessary environment for planning a new, “Italian” work – *Arlecchino*.⁹⁹ He

⁹⁶ Busoni to Gerda Busoni, London, 19 January 1913, in *Letters to His Wife*, 127-28.

⁹⁷ Busoni to Gerda Busoni, Heidelberg, 19 September 1913, in *Letters to His Wife*, 231.

⁹⁸ Busoni to Gerda Busoni, Verona, 9 September 1908, in *Letters to His Wife*, 136.

⁹⁹ Busoni to Egon Petri, Milan, 3 May 1913, in *Selected Letters*, 164.

began work on the opera in 1914; however, he was forced to relocate when war broke out. As he had both German and Italian roots, Busoni felt unwelcome in both countries. He sadly remarked, "So the Germans and the Italians are equally up in arms about me: – at least they agree on something."¹⁰⁰ He asked for a year's absence from his duties in Bologna, and, with his family in tow, sought refuge first in New York and then in Zurich. In 1916, he completed *Arlecchino*, a satirical opera in one act. The première was to be staged in the Stadt-Theater in Zurich, but the company was unwilling to accept the opera without an accompanying work to fill up the rest of the evening. This pressing problem led him to rework the material from the *Turandot Suite* into a two-act opera.

An ideal libretto, according to Busoni, is one that "could not exist or reach complete expression without music" – works that are able to stand alone as literature are unsuitable because the audience is "not seized with a longing for the missing music."¹⁰¹ In Busoni's opinion, Gozzi's plays positively demand music: "[A] 'fairy drama' without music is hardly thinkable, and especially in *Turandot* where no magic is mixed up with it, and the grateful and needful role of representing what is supernatural and out-of-the-ordinary falls to the lot of the music."¹⁰² Working from Gozzi's play, Busoni wrote the libretto "completely and independently...bringing it closer in tone to a pantomime or stage play."¹⁰³ With Busoni on the conductor's podium, *Arlecchino* and *Turandot* were performed in Zurich in 1917 under the title of "La nuova Commedia dell'arte." Despite

¹⁰⁰ Busoni to Harriet Lanier, New York, 18 July 1915, in *Selected Letters*, 205.

¹⁰¹ Busoni, "The Oneness of Music," 9.

¹⁰² Busoni, "The *Turandot* Music," 60-61.

¹⁰³ Busoni to Egon Petri, Zurich, 9 November 1916, in *Selected Letters*, 251.

the influence of the *commedia dell'arte* and Busoni's desire to write an Italian work, both operas were written in German, perhaps because he felt that there was little chance of his operas being performed in Italy.¹⁰⁴

In his historical study of the operatic libretto, Patrick J. Smith identifies several features of the twentieth-century libretto: shorter forms, partly as a reaction to the mammoth Wagnerian operas; emphasis on scenes, often resulting in a juxtaposition of disjointed events; the inclusion of different media such as pantomime and ballet; a rejection of reality, evident in the interest in fairy tales and archaic subjects; and a conscious attempt to depersonalize the characters, as seen in the interest in puppet operas.¹⁰⁵ Many of these trends mirrored developments in literature.

Economical and eclectic, Busoni's libretto is much more Modernist than the libretto of Puccini and his collaborators. Busoni's opera consists of two acts, and the average performance takes about one hour; Puccini's three-act work, on the other hand, takes about twice as long. Busoni's *Turandot* maintains Gozzi's disparate elements, whereas Puccini's is more uniform in mood. Busoni preserves the *commedia dell'arte* characters; in Puccini's opera, the Masks are assimilated into the Oriental cast. Although both works were based on Gozzi's play, they are fundamentally different in their approach to the setting, the storyline, and the characters. When the two libretti are compared side by side, Busoni's Modernist tendencies are very evident.

¹⁰⁴ Beaumont, 241.

¹⁰⁵ Patrick J. Smith, *The Tenth Muse: A Historical Study of the Opera Libretto* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 385-87.

adventure.¹¹⁰ Set in the quiet of the early morning, the first scene begins with a sense of danger but ends on an optimistic note. Throughout the opera there are these dualisms: hope and despair, opportunity and danger, pathos and humour.

Puccini's opera also begins in a menacing manner, but unlike Busoni's, it remains in that vein until the second act. The opera begins in the "dazzling hour of sunset" (Adami and Simoni, I. 1, 69),¹¹¹ with the Mandarin reading the decree and the restless crowd demanding the blood of the unfortunate Prince of Persia, who is about to be beheaded. This opening is fraught with tension and emotion. The jostling of guards and the crowd, the emotional reunion of the Unknown Prince (Calaf) and his frail father, Timur, the impressive appearance of Turandot in the cold light of the moon, and the sharpening of axes, all create a dark, macabre atmosphere. Additionally, the ghosts of Turandot's unsuccessful suitors impart an eerie, otherworldly feeling to the scene. Compared to Busoni's work, Puccini's *Turandot* is a grand Romantic spectacle, especially in its use of large crowd scenes. Table 2.1 illustrates the main differences in Act I:

¹¹⁰ Max Lüthi, *Once Upon a Time: On the Nature of Fairy Tales*, trans. Lee Chadeayne and Paul Gottwald (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 141.

¹¹¹ Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni, *Turandot* libretto, in *Turandot / Giacomo Puccini*, ed. Nicholas John, trans. William Weaver (London: John Calder, 1984), 65-109. All subsequent references are to this edition.

Table 2.1 Comparison of Act I

GOZZI	BUSONI	PUCCINI ¹
<p>Act I: Peking and surroundings Scene 1: Calaf, who has lost his kingdom and left his parents, arrives in Peking. He is unexpectedly reunited with his former tutor Barach, who is living under a pseudonym. By chance, the woman who is housing the Prince is Barach's wife, Schirina. Calaf asks Barach to keep his name secret as he is still hunted by the tyrant, Carizmo. Barach warns Calaf of Turandot, but Calaf is dismissive. The Prince of Samarkand is executed.</p> <p>Scene 2: Enter Ishmael, cursing Turandot. He throws her picture on the ground.</p>	<p>Act I, First Scene: Peking <i>Introduction und Szene (Kalaf and Barak), no. 1:</i> Prince Kalaf, who has come to China after losing his kingdom, sings of hope and opportunity in Peking. He is reunited with his former tutor, Barak, who warns him of Turandot. Kalaf dismisses the story as mere fairy tale.</p> <p><i>Lamento (Queen of Samarkand and chorus), no.2:</i> Enter the Queen of Samarkand and her entourage. Her son has just been executed; she curses Turandot and throws her picture down.</p>	<p>Act I: Peking, at sunset <i>Introduction (Mandarin, the Crowd, Guards, Liù and The Unknown Prince [Calaf]):</i> The Mandarin proclaims the law. The crowd is impatient for the execution. A scuffle ensues between the crowd and the guards. Timur falls and Liù begs for mercy. <i>Reunion (Calaf, Timur, Liù):</i> Father and son are joyfully reunited. <i>Ariette (Timur and Liù):</i> Timur sings of his plight and Liù's fidelity. She says that she is faithful because Calaf once smiled at her. <i>Executioner's chorus (The Crowd, Executioner's servants):</i> The knife is sharpened as the crowd grows impatient. They sing of Turandot's reign of terror. Chorus (The crowd): They await the moon. <i>Children's chorus (The Boys):</i> A chorus of boys sing of the power of Turandot's beauty. <i>Funeral cortège (the Crowd, Calaf and Priests):</i> The Prince of Persia appears; the crowd is moved by his beauty and begs for mercy. Turandot appears on the balcony, and Calaf is smitten.</p>

¹ These "numbers" have been identified by William Ashbrook and Harold Powers, *Puccini's Turandot: The End of the Great Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 15-42.

<p>Scene 3: Calaf and Barach struggle over the picture. Calaf falls under the spell of Turandot's beauty and is determined to win her hand.</p> <p>Scene 4: Enter Schirina. She and Barach unsuccessfully try to dissuade Calaf from his quest. Calaf leaves, and they weep.</p>	<p>Arioso (Kalaf), no.3: Kalaf is bewitched by Turandot's portrait.</p> <p>Pantomima e Finale (Kalaf and Barak), no. 4: The executioner impales a new head above the gates. Kalaf is determined to win Turandot's hand. Barak unsuccessfully tries to stop him, and is beaten by the guards.</p>	<p>Interlude (Calaf, Timur and Liù): Calaf is determined to announce his intention of entering the quest by striking the gong. Timur and Liù try to intervene.</p> <p>Intervention (the Ministers – Ping, Pong, and Pang – and Calaf): The Ministers also try to intervene.</p> <p>Interludes (Handmaidens, Ministers, Ghosts): Handmaidens hush the Ministers. The ghosts of Turandot's suitors urge Calaf to strike the gong. The Executioner shows the severed head.</p> <p>Aria (Liù): She begs Calaf to leave the city.</p> <p>Aria (Calaf): He urges her not to cry and to stay with Timur.</p> <p>Finale: The gong is glowing. Calaf strikes the gong; Timur and Liù lament; the crowd is eager for the next beheading.</p>
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Although both operas are set in Peking, Puccini's China is markedly more "Chinese" than Busoni's. Puccini and his collaborators envisioned China as a sumptuously exotic but dangerous setting. In the first act, the stage directions call for "a great loggia, all sculptured and carved with monsters, unicorns and phoenixes" (Adami and Simoni, I. 1, 69). Puccini's depiction of China seems to be more "realistic": he used Chinese names – Truffaldino, Pantalone, and Tartaglia become Ping, Pong, and Pang, for example – and Chinese tunes, pentatonic scales, and "Oriental" instruments such as the xylophone and gongs.

Busoni, on the other hand, appears less concerned with authenticity, indiscriminately mixing Chinese tunes with Indian, Persian, and Arabian melodies, as well as Western harmonies. In Busoni's opera, the setting is only vaguely Chinese; it is rather a remote, unnamed magical place.¹¹³ Any illusion that the opera is set in a real place is shattered by the theatricality preserved from Gozzi's play. This interest in artificiality is most evident in the presence of the *commedia dell'arte* Masks.¹¹⁴ As well as providing humour, the Masks remind the audience of the unreal nature of the story; they obviously belong neither in China nor in the fairytale world of Kalaf and Turandot. The presence of the Masks prevents the audience from ever believing in the representation, contributing to Busoni's – and later Brecht's – ideal of self-conscious theatricality.

¹¹³ The exoticism in the opera is discussed in more detail in the fourth chapter.

¹¹⁴ The musical depiction of the Masks is analyzed in the third chapter. This discussion focuses on their dramatic function in the libretto.

In Gozzi's play, the characters are aware of their roles in the play – for example, when posing the riddle of his name, Calaf refers to himself in the third person (III. 5). This technique, which undermines the illusion of verisimilitude, was also used by Busoni. Kalaf, for instance, introduces himself to the Emperor Altoum as "ein Märchenprinz" [a fairytale prince] (I. 2, no. 5). Gozzi's play even mocks itself: Calaf has heard rumours of Turandot's cruel decree, but dismisses them as "foolish stories" (Gozzi, I. 1, 132).¹¹⁵ Similarly, Busoni's Prince laughingly discounts the tales about Turandot: "Das Märchen hört'ich. (*scherzend*) Ein jeder Prinz darf um sie frei'n und pflichtet sich, drei Rätsel anzuhören und wagt den Kopf, falls ihm der nicht festsetzt." [I've heard this story. (*jokingly*) Every prince that comes to woo her promises to hear three riddles and loses his head if he cannot answer] (I. 1, no. 1, mm. 168-180). Brecht later saw this self-referencing as an important technique in the actor's process of detaching himself from the character portrayed.¹¹⁶

Although it contains a real potential for tragedy, Gozzi's *Turandot* is also a romance and a comedy. The audience's pleasure comes partly from "the witty and ingenious manner in which Gozzi balances incongruous elements...[W]e enjoy the virtuosity of the playwright's art as much as that of the players."¹¹⁷ By keeping this diversity of elements, Busoni's opera is much closer to Gozzi's play than is Puccini's. The contrasting characteristics call the audience's attention to the structure of the story,

¹¹⁵ "Turandot," in *Five Tales for the Theatre*, ed. and trans. Albert Bermel and Ted Emery (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 125-84. All references are to this edition, unless indicated.

¹¹⁶ Brecht, "Short Description of a New Technique of Acting which Produces an Alienation Effect [1940]," in *Brecht on Theatre*, 136.

¹¹⁷ Nicholson, 477.

reminding them that what they are watching is fictional. As in Brecht's theatre, Busoni's audience remains conscious of their role as spectators, objectively studying the action instead of being in "the thick of it, [sharing] the experience" with the actors.¹¹⁸

If the presence of Italian Masks in a Chinese fairy tale is absurd, the romance between Turandot and Calaf is equally unrealistic. Romance as a genre, notes Nicholson, operates by rules of convention rather than natural law; once the reader recognizes the genre, he or she overlooks the improbable events and expects a certain story, with certain characters.¹¹⁹ In the play, when Calaf first glances at the portrait, he becomes entranced, falling under a kind of spell. Although it is not a magical object, the portrait has a mysterious power over the Prince. The stage directions read: "He looks at the portrait, is visibly startled, and gradually, with a sequence of serious and dignified *lazzi*,¹²⁰ shows that he has fallen under its spell" (Gozzi, I. 3, 135).

In Busoni's opera, Kalaf also falls in love with the portrait. In the genre of romance, farfetched circumstances, such as falling in love with portraits, are perfectly acceptable, requiring no further explanation or justification. The musical bewitching of Kalaf features a Nubian chant from Ambros's *Geschichte der Musik*, played by the violins:

Example 2.4 Nubian chant (Ambros, 15; Beaumont, 242-43)



¹¹⁸ Brecht, "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre," 37.

¹¹⁹ Nicholson, 471.

¹²⁰ *Lazzi* are mime, actions or gestures used by *commedia* characters, usually humorous in nature.

The hypnotizing effect the portrait has on the Prince is musically shown through the static harmonies, slow tempo, and the repetitive, undulating motive in the violins and the celesta (see Example 2.5). The persistent rising major second in the clarinets and horns, which is reminiscent of a drone, and the pentatonic mode of the Nubian chant are traditional signifiers of the exotic;¹²¹ this allusion to a remote land enhances the fairytale atmosphere.

Turandot's theme, based on the Chinese melody taken from Ambros's collection,¹²² is heard in the *cor anglais* and the first clarinet in the seventh bar (see Example 2.5). The orchestration of this tune – particularly the use of the delicate harp and the chime-like celesta – is especially effective in depicting Kalaf's bewitchment. By having Kalaf fall in love with abstract representations – the portrait and the theme – rather than with the Princess herself, Busoni stresses the unrealistic nature of the event.

¹²¹ Derek B. Scott, "Orientalism and Musical Style," *Music Quarterly* 82 (1998): 327.

¹²² Beaumont 81-82.

Example 2.5 Act I, Scene 1, no. 3 "Arioso," mm. 1-11

Moderato quasi Andante

Cor Anglais

Clarinet

Clarinet

Horns in F

Harp

Klaraf

Barak

Celesta

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

6

C. A.

Cl.

Cl.

Hrn.

Hp.

K.

B.

Cel.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Rising second

dolce

dolce

pp

Bar-ak Bar-ak o du tück - i-scher Al-ter, woll-test mich al - so

[Nubian chant]

con sord.

pp dolciss.

sord.

pp

pp

[Turandot's theme]

dolce

dolce

dolce

pp

nar-ten! Nein, die-se Zü-ge sind nicht ein-es Teu-fels, noch ein-es Un-ge-heu-erst!

Ihr Ge-ni-en, helft!

Puccini's Calaf, on the other hand, does not fall in love with a portrait, but with a real person. Turandot first appears at the execution of the Prince of Persia, the latest unlucky suitor. The sky, previously golden with the setting sun, has turned into "a livid silver colour," and the "icy whiteness of the moon" heralds the Princess's arrival (Adami and Simoni, I. 1, 73). As the crowd cries for mercy, the Princess appears from the height of the imperial balcony. The stage direction reads: "The Princess seems almost incorporeal, like a vision. Her masterful attitude and her haughty gaze make the tumult cease magically" (Adami and Simoni, I. 1, 73). Puccini wanted Calaf and Turandot to be "almost supernatural beings,"¹²³ and the fact that she does not speak a word makes her even more forbidding.¹²⁴

The love story is unusual in all three versions because Turandot is not a typical fairytale princess. Fierce and cruel, proud and intelligent, her conversion at the end is problematic – how convincing her change of heart will depend on how she is portrayed through the course the story. In the play, the Princess is a reluctant tyrant; she regrets the bloodshed, but she must defend herself. In the second act of the play, she explains herself:

Prince, do not attempt this fatal trial. Whatever lies you have heard about me, the gods know that I am not heartless. But I abhor your sex, and I defend myself in the only way I know, so that I may remain free from men. Why should I not be as free as you are? Who forced you to come here, to make me be cruel against my will? (Gozzi, II. 5, 144)

¹²³ Puccini to Adami, Viareggio, September 1924, in *Letters of Giacomo Puccini*, ed. Giuseppe Adami, trans. Ena Makin, rev. Mosco Carner (London: Harrap, 1974), 321.

¹²⁴ John Black, "Carlo Gozzi's 'Turandot' and its Transformation into Puccini's Libretto," in *Turandot / Giacomo Puccini*, 60.

In Gozzi's play, the Princess's hatred of men stems from a desire to be independent. This is a much more rational reason than Puccini's; in his opera, Turandot abhors men because of the rape of her ancestress many centuries ago.

Like Gozzi, Busoni portrays Turandot not as a pitiless monster, but as someone who is torn between her pride and her love for Kalaf. At first she is cold and menacing, warning him, "Rat' oder stirb!" [Answer or die!] (I. 2, no. 7). However, she soon softens at the sight of the Prince. The tempo slows down and the texture lightens, and she sings, bewildered:

Example 2.6 Act I, Scene 1, no. 7 "Marsch und Szene," mm. 58-61

Weh! And -ren gleicht die-ser nicht; was be -rührt mich jäh, so fremd und neu?

[Oh, he's not like the others; what is this that I feel, so strange and new?]

This is sung to her theme, which was already heard in the Prince's arioso. She has tender feelings for him, but her pride prevents her from admitting her love. Unlike Puccini's heroine, who remains impervious to the Prince's ardour until the very end, Busoni's Princess vacillates between love and hate for Kalaf. Busoni's depiction of Turandot as conflicted is in agreement with Brecht's view on the falsehood of portraying characters as consistent and undivided.¹²⁵

When Kalaf is about to stab himself at the end of Gozzi's play, Turandot, finally relenting to her true feelings, stops him and confesses her love. To the court's surprise,

¹²⁵ Brecht, "Appendices to the Short Organum," 277.

she professes that the Prince's "own merits, [his] generosity, and [his] handsome features have softened [her] heart" (Gozzi, V. 2, 180). According to Nicholson, Gozzi's ending is in true tragicomic style: "It may not occur to Calaf that he is marrying a murderess, but we cannot easily dismiss those severed heads from our minds. This tension...gives the final scene an ambiguous, dissonant quality, to which we must respond by restraining a wholehearted assent to the joyful conclusion."¹²⁶ It is a happy ending of sorts, but not an uncomplicated one. The underlying conflict of emotions is heightened by the fate of Adelma, Turandot's calculating companion and rival for Calaf's love. Although Altoum returns her kingdom, Adelma cannot suppress her ambivalent feelings: "My lord...remorse...love...my emotions oppress me, and I cannot appreciate your liberality. Time will clear my mind. But for now I can only feel sad and not hold back my tears" (Gozzi, V. 2, 182).

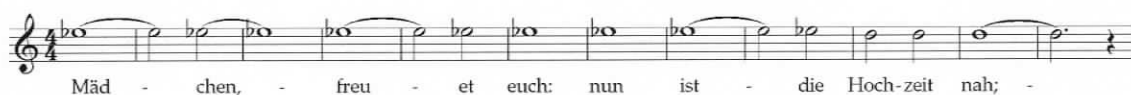
In Busoni's opera, the Princess is also moved by Kalaf's actions and finally admits to her love for him. There is a return of the music from Kalaf's riddle (I. II, no. 9), which is based on an Indian melody.¹²⁷ The riddle is transformed: "Was ist's das alle Menschen bindet, vor dem jedewe Kleinheit, jede Kleinheit schwindet, wogegen Macht und List zerschlägt, das Geringe zum Erhabnen prägt, das treibt den Kreislauf Weiten, umschließt die Gegensätzlichkeiten, das überdauert alle Triebe, das uns vereinte: ist die Liebe!" [What binds all of humanity, before which all seems trivial, against which might and cunning are rendered powerless, which ennobles and shapes the smallest of minds,

¹²⁶ Nicholson, 472.

¹²⁷ Ambros, 69; Beaumont, 85.

which drives the eternal cycles of Nature, which overcomes all oppositions and outlasts all impulses, uniting us all? It is love!] (II. 4, no. 10, mm. 69-105). This transformation of this material is significant: in its first appearance, it reflected the danger and uncertainty of Kalaf's situation. In its reappearance in the finale, the melody is a joyous celebration of love. This affirmation of the power of love is reinforced by the return of the odalisques' material in the B-section of "Tanz und Gesang" (see also Example 4.10):

Example 2.7 Act II, Scene 4, no. 10 "Finale," mm. 180-91



[Maidens, rejoice: now the wedding is near].

Although the text and music are very similar to the earlier appearance, the text is no longer in the future tense – happiness has finally arrived. The music has also changed – instead of continuing to descend as in "Tanz und Gesang," the line rises to the high C:

Example 2.8 Act II, Scene 4, no. 10 "Finale," mm. 192-201



[Happiness and light herald the new day!]

This passage is sung in unison by the full choir - both men and women – showing the unification of not only Turandot and Kalaf, but also of humanity.

Busoni's opera ends with the wedding of Turandot and Kalaf – a huge golden statue of Buddha is uncovered as Turandot exchanges her mourning veil for a bridal veil. Eunuchs dance merrily and the court rejoices to festive music:

Example 2.9 Act II, Scene 4, no. 10 "Finale," mm. 115-123

The musical score for Example 2.9 consists of four staves. The top staff is labeled 'Eunuchs' and contains a series of rests. The second staff is labeled 'Violin I' and contains a rhythmic melody of eighth notes. The third staff is a vocal line with the lyrics 'Hi, hi, hi, hi' and the instruction '(tanzend)' above. The bottom staff is labeled 'Vln. I' and contains a rhythmic melody similar to the second staff, with a 'ten.' marking at the end.

Again there is a reusing of music: the melody in the violins was first heard after Kalaf successfully answered the three riddles (I. 2, no. 8). In the first appearance of this music, it was interrupted by Turandot's suicide attempt; in the final act, however, it continues unabated, concluding in the happy union of Turandot and Kalaf. Thus, Busoni ends his opera in a typical fairy tale style – with a jubilant, triumphant wedding.¹²⁸ As in Gozzi's play, some of the characters express mixed feelings at the end, but in Busoni's opera, Adelma does not attempt suicide. Instead, she merely leaves, resigned to her fate: "Geduld, Geduld, (*leicht*) ich werd' mir einen andren suchen" [Patience, patience. (*lightly*) I shall have to find myself another] (II. 4, no. 10, mm. 65-68).

¹²⁸ Bengt Holbek, *Interpretation of Fairy Tales: Danish Folklore in a European Perspective* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedakatemia, 1987), 411.

In both Gozzi and Busoni's works, Turandot is transformed by the Prince's actions and his love for her. Puccini, however, envisioned a much more overtly emotional and passionate end. Table 2.2 shows that Puccini deviated significantly from Gozzi's play in Act III. In a letter to Adami, he wrote: "In the duet I think we can work up to a high pitch of emotion. And to do so I think that Calaf must *kiss* Turandot and reveal to the icy Princess how great is his love."¹²⁹ After Liù's suicide, the crowd exits, leaving Turandot and Calaf alone for the first time in the opera. Calaf, angry at Turandot, tears her veil from her face and is so astounded by her beauty that he moves to kiss her. Turandot tries to resist, crying out "Non profanarmi!" [Do not profane me!] but is unable to stop him. Here the stage directions read:

The Prince...strong in the knowledge of his right and in his passion, pulls Turandot into his arms and kisses her frenziedly. Turandot – against such impetuosity – has no more resistance, no more voice, no more strength, no more will. The unbelievable contact has transfigured her. (Adami and Simoni, III. 1, 106)

Instead of winning Turandot with demonstrations of his steadfast love and patience, Puccini's Calaf overtakes Turandot by sheer brute force.

Puccini's final duet is intended to affect the audience emotionally. He urged his librettists to "move [their] hearers at the end...and let the coming of love be as a shining meteor while the people shout in ecstasy, their taut nerves vibrating to the pervading influence like the deep-toned strings of a violoncello."¹³⁰ The duet is peppered with stage directions such as "with growing, feverish excitement," "with ecstatic tenderness,"

¹²⁹ Puccini to Adami, Bologna, October 1921, in *Letters of Giacomo Puccini*, 287.

¹³⁰ Puccini to Adami, Torre del Lago, May/June 1921, in *Letters of Giacomo Puccini*, 281.

“exalted, overcome,” and “her eyes veiled with tears” (Adami and Simoni, III. 1, 104-06). Puccini wanted Turandot to “burst into expressions of love...excessively, violently, shamelessly, like a bomb exploding.”¹³¹ Puccini’s outpouring of emotion in the final duet is precisely the kind of sentimentalism that Busoni opposed. In his essay, “The Oneness of Music,” Busoni says scornfully that love-duets are “not only shameless but absolutely untrue...altogether wrong and fictitious besides being ridiculous.”¹³²

As dawn finally breaks, the dramatic tension and passion come to a head, and Calaf reveals his name in a final act of love, putting his fate in Turandot’s hands. At this unexpected revelation, her pride is suddenly rekindled, and she appears ready to betray him, despite his selfless act. However, in the last scene, Turandot announces that the Prince’s name is “Love” and the two lovers embrace while the crowd sing joyously while scattering flowers.

¹³¹ Puccini to Adami, Torre del Lago, 18 July 1920, in *Letters of Giacomo Puccini*, 275.

¹³² Busoni, “The Oneness of Music,” 10.

Table 2.2 Comparison of the final scenes

GOZZI	BUSONI	PUCCINI
<p>Act IV: <i>A vestibule, at night</i> Scene 1: Turandot tries to discover the prince's name by threatening to torture Barach and Timur. Timur reveals that he is the prince's father. Although Turandot is moved by his misfortune, she is persistent. Scene 2: Enter Adelma, who warns Turandot that her father is coming. The prisoners are hidden. Turandot give Adelma, Schirina and Zelima gold to bribe Calaf's guards. Scene 3: Turandot vacillates between love and hatred for Calaf, but her pride wins. Scene 4: Altoum learns that Calaf's kingdom is restored. Altoum offers the names to Turandot if she surrenders. She refuses. <i>Calaf's room</i> Scene 5: Brighella warns Calaf that he may be visited by people who would betray him. Scene 6: Enter Schirina, disguised as a soldier. She tells Calaf that Timur is in Peking and that his mother is dead. She tries to convince him to write a few lines to his father, but Calaf refuses. Scene 7: Enter Zelima. She tells Calaf that Turandot loves him, but is too proud to concede defeat. If Calaf tells her his name, Turandot promises to marry him after the trial. Again, Calaf refuses. He sleeps.</p>	<p>Act II, Scene 3: <i>Turandot's seraglio</i> <i>Intermezzo dialogato</i> (Turandot, Adelma and Truffaldino), no. 4: Truffaldino, who was sent to find out the prince's name, has just returned from town.</p>	<p>Act III, scene 1: <i>The palace gardens</i> <i>The Temptations</i> (Calaf, the Ministers, and the Crowd): Ghostly figures appear, and then become the crowd. The Ministers attempt to bribe Calaf, first with maidens, then with gold and gems. Bloody and bruised, Timur and Liù are dragged in by the Guards. Ping recognizes them as friends of the Prince. Enter Turandot. <i>Torture of Liù</i> (Turandot, Liù, Calaf, Timur, the Crowd): Turandot demands Calaf's name. Sparing Timur, Liù says she alone knows the answer, and refuses to tell. The crowd calls for torture. Turandot wonders at Liù's strength. <i>Aria</i> (Liù): Liù answers that it is her love for the Prince that gives her strength. She will not betray the Prince, even though his victory will be her loss. The crowd calls for the executioner. <i>Suicide and funeral cortege</i>: Unable to withstand further torture, Liù snatches a dagger and stabs herself. Timur and Calaf cry out. The crowd is moved and beg Liù's ghost not to be vengeful. All leave except Turandot and Calaf.</p>

<p>Scene 8: Enter Truffaldino. He slips a mandrake root under the prince's pillow, but is unable to find the answer.</p> <p>Scene 9: Enter Adelma. She wakes Calaf and tells him of her plight. He is moved. She informs him that Turandot plans to kill him after the trial and begs him to run away with her. Calaf is distraught, and accidentally reveals his name.</p> <p>Scene 10: Brighella and soldiers arrive to take Calaf away. He accuses them of being in on the plot, and exits. Brighella is amazed.</p>	<p>Aria (Truffaldino), no. 5: Truffaldino informs the Turandot of his plot: he placed a mandrake root under the prince's pillow, but was unable to find an answer. Turandot impatiently sends him away.</p> <p>Dialogo, Arioso (Altoum, Pantalone, Tartaglia, Turandot), no. 6: Enter Altoum. Altoum offers Kalaf's name to Turandot if she promises to marry. She refuses.</p> <p>Pantalone and Tartaglia listen behind the door. Altoum is full of sadness.</p> <p>Duett (Turandot and Adelma), no. 7: Again, Turandot articulates her doubts. Adelma tells her that she knows the prince's name and whispers it in her ear.</p>	<p>Accusation (Turandot and Calaf): Calaf calls the Princess cruel and unfeeling, and tears aside her veil. He struggles with Turandot, who is still resisting. He kisses her and she is transformed by the physical contact. She is bewildered by her tender feelings for him.</p> <p>Duet (Turandot and Calaf): Turandot confesses that she was torn between feelings of love and hate from the first time she saw him. She tells him that he has won, but asks him to leave her in peace. He tells her his name, as dawn breaks. Her pride is rekindled.</p>
<p>Act V: Council hall</p> <p>Scene 1: Altoum, Tartaglia, and Pantalone are confident of Turandot's defeat. Calaf expresses his love for her.</p> <p>Scene 2: Enter Turandot and her entourage. She announces his name, but pities him. Calaf pulls out a dagger, but Turandot intervenes and professes her love. Adelma tries to stab herself but is stopped by Calaf. Calaf and Turandot ask Altoum to free Adelma and restore her kingdom. Altoum informs Calaf that Carizmo has died, and that his kingdom is restored. He shall have Peking, too. Turandot reflects: she has learned that women can be untrustworthy and men can be noble. She asks the audience for forgiveness.</p>	<p>Scene 4: The throne room</p> <p>(Untitled) (All), no. 9: Pantalone and Tartaglia express dread. Turandot and her women march in. Turandot announces the name and tells Kalaf he is free to go.</p> <p>Finale (All) no. 10: Defeated, Kalaf turns to go, but is stopped by Turandot, who professes her love for him. All rejoice and plan for the wedding. Adelma concedes defeat. The entire cast asks a new riddle, to which the answer is love. A statue of Buddha is unveiled, and the marriage ceremony is performed.</p>	<p>Scene 2: Outside the Imperial Palace</p> <p>Fanfare: Enter the Emperor and all his men. Soldiers and a huge crowd gather around.</p> <p>Revelation (Turandot): The Princess tells her father that she knows the Prince's name – and it is Love. Calaf embraces her.</p> <p>Chorus (the Crowd): Everyone rejoices.</p>

Conclusion

Puccini wanted to move his listeners; he urged his librettists to “create for me something which will make the world weep.”¹³³ Busoni, on the other hand, wanted to entertain them with his “little [intermezzo] in the theatre;”¹³⁴ therein lies the fundamental and crucial difference between Puccini’s opera and Busoni’s. The dissimilarity between the two operas is most evident in Puccini and his librettists’ creation of Liù. Preceded by Mimi of *La Bohème* (1896) and Cio-Cio San of *Madama Butterfly* (1904), Liù is a typical “Puccinian” heroine – “gentle and frail, who yields wholly to love and dies for it.”¹³⁵ She is depicted as being sweet, faithful and selfless – an opposite of Turandot. Liù’s loyal protection of Calaf’s frail father and her adoration of the Prince make her ultimate sacrifice – her suicide – especially heart-rending. The crowd’s bloodthirsty cries and cruelty of the Princess emphasize the gruesome nature of her tragic death (see Table 2.2, Act III, Scene 1).

Above all, Puccini wanted to affect his audience emotionally.¹³⁶ The humour, satire, and eclecticism of Gozzi’s play were contrary to Puccini’s goals – as a result, the references to Italy were erased, and the characters were portrayed as consistent, less conflicted. Puccini transformed Gozzi’s rather chaste romance between Calaf and Turandot into something more sexual and violent. The acme of emotional tension in the

¹³³ Puccini to Adami, Torre del Lago, 23 October, 1919, in *Letters of Giacomo Puccini*, 268.

¹³⁴ Busoni to Hans Huber, January/February 1919 [?], in *Selected Letters*, 281.

¹³⁵ Carner, “The Genesis of the Opera,” in *Turandot / Giacomo Puccini*, 12.

¹³⁶ Puccini to Adami, Torre del Lago, 5 May 1920, in *Letters of Giacomo Puccini*, 274.

opera, however, is Liù's poignant suicide, which has no equivalent in either Gozzi or Busoni's works.

Compared to Busoni's opera, Puccini's work is much more unified in mood. From beginning to end, it is a suspenseful, melodramatic work, full of pathos and violence. Busoni, however, retained the eclecticism of the play, reflecting the Modernist trends of anti-realism and anti-sentimentalism. Brecht scorned the kind of theatre that "aims at smoothing over contradictions, at creating false harmony, at idealization," a theatre in which events are shown to be inevitable, characters are always consistent, and the story unfolds logically.¹³⁷ In this kind of theatre, the audience passively, unthinkingly accepts the action and the characters. By highlighting, not hiding, the inconsistencies and incongruities in Gozzi's play, Busoni created a Modernist work that amazes and surprises the audience at every turn.

¹³⁷ Brecht, "Appendices to the Short Organum," 277.

CHAPTER THREE: *DRAMATIS PERSONAE* – VENETIAN MASKS IN CHINA

Puccini and his librettists were uneasy about the *commedia* characters in Gozzi's play: they wrestled with the idea of altering their personalities and considered excising them from their opera altogether. Puccini felt that the Masks could "possibly also spoil the opera," and he asked Adami and Simoni to find "a Chinese element to enrich the drama and relieve the artificiality."¹³⁸ Puccini and his librettists ultimately kept three of the four original Masks, but transformed them into Ping, Pong, and Pang, Chinese courtiers who do not retain any vestige of their Italian heritage.

Busoni, on the other hand, treasured the very thing that Puccini found objectionable: the incongruity of *commedia* characters in a fairytale love story. He not only preserved the Masks' personalities, he also heightened their quirks through music, making them obviously out of place, and emphasized the contradictions and unexpected events in his libretto. Through their stylized personalities and their humorous antics, Pantalone, Tartaglia, and Truffaldino prevent the audience from mistaking representation for reality or getting carried away by their emotions. The depictions of the Masks help create the kind of objectivity that Busoni, and other Modernists, aimed for in theatre.

Although the personalities of the *commedia* characters were in no way rigidly fixed, certain traits define each character. Each character has a distinct costume and a unique personality – the appearance of Harlequin in his diamond-patterned outfit, for

¹³⁸ Letter to Adami, Torre del Lago, Spring 1920, in *Letters of Giacomo Puccini*, 272.

example, would have created certain expectations in a seventeenth-century audience well-versed in the *commedia* traditions. Although Gozzi's stage instructions indicate that the Masks are wearing Chinese costumes, their personalities are nevertheless unmistakable. By clearly defining the *commedia* characters and differentiating them from the highborn, non-Western characters, Gozzi emphasized the absurdity of their presence in China and the theatricality of the play. Busoni did not make any specifications concerning the Masks' costumes,¹³⁹ but their personalities are well-defined and recognizable. The musical depictions of Pantalone, Tartaglia, and Truffaldino reinforce their personalities and distinguish them from the nobility. While Altoum is noble, Kalaf heroic, and Turandot haughty, the Masks are selfish, stupid, and silly, providing comedy whenever they appear on stage.

Gozzi also used the Masks to inject humour into the drama, thus both alleviating the gravity of the story and disturbing the romance. Busoni had similar aims: in his opera, the comedy created by the *commedia* figures keeps the audience at a critical distance from the action. The Masks are funny because they obviously do not belong in the story, but their words and music are also humorous. Although they are not central to the action – that is, they have no real impact on the events – they are crucial to preventing sentimentality. Their sarcastic, often inappropriately funny comments lessen the gravity of the work and divert attention from the love story.

¹³⁹ The Wexford Festival production used the Masks' traditional costumes. *Turandot*, DVD, directed by Patrick Mason (Wexford, UK: House of Opera, 1988). A more recent production by the Osaka College of Music (17 November 2002), which I attended, also used *commedia* costumes.

Twentieth-century manifestations of the *commedia dell'arte*

With its stock characters, masks, and predictable plots, the *commedia dell'arte* has been described as stylized and non-realistic.¹⁴⁰ While Puccini found this artificiality undesirable, it was precisely this theatricality which appealed to the Modernists. At the turn of the century, there was an explosion of works influenced by the *commedia dell'arte*: Harlequin figures filled the canvases of Picasso, Petrushka danced to Stravinsky's music, and clowns capered on Meyerhold's stage. While the use of *commedia dell'arte* characters is neither exclusive nor unique to the twentieth century, there is a marked difference between the dreamy, wistful Pierrot favoured by the Romantics and the somewhat sinister and cynical Harlequin who fascinated the Modernists.¹⁴¹ The *commedia dell'arte* reflected a number of Modernist tendencies, including an interest in "lowbrow" entertainment, a rejection of naturalism, and renewed use of past forms and techniques.

A common assumption about Modernist art is that it is cold, complex, and esoteric, an art for the discerning connoisseur and the elite, but out of reach for the layperson.¹⁴² However, early twentieth-century artists were also fascinated with traditions not normally associated with "high art." An interest in "lowbrow" culture emerged, partly a reaction against the seriousness and sense of self-importance seen in

¹⁴⁰ Kenneth Richards and Laura Richards, *The Commedia dell'Arte: A Documentary History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 2.

¹⁴¹ Susan Harrow, "From Symbolism to Modernism – Apollinaire's Harlequin-Acrobat," in *Studies in the Commedia dell'Arte*, ed. David J. George and Christopher J. Gossip (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993), 202-04.

¹⁴² Albright, *Modernism and Music*, 5.

Romantic works, particularly in Wagner's operas.¹⁴³ Brecht insisted that theatre should be fun, advocating a "smoker's theatre" in which the audience could relax, chat, and smoke while watching, instead of sitting in hushed and awed silence.¹⁴⁴ Similarly, Kurt Weill criticized those composers who were disdainful of their audiences and who alienated their listeners by producing inaccessible, elitist music.¹⁴⁵ In the early years of the twentieth century, cabaret, burlesque, and puppet shows made their way into theatres and opera stages, and jazz and popular songs infiltrated concert music.

The use of puppets, clowns, and masked figures also indicates a rejection of realism and naturalism. Modernist artists were particularly aware of this divide between reality and art, and the need for critical objectivity in the appreciation of art. In the words of the English director/theorist Edward Gordon Craig, whose name is synonymous with the revival of the *commedia dell'arte*: "This tendency towards the natural has nothing to do with art, and is abhorrent when it shows in art, even as artificiality is abhorrent when we meet it in everyday life. We must understand that the two things are divided, and we must keep each thing in its place."¹⁴⁶ Modernist artists sought to emphasize this divide, to make the audience aware of it. In theatre, this objective was accomplished through a self-conscious approach to acting, so that the audience admires the technique of the actor rather than the believability of the actor's character. According to Brecht, the objective of the actor is "to appear strange and even

¹⁴³ Martin Green and John Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot: The Commedia dell'Arte and the Modern Imagination* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 13.

¹⁴⁴ Brecht, "Emphasis on Sport [1926]," in *Brecht on Theatre*, 8-9.

¹⁴⁵ Weill, "Shifts in Musical Composition [1927]," in *Modernism and Music*, 117.

¹⁴⁶ Craig, "The Artists of the Theatre of the Future [1907]," in *On the Art of the Theatre* [1911] (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1957), 35.

surprising to the audience. He achieves this by looking strangely at himself and his work. As a result, everything put forward by him has a touch of the amazing."¹⁴⁷

Finally, the *commedia dell'arte* is a connection to the past, offering Modernist artists a means of expression which neither completely severs the ties with tradition nor alienates them from their audiences.¹⁴⁸ In adopting this view, the Modernists' revival of the Masks could be related to Neoclassicism – one example would be *Pulcinella* (1920), Stravinsky's ballet of the *commedia* characters featuring arrangements of Pergolesi's music. Just as old styles and techniques were transformed rather than used verbatim in the Neoclassical idiom, Modernist artists depicted the *commedia* in their own unique fashion. In fact, the use of past forms, styles, and techniques does more than recall the past – it also emphasizes the present. Through distortions of and deviations from traditional material, the gulf between the old and the new is emphasized, and the listener or the viewer is made aware of the "pastness of the past."¹⁴⁹ This anachronism is central to the theatricality of Busoni's *Turandot*.

Like his contemporaries, Busoni was enchanted with puppets, marionettes, and the *commedia dell'arte*. In a letter to his wife, he gave a detailed description of a puppet performance he had seen as a child, professing that he had "always felt drawn to marionettes," and that he was charmed by the performance's "exactness, precision so real that it was satirical."¹⁵⁰ Although they never met, Busoni owned a copy of Craig's

¹⁴⁷ Brecht, "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting," 92.

¹⁴⁸ Gabriel Jacobs, "The *Commedia dell'arte* in Early Twentieth-Century Music: Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Busoni and Les Six," in *Studies in the Commedia dell'Arte*, 229.

¹⁴⁹ Albright, *Modernism and Music*, 276-77.

¹⁵⁰ Letter to Gerda Busoni, Cologne, 16 January 1900, in *Letters to His Wife*, 36-37.

influential *On the Art of the Theatre* (1911).¹⁵¹ Busoni found many creative possibilities in the world of puppets and masks: three of his four operas are influenced by the *commedia* Masks, pantomime, or puppets. *Arlecchino* (1917), his satirical one-act opera, features characters from the *commedia*: Arlecchino and his wife, Colombina; the young lover Leandro; and three characters based on the old men of the *commedia*: Matteo, and the aptly named Abbate Cospicuo and Dottor Bombasto. Although *Arlecchino* is subtitled *Eine theatralisches Capriccio in einem Aufzuge* [A Theatrical Capriccio in One Act] in the published score, it is described as a "Marionetten Tragödie" in the manuscript. *Doktor Faust*, unfinished at Busoni's death in 1924, was based on the traditional puppet play rather than Goethe's version, and was written "following the tradition of the Marionettes."¹⁵²

In addition to the Masks, *Turandot* includes a mix of elements associated with the *commedia*, including mime and puppets. At the end of the first scene in Act I, the execution scene is portrayed through pantomime. For a 1921 production in Berlin, Busoni proposed that the rather long "Tanz und Gesang" (II. 3, no. 2) be enacted as a shadow play behind a curtain:

For the...shadow-play...I would suggest the choice of a humorous and fantastical description of the *Turandot* story itself, so that the spectator is made aware of the reverse side of the action and so that it can make Turandot nervous...Turandot as a dragon with a woman's head, guards and the executioner, Truffaldino as a clown, Altoum decrepit and supported by his Ministers.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Beaumont, 225.

¹⁵² Letter to Gerda Busoni, Chicago, 31 March 1915, in *Letters to His Wife*, 252.

¹⁵³ Letters to Franz Ludwig Hörth, 15 October 1921, qtd. in Beaumont, 244.

This shadow play would accomplish several things: 1) reinforce the comical and fantastic elements in the opera, 2) make apparent the complexity of both the storyline and characters, 3) and reinforce the theatrical element in the form of a play-within-the-play.

The absurdity of the Masks

By making a clear musical distinction between the noble characters and the *commedia* Masks, Busoni heightened the difference already present in Gozzi's play. Unlike Puccini's Ministers, who always appear together and are undifferentiated from one another, Busoni retained the unique character of each Mask. The absurdity of their presence reminds the audience that what they are watching is a representation, and not reality: "dances and masks and apparitions should be interwoven [into opera], so that the onlooker never loses sight of the charms of pretence or gives himself up to it as an actual experience."¹⁵⁴

Of the three Masks in the opera, Truffaldino has the largest role. Truffaldino, who is closely related to Harlequin, belongs to the *zanni* class in *commedia dell'arte* theatre. *Zanni* are servants who are often rascals or dunces, but most often they are a complex mix of the two.¹⁵⁵ They are wily, stupid, boastful, amorous, or cowardly. Traditionally, *zanni* are highly skilled in acrobatics; they also use *lazzi*, silly songs, and

¹⁵⁴ Busoni, "The Future of Opera," 40.

¹⁵⁵ Winifred Smith, *The Commedia dell'Arte* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964), 9.

patois.¹⁵⁶ Truffaldino is a “crafty, false, and boastful valet,”¹⁵⁷ but he can also display moments of stupidity. He is described as “lightheaded, gay, naïve, foolish, pliable, like quicksilver, always moving, and amusing the audience with his uncouth remarks.”¹⁵⁸

In the play and in Busoni’s version, Truffaldino is the head eunuch, naturally sung by a tenor in the opera. Unlike Pantalone and Tartaglia, Truffaldino is unsympathetic towards the Prince. In Gozzi’s play, Truffaldino is pleased that another prince is about to try his luck, for whenever “a new one gets it in the neck, the princess gives [him] a healthy tip” (Gozzi, II. 1, 138). Likewise, in Busoni’s opera, he describes the trials as being fun and delightful. His witty remarks and jokes about his manhood prevent the action from ever becoming too solemn. This disjunction of the serious and the comic is central to the Modernism of *Turandot*.

In his first entrance in the opera, “Introduktion und Arietta,” Truffaldino orders the eunuchs about as they prepare the hall for a new trial (I. 2, no. 1). Marked “bewegt und geschäftig” [animated and bustling], the music is lively; one can imagine a group of harried slaves rushing around while Truffaldino lords over them. He mistreats the slaves throughout the piece, heaping insults on them. Ironically, though he accuses the slaves of being lazy, he himself does not lift a finger. At the close of the arietta, the music increases in intensity and ends with Truffaldino’s thrashing the slaves left and right,

¹⁵⁶ Smith, 10.

¹⁵⁷ Pierre Louis Duchartre, *The Italian Comedy: The Improvisation Scenarios Lives Attributes Portraits and Masks of the Illustrious Characters of the Commedia dell’Arte*, trans. Randolph T. Weaver (New York: Dover, 1966), 157.

¹⁵⁸ Rusack, 9.

driving them from the room. The music mirrors the physical action: at the words “piff paff,” the notes alternate between F and G as he beats the slaves:

Example 3.1 Act I, Scene 2, no. 1 “Introduktion und Arietta,” mm. 81-87

spannt die Schen- kel, regt die Bei- ne, Schur- ken, Die- be, Af- fen,
 Schwei- ne, jetzt hin- aus, jetzt hin - aus, jetzt hin- aus, hin- aus, hin-
 aus, jetzt hin - aus, jetzt hin - aus, jetzt hin - aus, jetzt hin -
 aus, piff, paff, piff, paff, paff, piff, paff, piff, paff!

[Get a move on, move those legs, you villains, thieves, apes and pigs! Out with you!]

As with Tartaglia’s stutters, the music creates opportunity for physical humour; this example could be seen as a kind of musical *lazzi*.

In the opera, Truffaldino prides himself on his intellect; according to him, his mind is a triumph of breeding (II. 3, no. 4). Yet when Turandot sends him to learn Kalaf’s name, he relies on hocus-pocus instead of his wits and fails miserably. However, when Turandot accuses him of being a useless imbecile, he retorts:

Example 3.2 Act II, Scene 3, no. 5 "Aria," mm. 77-85

Presto (indigniert, beleidigt)



Mann - o-der Un-mann, un-fä-hig, fä-hig, mei-nenWitz kann mir nie-mand schnei-den!

[*Indignantly, scathingly:* Man or half man, capable or useless, no one can find fault with my brains!]

Again Busoni inserts a little joke about being a eunuch, made even funnier as Truffaldino is unknowingly insulting himself.

The musical depiction of Truffaldino is particularly significant because the music first heard in the "Introduktion und Arietta" is associated with his character, much like a *leitmotif* (see Example 3.6). A shortened version returns in "Intermezzo dialogato" (II. 3, no. 4), when he reappears to report to Turandot. The reusing of this music reinforces Truffaldino's character, making it more definite to the listener. Unlike the serious characters, who experience emotional conflict, he is simply drawn, and remains unabashedly himself. Another motif from "Introduktion und Arietta" (mm. 58-59) returns in Truffaldino's ensuing aria, strengthening his defiant words:

Example 3.3 Act II, Scene 3, no. 5 "Aria," mm. 98-105

Presto (leichter)



Truf-fal - din - o bleibt-er sel-ber, wird der Neid auch gelb und gel-ber

[Truffaldino remains true to himself, although others are green from envy].

Clearly defined characterization forces the audience to notice the difference between Truffaldino and the serious characters, a difference not unlike the separation between masked and unmasked characters in traditional *commedia dell'arte* theatre. Unlike Puccini, who assimilated the Masks into the Chinese setting, Busoni emphasizes the incongruity of the Masks by clearly defining them.

The other two Masks, both baritones, are Pantalone, the Venetian merchant, and Tartaglia, the stuttering Neapolitan lawyer. They belong to the group known as *vecchi*, or the old men. Like *zanni*, *vecchi* are masked, comic characters. *Vecchi* adopt humorous characteristics associated with old age: they are pedantic, meddling, long-winded, pompous, vain, conceited, and miserly. In addition to providing comic relief, *vecchi* emphasize the divide between the old and the young.¹⁵⁹ In both Gozzi and Busoni's works, they play the roles of Altoum's Ministers and confidantes.

Busoni felt that Pantalone, through his references to Venice and his dialect, was especially important in contributing to the artificiality of the play.¹⁶⁰ In both Gozzi and Busoni's works, Pantalone makes references to his home in Italy, reminding the audience how out of place he is in Peking. In Gozzi's play, he remarks, "you may not have noticed it, but I am not, myself, of Chinese descent" (Gozzi, II. 1, 328);¹⁶¹ in Busoni's opera, he also mentions Italy and, more specifically, St. Mark's cathedral in Venice (I. 1, no. 7, mm. 4-9). Although the other characters do not seem to be fazed by the

¹⁵⁹ Giacomo Oreglia, *The Commedia dell'arte*, trans. Lovett F. Edwards (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), 80.

¹⁶⁰ Busoni, "The *Turandot* Music," 61. The use of differing dialects was not used in Busoni's opera.

¹⁶¹ Gozzi, "Turandot", in *The Genius of the Italian Theater*, ed. Eric Bentley, trans. Jonathan Levy (New York: Mentor, 1964), 328.

incongruity, the Masks themselves are aware of their curious role in the drama. This self-awareness of the characters is an important factor in the theatricality of both Gozzi's play and Busoni's opera.

The second minister is Tartaglia, who is recognized by his pronounced stammer. Busoni writes this rather funny speech impediment into the music: when Altoum and his ministers repeatedly try to convince Kalaf to abandon his quest, Kalaf repeatedly answers, "Tod oder Turandot" [death or Turandot] (I. 2, no. 6). Tartaglia jeeringly repeats the words, but he himself becomes an object of ridicule when he trips over his words:

Example 3.4 Act I, Scene 2, no. 6 "Quartetto," mm. 63-66

Allegro



To, to, to, to, Tod, To, to, to, to, Tod, od-er Tu, tu, Tu ran dot!

The music heightens the humour of the text – both Tartaglia's words *and* his music stutter. Comic touches such as these help diminish the tragic elements in the drama and prevent the audience from becoming too caught up in the story.

There is little difference between Pantalone and Tartaglia aside from the occasional mention of Italy and the stuttering. Both are sarcastic, somewhat pompous, and sharp-tongued. The undercurrent feelings of superiority are evident in the Ministers' acerbic words: they are quick to criticize, insult, and ridicule. Throughout the opera, Pantalone and Tartaglia pay obeisance to the Emperor, but there is always an

undertone of scorn. Secretly, they believe that Altoum is too indulgent with his daughter. Altoum does not want to play the part of executioner, but feels that he has no choice: "...ich kann nicht anders, ich muß meine Tochter lieben" [I cannot do otherwise; I must love my daughter] (I. 2, dialogue). To this, Pantalone replies: "Euer Majestät Herz ist wie Fließpapier in Honig getränkt" [Your Majesty's heart is like blotting paper soaked in honey], implying that the Emperor is too soft. Tartaglia agrees: "Ba-ba-baumwolle mit Schmalz"¹⁶² [Co-co-cotton in lard].

Pantalone and Tartaglia remain outwardly respectful towards Altoum, but they do not extend this courtesy to the other characters. Like Altoum, they try to dissuade Kalaf from attempting the trial, but their actions are not motivated by fatherly concern. Pantalone looks down his nose at the Prince and scolds him like a naughty child. He warns: "Seien Sie nur zuversichtlich / daß die Rätsel, die sie dreht, / nicht von Zucker sind noch Pappe!" [You can be sure that the riddles won't be made of sugar or cardboard!] (I. 2, no. 6, mm. 40-43). Tartaglia is less mincing with his words: "Teufel, Teufel, süßes Herzchen, / welch verbohrtter Ei-ei-eigensinn!" [Devil, you are a devil, sweet darling, with your pig-headed obstinacy!] (mm. 67-70). Despite their efforts, Pantalone and Tartaglia cannot seem to hide their disdain.

¹⁶² "Schmaltz" also means excessive sentimentality, as in Yiddish.

Humour in contrast and similarity

In his discussion of humour in music, Henry F. Gilbert differentiates between two types of humour in music: a humour that involves an element of the ridiculous and a kind of humour that involves a sense of merriment, joviality, mirth, a "pure exuberance of good feeling."¹⁶³ Both of these types are present in Busoni's *Turandot*. Several techniques are used to achieve humour in music, including mimicry, exaggeration, instrumentation, and surprise, but perhaps the most important – and most pertinent to this analysis of Busoni's opera – are incongruity and parody.¹⁶⁴

In *Turandot*, incongruity is achieved primarily by differentiating between the serious characters and the Masks, and inserting humour at surprising moments. Busoni uses topics to delineate the comic characters from the serious ones, causing incongruity when the two are placed at close quarters. The piece that best exemplifies Busoni's humorous use of incongruity is Truffaldino's first piece "Introduktion und Arietta" (I. 2, no. 1); this scene is an adaptation of a similar episode in the play (II. 1).

"Introduktion und Arietta" is a lively, virtuosic piece, reminiscent of the patter song found in *opera buffa*. It is in itself not particularly humorous unless it is seen in the larger context. The circumstance in which a topic is heard is important to how it is perceived¹⁶⁵ – *when* we hear these signs, or topics, is instrumental in *how* we interpret

¹⁶³ Gilbert, "Humor in Music," *Music Quarterly* 12 (1926): 51.

¹⁶⁴ Gretchen A. Wheelock, *Haydn's Ingenious Jestings with Art: Contexts of Musical Wit and Humor* (New York: Schirmer, 1992), 203.

¹⁶⁵ Agawu, 35.

them. Truffaldino's piece is preceded by the suitably grave "Pantomima e finale," in which the Prince of Samarkand is beheaded and Kalaf rushes off to win Turandot's hand, despite Barach's protestations. Following Truffaldino's arietta is "Einzug des Kaisers," the dignified and regal entrance of Altoum and his men. Truffaldino's arietta differs from the pantomime and Altoum's music in every respect: the differences in mood, tempo, instrumentation, and musical language make light of the serious situations and ensure that tragic elements do not dominate the drama. Sandwiched between two serious episodes, the light-hearted and merry Truffaldino seems even more heartless, his words more irreverent.

The serious characters' reactions to the executions are appropriate to the situation: Kalaf expresses horror and indignation and vows to avenge the Prince of Samarkand, and Altoum expresses his sorrow and his pity for the fallen princes. Even Turandot regrets the bloodshed. Truffaldino, on the other hand, mocks the unlucky suitors, calling them "Gecken, Narren, Laffen" [fops, fools, dandies]. He laughs merrily in anticipation of a new trial:

Example 3.5 Act I, Scene 2, no. 1 "Introduktion und Arietta," mm. 64-66

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line. It consists of two staves of music in a single system. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody is written in a simple, rhythmic style. The lyrics are written below the notes. The second staff continues the melody, featuring a more complex rhythmic pattern and a melisma on the word 'ha'.

's ist viel zu wen - ig noch, dem Him - mel sei's ge - klagt,
 wenn nur der Kopf ih-nen wird ab-ge-hackt, ha ha, ha ha - -

["It is still much too little," complains the heavens, "when only the head is chopped off!"] Placed between Kalaf's heroism and Altoum's concern, Truffaldino's words seem particularly flippant and unfeeling.

It is interesting to note that Puccini chose to change this scene completely. In his version, Ping, Pong, and Pang hope for an end to the trials – regardless of the outcome – and wistfully reminisce about their homes. The text, full of picturesque images of bamboo and pagodas, and the pentatonic music erase all traces of the characters' Italian origins. Busoni, on the other hand, calls attention to the difference through his music. Prior to Truffaldino's arietta, the opera is undoubtedly situated in a distant, foreign place: augmented seconds, the prominence of wind instruments, the borrowed material from Ambros's study, and mixed scales evoke somewhere faraway. However, there are no exotic signifiers in Truffaldino's music, presumably because he is an Italian. In addition, the contrapuntal texture of the orchestral introduction places the listener in a bygone era, accentuating Truffaldino's incongruent presence in the opera. This recalling of the past can also be a kind of exoticism – something that is temporally remote can seem as unfamiliar as that which is geographically remote.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ W. Anthony Sheppard, *Revealing Masks: Exotic Influences and Ritualized Performance in Modernist Theater* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 14.

Example 3.6 Act I, Scene 2, no. 1 “Introduktion und Arietta,” mm. 5-9

Bewegt und geschäftig

As chief eunuch, Truffaldino presents many opportunities for jokes about masculinity, or lack thereof. He is derided by other characters – Tartaglia calls him the “Hammelführer” [leader of the castrated male sheep] (I. 2, no. 7, mm. 14-16). Although the others scorn Truffaldino for being a eunuch, he prides himself on his position, and even feels that he is superior to other males:

Was bin ich, damit verglichen,
für ein Muster der Eunüchen,
mir wird das Hirn nicht warm
vor einem Weiberschwarm,
hier wurzelt meiner Halbheit Scharm,
ob der Hahn sich noch so blähe,
mich lockt nicht das Bett der Ehe.
La tralala, tralala, wie steh ich da!
Das ist des Kastraten Segen,
daß sein Geist bleibt überlegen.

[As for me, a eunuch, / my brain won't get warm over a swarm of women, / that is the charm of being half / while the rooster fluffs up his feathers, / I am not lured into the marriage bed. / La tra-la-la, tra-la-la, no, not for me! / That is the castrato's blessing, his mind remains superior] (I. 2, no. 1, mm. 67-76).


One would assume that being a castrato would be associated with being weak and effeminate, but for Truffaldino, who is a boastful and somewhat stupid character, it is an advantage. He is proud rather than ashamed of his status, turning the audience's expectations upside-down.

Busoni makes an unmistakable demarcation between the music of Altoum's men and that of Truffaldino. "Einzug des Kaisers" is a picture of masculinity: the prominence of brass and low-pitched instruments, tonal stability, and simple melodic lines are reminiscent of Sarastro's music in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*.¹⁶⁷ Truffaldino's arietta, on the other hand, reinforces his effeminacy, differentiating him from the Emperor and his men. High-pitched instruments – piccolo, flutes, and the *cor anglais* – are featured, as well as the tinkling of the ethereal glockenspiel and triangle. It moves at lightning pace, flitting through keys, whereas "Einzug des Kaisers" is firmly in F-Major:

¹⁶⁷ For a discussion of the musical difference between the Queen of the Night and Sarastro, see Ivan Nagel, *Autonomy and Mercy: Reflections on Mozart's Operas*, trans. Marion Faber and Ivan Nagel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 21-25.

Table 3.1 Construction of Act I, Scene 2, no. 1 "Introduktion und Arietta"

<i>Orchestral introduction</i>	
Section: A (a)	(b)
Tempo: Bewegt und geschäftig	
Key area: C – E – D-flat – F – C	C – C-sharp – G – D
Bars: 1	20
<i>Arietta</i>	
Section: B (a)	(b)
Tempo: Quasi lo stesso tempo	Poco più tranquillo
Key areas: g – A-flat/a-flat – D – G/g	G/g – D – g
Lyrics: Orders slaves "Rechts zunächst der große Thron..."	Looks forward to trial, laughs at men "Nun wird's lustig..."
Bars: 44	58
Section: B (c)	(a ¹)
Tempo:	Tempo I
Key areas: G – E/e – C-sharp/c-sharp	G
Lyrics: Comments on marriage "ob der Hahn sich noch so blähe..."	Orders slaves "Hurtig, nicht den Takt verlieren..."
Bars: 71	79 (<i>attaca</i> to "Recitativo")

Truffaldino's arietta was called "marcia grottesca" in the instrumental suite and features the topic of the military style. The duple meter, prominent snare drum, winds and brass, detached articulation, and use of the  figure is particularly evocative of a march.¹⁶⁸ The pantomime and the Emperor's entrance also make use of the military style, but to a much different effect. In the pantomime, the rhythmic ostinato in the timpani of the opening reappears. The military topic is used to remind the audience of the danger and potential for tragedy. In "Einzug des Kaisers," a trumpet behind the scenes plays a

¹⁶⁸ Allanbrook, 47.

fanfare. Here, the military reference is dignified, whereas Truffaldino's music is cheeky and comical, a parody of the military style. All three pieces use the same topic, but in very different ways; it is as if Busoni is showing the same object, but cast in a different light each time.

Of course contrast is not unique to this opera: the principle of contrast is an integral part of traditional musical structures. In eighteenth-century opera, there was no clear dividing line between *opera seria* and *opera buffa* – the two genres frequently borrowed from each other. However, a comic opera can have elements of seriousness without compromising its status as *opera buffa*, as long as the prevailing sentiment is consistent with the genre.¹⁶⁹ In *Turandot*, there are both comic and serious elements, but Busoni *juxtaposed* these aspects, rather than connecting or integrating them – this is a very Modernist technique. Pantalone, Tartaglia, and Truffaldino draw attention to the fictitiousness of the story and inject humour into the opera by being conspicuously different from the other characters.

If incongruity works on the principle of contrast, then parody is based on the principle of similarity. A parody involves imitating an object for a humorous effect, sometimes involving a feeling of superiority.¹⁷⁰ A famous example is *Ein musikalischer Spaß*, KV 522, in which Mozart parodies his less competent contemporaries. In *Turandot*, parody is used mainly by Altoum's Ministers.

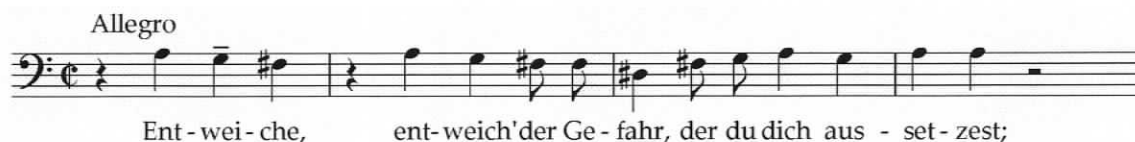
¹⁶⁹ Marita P. McClymonds, "Opera seria? Opera buffa? Genre and Style as Sign," in *Opera buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, ed. Mary Hunter and James Webster. Cambridge Studies in Opera (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 198.

¹⁷⁰ Miguel Mera, "Is Funny Music Funny? Contexts and Case Studies of Film Music Humor," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 14 (2002): 94-95.

Pantalone and Tartaglia often imitate the Emperor; however, this imitation is always slightly off-kilter, so that the effect of parody is created. The first example is in the quartet of the first act, where they try to dissuade Kalaf from the trial. Altoum begins with a four-note motif:

Example 3.7 Act I, Scene 2, no. 6 "Quartetto," mm. 2-5

Allegro



Ent - wei - che, ent - weich' der Ge - fahr, der du dich aus - set - zest;

[Escape, escape from the danger you have put yourself in].

Altoum acts as a kind, concerned father figure to Kalaf, calling him "mein Sohn." He warns the Prince of the dangers and describes his grief at having to put so many young men to their deaths. However, Kalaf is determined and insists on "Tod oder Turandot!" Finally, Pantalone becomes exasperated and interjects his chiding words:

Example 3.8 Act I, Scene 2, no. 6 "Quartetto," mm. 32-35

Allegro



A - ber teu - er - ster der Prin - zen, mein ge - be - ne - dei - ter
Bub, so merk' die Köp - fe ü - berm Tor - re!

[But my dearest Prince, my blessed baby, look at the heads above the gate!].

Pantalone uses the same melodic material as Altoum, but sings the notes twice as fast, transforming Altoum's well-meaning words into nagging. Altoum pleads with Kalaf, but Pantalone wags his finger at the Prince.

In the "Quartetto," the parody is self-contained – the material that is being parodied and the parody exist in one number, and do not recur. However, some instances of parody refer to previous music. For example, in his aria, Truffaldino mocks Kalaf's "Tod oder Turandot" theme:

Example 3.9 Act II, Scene 3, no. 5 "Aria," mm. 53-57

(parodierend)

Er sagt: "Tod, Tod o - der Tu - ran - dot"

There are various ways Truffaldino bungles this theme: the time signature is in 3/4, whereas Kalaf usually sings this in 2/2; the original opening interval, a falling perfect fourth, is transformed into a diminished fifth; and the rhythm is more complicated. By distorting Kalaf's theme, Truffaldino shows his scorn. Interestingly enough, Kalaf's theme had already been parodied by Tartaglia in the "Quartetto" of the first act (see Example 3.4). This example of self-referencing is highly theatrical as Truffaldino parodies both the music and the words, acknowledging that the characters are aware of their roles as opera singers. It is as if the opera is self-consciously poking fun at itself as well as at the romantic intentions of the Prince.

The examples given so far involve parody through imitation; Busoni also uses direct repetition in a comical manner. In the dialogue following Truffaldino's second

aria, Altoum offers to tell Turandot Kalaf's name in exchange for his life. Pantalone and Tartaglia wait inquisitively behind a door, listening in on the conversation:

Altoum: Guck mal her. (*Eine Rolle hochhaltend*) Was ist das? [Look here. (*Holding up a list.*) What is this?]

Pantalone: Was ist das? [What is this?]

Altoum: Eine Rolle. [A list.]

Tartaglia: Eine Rolle. [A list.]

Altoum: Was steht darin? [Of what?]

Pantalone: Was steht darin? [Of what?]

Altoum: Die Namen, die du nicht weißt. [The names that you do not know.] (*Pantalone und Tartaglia pfeifen lang und leise.*) [(*Pantalone and Tartaglia whistle long and low.*)]

The effect of the literal repetition is funny because the audience is made aware of the eavesdropping. Finally, Altoum gives up and shakes his head in defeat, muttering to himself, "Schade" [pity]. He is then joined by his Ministers, who echo his words, as if they had been present all along:

Example 3.10 Act II, Scene 3, no. 6 "Arioso," mm. 32-33

The musical score consists of three staves, each with a bass clef and a 4/4 time signature. The top staff is for Altoum, the middle for Pantalone, and the bottom for Tartaglia. Altoum's part starts with a whole rest, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) and then a series of eighth notes (B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4). Pantalone's part has a whole rest in the first measure, followed by a quarter rest, and then a quarter note G4. Tartaglia's part has a whole rest in the first measure, followed by a quarter rest, and then a quarter note G4. The lyrics 'Scha- de...' are written below the notes for each part.

This is an "in" joke, a wink to the audience: Altoum is unaware that Pantalone and Tartaglia were listening, but everyone else knows.

Conclusion

Busoni felt that a work for the theatre “should offer something which is contrary to daily life; it fulfils its purpose when it gives what life has not got.”¹⁷¹ He preserves the unique personalities of the Masks, highlighting their absurd presence in a fairy tale set in China. The paradoxes and oddities in Busoni’s libretto call attention to the fantastical nature of the work; as anachronisms, the roles of the Masks are crucial to shattering any illusion of reality. This acknowledgement the fantastical nature of the opera parallels Brecht’s anti-realist, anti-illusionist opinions. Additionally, the Masks provide an element of humour – humour that diminishes tragic aspects. When one critic denounced the opera as “monstrous,” Busoni replied that the execution of the Prince of Samarkand is “not a *creepy episode* when one considers the symbolic (and almost comical) meaning of the plot as intended by the amusing nature of the whole play: namely that the princess’s young men ‘lose their heads.’ One also notices at the end of the play that they were made of papier-mâche and aren’t to be regretted anyway.”¹⁷² Puccini’s opera, on the other hand, is devoid of all comedy.

Gozzi used the Masks to reaffirm the supremacy of the *commedia dell’arte*:¹⁷³ their conspicuous presence in his *fiabe* and the use of *lazzi*, improvisation, dialects, and other traditional *commedia* techniques served as a show of support for the genre. Busoni, who

¹⁷¹ Letter to Gerda Busoni, Moscow, 31 November 1912, in *Letters to His Wife*, 213.

¹⁷² Busoni, Letter to an unknown critic, undated, in Tamara Levitz, *Teaching New Classicality: Ferruccio Busoni’s Master Class in Composition* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), 154.

¹⁷³ *Useless Memoirs of Carlo Gozzi*, 181.

wanted to produce an Italian theatrical work, valued the Masks for the same reason. In a letter to Egon Petri, Busoni described the inspiration puppet theatre, marionettes, and the *commedia dell'arte* offered him: "It was like a liberation from the gods and heroes on stilts who have been the nightmare of my now fifty-year existence, from the heroes (as Heine said) who have the courage of one hundred lions and the mind of two donkeys."¹⁷⁴ Busoni's *Turandot*, based on a play by a staunch Italian nationalist and containing elements of the highly stylized *commedia* theatre, is a conscious departure from both the Germanic tradition of Wagner and aesthetic goals of Italian *verismo* opera.

¹⁷⁴ Busoni to Egon Petri, 28 March 1916, in *Teaching New Classicality*, 143-44.

CHAPTER FOUR: SETTING – AN ECLECTIC DEPICTION OF DISTANT LANDS

In the twentieth century, Western European composers made more of an effort to integrate the styles, techniques, and musical details of other cultures into their works rather than using “arbitrary acoustic signals,” such as augmented seconds, to depict the exotic.¹⁷⁵ In general, Modernist composers aimed for an assimilation of non-Western music into their musical language, attempting to move beyond the simple practice of borrowing melodies.¹⁷⁶ Debussy, for example, relied more on harmony, texture, instrumentation, and melodic structure than on actual melodies. Related to this desire of integration was the concern for authenticity. Thanks to the new field of ethnomusicology, Modernist composers had a better understanding of non-Western musical practice than their predecessors. With greater knowledge came greater responsibility, and twentieth-century composers paid attention to the accuracy of their borrowings.

Considering the Modernist concern for assimilation and authenticity, Busoni’s eclectic exoticism is puzzling. On the one hand, he tried to avoid conventional exoticism by referring to Ambros’s work.¹⁷⁷ Yet, Busoni did not limit himself to Chinese melodies – in fact, he only used one. In addition to these borrowed melodies, he also makes use of traditional – even hackneyed – signifiers. The exoticism in *Turandot* does not appear to venture beyond a superficial use of clichés and seems to confirm all of Busoni’s critics’

¹⁷⁵ W. Anthony Sheppard, 11.

¹⁷⁶ Albright, *Modernism and Music*, 249; W. Anthony Sheppard, 11.

¹⁷⁷ Busoni, “The *Turandot* Music,” 60-61.

derogatory remarks about his apparent lack of originality. Mosco Carner praises the work for being “intellectually stimulating” but also says it “suffers from a strange hotchpotch of styles.”¹⁷⁸ However, Busoni’s critics fail to appreciate several things: 1) his exoticism reflects his views on the artificiality of opera – the exotic material provides a fantastic, imaginary setting for the tragicomic fairy tale and was not meant to portray China realistically; 2) his eclectic use of material affirms his belief that music is universal, beyond man-made conventions; 3) his use of conventional material is not disrespectful; his music reverses negative stereotypes rather than confirming them.

Exoticism versus Orientalism

From the first cross-cultural interactions, Western European artists have looked beyond their own borders for inspiration and renewal – the use of material from another culture is known as exoticism. Exoticism is “[t]he evocation of a place, people or social milieu that is (or is perceived to be) profoundly different from accepted local norms in its attitudes, customs and morals.”¹⁷⁹ In music, this evocation is accomplished through scales or modes, rhythms, instrumentation, harmonies, texture, performing techniques, titles, or – in the case of songs or opera – through text. In opera, costumes, make-up, and stage props aid in suggesting a foreign place. While the allure of the exotic remains unabated even today, the approach has changed over the years. The difference between

¹⁷⁸ Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, 534.

¹⁷⁹ *New Grove Online*, ed. L. Macy, s.v. “Exoticism,” (by Ralph P. Locke), <http://www.grovemusic.com/> (Accessed 11 October 2006).

exoticism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries lies not in *what* material was used necessarily, but *how* and *why* it was used; as aesthetic goals changed, so did the way in which composers used non-Western music.

In the eighteenth century, artists focused on Turkey, perhaps due to the constant threat of Turkish invasion.¹⁸⁰ Turkish-inspired clothing became fashionable, and operas and plays set in Turkey abounded. Christoph Friedrich Bretzner's libretto *Belmont und Constanze, oder Die Entführung aus dem Serail* was set no less than four times in a fifteen-year period: versions were written by W.A. Mozart (1782), Christian Ludwig Dieter (1784), Joseph Heinrich Knecht (1787), and Anton Joseph Kuzzi (1796). Composers summoned up images of Turkish military bands through harmony, rhythm, and particularly instrumentation, with little or no regard for authenticity.¹⁸¹

In the nineteenth century, the focus moved from the harsh, military, male-dominated Orient to the mysterious, perfumed world of the female.¹⁸² Artists, particularly the French, were compelled by the charms of North Africa, the Middle East, and Spain; this trend is found in *Salammbô* (1862) and "Hérodias" of *Trois Contes* (1877) by Gustave Flaubert and in the paintings of Eugène Delacroix. Napoleon's invasion of Europe and imperial expansions stimulated interest in these lands and resulted in

¹⁸⁰ John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 141.

¹⁸¹ Mary Hunter, "The Alla Turca Style in the Late Eighteenth Century: Race and Gender in the Symphony and the Seraglio," in *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press: 1998), 43-73; Miriam K. Whaples, "Early Exoticism Revisited," in *The Exotic in Western Music*, 3-25; Eve R. Meyer, "Turquerie and Eighteenth-Century Music," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 7 (1974): 474-88.

¹⁸² Herbert Lindenberger, *Opera in History: From Monteverdi to Cage* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 169-70.

increased scholarship.¹⁸³ Guillaume Villoteau's *Description de l'Égypte* (1809) and Edward William Lane's *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836), which were widely read, included descriptions of music. Writers began incorporating non-Western music into their historical surveys – the work of Raphael Georg Kiesewetter (*Die Musik der Araber nach Originalquellen dargestellt*, 1842) and August Wilhelm Ambros (*Geschichte der Musik*, 1862-78) were early attempts at addressing the music of other cultures.¹⁸⁴ Equipped with better knowledge than their predecessors, nineteenth-century composers aimed for accuracy, although the material was always adapted to Western tastes.¹⁸⁵ The taste for the exotic in French music began with Félicien David's symphonic ode *Le désert* (1844) and continued to the end of the century. This trend was especially evident in opera: Berlioz's *Les Troyens* (1862), Bizet's *Djamileh* (1872) and *Carmen* (1875), Massenet's *La roi de Lahore* (1877) and *Herodiade* (1881), Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila* (1877), and Delibes's *Lakmé* (1883) are all examples of nineteenth-century French exoticism.

In the twentieth century, the Far East – namely China and Japan – was the favoured locale. An attraction to these countries was hardly new: in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, increased trade between Europe and China resulted in *chinoiserie* in

¹⁸³ Lindenberger, 170.

¹⁸⁴ For an overview of European studies of non-Western music, see Bohlman, "The European Discovery of Music in the Islamic World and the 'Non-Western' in 19th-Century Music History," *Journal of Musicology* 5 (1987): 147-63.

¹⁸⁵ Gilles de Van, "Fin de Siècle Exoticism and the Meaning of the Far Away," trans. William Ashbrook, *Opera Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (1995): 80.

ballets, drama, and opera.¹⁸⁶ Examples of *chinoiserie* include Vivaldi's *Teuzzone* (1719) and Gluck's *Le Cinesi* (1754), as well as Gozzi's *Turandot*. In the twentieth century, however, the influence of China and Japan went beyond sumptuous costumes and pagodas on the stage – composers attempted to incorporate authentic material into their works. Although stereotypical exotic signifiers persisted, twentieth-century composers tried to transcend the somewhat superficial practice of borrowing tunes by incorporating exotic material into the structure and the technique of their works.

The borrowing of material and images from other countries has been a hotly debated topic, especially since the publication of Edward W. Said's book *Orientalism* (1978). It would not be an exaggeration to say that this work transformed the way in which critics approach Western policy, scholarship, and art concerning non-Western cultures. Before Said, "Orientalism" was a neutral term used to designate Western study of the Orient. However, Said questions the neutrality of scholarship. Adopting Michel Foucault's notion of knowledge as power, he argues that Western representation of the Orient reflects colonial attitudes and interests. Orientalism, he avers, is not a factual treatment of the Orient, but "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience."¹⁸⁷ By describing it, teaching it, writing about it, and ruling over it, Orientalists rob their subjects of their voice, their right and ability to represent themselves, rendering them powerless. Since Said's interest

¹⁸⁶ For an historical overview, see Lam Ching-wah, "Chinoiserie: Chinese Influence on European Stage in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Chinese Culture* 37, no. 2 (June 1996): 49-59.

¹⁸⁷ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* [1978] (New York: Vintage, 1979), 1.

is in the relationship between colonizers and colonized, his discussion is largely limited to British and French interactions with the Near East.

According to Said, Orientalism is a style of thought based on the difference between the Occident and the Orient: the Orient defines Europe by being its contrast, its opposite, its Other.¹⁸⁸ This approach divides people into “us” versus “them, or “Self” versus “Other,” creates dichotomies, and promotes stereotypes. Orientalist representations, says Said, must be seen as *representations* and not as objective depictions: “we need not look for correspondence between the language used to depict the Orient and the Orient itself, not so much because the language is inaccurate but because it is not even trying to be accurate.”¹⁸⁹ Representations of the Orient, he avers, reveal more about the author’s attitudes than the Orient itself.¹⁹⁰

Although he was not the first to question European authority over its colonies, Said’s work has had an immediate and lasting impact because of its “insistent undoing of oppositions between the Orient and the Occident, Western knowledge and Western power, scholarly objectivity and worldly motives, discursive regimes and authorial intentions, discipline and desire, representation and reality, and so on.”¹⁹¹ Said’s study still exerts a great deal of influence – one can hardly discuss the West’s treatment of the East without referring to it – and has been especially important in literary studies, as it was instrumental in ushering in postcolonial criticism. Said’s challenging of Western

¹⁸⁸ Said, 1-2.

¹⁸⁹ Said, 71.

¹⁹⁰ Said, 12.

¹⁹¹ Gyan Prakash, “Orientalism Now,” *History and Theory* 34 (1995): 201.

authority and authorship has been both reviled and revered, but there is no question of its importance.

In the study of Western interpretations of non-Western cultures, postcolonial and feminist criticisms have emerged in the forefront in the wake of *Orientalism*. These critics object to the stereotypical depictions that marginalize the Other. They view Western representations of the Other – both the foreign Other and the female Other – as modes of domination. They argue that by representing and appropriating the Other, European policymakers, academicians, and artists deny the Other a voice, propagating Western cultural hegemony. However, in discussing Busoni's opera, the term "exoticism" is more suitable than "Orientalism" for three reasons: 1) after *Orientalism*, the term "Orientalist" has become laden with pejorative connotations; 2) Busoni's exoticism encompasses a temporal distance as well as a geographical distance – to his audience, the *commedia* characters are as remote as the non-Western characters; 3) exoticism in *Turandot* is not an expression of British/French colonial interactions.

Busoni's exoticism is not disrespectful because it was not used to recreate China, but rather to produce a faraway, imaginary backdrop for his incredible story. The mix of exotic topics is so eclectic and puzzling that there is no chance of interpreting the story as being set in a real place. Furthermore, Busoni's sympathetic portrayal of the "Chinese" characters, especially the female characters, shatters stereotypes of despotism and sexual deviancy, challenging the audience to reassess their prejudices and forcing them to face their assumptions. His complex, sometimes bewildering treatment of exotic

material can be explained by his desire to create an opera that is self-consciously, intentionally unrealistic.

Alternative interpretations: A remote land

In the chapters on the *Turandot Suite* and the opera, Antony Beaumont identifies eight instances of borrowing from Ambros's work.¹⁹² Sometimes the melodies are used during important points in the drama – for instance during the conclusion of the riddle scene and at Kalaf's enchantment – and at other times, they are presented for colour, as exemplified by "Tanz und Gesang" (II. 3, no. 1). Busoni also associated three main "Asian" characters with exotic themes – Kalaf with an Arabian call to prayer, Altoum with Turkish and Persian songs, and Turandot with the only Chinese melody of the opera. Kalaf and Turandot's themes are especially important as they recur throughout the opera, acting as *leitmotifs*. However, Busoni did not always use authentic material to depict the exotic; the opera includes conventional signifiers as well. Since his aim was not a realistic representation of China, the use of these signifiers, even something as clichéd as the augmented second, is appropriate, especially when we consider his aesthetic goals.

Although it sounds distinctly non-Western, the exoticism of "Lamento" (I. 1, no. 2) does not use any authentic material, relying solely on conventional exotic signifiers. The libretto provides opportunity for an extravagant spectacle: Busoni used the

¹⁹² Beaumont, 80-86; 242-45.

execution of the Prince of Samarkand as justification for the colourful entrance of the Queen. In Gozzi's play, it is Ishmael, the Prince of Samarkand's tutor, who mourns for the unlucky suitor – Busoni's version is visually much more striking. The stage directions read: "Die Königin-Mutter von Samarkand, eine Mohrin, phantastisch mit bunten Straußfedern geschmückt, erscheint in einem Tragsessel geschwenkt, von rasenden Klageweibern gefolgt." [The Queen Mother of Samarkand, a Moorish woman, fantastically adorned with colourful ostrich feathers, appears on a palanquin, followed by a wailing group of women.]

The "Lamento" is a rounded binary, with the Queen's solo providing the contrasting section. The A-section is harmonically and rhythmically simple: pentatonic harmonies dominate, and the horns, bassoons, and strings pound out persistent quarter notes. Rhythm is a prominent feature: the evenly spaced beats call to mind the beating of a tom-tom. The wordless singing of the women's chorus, the driving rhythm, and the pentatonic harmonies are clearly influenced by Amerindian music.

Example 4.1 Act I, Scene 1, no. 2 "Lamento," mm. 4-10

Women's choir
(Behind the scenes)

Busoni admired Native American cultures for their mysticism and non-materialistic way of life,¹⁹³ and their music was the inspiration for several of his pieces. He became acquainted with Amerindian music through his former pupil, Natalie Curtis (1875-1921). Curtis, who advocated the preservation of Amerindian culture, wrote *The Indians' Book: An Offering by the American Indians of Indian Lore, Musical and Narrative, to Form a Record of the Songs and Legends of Their Race* (1907). At Mahler's performance of the *Turandot Suite* in 1910, Curtis presented Busoni with a copy of her book. He subsequently wrote several pieces using themes from her collection: *Red Indian Fantasy* (1914), which was dedicated to Curtis, *Red Indian Diary Book* (1915), and *Song of the Spirit Dances* (1915). It may seem strange that Busoni chose to emulate Amerindian music at this juncture, especially considering that Samarkand is a city in central Asia. However, the ethnic identity of the Queen is already ambiguous. Her physical description indicates that she is perhaps African or Indian in origin,¹⁹⁴ but the music evokes some unspecified distant land. Busoni is not representing Asian, African, or American culture; instead, he is depicting some other, imaginary place.

The last number of the first scene, "Pantomima e Finale," uses exotic topics to remind the listeners of the danger Kalaf faces. At this point, the executioner, accompanied by guards and drummers, impales a freshly severed head on the city gate. The prominent instruments in this piece are the *cor anglais*, the clarinet, and the bassoon.

¹⁹³ Letter to Gerda Busoni, Columbus, 22 March 1910, in *Letters to His Wife*, 163.

¹⁹⁴ Moors were "widely supposed to be mostly black or very dark-skinned... This term was often used, even into the 20th cent., with the sense 'black person.'" *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Moor," <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/entrance.dtl/> (Accessed 17 October 2006).

Traditionally, high-pitched wind instruments, especially the *cor anglais*, have exotic associations.¹⁹⁵ The melody played by these instruments, though not taken from Ambros's book, definitely has an Asian flavour, largely because of the prominence of the augmented seconds.

In "Pantomima," the augmented second occurs between the second and third degrees of the scale, and again between the sixth and the seventh degrees. The interval is presented first in an altered scale in measures 5-6:

Example 4.2 Act I, Scene 1, no. 4 "Pantomima e finale," mm. 1-8

Alla marcia

The musical score shows three staves: Cor anglais (top), Clarinet in Bb (middle), and Bassoon (bottom). The Cor anglais part features a melody with an augmented second interval. The Clarinet and Bassoon parts have a rhythmic accompaniment with triplets. The tempo is marked 'Alla marcia'.

This flourish is one of many altered scales in "Pantomima"; these melodic structures sound ordinary and strange at the same time, defamiliarizing the familiar. In measures 11-12, the augmented second, re-written as a minor third, becomes even more pronounced because of rhythmic syncopation and a prolongation of the second note:

¹⁹⁵ Scott, 327.

Example 4.3 Act I, Scene 1, no. 4 "Pantomima e finale," mm. 11-14

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Cor Anglais (English Horn) and Bassoon. The Cor Anglais part is written on a treble clef staff, and the Bassoon part is on a bass clef staff. Both parts begin with a forte (f) dynamic. The Cor Anglais part features a series of eighth notes, with a triplet of eighth notes in measures 12 and 13. The Bassoon part mirrors this with a similar rhythmic pattern, also including a triplet of eighth notes in measures 12 and 13. The score is set in 3/4 time and the key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat).

This material returns in its most powerful form at measure 60, played double fortissimo by the flutes, oboes, and violins.

The augmented second is "authentic" in that it is used in certain non-Western modes, but frequent use of this interval can lead to musical caricature. In *Samson et Dalila* (1877) Saint-Saëns uses an Arabian Hijāz mode as a basis for "Bacchanale." Although the original mode contains an augmented second between the second and third notes, Saint-Saëns presents the interval again between the sixth and seventh notes. According to Ralph P. Locke, an authority on musical exoticism, this insistence on the augmented second emphasizes the difference between Western and Eastern practices, heightening the gap between the Self and the Other.¹⁹⁶ In Busoni's case, the augmented second also acts as a contrast between East and West, but while the Eastern characters are remote geographically, the Italian Masks are temporally distant. Thus, Busoni's exoticism cannot be considered to be derogatory because the East and West are equally unfamiliar to the audience.

Mixed with this exotic material in "Pantomima" are military topics that are articulated through instrumentation and rhythm. The E-flat minor ostinato, which has

¹⁹⁶ Locke, "Constructing the Oriental 'Other': Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila*," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3 (1991): 266-67.

already been associated with danger in the first piece, returns for the gruesome beheading. The melodic material played by the winds is punctuated with fanfare gestures played by the bass drum, cymbals, and trumpets. These military topics impart a menacing mood to the music, a stark contrast to both the soft, mysterious "Arioso" and to the light music of Truffaldino that follows. By using traditional, even clichéd exotic signifiers, Busoni sharply divides the music of the "Asian" characters and that of the Masks, making the presence of the Venetian characters even more incongruous.

The correspondence between exotically-themed works and reality is complex because these works do not claim to represent objectively, but present themselves as being fictitious objects intended for entertainment or aesthetic appreciation.¹⁹⁷

Opponents of exoticism see the disregard for veracity as misrepresentation – misrepresentation that is harmful and degrading. However, a more positive approach to musical exoticism is possible if we acknowledge the diversity of exotic-themed works and the possibility of interpreting these works in multiple ways.¹⁹⁸

For Busoni, the very nature of opera is unrealistic. Instead of disguising this fact, he believed that composers should embrace and emphasize the fantastic, the mythical, the nonsensical, and the improbable aspects of opera – authenticity was never his aim. In an unpublished document, he describes his use of exoticism:

I tried to stress the fairy-tale quality [in *Turandot*] by interspersing exotic rhythms, melodies, and sonorities throughout the opera; but I limited myself to

¹⁹⁷ Locke, "Cutthroats and Casbah Dancers, Muezzins and Timeless Sands: Musical Images of the Middle East," in *The Exotic in Western Music*, 105.

¹⁹⁸ Locke, "Cutthroats," 105-07; MacKenzie, xv-xvii.

using these means in the places where the 'purely musical' appear in passing. I also couldn't allow the 'purely music' to develop too vividly...because I didn't want to lead the game in a 'realistic-tragic' direction.¹⁹⁹

This excerpt illustrates that Busoni did not intend to use exotic material in an effort to depict China realistically, but rather to create a magical, make-believe setting.

Alternative interpretations: A reversal of stereotypes

Stereotypical characters proliferate in Orientalist representations: swarthy men with curly moustaches wield their scimitars, while dark-eyed beauties peep seductively behind their veils. These depictions, which were commonplace in the arts until recently, erase all individuality from people from non-Western countries, reducing them to cartoon-like figures. Busoni's *Turandot* contains some of these stereotypes, especially in the harem scenes; however, for the most part, negative stereotypes are reversed in the opera. Unlike the tyrannical, power-hungry despot of Orientalist art, Altoum is a dignified, compassionate man whose only fault is overindulging his daughter. Busoni's depiction of the principal female characters also challenges Orientalist clichés: in place of the seductive, wanton woman or the weak and passive girl are Turandot and Adelma, strong, independent princesses. By negating stereotypes, Busoni makes his "Asian" characters less foreign to his audience; ironically, it is the European characters, the Masks, who are more remote. This reversal of expectations is important in

¹⁹⁹ Qtd. in *Teaching New Classicality*, 149.

demonstrating the Modernist tendencies in Busoni's exoticism and their affinity to Brecht's theatre.

In Orientalist works, males are often portrayed as inflexible, violent, lustful tyrants and fanatics: in art, they are often seen stabbing a lion or committing some cruel act.²⁰⁰ Such unfeeling, rigid characters also appear in opera: in Stravinsky's *Le Rossignol* (1909), the Emperor of China captures the nightingale for his own pleasures and then banishes it forever when it disobeys him. The non-Western leader is also sometimes portrayed as blindly following a repressive religion or law. In Puccini's *Turandot*, Altoum's music consists of a strict pentatonic mode, reflecting his obligation to the decree.²⁰¹ The Oriental male is also sometimes a comical character. Mozart provides two examples: Osmin, a Turk in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, and Monostatos, a Moor in *Die Zauberflöte*, are dangerous and immoral, but they are also objects of ridicule.

In Busoni's *Turandot*, Emperor Altoum embodies dignity and goodness. His music, the most tonally stable in opera, is replete with noble military topics. His majestic entrance, "Einzug des Kaisers" (I. 2, no. 3), is unmistakably in F Major, and features regular four-bar phrases. The stately melody, heard in the flutes and violas, is based on a Turkish song:²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Locke, "Constructing the Oriental 'Other'," 280.

²⁰¹ Locke, "Reflections on Orientalism in Opera and Musical Theatre," *Opera Quarterly* 10.1 (1993): 58.

²⁰² Ambros, 110; Beaumont, 81.

Example 4.4 Act I, Scene 2, no. 3 "Einzug des Kaisers," mm. 1-8

Quasi il doppio movimento, ma sempre sostenuto

[Turkish song]

dolce

p

p

[Turkish song]

p

p

p

p

Flute

Cor Anglais

Bassoon

Bassoon

Viola

Viola

Violoncello

Violoncello

Fl.

C. A.

Bsn.

Bsn.

Vla.

Vla.

Vc.

Vc.

There is not one but two borrowed melodies in this piece: the Doctors' melody is based on a Persian melody:²⁰³

²⁰³ Ambros, 109; Beaumont, 81.

Example 4.5 Act I, Scene 2, no. 3 "Einzug des Kaisers," mm. 27-34

Die Doktoren

The image shows a musical score for two voices: Tenor and Bass. The Tenor part is written on a treble clef staff with a soprano C-clef (8) and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The Bass part is written on a bass clef staff with a soprano C-clef (8) and the same key signature. The lyrics are: "Wir - sind die Dok - to - res und sit - zen zu Ge richt." The music consists of a series of eighth and quarter notes, with a final cadence on a whole note.

[We are doctors, and we administer the law.]

Its melodic shape is reminiscent of a fanfare; this reinforced by an echo of this music, played by a trumpet behind the scene. These military topics are strikingly different from those of Truffaldino.

The next number, Altoum's aria, is a moving piece in which he makes a supplication to Confucius, demonstrating his deep piety. He also articulates his love for his daughter, clarifying the reasons for the continuation of these terrible trials. The music reflects his dilemma: he loves his daughter and is bound by law to the decree, but it is an affront to his morals. The tonal language is not complex, but is more chromatic than "Einzug des Kaisers," mirroring Altoum's emotional conflict. Throughout the aria is a metrical dissonance: the second beat of the phrase is accented because it is the highest in pitch, as well as being the longest in duration. This accent on the offbeat indicates Altoum's pain:

Example 4.6 Act I, Scene 2, no. 4 "Aria," mm. 1-2

Quasi Adagio

Viola

Viola

Violoncello

Violoncello

Violoncello

Contrabass

Dotted rhythms are also prominent in this aria and are reminiscent of the French Overture, a fitting reference as it is traditionally used when the occasion calls for a "serious, elevated tone."²⁰⁴

In his final solo, "Arioso" (II. 3, no. 6), Altoum pleads with his daughter, offering answers to the riddle if she agrees to marry Kalaf. As in his other music, stately military topics are featured. The tempo is *sostenuto e grave*, and marked *con dignità*. A trumpet, which is strongly associated with military music, plays a countermelody to his line. Dotted rhythms persist throughout the piece, again recalling the regal French Overture style.²⁰⁵ This is music befitting a king.

²⁰⁴ Ratner, 20.

²⁰⁵ In the CD recording conducted by Kent Nagano, the rhythms are double-dotted. *Busoni: Turandot and Arlecchino*, Opera de Lyon cond. Kent Nagano, Virgin Classics VCD 7 59313-2, 1994.

Example 4.7 Act II, Scene 3, no. 6 "Arioso," mm. 1-5

Sostenuto e grave

Trumpet (behind scene) *Sostenuto con dignità*

Altoon

Violoncello *fp*

Contrabass *fp*

Heim - li - che Kun - de kam mir

C Tpt.

B. zu. Von ho - her Her kunft ist der Jüng ling

Vc. *pizz.*

Cb. *pizz.*

[A secret messenger has come to me. The young prince is of noble birth].

As in the "Aria," Altoum is torn between his parental love and his sense of propriety. When Turandot refuses his offer, he warns her that she will be shamed before the court, but he cannot help but feel miserable at the thought of her unhappiness: "...und morgen hat das Teufelsspiel ein Ende, und du stehst beschämt vor aller Welt. (Für sich) Soll ich sie so verlassen? Ich war ein bißchen hart!" [...and in the morning, this devil's game will end, and you will stand, shamed before the world. (To himself) Should I leave her so? I was a bit harsh!] (mm. 24-28). Clearly Altoum's weakness is his daughter; however, this weakness makes him human.

In many nineteenth-century works, women are associated with distant lands, adventures, and danger.²⁰⁶ Orientalist art, produced by European men, depicts non-Western women as “objects of desire – primarily as odalisques or concubines who are voluptuous, vulnerable, indolent and sexually available...not just desirable but actively and dangerously desiring.”²⁰⁷ The representation of non-Western women in painting, especially those set in harems or slave markets, is a topic that is particularly controversial.²⁰⁸ The paintings of Jean-Léon Gérôme’s (1824-1904) are indicative of the nineteenth-century fascination with these kinds of scenes. Many of Gérôme’s depictions of women are suggestive in nature. In a series of paintings of 1872-73,²⁰⁹ the subject – an Arab girl – poses seductively in doorways, much like a prostitute. Beside her is a hookah pipe; thus, the world of the female is linked with the world of opulence and drugs. The subject is clothed in a veil, flowing pants, and a gauzy blouse, through which one can catch a glimpse of her breasts. A beaded slipper is lazily hanging off her foot, just about to fall. In all the paintings, the girl’s head is tilted to one side and her side-long glance seems to beckon the viewer. These sensual images of non-Western women were commonplace in the nineteenth century. There are many examples of this Oriental *femme fatale* in opera: Salome, Carmen, Delilah, and Turandot are all exotic seductresses,

²⁰⁶ Linda Phyllis Austern, “‘Forreine Conceites and Wandring Devises’: The Exotic, the Erotic, and the Feminine,” in *The Exotic in Western Music*, 26.

²⁰⁷ Locke, “Constructing the Oriental ‘Other,’” 269.

²⁰⁸ For a collection of these images, see the chapter “Women: From the Unseen to the Fully Exposed,” in Kristian Davies, *The Orientalists: Western Artists in Arabia, the Sahara, Persia and India* (New York: Laynfaroh, 2005), 246-263.

²⁰⁹ “Femmes du Caire” (1872), “Souvenir du Caire” (1873), “Jeune Fille arabe dans un passage” (1873), and “Jeune Orientale au narguilé” (1873); for a catalogue of his works, see Gerald M. Ackerman, *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme with a Catalogue Raisonné* (London: Sotheby, 1986).

capable of ruining the most noble of men. Another prototype is the gentle but weak, passive Oriental female: Liù, Cio-Cio-San, and Lakmé belong to this type. In Puccini's opera, the two stereotypes are embodied in Turandot and Liù, but in Busoni's opera, Turandot and Adelma upset these Orientalist clichés.

Although borrowed melodies are present in Kalaf and Altoum's music, they sound quite European. The Turkish song used for "Einzug des Kaisers" is described by Ambros as being remarkable for its resemblance to European music.²¹⁰ Busoni reserves the most exotic-sounding, most conventional material for the characterization of Turandot's attendants – perhaps the clichéd image of the harem demands clichéd music. As conventional as the music may be, however, the women of the harem are not portrayed as seductive or wanton; their music is innocent, simple, and charming. The depiction of the odalisques is important as a contrast to Adelma and Turandot.

The first solo piece for the women's chorus is "Lied mit Chor" (II. 3, no.1), which is sung entirely behind a closed curtain. The instrumentation is delicate, with the flutes, oboes, tambourine, and harp in the spotlight. The piece opens with E-Minor chords in the harp, violas, and cellos; the *pizzicato* notes in the strings and the use of the harp evoke the sounds of the strumming of a mandolin or guitar. Above this accompaniment is a melody taken from the English folk tune "Greensleeves":

²¹⁰ Ambros, 111.

Example 4.8 Act II, Scene 3, no. 1 "Lied mit Chor," mm. 1-6

Allegretto

Harp *f*

Vorsängerin

Viola *pizz.* *mf*

Violoncello *pizz.* *mf*

La la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la -

Reviewers of *Turandot* have been confused by the use of "Greensleeves" – one reviewer attributed the opera's weakness to such "paradoxical references."²¹¹ While the use of a medieval English tune may seem out of place in a fairy tale set in China, perhaps "Greensleeves" is fitting considering Busoni's aesthetic goals. It is possible to consider that this strange quotation is *deliberately* puzzling. It is important to bear in mind that Busoni believed that music was universal and free; any musical means is appropriate if the situation calls for it or if contrast is needed.²¹² The lilting dotted rhythms and timeless quality of the tune creates an image of gentle femininity.

Following "Lied mit Chor" is another piece for female chorus, "Tanz und Gesang" (II. 3, no. 2), set in Turandot's chambers. Maidens sing and dance while Turandot and Adelma sit on a sofa, surrounded by cushions. The music in this piece is the most conventionally exotic of all the pieces in the opera: the melodic elements,

²¹¹ William Lloyd, review of *Busoni: Turandot and Arlecchino*, Opera de Lyon cond. Kent Nagano, Virgin Classics VCD 7 59313-2, *Musical Times* 135.1812, February 1994.

²¹² Busoni, "The New Harmony," 27.

rhythm, borrowed material, and instrumentation are particularly suggestive of a harem. The piece opens with a drone – a traditional exotic signifier²¹³ – played by a solo cello. A rising figure played by the bass clarinet and the remaining cellos feature an augmented second, while the oboe plays the main melody, an Arabian tune:²¹⁴

Example 4.9 Act II, Scene 3, no. 2 “Tanz und Gesang,” mm. 5-13



The formulaic exoticism may evoke sensuous images of the harem; however, the contrasting B-section suggests the opposite. This section, in 6/8 time, is much simpler melodically, rhythmically, and harmonically, providing an effective contrast to the A-section. The melody in the flutes, oboes and clarinets is taken from an Indian melody from *Geschichte der Musik*.²¹⁵ The gentle, lilting dotted rhythms and lack of metrical dissonance, along with the trill figures in the flutes and the “strumming” in the strings and harp, reflect the gentle nature of the women. Furthermore, the words encapsulate the women’s character:

Nacht wird zum Tag, schauet!
Leuchtend wird nun der Saal;
Leben, rhythmisch bewegt,
Wogt auf und ab.
Mädchen! Freuet euch!
Bald empfängt euch der Bräutigam.

²¹³ Scott, 327.

²¹⁴ Ambros, 111; Beaumont, 83.

²¹⁵ Ambros, 70; Beaumont, 83.

Nacht wird zu Tag,
Leben wogt in seinem Arm.

[Behold! Night turns into day. / Light returns to the room; / Life flows rhythmically, to and fro. / Maidens, rejoice! Soon your bridegroom will come to you. / Night turns into day. / In his arms, life flows.] In this simple text, written by Busoni, love and marriage is a part of the natural cycle of life, as inevitable as the surging of the tide. Here, the music and words affirm the power of love, which ultimately prevails over pride in the end (see Example 4.10).

According to Linda Phyllis Austern, the musical language of the exotic and the feminine are similar. Both rely on chromatic harmonies, pulsating, syncopated rhythms, metrical dissonance, prominence of the winds, and sometimes scales or melodic patterns borrowed from other cultures – “in short, on an aesthetically intriguing violation of Western High Art auditory norms.”²¹⁶ “Tanz und Gesang” is a typical example of this kind of exoticism – the mellifluous, sinuous melody, the insistent drone, the syncopated rhythms, and instrumentation are derived from traditional language meant to evoke the feminine world of the exotic. Turandot’s attendants, however, are innocent, even chaste. Their sentiments and music are a clear contrast to Adelma’s shrewdness and Turandot’s haughtiness.

²¹⁶ Austern, 26-27.

Example 4.10 Act II, Scene 3, no. 2 "Tanz und Gesang," mm. 86-93

Sanft, heiter
dolce, serenamente

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in B \flat
Triangle
Harp
Choir
Viola
Violoncello

dolce
dolce
dolce
p
f
pizz.
pizz.

Mäd - chen!
Freu - et euch!

In Puccini's opera, the character Liù has the same function as Busoni's female chorus. She is patient, gentle, and loving, a contrast to Turandot. Although she desires Calaf, she does not compete with Turandot; ultimately, she sacrifices herself so that he can be victorious. Busoni's Adelma, on the other hand, refuses to give up without a

fight. She too is a slave, but unlike Liù, she was once a princess. Liù accepts her lot in life, but Adelma dreams of a better life – a life of freedom.

In Gozzi's play, Adelma's role is very important; her schemes provide much of the intrigue in the drama. In the original version, she confesses her love to Calaf and tries to persuade him to run away with her (see Table 2.2). In Busoni's opera, she does not actually converse with the Prince; nevertheless, she is manipulative and cunning. She feeds Turandot's hatred for men by appealing to the Princess's main fault: her pride. She encourages Turandot to be hard with Kalaf: "Laßt euch nicht erweichen!" [Do not weaken!] (I. 2, no. 7, m. 115). Recognizing Turandot's conflicting emotions, Adelma slyly suggests that Turandot is getting soft: "Ich erkenn' euch nicht wieder, so sehr gebärdet ihr euch fremd. Hat der Anblick dieses Glücksprinzen das Metall eurer Seele zum Glühen gebracht? Mir wär's drum leid." [I hardly recognize you, you are acting so strangely. Has the sight of these lucky princes warmed the metal of your soul? I would be sad if it were so.] (II. 3, dialogue). Predictably, Turandot rises to the bait and takes offence at these mocking words.

Adelma's role is much smaller in Busoni's opera than in Gozzi's play. Her main number is "Duett" (II. 3, no. 7), which is sung with Turandot. She begins by reminding the Princess of her loyalty: she has served Turandot faithfully despite being kept as a slave against her will. The music, marked "Allegretto tranquillo e grazioso," is graceful and light, consisting of elegant rhythms and clear tonality. However, the syncopated rhythms betray the complexity of Adelma's true feelings:

Example 4.11 Act II, Scene 3, no. 7 "Duett," mm. 29-34

Allegretto tranquillo e grazioso

Adelma

Ihr nennt mich Freund - in ja, ich bin's zu euch, - ich darf es
sein, da ich - von Kön' - gen stam - me; doch hält ihr mich - als Skla - vin,

[You call me a friend, and I have been loyal to you. Though I am of royal blood, you keep me as a slave].

In the following section (mm. 38-48), Adelma persuades Turandot to free her in exchange for the Prince's name: "Freiheit gegen Freiheit!" [Your freedom for mine!]. Here the harmony becomes more complex: the music moves through several tonal areas, but does not firmly establish any particular key. Again, she appeals to Turandot's pride, flattering her in the process: "zwei kluge Mädchen kommen leicht ins reine" [two clever girls can easily figure this out]. Adelma's role topples the Orientalist stereotype of the sweet, frail woman. She is strong-willed, intelligent, and determined, a worthy adversary for Turandot.

Although Adelma plots against Turandot and betrays the Prince by giving away his name, she is not a completely immoral character. Her deviousness prevents the audience from wholeheartedly sympathizing with her, but she cannot be a subject of vilification because her desire for freedom and love are universal desires. The lack of clear-cut "good guys" and "bad guys" in Busoni's opera is important because the audience is not guided in their understanding of the characters; spectators are forced to make their own decisions and form their own opinions. Even Kalaf, the prototypical

fairytale Prince, has flaws: he arrogantly persists in his quest for Turandot's hand, disregarding heartfelt pleas from his tutor and the Emperor. The portrayal of these characters gives rise to feelings of ambivalence rather than empathy or revulsion.

Much ink has been spilled over Puccini's negative portrayal of Turandot;²¹⁷ although he portrays her as a powerful woman, his characterization is essentially negative. She is cruel and unfeeling, especially towards Liù. However, Busoni's Princess is much more humane. The first hint of her feelings for Kalaf is expressed in "Marsch und Szene" (I. 1, no. 7); however, her tumultuous emotions are fully unleashed in her solo "Rezitativ und Arie" (II. 3, no. 3).

Torn between her love for Kalaf and her pride, Turandot feels conflicted and afraid, and the music mirrors her words. The music is appropriately turbulent: the tremolo in the strings, chromatic language, quick tempo, changes of meter, wide intervallic leaps, extreme vocal range, and the vacillation of major and minor complement Turandot's feelings of turmoil. She wonders whether she loves him or hates him, and the music to both sentiments is similar, indicating that both emotions are equally strong. This clash between love and hate is reinforced by her words "doppelte Pein" [double the pain].

²¹⁷ For example, see Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* [1978], trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 96-102.

Example 4.12 Act II, Scene 3, no. 3 "Rezitativ und Arie," mm. 35-42 (expressing love)

fiero
f daß ich ihn lie - be, sollt' es so sein? -

[Can it be that I love him?]

Example 4.13 Act II, Scene 3, no. 3 "Rezitativ und Arie," mm. 45-51 (expressing hate)

daß ich ihn has - se, dop - pel - te Pein!

[Or do I hate him? Double the pain!]

Unlike the typical fairytale princess who waits for Prince Charming, Turandot is a strong, self-reliant character. She opposes marriage and clearly values her independence: "Noch wick ich keinem, mir selbst betreut; würd' es sich wenden, schnell wär's bereut" [Until now I have taken care of myself; should I give in, I will soon regret it!] (mm. 58-82). She recognizes that ultimately she will pay a price – she will either be humbled and shamed or she will lose Kalaf: "[U]nd ob er siege, ob er liege, mein Stolz, mein Stolz fällt" [whether he is victorious or defeated, my pride, my pride will fall]. Here, the word "Stolz" is emphasized, occupying four entire bars on B-flat – the highest note of the aria – only to fall dramatically at the end of the phrase.

Example 4.14 Act II, Scene 3, no. 3 "Rezitativ und Arie," mm. 114-124

rit. a piacere
 mein Stolz, - - - mein Stolz - fällt

If Turandot is not typically submissive, she is also not wanton; in fact, she seems terrified of love. Although she expresses her doubts in the aria, her pride, or perhaps her fear, overcomes her feelings for Kalaf and she resolves to be strong: “Richte dich aufwärts mein hoher Mut; zum letzten Male wehre, wehre dich gut!” [Take courage, my spirit, and defend me well for the last time!]. At this allusion to war, the horns burst out in a militaristic gesture. Interestingly, its melodic shape and pentatonic flavour are reminiscent of Turandot’s theme, which was first used to express her tenderness for Kalaf; this similarity suggests that Turandot has vanquished her feelings of love.

Example 4.15 Act II, Scene 3, no. 3 “Rezitativ und Arie,” mm. 139-143

Allegro energico

Horns

mf *f* *ff*

Turandot

Rich - te dich auf - - - - - wärts!

Violin I

Violin II

Turandot is beautiful, but she is not a seductress. The one instance in which she uses the power of beauty – during the riddle scene, where she unveils herself – is quite modest, especially when compared to Salome’s “Dance of the Seven Veils.” Furthermore, Turandot unveils herself as an act of defence, not to ensnare Kalaf.

Conclusion

Whenever a Western composer adopts music from another culture, a degree of interpretation is needed. The presentation of non-Western music in the concert hall removes it from its natural surroundings and function; unless the aim is to re-create the music for ethnomusicological or anthropological study, veracity is neither possible nor desirable. While we must be sensitive to the propagation of damaging stereotypes, we must also recognize the artistic merits of exoticism. Although Busoni appears to use non-Western material in a haphazard manner, his exoticism is neither disrespectful nor offensive. Busoni never intended to be authentic – in fact, I would argue that he intended to *inauthentic*. He averred that opera should “[present] **consciously** that which is not to be found in real life”;²¹⁸ by using a mix of borrowed material, Busoni avoided the trappings of realism.

It would be easy to dismiss Busoni’s exoticism as outmoded and clichéd, a vestige of late Romanticism. However, a closer investigation reveals that he used this material in fresh, Modernist ways – ways that surprise and amaze. By using conventional exotic signifiers, Busoni lays bare his methods of creating the setting, much like the visible lighting in Brecht’s theatre. In examining Busoni’s exoticism, it is critical to look at *how* and *why* he used exotic topics, not just *what* he used.

²¹⁸ Busoni, “The Future of Opera,” 40. Emphasis is mine.

CONCLUSION

The genesis of this thesis began with an interest in exoticism in opera. After Edward Said's *Orientalism* turned my attention to the political nature of representation, I began to devise a thesis that involved comparing exoticism throughout history. It was my assumption that twentieth-century composers would be more concerned with authenticity than their predecessors when appropriating music from other cultures. I presumed that Modernist composers would be rigorous in ensuring accuracy in their depictions, especially since ethnomusicological studies have resulted in a wealth of material to draw upon. As the *Sketch* is considered to be "perhaps the first conscious – or self-conscious – manifesto of musical modernism,"²¹⁹ I thought that perhaps Busoni's *Turandot* could be used to illustrate the Modernist use of non-Western music. Since Busoni's music is often disparaged as old-fashioned, I hoped that the exoticism in *Turandot* would be sufficiently "modern" to prove otherwise.

To my dismay, I found many of Busoni's exoticisms to be conventional, no different from early uses of non-Western material. I was surprised by how inauthentic the opera was – although it is set in Peking, Busoni used material from non-Chinese traditions, including Arabian melodies, Indian songs, and, inexplicably, "Greensleeves." I was at a loss to explain how this bewildering hodgepodge of *commedia dell'arte* characters, fairytale romance, and exoticism exemplified Busoni's Modernism.

²¹⁹ Robert P. Morgan, "Secret Languages: The Roots of Modernism," in *Modernism: Challenges and Perspectives*, 40.

However, with repeated listening, the contradictions and incongruities of *Turandot*, which I had found disturbing initially, struck me as self-consciously theatrical – the kind of theatricality that I find characteristic of Modernist theatre. I had recently watched the Vancouver Opera's production of *Die Dreigroschenoper* (2004), and noticed how Brecht called attention to the act of viewing through the use of placards, the technique of self-referencing, the unlikely events, and the presence of humour in serious situations. As I read more about Brecht's writings on the *Verfremdungseffekt* and compared them to Busoni's theories of opera, the similarity between the two became more and more apparent.

In his second edition of the *Sketch*, Busoni objected to the passivity and complacency of opera audiences: "...the public does not know, and does not wish to know that in order to receive a work of art, half the work must be done by the receiver himself."²²⁰ Brecht felt that mindless consumption is a result of theatre that is laid-out and obvious:

the spectator wants to be put in possession of quite definite sensations, just as a child does when it climbs on to one of the horses on a round-about: the sensation that it can ride, and has a horse; the pleasure of being carried, and whirled past the other children.²²¹

The remedy for this unthinking reception, Brecht says, is theatre that amazes. In order to move from "general passive acceptance to a corresponding state of suspicious inquiry," the spectator needs to "develop that detached eye with which the great Galileo

²²⁰ Busoni, "The Future of Opera," 41.

²²¹ Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," 188.

observed a swinging chandelier"²²² – revelations are possible when the audience looks at ordinary events in a new way. Thus, *Turandot* can be seen not as a failed attempt to be authentic or realistic, but as a successful endeavour to engage and amaze the audience.

Busoni's music is undervalued because it is considered old-fashioned and unoriginal. He is criticized as someone who had revolutionary ideas, but not enough vision to carry them out. *Turandot* is underappreciated for the same reasons – it lacks the satirical bite of *Arlecchino*, as well as the philosophical depth of *Doktor Faust*. However, it is deceptively conventional; although the musical language is not particularly adventurous, the way in which it was used is surprisingly Modernist.

Since Busoni's Modernist tendencies in this opera are not readily apparent, they tend to be overlooked, and so, *Turandot* remains largely ignored. I have deliberately chosen a "conventional" piece of Busoni's to demonstrate that analyses of his music are usually too cursory to offer any insight. Modernism was a complex phenomenon characterized by pluralism – a pluralism that necessitates broad and comprehensive assessments. By identifying Modernist traits in the opera and showing their affinity to Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, *Turandot* – and Busoni – can be reconsidered as being both indicative of early twentieth-century thought and anticipating later developments in music and theatre.

²²² Brecht, "A Short Organum for Theatre," 192.

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APPENDIX: PERMISSION TO USE THE SCORE

Date Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2006 2:17 AM

From: "Thomas Trapp / Breitkopf" trapp@breitkopf.de

Subject: RE: Busoni - Turandot (Opera)

Dear Annie,

Thank you for your message. I thought that I had already replied on a similar message, received from you earlier. Now I discovered, that I drafted and filed it only in my "Draft" folder. Sorry for this.

Yes, the quotations may be to the extend of 12 bars, you may computer-set this and add it to your text.

Best regards,
Thomas

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