Master's Thesis

The Diva Dilemma

A Comparative Analysis of Aging on the Operatic Stage

Matthew Timmermans
MCGILL UNIVERSITY

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) for its support of my project by rewarding me with a Canadian Graduate Fellowship. Their support assured me that these questions were worth pursuing and the grant enabled me to explore the full scope of this topic. Also, I wish to thank my supervisor Steven Huebner. Without his expertise and guidance this project would not have been possible. His unending patience gave me the tools to coherently craft my ideas. I also want to thank Rachelle Taylor, who supported me throughout the entirety of this project. She helped me to write my SSHRC proposal, and ceaselessly encouraged me while I wrote a thesis for the first time.

Outside of academia, I would like to thank my private voice teacher and dear friend, Ingemar Korjus. Our discussions about vocal technique and the careers of many famous singers inspired the accessible and multi-disciplinary approach used in this thesis. Because these singers are referred to extensively in this work, I think it is fitting to recognize the influence a few of these performers had on me. I must thank Joan Sutherland, my first diva, and one of the biggest inspirations for this project. In addition to her, I would like to thank Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Christa Ludwig, my first Marschallin and Octavian. These interpreters shaped the way that I hear and understand Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*. Despite their omittance, Leonie Rysanek and Maria Callas' aging also had a great impact on this study. Lastly, I must thank Edita Gruberova one of the few sopranos I consider who is still performing. She and her fans' devotion to opera have been an inspiration to me and a representation of this project's importance.

My friends and loved ones also supported me through this long process. Although it is not possible to completely express my gratitude here, I can begin by giving a special thanks to

Patrick Juskevicius for the endless hours he spent listening to my ideas and helping me with my writing. Despite knowing very little about opera, Michael Dascal also spent a great deal of time reading my work and helping me to express myself. Without these two, this thesis would certainly not exist in its completed form. Last but certainly not the least, I want to give a big thank you to Jaclyn Grossman, a fellow singer and friend with whom I do not feel as crazy when I talk about singers.

Introduction: Discovering Operatic Aging through a Shared History

After seeing an opera, many seasoned spectators might think they never considered a performer's age to impact his or her performance. Perhaps, because most opera singers are older than the characters they portray, audiences believe that an overt consciousness of the gap between a performer's age and their character's age would take away from the impact of the drama. Although we may decide to ignore it, this discrepancy between the real and the opera's imagined world can be found in many of opera's stereotypes. For example, consider "it ain't over until the fat lady sings." Who is this fat lady? One could argue she is ageless because the expression emphasizes her size, rather than her age. However, it is not often that one sees an overweight sixteen-year-old on the operatic stage. No, the "fat" explicitly states that this famous lady is overweight, and the "ain't over until" suggests that she ends the show with so much bravura that it climactically brings the curtain down. Her weight and ability to end the show also imply that she is an experienced performer. To obtain this experience, the "fat lady" is most likely older than the typically adolescent characters she portrays.

We might take this analysis further by suggesting that this "fat lady" also wears a pair of horns on her head and introduces herself to the audience screaming "Ho jo to Ho!" Brünnhilde, one of opera's most famous heroines, is typically played by a physically imposing larger and older woman. In Richard Wagner's libretto for *Der Ring des Nibelungen* she is supposed to be a ripe virgin of sixteen years old. However, she is almost always played by a woman in her forties, if not her fifties. In the last opera, *Götterdämmerung*, Brünnhilde not only destroys the gods and burns the earth, but she also brings Wagner's sixteen-hour epic to a close so iconic that one can not help but say, "it ain't over until the fat lady sings." My point here is that one of the most famous stereotypes about opera not only denotes weight as a sign of prodigious talent, but also

that the singer who performs Brünnhilde is necessarily much older than the age dictated by the composer. This difference in age between the character and the performer is necessary because a singer needs to mature and hone her craft so that she can perform most operatic roles. If we consider the example of Brünnhilde, the performer is not expected to represent exactly the character's looks or age because she would probably lack the necessary skill to surmount the challenges of the music and bring the opera to a grand finish. Similar to this brief example exploring the role of Brünnhilde, in this thesis I will demonstrate how age has impacted evaluations of operatic performance.

The idea for this project came to me before I knew much about age or opera studies. Like many young singers at outset of his or her career, I chose a diva camp to adhere to. For me this was Joan Sutherland. I was introduced to her voice when I listened to her debut album, *The Art of the Prima Donna* released in 1960. She recorded it just after she became an overnight sensation in 1959 singing the title role in Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Covent Garden. I listened to Sutherland for hours singing some of the most difficult coloratura arias in the soprano repertoire and became obsessed with her virtuosity and what appeared to be a limitless upper register. At the time, it seemed as if there was no vocal challenge that she could not surmount. However, after I listened to more of her recordings, intently studying and mentally archiving every nuance of her performance, I noticed how her voice changed with each new recording. At the end of her career, it became fuller and darker in the bottom register, but thinner and less assured in the upper register. I was disappointed by the later recordings because her high E's at the climax of finales and arias became laboured and thin, not the thrilling leap of triumph as heard in her earlier ones. It became clear to me that although there was still no vocal challenge that Sutherland could not overcome, she could not surpass the freshness and ease of her younger

voice. I began to value Sutherland's earlier rather than her later recordings because I perceived her voice to have declined with age. This knowledge of Sutherland's aging influenced how I interpreted and evaluated her performances, for better or worse. Thus, for me a particular performer's age narrative influenced his or her musicality, vocal technique, range, and physical appearance.

As I began opera studies, I realized that what seemed so fundamental to an operatic performance for me—that a performer is a certain age and that we the listeners can see and hear how that age impacts his or her performance—draws little attention in scholarship. I thought if a performer's age impacted how I understood his or her performance, why have other critics and scholars with more training not considered such questions? One possible answer is that there has been very little inquiry about the opera singer's body and its effect on his or her performance. Another reason is that a performer's aging lies outside the work or a single performance of it. To consider age as I did with Sutherland one must compare several performances to construct an age narrative or what Clemens Risi calls a shared history of that performer's performances.[1] To move beyond these challenges, we might also consider how a performance is more than our single experience of it. Rather it is a complex history of audience expectations accumulated outside its duration that inform how we appreciate that performance and how its performers' own aging impacts it. By considering performance in this way, we can gain a greater understanding of the work being performed and ourselves as spectators of, and contributors to, a performance.

In my first chapter, I examine the gaps among age studies, performance practice, and opera studies. Through an overview of age and performance studies, I demonstrate that one is

[1] Clemens Risi, "Poses by Anna Netrebko: On the Perception of the Extraordinary in the Twenty-First Century," in *Technology and the Diva: Sopranos, Opera, and Media from Romanticism to the Digital Age*, ed. Karen Henson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 156.

inextricable from the other. Our perception of a performance and the bodies that compose it are inevitably impacted by the ages of those bodies through two of the most common paradigms of aging in opera. The first is when a performer represents his or her own age in a performance, and the second is when a diva does not represent the character's age in her performance. I will explore these two paradigms using case studies in chapters two and three.

Explored in my second chapter, the first paradigm of aging can be explained using an example from my own experience. One of the most striking instances of how a singer represented her own age in an opera is the career of mezzo-soprano Christa Ludwig. My first recording of Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* was the 1956 studio performance produced by Walter Legge and conducted by Herbert von Karajan with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf as the Marschallin, Christa Ludwig as Octavian, and Teresa Stich-Randall as Sophie. This recording is the first *Rosenkavalier* for many opera amateurs because of its notoriety and accessibility on disc. Here, Christa Ludwig is just beginning her career. Opera reviewer Anthony Tommasini describes her here as, "at her youthful and rich-voiced best as Octavian," and Kenn Harris claims that, "[s]he is quite the best exponent of the role on records, surpassing even [Yvonne] Minton in opulence of sound and ardentness of characterization."[2] Because of her iconic "youthful" impression preserved on this recording of *Rosenkavalier*, I, like many other opera aficionados, associated her with the youth and vigor of Octavian. However, in 1969 Ludwig graduated to the role of the Marschallin, and in 1971 preserved it on record in a production by John Culshaw, conducted by Leonard Bernstein with Gwyneth Jones as Octavian, and Lucia Popp as Sophie. Suddenly, my perception of Ludwig's static young age as Octavian was challenged. In the latter

[2] Anthony Tommasini, *Opera: A Critic's Guide to the 100 Most Important Works and the Best Recordings* (New York: Times Books, 2004), 213; Kenn Harris, *Opera recordings; A Critical Guide* (New York: Drake Publishers, 1973), 254.

recording, we are presented with a singer who has aged fifteen years since recording Octavian and who is now playing the Marschallin (also fifteen years older than Octavian in the libretto). Assuming we are an informed audience, we remember that Ludwig sang Octavian almost fifteen years earlier in her career and we are now forced to accept that Ludwig has matured and aged into an older role. We can hear evidence of this in her voice with its changed timbre and growth to meet the demands of the Marschallin. The same reviewers who discussed her Octavian also bring attention to this change. For example, Tommasini notices Ludwig "[moving] up here to the soprano role of the Marschallin" and J.B. Steane refers to her as "transitioning."[3]

The preservation of these two performances of Ludwig bears witness to her own aging, a material replication of Risi's shared history. Ludwig herself admitted that in some ways she embodied the Marschallin's age by being 40 years old, and like her she was also looking back on her youth, preserved on record as Octavian. In *Rosenkavalier*, we are presented with a unique phenomenon in opera where a singer can represent her own age on the stage. This is different from performing a role like Brünnhilde where a singer always seems older than the role they are portraying. With the notion that Ludwig matured from Octavian to the Marschallin, I began listening for differences in vocal delivery, phrasing, timbre, and characterization, comparing how she sang her previous role to the latter. Doing this added biographical depth to my experience because I was comparing more than one of Ludwig's performances. I created a shared history with Ludwig as well as the opera. It is then that I thought about Ludwig the opera diva who ages and becomes the Marschallin, as opposed to simply Strauss and Hofmannsthal's Marschallin, and how these two representations mutually enhanced one another. When looking at the effects

[3] Tommasini, *Opera: A Critic's Guide*, 256; J. B. Steane, *Singers of the Century*, vol. 1 (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1996–2000), 154.

aging has on opera singers who sing the same roles at the beginning of a career until the end, we can deepen our understanding of how these roles and performers are affected by age.

An example of the second paradigm of aging can be clearly witnessed by the reception of Sutherland, nicknamed *La Stupenda*, discussed above. Having had a vast career stretching from her overnight rise to fame in 1959 until her retirement in 1990, Sutherland had the opportunity to sing many roles, and she recorded several of these multiple times. Her fans and her detractors are left with an archive of material that documents her career as an aging singer, including arias and roles that can literally be compared note for note. As with any performer, opinion is divided about which recordings she sounds better in, whether it is her performance of Amina in 1962 or later in 1980. Like with Ludwig, after listening to the different performances, I was left wondering how Sutherland's aging affected her voice including her technique, interpretation, and virtuosity. Once again, we see the singer as more than a vehicle for the music. However, in the case of Sutherland it is not the representation of her age like in the example of *Rosenkavalier* above that interests me, but her negation of it. For example, the character of Amina in Bellini's *La Sonnambula* is an adolescent girl. Although she was no longer an adolescent when she first recorded the role in 1962, Sutherland was the closest that she would ever become to embodying the age of the character. Why then make a second recording eighteen years later when her voice is no longer as fresh, an obvious testament to her aging? It seems that the listener's intimacy with the diva, getting to know and appreciate her art over time—Risi's shared history—allows him or her to negate the opera's imaginary world, whether it is on stage or privately at home. The fame accumulated by the diva over the duration of her career, ironically makes her appear ageless despite the visual and vocal discrepancies that occur at different times in her career. In Sutherland's case, the audience no longer wants to hear Bellini's young Amina, instead they

want the woman and diva, *La Stupenda*. It is this second type of aging, through negation and divadom, that I will explore in my third chapter.

In my final chapter, I will examine how both these paradigms of aging in opera are impacted by the accessibility of filmed opera and the increasingly pervasive belief that to age means to be in decline. Discussing the effects that cameras have on opera using current examples including *The Met: Live in HD* series and the famous Zeffirelli films, I will explore the ways in which technology has altered audience expectations of how age is represented in opera. Audiences and scholars express both excitement and concern that singers in lead roles on the operatic stage are becoming younger. Although it is exciting that singers now more than ever are expected to look like the characters they portray, scholars and spectators are concerned that the musical quality of opera performances has decreased because these young singers do not have the experience and physical maturity to effectively perform the roles they are singing.

By acknowledging that performers age between each consecutive performance and critically engaging with how this impacts our interpretation of a performance, we are vividly faced with the ephemeral nature of music as an event in time. Unlike an instrument that is external to the body, the voice is dependent on the aging vessel in which it is contained. If we recognize using our shared history that a performer ages, they become performers who bring their own identity to the performance as opposed to simply serving the work. The two contrasting examples above exemplify the two-pronged approach used in this thesis to analyze how aging is perceived in opera. By arguing that the representation of age in an operatic work is seen in not only its plot and music but also in the singers' performance, my thesis will examine how spectators both recognize the performer as an aging body and in some instances, ignore it.

Chapter 1: Aging and Opera

From Gerontology to Age Studies

In the 2010 introduction to *A Guide to the Humanistic Studies in Aging*, the third installment in a collection started in 1992, age scholar Thomas Cole and Ruth E. Ray observe that mainstream gerontology ignores the "urgent existential, moral, and spiritual issues" of aging.[1] They conclude that by leaving these issues unexplored, previous scholarship has not answered the "basic question of humanistic gerontology—what does it mean to grow old?"[2] In an attempt to find answers to these issues, social scientists have dominated most of the scholarly inquiry on aging since the 1970s.[3] Then, in the 1990s scholars in the humanities drew on literary perspectives and narrative studies to broaden the scope and further nuance how we understand aging, bringing the discourse closer to cultural analysis as opposed to biological analysis. However, it was not until Margaret Morganroth Gullette's book *Aged by Culture* (2004) that a scholar would push the dichotomy between whether aging is a cultural or biological phenomenon to its most extreme. She claimed that aging is not a biological phenomenon at all, but instead a cultural one.[4]

By questioning the objectivity of age, Gullette adds a new dimension to age research by broadening the discourse from empirical science to include a cultural dimension. This invites all disciplines in the humanities to question how aging might impact their fields.[5] For example,

---

[1] Thomas R Cole and Ruth E Ray, "Introduction: The Humanistic Study of Aging Past and Present, or Why Gerontology Still Needs Interpretive Inquiry," in *A Guide to Humanistic Studies in Aging: What Does it Mean to Grow Old?*, eds. Thomas R Cole, Ruth E Ray, and Robert Kastenbaum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 3.
[2] Thomas R Cole and Ruth E Ray, "Introduction," 3.
[3] Thomas R Cole and Ruth E Ray, "Introduction," 15.
[4] Thomas R Cole and Ruth E Ray, "Introduction," 17.
[5] Margaret Morganroth Gullette, *Aged by Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 114.

Gullette challenges the perdurance assumed in identity theory.[6] She, and other age scholars such as Anne Davis Basting, believe that the ideological critiques of identity constructionists such as Michel Foucault and Judith Butler create just another fixed internal subject without physical or psychological changes that result from aging. To rectify this, Gullette suggests that identity might be considered, in Stuart Hall's words, as a *process* of identification, one that views our selves as continuing selves in a narrative of achievement.[7] As a result, Gullette envisions age studies nuancing existing critical theories in the humanities while at the same time benefitting from the cultural work already present in other disciplines. This thesis responds to Gullette's invitation and explores how aging impacts the discourse in musicology. The beginning of this chapter seeks to chart some connections between age studies and other humanistic disciplines such as identity theory considered briefly above. It then expands this discussion into performance studies in both theatre and opera, creating new pathways between age studies and musicology.

Decline on the Stage

To better grasp how age studies is a cultural phenomenon, it would be beneficial to first expand on how age studies uses identity theory to understand the psychological process of aging. In the early 1990s, age scholars such as Mike Featherstone and Mike Hepworth used the metaphor of a mask to explain the gap between the age we perceive ourselves as on the inside and the age our physical body projects.[8] They explain that when we look in the mirror we see a physically older person than our inner and arguably true self, and because of this gap in time we interpret aging

[6] Gullette, *Aged by Culture*, 121. Before Gullette, Anne Basting in her book *Stages of Age* in 1998 observes the "lack of recognition of aging in cross disciplinary explorations of cultural difference and social practice […] Theories of social practice, including ground-breaking work of scholars such as historian Michel de Certeau and philosopher Judith Butler, tended to overlook physical and psychological changes inherent in the aging process," Anne Davis Basting, *The Stages of Age: Performing Age in Contemporary American Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 2.
[7] Gullette, *Aged by Culture*, 124–9.
[8] Mike Featherstone and Mike Hepworth, *Images of Aging: Cultural Representations of Later Life* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), *passim*.

negatively. This negative view of aging remains the predominant way that people today interpret their age. To rectify this, Gullette offers a positive one instead. She defines identity "as a sense of an achieved portmanteau 'me'—made up, for each subject, of all its changeable and continuing selves together—connected in different ways, or intermittently, but sometimes barely at all, to a sensuously material body."[9] In this way like Butler, who defines gender as performative rather than biological, Gullette sees age as a social performance of identity.[10] In other words, a cultural consideration. She maintains that because there is no exact scientific measure that at a certain age all humans will experience the same effects of aging, such as wrinkles, reduced movement, Alzheimer's, or dementia, we as a people with shared values and beliefs therefore impose categories of aging or age groups such as young, middle and old age.[11] Although to a certain extent there are biological consequences such as our changing bodies, or sex in Butler's case, we also act in certain ways that reflect our identification with our biological age and how it is understood culturally. Gullette explains that:

> To think further about age as a performance in normal life, it would be useful to think about how well or badly age can be feigned by professionals. The stage rather than film is the right venue for testing this: there actors are live (as we are), without retakes or lens filters, in a place where the entire body can be seen from most angles. Traditional realist productions more than experimental ones are where the risk is highest. There you can't have a character without projecting an age.[12]

Age scholar, Michael Mangan expands on Gullette's theory of age identity defining this process of identification as gerontideology. He explains that this process is "inherently triangular, involving the gaze of others as well as two images of oneself;" the first image is the age we

[9] Gullette, *Aged by Culture*, 125.
[10] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 2.
[11] Gullette, *Aged by Culture*, 102.
[12] Gullette, *Aged by Culture*, 162–3.

imagine or feel we are and the second is an older image, if only by a second, that we see in the mirror.[13] Essential to how this thesis analyzes age in the theater, Mangan argues that this triangular relationship can be clearly seen on the stage. Theatrical performance showcases physical bodies that signify their age, Mangan's first image. However, the performer's body and its age must fit the theatrical narrative by crafting a costume or acting in a certain manner, the second image. The 'others,' or the audience in this context, perceive both the performer's body in its costume as well as the biological body of the performer. By recognizing this triangular relationship on the stage, we can understand that age is negotiated between the subject, or in this case the performers, and the audience as opposed to being inscribed in the physical body. Mangan notes that, "[a]ny kind of theatrical performance brings into play both the body and the mind, together with the signifier and signified, with the physical/ biological organism that is the performer and with the questions of self and identity which the performance generates. But age, like gender, brings a particular sharpness to some of these questions." One of the questions explored in this thesis is how audiences perceive a performer's actual age (or not) as a visual and aural signifier. Mangan argues that in "performance the physical presence of the actor's body itself—and the way that that body is used in conjunction with the codes and conventions of movement, gesture, make-up and costume—inevitably become one of the theatrical signs from which the audience constructs meanings."[14] These theatrical conventions, that as I argue here include the voice as well as the body, are cultural signifiers that portray age to an audience. These age signifiers become more problematic once we consider how they are encoded by the negative view of aging that I mentioned previously.

[13] Michael Mangan, *Staging Ageing* (Bristol; Chicago: Intellect, 2013), 5.
[14] Mangan, *Staging Ageing*, 6.

Gullette defines our cultural understanding of aging or age ideology as a regressive process. She calls this the "narrative of decline" or identity stripping. She describes the narrative as "a story of progress [that] becomes a peak-and-(early)-decline story […] According to the prevailing script, even if we also make progress, we are supposed to internalize decline as our dominant private age identity."[15] This narrative is a cultural phenomenon, not a biological one that at the same time seems unique to each individual. It encourages prejudice against aging because it is characterised by "loss, isolation, and diminished physical, mental, and material resources."[16] We see these descriptions of aging as objective truths thereby strengthening the narrative's persuasive power.[17] Mangan discusses, in a section of his book called *Staging Aging* that it is worth quoting at length, how the narrative of decline is inextricably linked to theatrical performance as a stage that plays out social ideologies using age signifiers. However, he suggests that the theatre is a place where we can exploit the explicit use of signs and signifiers to expose the narrative of decline as a social construction by examining negative examples of this narrative and offering positive alternatives instead:

> Indeed, theatre is more inextricably bound up with age ideology than is the case with most art forms. The primary medium of theatrical performance, after all, is the human body, and the human body is always of a specific age – whether that be old or young. The specificity of that age becomes part of the meaning of the theatrical experience as a whole. Moreover, the master narrative of decline may find that the fictions of theatrical performance offer it a particularly convivial home for other reasons. Theatre is, among other things, a sign-system, but it is a sign-system which necessarily refers to other sign-systems. In particular, it draws on and quotes the signifiers, codes and modalities of everyday life. If the master narrative of decline is indeed as Gullette suggests, 'omnipresent' in the discourses which dominate our lives, then it is to be expected that it will find frequent expression in plays and

[15] Gullette, *Aged by Culture*, 130.
[16] Gullette, *Aged by Culture*, 130.
[17] Mangan, *Staging Ageing*, 8.

> performances. But if theatre is inherently complicit in the contradictions of complexities of the ideologies of a culture, that is not to say that it is doomed only to articulate those ideologies uncritically. It may also play with them, question them or contradict them.[18]

Like Mangan's observation that theatre's "dependence on the audience is absolute and is thereby complicit in societies ideological and cultural constructions," I also see opera like theatre portraying these ideologies on the stage through voice, costume, and the physicality of the body in performance.[19] As I argue in this thesis, opera's performance history not only reflects the prominence of the narrative of decline, but in some cases it offers Gullette's contrary positive narrative of aging as achievement.[20]

Aging in Opera Performance

Just as Gullette questioned the fundamental way in which gerontologists consider age, in the field of musicology during the same year Carolyn Abbate in her controversial article "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" criticized how musicologists write about music, specifically, their neglect of its performance.[21] Similar to Gullette's reconsideration of aging, Abbate argues that scholars contain music through hermeneutic processes that ascribe it specific meanings. Instead, Abbate believes we should not try to capture music, rather we should leave it open so that its many different meanings and essential "strangeness" can be conveyed by scholarship.[22] Only then can we consider music's "eventness." Abbate claims that "the relationship between real music and its action upon performers and listeners—a nonrepeatable moment and place, in a context that will exist only once and not again—becomes so fundamental, so viscerally powerful and ephemeral,

[18] Mangan, *Staging Ageing*, 8–9.
[19] Mangan, *Staging Ageing*, 9.
[20] Mangan, *Staging Ageing*, 21.
[21] Carolyn Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?," *Critical Inquiry* 30/ 3 (2004): 505–36.
[22] Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?," 508.

so personal, contingent, fugitive to understanding, that it elicits the unfashionable."[23] Since this relationship evokes something that is unfashionable or intrinsically fleeting, it cannot be understood beyond a single moment in time. By discussing time and its bodily impact, aging, we can further nuance Abbate's notion of performance as an event by considering how a performer's and our own aging affects how we experience and interpret a performance event. Just as Gullette and Abbate examine and critique widely held and reductive beliefs about how their disciplines previously considered their topic of study, I bridge the gap between these two disciplines to question widely held notions of what age means on the operatic stage. In doing so, I show how musicology and age studies are interdependent and can nuance the ways in which we think about these two disciplines. By exploring the many understandings that audiences can have when they experience an opera and a performer's aging, we can better understand Abbate's "ephemerality" in performance and Gullette's concept of aging as a cultural construct.

Since humans must age, performers of any artistic genre will be different in mind and body each time they perform.[24] This observation reflects that music happens in time and can never be duplicated. Like the performers, the listener must also age. For example, a listener who has seen one work performed with the exact same cast on another night (maybe, in the case of a recording, the same performance exactly) will perceive it differently than the previous event because he or she has aged and had new experiences in the interim. Thus, each performance is a single ephemeral event, as Abbate argues, because the audience's perception of what they hear and see performed has changed because of their movement in time.

[23] Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?," 529.
[24] Gullette, *Aged by Culture*, 123.

Acknowledging how the concept of aging clarifies the singularity of an event substantiates musicologist Nicholas Cook's reorientation toward music as performance. Since the two, music and performance, are inextricably entwined; one cannot exist without the other.[25] If we consider music as performance, musicologist Philip Auslander argues that we "move beyond formulations that mark off disciplinary territory, even in the interest of emphasizing complementarity, in favor of an approach that sees music and its performance as inextricably imbricated with one another."[26] These disciplinary boundaries include aging and by considering age studies along with performance studies and musicology, we may "help each other by providing the meaning of what performances of these works have on audiences."[27] Then, by considering the impact performances have on their audiences, musical performance is "less about sound per se than it is about using sound to create a particular experience within the mind of the listener. To this end, the strategic use of visual information is no less important than manipulation of breath control, bow position, striking angle, intonation, etc."[28] We can amend Auslander's observation to note that the aging performer in performance creates "a particular experience within the mind of the [aging] listener" as well from these same aural and visual techniques. This means that age is not only limited to how we see the performer but also how his or her aging may be communicated through sound and how the listener interprets that sound through his or her own preoccupations with age. We can better understand the reciprocal relationship between music and age and how they affect one another by using performance studies. Musicologist Alejandro L. Madrid explains that "a performance studies approach to the

[25] Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill, "Introduction," in *Taking It to the Bridge: Music as Performance*, eds. Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 6.
[26] Philip Auslander, "Music as Performance: The Disciplinary Dilemma Revisited," in *Taking It to the Bridge: Music as Performance*, eds. Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 352.
[27] Cook and Pettengill, "Introduction," 6.
[28] Philip Auslander, "Music as Performance," 354.

study of music asks what music does or allows people to do; such an approach understands musics as processes within larger social and cultural practices and asks how these musics can help us understand these processes as opposed to how do these processes help us understand music."[29] By understanding how we perceive aging in music we can therefore understand the larger phenomenon of age ideology with its all-important narrative of decline. As a result, music acts as a catalyst to understand "larger social and cultural practices" beyond the work itself. Now that we have established that music and aging are inextricably entwined and "imbricated with one other," we will see that age in music is most apparent in how we view the changing instrument of an opera singer, the body. However, before moving on to discuss the aging body and how its visual and aural characteristics are implicated in musical performance, we must digress and define what constitutes a performance as an event, particularly taking into account the audio-visual resources that might reproduce it for dissemination.

Since Abbate's reorientation toward music as an event, the issue of what exactly that performance entails is still a topic of debate. In "Music—Drastic or Gnostic," Abbate claims that the ephemeral nature of music and its resultant meanings can only be experienced in live performance. She argues that the mediation of music through recordings seeks to fix music in a way that leads us to misunderstand its ephemerality. However, David Levin takes up Abbate's reasoning and expands her considerations of an event to include recordings because, "there is no reason why we couldn't be transported by a recording as by a live performance: it is, I think, a question of openness and approach."[30] As far as aging goes, in a recording we may hear, if it is a

[29] Alejandro L. Madrid, "Why Music and Performance Studies? Why Now? An Introduction to the Special Issue," *Revista Transcultural de Musica/Transcultural Music Review* 13 (2009): https://www.sibetrans.com/trans/article/1/why-music-and-performance-studies-why-now-an-introduction-to-the-special-issue.
[30] David Levin, *Unsettling Opera: Staging Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, and Zemlinsky* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 9.

sound recording, and also see, if it is a video recording, how the performers have aged. Similarly, Cook considers that a recording is another performance separate from live performance or spliced studio sessions because it is experienced by the listener as another kind of event.[31] Therefore, we might consider that a recording is reinterpreted by the listener each time it is heard because he or she has changed.

To see a recording in this way, we must consider what Levin calls the "either/or-ification" of Abbate's logic.[32] In other words, Levin and I disagree with Abbate's assertion that we cannot be absorbed in the "eventness" of performance and at the same time consider the abstract objects which are an extension of the same event.[33] As Levin so succinctly states, "I would amend Abbate's proposal, suggesting that we allow for live performance *and recordings* to serve as the objects of *all manner* of absorption, critical and experiential. In short, I want to have it both ways I want to be transported and think about where we are going."[34] It is this dual definition of orientation that is the focus of this thesis: audiences can be both immersed in the age of fictitious characters in an opera and at the same time aware of the performer's own age.

Time and the Singer's Body

Echoing Abbate's concerns about recordings of music, scholars Linda and Michael Hutcheon caution that if we equate recordings with live performance we risk disembodying the voice and fetishizing it. However, I argue (as seen in the consideration of Christa Ludwig and Joan Sutherland's recording careers in my introduction) that several recordings of a single performer

[31] Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 374.
[32] Levin, *Unsettling Opera*, 9.
[33] For more discussion on the concepts in Abbate's article "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" please refer to Karol Berger, "Musicology According to Don Giovanni, or: Should We Get Drastic," *Journal of Musicology* 22 (2005): 490–501; and Lawrence Kramer, "Music, Metaphor, Metaphysics," *The Musical Times* 145 (2004): 5–18.
[34] Emphasis his. Levin, *Unsettling Opera*, 10.

can create a record of performance and a narrative of his or her aging.[35] This performer aging narrative makes the body's presence even *more* apparent in the sound rather than disembodying the voice because we recognize the effect aging has had on his or her voice. The body is essential to the performative act and in the case of a vocalist the instrument, which is the body, changes as it ages, visually and aurally—unlike other musicians whose instruments are external to themselves.

Although using a mirror we can confirm our cultural assumptions of what it looks like to age, just how these ideological formations affect the voice is not as consistently and widely acknowledged. Perhaps this is a result of the many voices a person can have (such as a spoken and singing voice) or its lack of permanence as sound. Limiting ourselves to how listeners perceive the aged spoken voice, we may consider "lower vocal pitch, increased hoarseness, increased strain, higher incidence of voice breaks, vocal tremor, increased breathiness, reduced loudness, slower speech rate, hesitancy, less precise articulation, and longer duration of pauses" as accepted signs of aging.[36] With regard to the aging operatic voice, there are similar symptoms to the spoken voice even though opera singers produce and shape sound differently. However, this difference between the spoken and sung voice does not decrease their mutual dependence on the aging body. As vocal pedagogue Richard Miller notes, "[m]ost studies of the mature female voice have been directed toward the speaking voice, but because of the close relationship between the speaking and singing voices (being one instrument), research on the aging process in

[35] Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, *Bodily Charm: Living Opera* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 10–6.
[36] Ruth Pe Palileo, "'What Age am I now? And O?': The Science of the Aged Voice in Beckett's plays," in *Staging Age: The Performance of Age in Theatre, Dance, and Film*, eds. Valerie Barnes Lipscomb and Leni Marshall (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 130. For more on the aged voice see, Daniel R. Boone, "The Singing/ Acting Voice in the Mature Adult," *Journal of Voice* 11.2 (June 1997): 161–4; and Carole Ferrand, "Harmonics-to-Noise Ratio: An Index of Vocal Aging," *Journal of Voice* 16.4 (December 2002): 480–7.

the spoken voice pertains to the singing voice as well."[37] For example, the majority of sopranos switch to the mezzo-soprano repertoire over the duration of a long career because it exploits different aspects of their voice such as darkened vocal colour and lowered range that now causes strain on their high notes. Internationally famous Wagnerian soprano from 1950–60 turned dramatic mezzo-soprano, Astrid Varnay observes this physiological change in her autobiography:

> As the 1970's began, I became aware of a gradual change affecting my vocal technique. While my voice had added lustre in the lower and middle registers, I was beginning to lose some of the ease with which I had formerly been able to negotiate the extreme top notes. This is a common phenomenon among professional singers, a natural development every one of us has to face sooner or later. The human voice has a certain similarity to wine. No wine ever gets lighter with time. On the contrary, it settles and becomes heavier and fuller-bodied, adding a richness it did not have when it was young. Just as the voice changes with age, so too, the flexibility of the throat and thorax muscles is affected by the passage of years.[38]

Varnay clearly expresses the effects that aging had on her own voice. Although her vocal change is common among many sopranos it is especially particular to her *Fach* as a dramatic soprano. These effects are not consistent with every soprano and differ among voice types. Scientific studies of vocal aging confirm that our "notion [that vocal] decline occurs gradually and progressively (linear senescence) is open to challenge. It appears possible that many of these functions can be maintained at a better level than expected until very near the end of life, perhaps allowing a high-quality singing or acting career to extend into or beyond the seventh decade."[39] However, from Varnay's assumption that aging always occurs in this way, she expresses a

---

[37] Richard Miller, *Training Soprano Voices* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 166.
[38] Astrid Varnay, *Fifty-five Years in Five Acts: My Life in Opera* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000), 240.
[39] Robert Sataloff, Joseph Spiegel, and Deborah Caputo Rosen, "The Effects of Age on the Voice," in *Vocal Health and Pedagogy*, ed. Robert Sataloff (San Diego: Singular Publishing Group, 1998), 128.

commonly held belief of what it should sound like to age, much like how we explored the common perceptions of aging in the spoken voice. It can be clearly seen that the aging process affects not only how opera performers look on stage, but also how they sound. Not only are these common vocal aging characteristics biological, but because socially we associate them with signs of "empirical" aging, they act as signs that a person has aged and are used in performance to communicate aging.

The Real and the Represented Body

In musicology, the Hutcheons, like age studies scholars including Gullette and Mangan, make a distinction between the "real" biological body and its associated changes as opposed to the represented body or signifier, which generates its meaning from the audience's interpretation of the dramatic text or work and its coexistent social and cultural contexts.[40] They note that: "Theatrical performance assumes warm, material bodies–existing in space and time–with visible markers of, for instance, gender, race, and *age*. But as we have seen, those bodies are never 'natural'; they are always cultural and historical."[41] Here, the Hutcheons draw our attention to the material body with its biological differences such as age and the cultural body that is inscribed with the meaning of what these characteristics should mean. But how is age signified in opera?

The impact of age on the operatic voice, and consequently the narrative of decline, has made itself apparent in many ways. For example, it impacts the way roles are composed to portray age stereotypes, such as young girls composed for sopranos with lighter voices and higher tessituras to older women with heavier voices, like a mezzo- or dramatic soprano and a

[40] Hutcheon, *Bodily Charm: Living Opera*, 23.
[41] Emphasis mine; Hutcheon, *Bodily Charm: Living Opera*, 25.

much lower tessitura. The way characters are composed in opera to signify their age affects how the performer portrays their age. These musical stereotypes by extension determine the singers chosen to sing these roles, decisions based on their voice types as well as their looks; however, the voice is considered first since every voice cannot pragmatically sing every role although the singer might look the part. This particularity of the voice to each person, its limitations and unique quality makes it singular and signifies the individuality of the performer even though he or she inhabits the persona of another character.[42] Thus, the performer's body is chosen to signify a character's age, but at the same time it still represents his or her real body and age.

Roland Barthes brings greater clarity to the concept of the voice denoting the "real" body in his essay titled *The Grain of the Voice*:

> To listen to someone, to hear his voice, requires on the listener's part an attention open to the interspace of body and discourse and which contracts neither at the impression of the voice nor at the expression of the discourse. What such listening offers is precisely what the speaking subject does not say: the unconscious texture which associates his body-as-site with his discourse: an active texture which reactualizes, in the subject's speech, the totality of *his* history.[43]

If we consider Barthes' theory using the example of the performer's aging body, Barthes' "history" might be understood a record of his or her performance and how his or her body has changed with time. He explains that you can see "the body in the singing voice, in the writing hand, in the performing limb," and as "something which is directly the singer's body, brought by one and the same movement to your ear from the depths of the body's cavities, the muscles, the membranes, the cartilage, […], as if a single skin lined the performer's inner flesh and the music

[42] Lawrence Kramer, "On Voice: An Introduction," in *On Voice*, eds. Walter Bernhart and Lawrence Kramer (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), xi–xii.
[43] Emphasis mine. Roland Barthes. "The Grain of the Voice," in *The Relationship of Forms* (Berkley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 255–6.

he sings."[44] Thus, Barthes suggests that the performer's body is clearly projected through the voice. Adriana Cavarero in her book *For More than One Voice* elaborates on Barthes' theory of the voice stating that the "simple truth of the vocal, announced by voices without even the mediation of articulate speech, communicates the elementary givens of existence: uniqueness, relationality, sexual difference, and *age*—including the 'change of voice' that, especially in me, signals the onset of puberty."[45] As she notes, the voice unquestionably communicates a unique body even without language. This concept is echoed by Paul Zumthor who expresses a need for a science of the voice.[46] He distinguishes between the voice's orality and vocality. Orality is "the functioning of the voice as the bearer of language" and vocality is "the whole of the activities and values that belong to the voice as such, independently of language."[47] In opera, audiences can perceive aging in either the voice's orality which would be how the text is sung by the singer or its vocality which is the unique texture of the performer's voice. By understanding the voice in this way, we can imagine how audiences perceive the unique body of the performer just through the voice, including its relative age through age associated cues.

To discuss this language-less voice, Barthes suggests that the very vocabulary we use to describe the voice is rather a description, by extension, of the body: "Listening to the voice inaugurates the relation to the Other: the voice by which we recognize others (like writing on an envelope) indicates to us their way of being, their joy or their pain, their condition; it bears an image of their body and, beyond, a whole psychology (as when we speak of a warm voice, a

[44] Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," 276 and 270.
[45] Emphasis mine. Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 7–8.
[46] Paul Zumthor, *Oral Poetry: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 44.
[47] Paul Zumthor, preface to Corrado Bologna, *Flatus vocis: Metafisica e antropologia della voce* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2000), vii.

white voice etc.)."[48] By reflecting on vocabulary that "bears an image" of the performer's body literally and through the voice, we can analyse how audiences acknowledge an opera performer's aging/real body. Just as Varnay described her own aging voice as becoming "heavier and fuller-bodied" we can perceive how audiences might interpret these as signs that person has aged. It is not hard to imagine that how an audience interprets seeing and hearing the aging body/voice may influence their enjoyment of a performance, though this may not always be the case. That enjoyment depends on how performers in their given roles reward the cultural expectations raised by the dramatic text. This includes what it sounds and looks like to age.[49]

Although, aging can positively impact a singer's vocal development, vocal pedagogue Richard Miller also notes some common negative effects of this process. He claims there might "not be the same sheen on the voice; there may be the loss of a few notes at the top of the range or at the very bottom," but he concludes that "if the voice is kept functioning, its rate of physical deterioration will be retarded."[50] He observes that these changes have been absorbed by the narrative of decline causing audiences to feel that "there is something unseemly about continuing to sing beyond a certain age, a kind of lawless flouting of the geriatric rules. This is why a number of people stop singing before they should. Society expects it of them."[51] Despite examples of the narrative of decline in opera such as this, there are many reviews that recognize a performer's increased nuance, musicality, or understanding of a role in comparison to an earlier performance. Instead of purporting decline, this recognition of an increase in nuance acknowledges that a performer has aged, although it is a mental as opposed to a physical criterion, and enhances a performance as a result of that change. This is an example of Gullette's

[48] Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," 255.
[49] Hutcheon, *Bodily Charm: Living Opera*, 119.
[50] Richard Miller, *On the Art of Singing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 203.
[51] Miller, *On the Art of Singing*, 203.

narrative of age as achievement instead of decline. As will be further explored in the following chapters, in opera both age ideologies, decline and achievement, coexist.

Age beyond Opera: The Vocal Persona

By exploring the ways in which we describe the aged voice not only do we reveal the impact of Gullette's narrative of decline on opera, but we also strengthen the connection between the voice and body in scholarship. Michelle Duncan notes that scholars must fill this gap because:

> [...] opera studies persist in thinking of the voice as extra-corporeal. Carnal voices are either lacking or absent, marked by what they do not do, operative through failure and negatively, or envisioned as supra-objects that are off the scale, excessively loud (and thus impossible to register or to be perceived as material) and potentially "violent." As for the body of the singer, opera studies has tended to ignore it altogether unless it possesses currency as the object of desire or of a fetish. And when this happens, both the body and voice become secondary to the affect or erotic desire of the spectator.[52]

By nuancing our discussion of the operatic voice and body with age, we can fill this gap. In addition to discussing how the performer's voice and body might be fetishized, we may also acknowledge that he or she is a real and changing body with a voice that is impacted by that change.

If we understand the performer in this way, we also come closer to understanding the vocal persona, as understood by Simon Williams. A performer's vocal persona separates him or her from the work or character being portrayed and it can paradoxically expand our immersion in the performance despite arguably separating us from it. Williams observes that in theatre, "[m]ost actors are recognizable from one role to another, [however] opera singers even more so as their voices do not change with their roles. What opera singers carry from one role to the other

[52] Michelle Duncan, "The Operatic Scandal of the Singing Body: Voice, Presence, Performativity," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16/3 (2004): 285.

might therefore, be considered their 'persona,' an outward image of themselves that colors and even *constitute* their roles."[53] Thus, performers can embody or "constitute," in Williams' words, the role using not only their voice, but also their body and thereby their aging. As a result, the performer's age can better portray the character he or she is performing while at the same time denoting his or her individual vocal personae reinforcing the real and carnal nature of his or her body. I will explore this idea further in my second chapter using Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* as an example of singers embodying their own age, and more importantly the voice appropriate to that age, in the three contrasting soprano roles that signify three different generations of aging.

Like Duncan, Sarah Nancy challenges the pattern in musicology "[t]o apprehend the voice as an excess," as if the voice magically transcends "the body of the performer, as formidable and disciplined as that body may be."[54] Using the reception and purpose of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *tragédie lyrique* as a case study, she attempts to move away from the "theoretical impasse that tends to make the singing body disappear."[55] One of her solutions is to remind us "that the singing body is also always an acting body, we are invited to question the distinction and the articulation between one and the other, and thus to seek the singing body through the embodiment of the character." From her first conclusion we can see that like the aging body discussed so far, there is a connection between the sound of the voice and the changing body that is portraying a character on stage. Another of her solutions considers the audience as an active listener that can have an impact on how aging is understood and

[53] Emphasis mine. Simon Williams, "The Vocal Persona of Jussi Björling," in *On Voice*, eds. Walter Bernhart and Lawrence Kramer (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), 34.
[54] Sarah Nancy, "The Singing Body in the Tragédie Lyrique of Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France: Voice, Theatre, Speech, Pleasure," in *The Legacy of Opera: Reading Music Theatre as Experience and Performance*, eds. Dominic Symonds and Pamela Karantonis (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 65.
[55] Nancy, "The Singing Body in the Tragédie Lyrique of Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France," 74.

portrayed on stage: "Finally, by recognising the way that *tragédie lyrique* takes the listeners' bodies, and, by doing so, the *audience as a body* in consideration, we are reminded of the fact that the singing body always concerns the listening body in a communal way."[56] Like Mangan's theory of gerontideology, the listening body or the audience as a communal 'other' has expectations of what signifies age. I would extend Nancy's observation of the audience as a listening body and apply it to the opera house today. Listeners, through culturally constructed expectations, affect what appears on stage because the performance must communicate with them using their understanding of culture. In the terms of aging, we can see this in the voice types meticulously chosen to sound like the age of the character being portrayed as well as visually characterising them. These voice types, that consequently influence which singers are chosen to perform the role, are based on audience or cultural assumptions of what it looks and sounds like to be a certain age. This can be seen clearly in *Rosenkavalier* where we are faced with the Marschallin who does not have grey hair or physical impediments at her ripe age of 32. How then do we distinguish her as older than the other characters? It may be hypothesized that the voice type chosen to portray the Marschallin portrays her age to the audience across the vast opera house. This voice is chosen to reflect the age of the body according to our communal expectations.

In contrast to Williams and Nancy's theories of embodiment through the voice, Jelena Novak uses theories of ventriloquism to argue that the voice is a separate body that enhances and distinguishes itself from the physical body. She calls this concept of the voice, the vocalic body,

[56] Emphasis mine. Nancy, "The Singing Body in the Tragédie Lyrique of Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France," 74.

and the relationship between it and the physical body is defined as the voice-body. She explains that:

> As is usually understood, the body produces the voice. The concept of the vocalic body emphasizes not only that their inversion is possible, but that it happens all the time. It emphasizes the reversibility of the mutual influences between body and voice […] I perceive the voice-body as a kind of mirror mechanism—the voice is projected by, but also on, the body and that projection, in this case vocal performance, immediately affects the identity and the presence of the body that produced it, by reflecting itself back to it.[57]

Using her theory of the voice-body, we can move beyond considering the singing body as simply a passive mediator to the voice, rather the aging body is present because of its physical effect on the voice.[58] Like the Hutcheons, Novak sees two bodies, a singing body and the 'real' body. She explains that, "[w]hen we see a singing body on the operatic stage we should be aware that we see the two bodies in one: the body of the [real-life] singer and the body of the character that the singer plays, or 'represented' and 'real' bodies."[59] In chapter two, I explore how knowing the real body can enhance a performance, particularly seeing a singer as embodying the age of the character. Moreover, I examine how singing is affected by age ideologies, which has changed how the Marschallin has been interpreted over time. Acknowledging performers as aging bodies focuses us on the separation and mutual dependence of these two bodies, real and singing, in performance. However, in chapter three, I examine how the "real" body, seen in opera as stereotypically incongruent with our realist expectations of the character because the performer is too old or overweight, is ignored by the audience and thereby the performer's age as

[57] Jelena Novak, *Postopera: Reinventing the Voice-body* (Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate, 2015), 6.
[58] Novak, *Postopera*, 12–3.
[59] Novak, *Postopera*, 20.

an embodiment of the character too. In my fourth chapter, I examine the increase of the audience's expectations for realism on the stage in the wake of the prevalence of filmed opera.

To conclude, one of Novak's observations nicely describes the intertwining discourses presented here including age, performance, and opera studies that resonate throughout the next three chapters. Novak alludes to why there is such a wide spectrum of different responses to aging in opera that I discuss in this thesis from embodiment to the denial of the performer's age. She explains that:

> the different demands for dramatic representations of the voice and for the body alludes to an unsuccessful mimesis between a narrative and its operatic representation as the main cause for the 'weird excess' […] However, one should be careful not to connect the mimesis only with the visual appearance of the characters. To simplify: even if Radames the actor/singer is young, and his appearance resembles the usual representation of the Egyptian inhabitants of the Old Kingdom, the gap between the singing body and the voice persists.[60]

In other words, even though the performer may physically represent the character on stage, the gap between the vocalic and physical body still exists. Thus, the most convincing performance is not always one in which the performer looks like the character they are portraying. Instead of seeing the performer's real body, sometimes the audience prefers to negate it. In the next two chapters, I will examine the documented operatic traditions over the past hundred years to demonstrate these to two trends in opera: one that requires the singer to embody his or her own age and portray these aging stereotypes; and the other that denies age ideology altogether and sees seeing the singer as a timeless effigy, usually in the form of a diva. To exist these two phenomena depend on "an imaginative complicity between the audience and the stage, to

[60] Novak, *Postopera*, 22.

represent the consciousness of the audience."[61] Thus, the audience acts as an active party in contributing to the desire and continuation of these traditions that coexist in one art form during the past century and possibly even longer. As I argue here, opera both perpetuates the narrative of decline, but it can also deny it by creating an example of positive rhetoric about age.

[61] Mangan, *Staging Ageing*, 21.

Chapter 2: Embodying the Marschallin; How Opera Singers Portray Age

Der Rosenkavalier, an Opera about Aging

Princess:

I remember a girl, just like this one,
Who straight from the convent was marched off to the holy estate of wedlock.
(*takes a hand mirror*.)
Where is she now! Yes.
(*sighs*.)
Go, seek the snows of yesteryear!
But can it be — can it be though I say it so,
That I was that young Tess of long ago
And that I shall be called, ere long, "the old Princess …"
"The old Field Marshal's lady!" — "Look you,
"There goes the old Princess Therese!"
How can it come to pass?
How can the powers decree it so?
For I am still I, and never change.
(*Gaily*.)
And if indeed it must be so, Why then must I sit here, looking on,
And see it all and grieve? Were it no better if I were blind?
There things are still a mystery, such a mystery.[1]

(The Marschallin, Act I)

This excerpt from the Marschallin's monologue touches upon several notions of aging discussed in the previous chapter. The Marschallin sees the biological result of time passing through her

[1] Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "*Der Rosenkavalier*," in *Richard Strauss, Der Rosenkavalier: Comedy for Music in Three Acts*, of the Metropolitan Opera Classics Library (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), 107.

reflection in the mirror, but she is puzzled as to why this material image is incongruent with the young image she has of herself. She ponders how she can change, and yet remain the same: "For I am still I, and never change." By applying the concepts of age already explored in the previous chapter, we can assume that the Marschallin fears physically aging because it will affect how others view her: "And that I shall be called, ere long, 'the old Princess …'." Despite not feeling the negative effects of her age, such as her loss of beauty, the Marschallin fears that onlookers will think she is in decline because she has grown older. Her fears are symptomatic of the negative age ideology believed by those around her: "'There goes the old Princess Therese!'" If we consider the Marschallin's monologue as an aging narrative to be scrutinized, we can interpret the Marschallin as a symbolic victim of Margaret Morganroth Gullette's narrative of decline.

By questioning what it means to age through the Marschallin, Hofmannsthal explores the intersection between individual and societal perspectives in *Der Rosenkavalier*. Strauss scholar Bryan Gilliam explains that, "[Hugo von] Hofmannsthal's two plays—*Elektra* and *Der Rosenkavalier*—are linked by their ultimate affirmation of the communal over the individual, the social (even psychological) power of gesture (often ritualistic), and the *perception of time as a societal phenomenon* with respect to the individual."[2] If we use age studies as a lens through which to interpret *Rosenkavalier*, we can see how the Marschallin's monologue exposes the oppressive nature of age ideologies. Not only does it describe the passing of time as wasting away her body, but it also suggests the trauma experienced by aging women who believe their bodies can no longer arouse sexual desire. Furthermore, Strauss' setting of the Marschallin's

[2] Emphasis mine. Bryan Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner's Mountain: Richard Strauss and Modern German Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 89.

heart wrenching leitmotif for lush strings—beginning with an octave jump to then rise a full tone, fall a minor ninth, and climb another semitone—is extremely sympathetic to her plight, suggesting that the process of aging is often viewed as negative and tragic. Because of her music and self-awareness as a victim of the narrative of decline, the Marschallin is one of the theatrical representations that Michael Mangan suggests—as we have seen in the previous chapter—can expose Gullette's concept of a narrative of decline, and then replace it with a positive narrative of aging.

Through the Marschallin, Hofmannsthal describes the paradox of aging as an existential "mystery": Why a being can stay the same and yet change. By using critical strategies in age studies to analyze the performance traditions of *Rosenkavalier* and their reception, I argue that this mystery is clearly a representation of Gullette's narrative of decline as opposed to a philosophical consideration. In this chapter, I examine how the theme of aging is not only explored in the libretto of *Rosenkavalier*, but also in its score and performance history. These three parameters, especially the latter, encourage an interpretation that supports a narrative of decline, and in some cases also contradict it.

The Representation of Age in *Rosenkavalier*

Since its premiere in 1911, Strauss' *Rosenkavalier* is the most performed opera that probes the topic of aging, a rare and intimate theme given the genre's affinity for narratives involving love, death, and politics.[3] In the libretto, Hofmannsthal speaks through his characters to explore the themes of time and mutability. By differentiating how each of his characters understand time he not only considers a range of perspectives, but he also imbues each character with a greater self-

[3] Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* also deals substantially with the theme of aging and loss through the character of Hans Sachs and his relationship with Eva.

consciousness making him or her seem more human. As alluded to above, the Marschallin has the fullest understanding of time and uses all three tenses of the verb "to be." But Octavian can only consider the past and the present which can be clearly heard in his first address to the Marschallin, "The way you were, the way you are" (Wie du warst, wie du bist).[4] Finally Sophie, the most innocent and naïve of the three characters, does not comprehend the future any better than Octavian. Perhaps even less so, since she believes in an idealized vision of love as eternal that is belied at the very beginning of the work by the Marschallin's adultery.[5] The contrast between the characters' notions of time can be most clearly seen in the famous trio at the end of Act III. The Marschallin alludes to the past, present, and future in succession when she admits that she promised to leave Octavian one day, that the day to leave him is now, and that he will find happiness with Sophie. On the other hand, Octavian reflects on how these events came to pass and only questions how he should deal with them in the present. The most confused of the three characters, Sophie does not understand what has happened in the past between Octavian and the Marschallin, and can only consider what to do in the present. Not only, then, does Hofmannsthal assign ages to these three protagonists in the libretto—Sophie a young sixteen year old fresh from the convent; Octavian seventeen years and two months; and the Marschallin a thirty-two (or thirty-five according to Lotte Lehmann[6]) year old princess—but he also implies three different categories of age that characterize them. Sophie is the youngest and has the least understanding of time. She also does not understand what has occurred between Octavian and the Marschallin. Octavian is older and has somewhat more understanding of time given his affair

[4] Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner's Mountain*, 89.
[5] Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner's Mountain*, 89.
[6] "She is a woman entre deux âges; Strauss thought of her as being approximately thirty-five, the age at which, in that period, a woman begins to stop being young." Lotte Lehmann, *Five operas and Richard Strauss* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1964), 124.

with the Marschallin, but throughout the opera he still believes that the Marschallin and he will stay together until the end. The Marschallin has the broadest concept of time as seen in her Act I monologue. She has foreseen her separation from Octavian since the beginning and at the end dispels Octavian's youthful fantasies by renouncing him and allowing him to couple with Sophie.

Evidently, Strauss was also inspired by the differences and similarities among the ages of Hofmannsthal's characters. He represents the effect of time on these three characters by exploring the possibilities of contrast and cohesion among female voices. Gilliam explains why Strauss agreed to set a narrative that included more than one female voice:

> Once again Strauss created a libretto featuring a triangle of main characters, with the title role in the middle; but this triangle consisted entirely of women. From this moment onward the female voices —solo, duet, or trio—became his chief interest for the musical stage. Beginning with *Elektra*, unprecedented in the way it is based sonically on three sopranos, Hofmannsthal created a host of female relationships that were at the center of Strauss's musical thinking:
>
> *Rosenkavalier*: Marschallin, Octavian, Sophie
> *Ariadne auf Naxos*: Ariadne, Zerbinetta
> *Die Frau ohne Schatten*: Nurse, empress, dyer's wife
> *Die ägyptische Helena*: Aithra, Helen
> *Arabella*: Arabella, Zdenka.[7]

Although Strauss' use of three female singers can signify many themes in these operas, what is most apparent in *Rosenkavalier,* especially as I argue here, is how their voices contrast to symbolize three different ages—this includes the representation of Octavian's gender.

Strauss emphasizes these characters' ages musically by composing each of the three roles differently for the female voice. This can be seen explicitly in the difference between each of the

[7] Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner's Mountain*, 96–7.

three roles' tessituras. As the youngest character, Sophie has the highest tessitura, and is usually sung by a soubrette, light lyric coloratura, light lyric, or full lyric soprano.[8] Vocal pedagogue Richard Miller observes that soubrettes and coloraturas show a greater technical prowess at younger age in comparison to larger voices. This implies that casting Sophie as this voice type portrays her youth.[9] Although originally written for a soprano, Octavian has most often been sung by a mezzo-soprano because the tessitura lies the lowest of the three characters.[10] The lower range of Octavian's voice can suggest his masculinity, and arguably that he is older than Sophie. Finally, and as it will be seen later in this chapter most controversially, the Marschallin's tessitura lies in between that of Sophie and Octavian, to denote her femininity in contrast to Octavian and her similarity to Sophie as a beautiful woman. Because her music mostly lies in the soprano's comfortable middle range, how old the Marschallin should sound in comparison to Sophie remains ambiguous and is open to many interpretations.

In addition to their differing tessituras, Strauss composed the roles in different styles that also connote age. Sophie's music ranges from very lyrical, almost dreamlike when we first meet her in Act II during the presentation of the rose, to fragmented *parlando* that represents youthful chatter, as when, for example, she lists off Octavian's many names. Octavian's music, on the other hand, moves from being hyper romantic with broad melodies like those seen in the operas of Giacomo Puccini—such as his plea to the Marschallin not to leave him at the end of Act I "Ich will den Tag nicht denken"—to quick jumps reaching into his high register—almost as high as

[8] Richard Boldrey, *A Guide to Operatic Roles & Arias* (Dallas: Pst, 1994), 134; Richard Miller, *Training Soprano Voices* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 9.
[9] Richard Miller, *On the Art of Singing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 177.
[10] Boldrey, like Miller classifies Octavian as a dramatic mezzo-soprano, however he also offers other possible interpretations such as full lyric and spinto soprano, and full lyric mezzo-soprano, Miller, *Training Soprano Voices*, 13; Boldrey, *A Guide to Operatic Roles & Arias*, 111. Also, most vocal editions whether they are vocal piano scores or orchestral scores classify Octavian as a mezzo-soprano.

the Marschallin—to show his impetuous youth, such as occurs in his quarrel with Baron Ochs in Act II. The Marschallin is mostly portrayed by an expressive *parlando* style from which several melodic fragments are teased out and developed into longer melodic lines as heard in her Act I monologue. Her stature and age are reflected through the regal and tempered nature of her lines sitting consistently in a comfortable middle range in comparison to the more erratic and spirited nature of Octavian and Sophie. Furthermore, at the beginning of her Act I monologue, "Kann mich auch an ein Mädel erinnern," the music evokes a small string quartet with horn and clarinet reminiscent of Mozart's musical style. As William Mann observes, "[t]he monologue is attended by a host of memorable musical phrases, most of them destined not to recur in the score; yet they are derived, with a concentration worthy of a good Mozartian, from the first violin's opening phrase and from the patter repeated at the climax."[11] As we know, Strauss wanted *Rosenkavalier* to be his "Mozart opera," and several parallels have been made between its narrative and that of *Le Nozze di Figaro*.[12] Drawing these two works into closer proximity, we see a similarity between the Marschallin's music during her monologue and Mozart's musical style thereby associating her with an older musical style. This unique musical setting evokes themes of maturity and worldliness unlike Octavian's youthful romantic style which appears in distinct contrast soon after.

Although performers sing the same score in each performance, a singer's interpretation of Strauss' music can greatly change how the music is heard depending on his or her musical approach, vocal colour, and acting. These changes influence how the contrast between the three

[11] William Mann, *The Operas of Richard Strauss* (London: Cassell, 1964), 118.
[12] Michael Reynolds, *Creating Der Rosenkavalier* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016), 4.

roles' ages is represented. In 1963, an article in the London *Times* worth quoting at length observes the limitless range of interpretation possible with each of these roles:

> In what vocal terms, for example, should we conceive the leading trio of female voices? A historic partnership perpetuated on gramophone records, has caused many operagoers to believe firmly that the Marschallin should have a Sieglinde voice, Sophie a soubrette soprano, Octavian a mezzo-contralto. There is musical commonsense to commend this balance of voices; those who attended the famous Rosenkavalier performances in the London of the inter-war period may remember that when Delia Reinhardt sang Octavian there was not enough contrast of timbre between the three voices. Nevertheless the very first performances were quite differently cast, for Margarethe Siems, the Marschallin, was to be Strauss's first Zerbinetta, while the Octavian, Eva von der Osten, was a famous Isolde and Ariadne as well as a Kundry. The first Berlin Feldmarschallin, Frieda Hempl, was a soprano leggiero too (Strauss offered her the choice of the three principal roles); but in Vienna the part went to a heavier quality of voice, that of Lucie Weidt who was a celebrated Brünnhilde.
>
> It should hardly need saying the relative weight of the three soprano roles affects the character of their scenes with one another, as well as the desirable level of orchestral sound when they are singing. And we may well find that a light, clear voice, will best convey the Marschallin's youthful grace upon which Strauss continually insisted (she should suggest a woman in her early thirties). But, of course, her voice must not sound too much like that of Sophie who at 16 is just half her age.[13]

Our anonymous music critic sheds light on the very dilemma explored in this chapter. How does the "relative weight of the three soprano roles" affect how the age of these characters comes across? The critic notes that the Marschallin cannot sound too much like Sophie because their voices must communicate their difference in age, thus the preference for a heavier or Sieglinde-sized voice Marschallin. However, if they do sound somewhat similar it can underline how these two women are linked and make the Marschallin appear young. By looking at the performers chosen by Strauss to perform *Rosenkavalier* and comparing them to later singers in the same

[13] Our Music Critic, "Perspective and Detail in Der Rosenkavalier," *The Times*, December 20, 1963.

roles, I will argue that the necessity to differentiate among the three sopranos is a symptom of the narrative of decline's impact on the imaginations of producers, performers, and audiences. Because of this narrative, later productions seek to solidify and project age categories vocally that did not exist for Hofmannsthal, Strauss, and audiences of the early twentieth century.

Using the *Fach* System to Interpret Age

Throughout this chapter I will use the German *Fach* system as a tool to analyse how performers, critics, and audiences understand and classify the differences among soprano voices. Since 1951, Rudolf Kloiber's *Handbuch der Oper* remains the official reference in German opera houses to cast certain voice types in particular roles.[14] Although the *Fach* system originated in Germany, it is widely used across Europe and somewhat in America.[15] Not strictly based on the composer's authorial intent, the *Fach* system is a set of guidelines drawn from popular performance practices of the operatic canon. This makes it a useful tool to analyse how culture affects performance because it can tell us what audiences expect to see at the opera. Like typecasting in the movies, singers are divided into different *Fächer* based on their physical characteristics, vocal characteristics, and age.[16] As Pearl Yeadon McGinnis and Marith McGinnis Willis observe, "[h]ow a singer's voice sounds is the initial factor in determining that singer's Fach. This relies heavily on the characteristics of the vocal apparatus, which are directly related to the physiology of the individual. An extremely petite soprano seldom has a huge dramatic voice, nor does a tall, statuesque, large-boned soprano usually have a bright, high, flexible coloratura voice."[17] Thus, a singer's *Fach* is also influenced by their build. But as I have shown in the last chapter, the body is affected by age, which also influences how we perceive the singer. Putting this together, the

[14] Pearl Yeadon McGinnis, and Marith McGinnis Willis, *The Opera Singer's Career Guide: Understanding the European Fach System* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 17.
[15] Yeadon McGinnis, and McGinnis Willis, *The Opera Singer's Career Guide*, 2.
[16] Yeadon McGinnis, and McGinnis Willis, *The Opera Singer's Career Guide*, 2.
[17] Yeadon McGinnis, and McGinnis Willis, *The Opera Singer's Career Guide*, 4.

Fach system is influenced by what we believe an opera singer at a given age should sound like and can hint at what audiences expect from age categories in opera.

Strauss and Age in *Rosenkavalier*

Returning to our music critic's analysis in *The Times*, Strauss' chosen performers for the roles of the Marschallin, Octavian, and Sophie greatly differ from our ideas about these roles today. For the 1911 premiere in Dresden, the Marschallin was performed by Margarethe Siems, Octavian by Eva von der Osten, and Sophie by Minnie Nast. All three parts were sung by women known for soprano, as opposed to mezzo-soprano repertoire. If we compare these performers' portrayals to what contemporary spectators expect from these roles, we can observe how age was represented differently then in *Rosenkavalier* than it is today.

Nast sang mostly light and soubrette soprano roles, lighter repertoire than Miller or Richard Boldrey consider appropriate for a Sophie today.[18] Yeadon McGinnis and McGinnis Willis describe a contemporary Sophie as a lyric coloratura soprano, which they characterize as, "[a] high, bright, flexible voice that shines in the upper register. Lyric coloratura sopranos usually portray younger heroines, so must be capable of portraying a sweet, delicate image on stage."[19] (Boldrey gives examples such as Marguerite de Valois in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*, Gilda in Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto*, and Elvira from Vincenzo Bellini's *I Puritani*.[20]) However, "[t]hese roles are sometimes played by a young soubrette soprano and then would be referred to as a *Lyrischer Koloratursoubrette*," probably more like Nast's voice type.[21] Known for its lack

[18] J.B. Steane, "Nast, Minnie," *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed March 4, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/41600. Boldrey classifies Sophie as usually a full lyric soprano while Miller sees her as a lyric coloratura soprano. Boldrey, *A Guide to Operatic Roles & Arias*, 134; Miller, *Training Soprano Voices*, 9.
[19] Yeadon McGinnis, and McGinnis Willis, *The Opera Singer's Career Guide*, 20.
[20] Boldrey, *A Guide to Operatic Roles & Arias*, 157–8
[21] Yeadon McGinnis, and McGinnis Willis, *The Opera Singer's Career Guide*, 20.

of vibrato and clear tone, both characteristics of the *Lyrischer Koloratursoubrette*, Nast's voice would have portrayed Sophie's youth and innocence.[22]

On the other hand, Von der Osten was known for singing Wagnerian roles later in her career as noted above by our music critic. Nevertheless, musicologist Harold Bruder notes that, contrary to our conception of a heavy Wagnerian sound, she like Nast brought "a lighter, more youthful quality to the role. Sophie and Octavian have a delightful innocence on these lovely recordings."[23] Although the quality of the 1911 recording that Bruder refers to is grainy and distorted, one can hear Von der Osten's light tone and articulation, and its similarity to the voices of Nast and Siems. Despite our uncertainty about the difference between the vocal weight necessary to perform heavier repertoire such as Wagner's operas in the early twentieth century in comparison to today, we do know that Von der Osten was considered a soprano, not a mezzo-soprano. Since she was a soprano, we can assume that there is a difference between how Von der Osten sounded as Octavian and how a contemporary mezzo-soprano would sound. Despite Strauss casting of Von der Osten as the first Octavian, Boldrey identifies this role as a dramatic mezzo-soprano. He describes this *Fach* as "the mother, witch, the whore, the dowager, sometimes even the queen," citing such roles as Fidès in Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*, Ortrud in Wagner's *Lohengrin*, and Azucena in Verdi's *Il Trovatore*.[24] Because of its dramatic weight, this *Fach* has connotations of age and maturity as opposed to the youthful innocence intended by Strauss. Although this maturity might also be interpreted as Octavian's masculinity, the growing

[22] Teresa Stich-Randall, another famous interpreter of Sophie on the 1956 Herbert von Karajan recording of *Rosenkavalier*—with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf as the Marschallin, and Christa Ludwig as Octavian—was also viewed as the ideal Sophie because of her clear and straight tone, however she went on to sing more dramatic repertoire than Nast.
[23] Harold Bruder, "Margarethe Siems Strauss's Ideal Soprano?," *The Opera Quarterly* 15/3 (1999): 399; Harold Rosenthal, "Osten, Eva von der," *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed March 5, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/20537.
[24] Boldrey, *A Guide to Operatic Roles & Arias*, 26 and 174–6

gap between soprano and mezzo-soprano interpretations is a testament to the interpretive breadth of the role, and changing notions of what it should sound like to perform a boy Octavian's age.

In contrast to Von der Osten's soprano interpretation, Margarethe Arndt-Ober a German contralto famous for Verdi and Wagner heroines, such as Amneris in the former's *Aïda* and Waltraute in the latter's *Götterdämmerung*, premiered Octavian at the Metropolitan Opera in 1913.[25] Critics such as Max Smith praised Margarete Arndt-Ober's performance of Octavian, but he also thought "that a daintier and more puerile interpretation of the role would have come nearer to the composer's ideal."[26] After attending a production of *Rosenkavalier* with the replacement of Elisabeth Schumann as Sophie, Smith elaborated on why Arndt-Ober's interpretation was unsuitable to portray Octavian:

> In the duets of the second act with Octavian one almost resented the interference of Margarete Ober, who, as usual, gave a dramatically forceful portrayal of the rose-bearing cavalier, but again indulged in vocal exaggerations that seemed all the more apparent when thrown into juxtaposition with Mme. Schumann's delicate art.[27]

Smith draws our attention to the "forceful" difference between Ober's interpretation and Schumann's. We may surmise that this difference was a result of Arndt-Ober's experience in the dramatic mezzo-soprano repertoire that demands exaggeration as opposed to "Schumann's delicate art." Despite having not heard Von der Osten at the premiere it seems that Smith also understood Octavian as Strauss did. Octavian should sound lighter and more youthful, like

[25] J.B. Steane, "Arndt-Ober, Margarethe," *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*. *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed March 6, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O003637.
[26] Max Smith, "Review of Der Rosenkavalier," *The New York American*, September 12, 1913.
[27] Max Smith, "Review of Der Rosenkavalier," *The New York Press*, November 20, 1914.

Sophie. Frieda Hempel, the Marschallin in this performance as well as the New York and Berlin premieres, also argued that Arndt-Ober's interpretation is contrary to Strauss' vision of Octavian:

> Today [… t]he part of the Marschallin is performed by a large woman with a big, dramatic voice. Octavian is sung by a husky contralto, and the figure of Baron Ochs is reduced to a comical, slapstick character. As Strauss said to me years later, "If I had wanted a strong, husky person for Octavian I would have written the part for a tenor. The young boy Octavian should have soprano-like sweetness. And I did not write heavy notes for the Marschallin. I composed the part for graceful, easy parlando singing."[28]

Interpreting Hempel's understanding of Strauss' intentions in terms of how the voice signifies age, we can assume Arndt-Ober's dramatic interpretation and contralto voice contradicts Strauss' vision of Octavian having a sweet and boyish sound. Scholar Michael Scott describes Arndt-Ober's voice as having "a hard attack and some pinched and typically hooted tone in the upper range." His description is reminiscent of the husky sound that Hempel also claimed was undesirable for Octavian.[29] Moreover, Hempel opined that a hooted upper range, such as Scott described, was unquestionably inappropriate when she said, "no contralto who has the slightest difficulty with her upper notes should sing Octavian."[30] Smith, like Hempel, did not like this sound particularly because it starkly contrasted with the purity of Sophie. Nevertheless, when *Rosenkavalier* was performed Philadelphia in 1915 with Edith Mason in the role of Sophie, the critic signed F.L.W. found this contrast quite pleasing. He brought attention to the same duet as Smith did in his review and found Arndt-Ober in particular quite effective.[31] Although neither critic explicitly references Octavian's age, we might consider that they disagree about how

---

[28] Frieda Hempel, William R Moran, and Elizabeth Johnston, *My Golden Age of Singing* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1998), 100.
[29] Michael Scott, *The Record of Singing* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979), 214.
[30] Hempel, *My Golden Age of Singing*, 123.
[31] F. L. W., "'Der Rosenkavalier' at Metropolitan First Philadelphia Performance of Strauss Opera With Ober in Title Role," *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, December 14, 1915.

Octavian should sound because they have different ideas about what it should sound like to be a boy. Strauss seems to have preferred Sophie and Octavian to sound similar to emphasize their youth, but critics such as F.L.W. preferred a differentiation between these two characters' voices possibly to denote the difference between their age and gender. This gap between understandings of how the characters in *Rosenkavalier* should be represented grows even larger when considering the performance history of the Marschallin.

As noted by Hempel, Strauss did not intend a "big, dramatic voice" to perform the Marschallin. Instead, he chose a *soprano leggero* or light lyric coloratura soprano, Margarethe Siems, who also premiered the role of Chrysothemis in *Elektra* two years before.[32] When composing *Rosenkavalier*, Strauss knew that Siems was famous for her high extension and flexibility in addition to her fuller middle and lower registers. These capabilities enabled her to tackle a wide range of roles from the Queen of the Night to Isolde later in her career.[33] As previously seen with Von der Osten's vocal portrayal of Octavian, Siems could have sung the Marschallin lightly or in a more dramatic manner. When listening to Siems' recordings of the Marschallin, Harold Bruder claims that she sang the role with a "gaiety, lightness, and elegance" that Hempel said was essential to the role.[34] Recalling Hempel's suggestion that the Marschallin should be sung by a lyric coloratura soprano such as Siems, it is interesting to note how contemporary vocal pedagogues describe this *Fach*. Boldrey notes its "high extension in range,

[32] Boldrey lists Siems' voice as a full lyric coloratura soprano, light dramatic coloratura soprano, spinto soprano, and full dramatic coloratura soprano. Unlike the other sopranos he does not highlight which category her voice best fits suggesting that he does not know or that she was flexible among them all. However, many sources describe Siems' voice as a *soprano leggero* which Boldrey classifies as a light lyric coloratura soprano including Hempel, who says her voice is the same as her own suggesting that by Boldrey's categorization Siems is also a full lyric soprano. Despite this primary evidence, using recordings Michael Scott says Siems' voice was not naturally a high soprano and that she found more freedom in her middle and lower register. Boldrey, *A Guide to Operatic Roles & Arias*, 432; Scott, *The Record of Singing: to 1914*, 170–1.
[33] Bruder, "Margarethe Siems Strauss's Ideal Soprano?," 391–3.
[34] Bruder, "Margarethe Siems Strauss's Ideal Soprano?," 396 and 399.

with agility, and with the warmth of romantic youth."[35] (The roles sung by a lyric coloratura soprano are the same as those listed for Sophie's *Fach* above) From Boldrey's reference to youth in his description of this voice type, we might therefore interpret that these sopranos' voices portray a young Marschallin instead of an old woman. Supporting this interpretation, Strauss claimed that the Marschallin should be "a pretty young woman, no older than thirty-two years […] Octavian is neither the first nor the last lover of the beautiful Marschallin, and she must not act the closing of the first act too sentimentally, as tragic farewell to her life, but must retain some measure of Viennese grace and lightness, with one mournful and one joyous eye."[36] However, George R. Marek notes that, once again, we are presented with an ambiguity in the representation of age. In terms of the eighteenth-century—at which time the plot of *Rosenkavalier* takes place—the Marschallin would be almost beyond what would have been considered marriageable age. We might cautiously translate her age in the twentieth century as forty or forty-five.[37] The answer as to whether Strauss and Hofmannsthal envisioned the Marschallin as an eighteenth-century thirty-two or a twentieth-century thirty-two might be found if we consider the ages of the performers that Strauss chose to sing the Marschallin. Based on the ages of Siems (thirty-two) and Hempel (twenty-eight) when they premiered the role of the Marschallin as well as Strauss' preference for a light voice, we can assume then that Strauss envisioned a Marschallin as a twentieth-century thirty-two not an older woman portrayed by a dramatic soprano.

[35] Boldrey, *A Guide to Operatic Roles & Arias*, 22 and 157–8.
[36] George R. Marek, "Introduction: The Music of Poetry or the Poetry of Music?," in *Richard Strauss, Der Rosenkavalier: Comedy for Music in Three Acts*, of the Metropolitan Opera Classics Library (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), xiv.
[37] Marek, "Introduction," xiv.

When he premiered *Rosenkavalier* in Berlin in 1911, Strauss demonstrated his continued desire for a lighter soprano as the Marschallin when he asked Hempel, another *soprano leggero* like Siems, to sing the role. However, before finally asking her to sing this role he made her study all three soprano roles in *Rosenkavalier*. Hempel recalled that:

> Because of my good figure and good legs, Strauss asked me to study the role of Octavian. He had seen me in [Albert Lortzing's *Der*] *Wildshütz*, where I had impersonated a young student. I must say that the role of Octavian was quite different! I was glad when Strauss came back to me a few weeks later and asked me to study Sophie. This part suited my high voice much better. After I was again ready with the part. He came once more and said, 'Hempelchen, I have no Marschallin—you must be my Marschallin.'[38]

Strauss envisioned a similarity between these roles that was so close one person could effectively portray them all within the limitations of a single body and voice. In terms of aging, we might infer that Strauss, and his intended audience, did not expect a significant difference in vocal timbre between the voices of Sophie, Octavian, and the Marschallin. Perhaps, Strauss really wanted to emphasize the Marschallin's youth and accentuate her past similarity to the young, or perhaps audiences of the period did not distinguish between vocal timbres and age. However, because Strauss cast Octavian as a woman to show his youth the latter seems unlikely. Rather, it appears that older ages were not differentiated from younger ones. Thus, the Marschallin was not intended to sound old in comparison to Octavian and Sophie because she was not viewed as in decline at the young age of thirty-two.

In her autobiography, Hempel expanded on why Strauss' concept of the Marschallin was weakened when it is performed by a dramatic soprano:

[38] Hempel, *My Golden Age of Singing*, 98.

> Siems, who created the role in Dresden in 1911, and I, who sang it in Berlin under Richard Strauss and in New York, were lyric coloraturas. If Strauss had wished to cast a dramatic soprano as the Marschallin, there were several excellent ones available in Dresden and in Berlin. But he definitely wanted a light, lyric soprano for this role, and although I was already studying the role of Sophie, he asked me to do the Marschallin. How can the gaiety, lightness, and elegance of this dainty woman be portrayed by [the] large women who habitually sing Isolde?

The tendency to cast the Marschallin as a dramatic soprano appears consistently in contemporary performance literature describing this role. Vocal pedagogues like Miller and Boldrey classify the Marschallin as a *Jugendlichdramatisch* or a *Dramatisch Sopran*, suggesting a weight to the performer's voice that differentiates the older characters from the younger ones.[39] Yeadon McGinnis and McGinnis Willis describe the *Jugendlichdramatisch Sopran* as "a young-looking dramatic soprano with a powerful and beautiful voice capable of long lyric phrases but of a greater volume capability than the lyric soprano" arguably maintaining the Marschallin's youth.[40] (Boldrey gives examples of roles such as Valentine in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots*, Elsa in Wagner's *Lohengrin*, and the title role in Verdi's *Aïda*.[41]) However, the dramatic soprano as described by the same authors has no link to the youth desired by Strauss and Hempel: "A powerful, brilliant voice, physically and vocally imposing on stage. This soprano must have a voice that can cut through heavy orchestration and the ability to sing effectively for long periods while always commanding the attention of the audience."[42] (Boldrey provides examples such as Brünnhilde in Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, the title role in Richard Strauss' *Elektra*, and the title role in Giacomo Puccini's *Turandot*.[43]) Yeadon McGinnis and McGinnis Willis'

---

[39] Miller, *Training Soprano Voices*, 11; Boldrey, *A Guide to Operatic Roles & Arias*, 70; J.B. Steane also considers the voice type meant for the Marschallin as a lyrico-dramatic, J. B. Steane, *Voices: Singers & Critics* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1992), 20.
[40] Yeadon McGinnis, and McGinnis Willis, *The Opera Singer's Career Guide*, 23.
[41] Boldrey, *A Guide to Operatic Roles & Arias*, 166–8.
[42] Yeadon McGinnis, and McGinnis Willis, *The Opera Singer's Career Guide*, 24.
[43] Boldrey, *A Guide to Operatic Roles & Arias*, 168–9.

description of the dramatic as imposing arguably negates the "gaiety, lightness, and elegance" that Hempel suggested a portrayal of the Marschallin needs.

A More Dramatic Marschallin

If according to Hempel a large voice cannot portray the Marschallin's youth and beauty, why then is she constantly cast as a dramatic soprano as opposed to a light lyric coloratura soprano? There are several possible answers. First, as Siems and Hempel became identified with the role of the Marschallin they themselves and their voices aged, and consequently they relinquished their *leggero* roles for dramatic roles. Thus, their older age affected how audiences understood the role.[44] Yet a more influential phenomenon, as observed negatively by Hempel, was the trend to cast the Marschallin as a dramatic soprano. This phenomenon became popular before these sopranos' own aging had advanced far enough to significantly change audience perceptions of the Marschallin's age.

Already quoted above in *The Times*, our music critic suggests that the casting of the Marschallin as a dramatic soprano began as early as 1911 at the Viennese premiere of *Rosenkavalier*. At the age of thirty-five, dramatic soprano Lucie Weidt performed the Marschallin in the same year that she also sang Wagner's Brünnhilde.[45] Following the premiere Weidt sang another sixty-nine performances as the Marschallin from 1911–29 in Vienna, more than any other soprano has at that theatre to date, perhaps justifying the perception of the Marschallin as an older woman.[46] Following Weidt's success, theatres around the Western world

[44] In 1914, Hempel began to lose her top register and similarly Siems did too as they both moved into a larger repertoire possibly changing the colour of their voices to a darker and stereotypically aged sound. Michael Scott, *The Record of Singing: To 1914* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1977), 170 and 173.
[45] Scott, *The Record of Singing: To 1914*, 184; Desmond Shawe-Taylor, "Weidt, Lucie," *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed March 7, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/30024.
[46] See the Vienna Staatsoper Archiv, "Lucie Weidt als „Die Feldmarschallin" in „Der Rosenkavalier"," accessed March 13, 2017, https://archiv.wiener-staatsoper.at/search/person/6025/role/142.

began to cast dramatic sopranos in the role of the Marschallin preferring this vocal timbre to the lighter voices of Siems and Hempel. Mirroring this growing trend, after the Viennese premiere Strauss considered Weidt his favourite interpreter of the Marschallin indicating that his understanding of the role had changed since seeing Siems and Hempel, and possibly that he considered how age impacted the portrayal of this character, musically and sympathetically.[47]

Reaffirming Strauss' preference for a dramatic Marschallin, after 1924 Strauss changed his mind again and declared Lotte Lehmann his favourite singer and Marschallin.[48] Not only was she Strauss' favourite Marschallin, but she is historically the most famous interpreter of this role.[49] Like Weidt, she was internationally identified with what Miller defines as the *Jugendlichdramatisch* and dramatic repertoire such as Beethoven's Leonore, as well as Wagner's Elisabeth, Elsa, Eva, and especially Sieglinde—in 1963 our music critic notes the difference between Siems and Hempel and the dramatic interpreters of the Marschallin was a vocal timbre characteristic of Sieglinde, thus it is likely that he had Lehmann, a famous Sieglinde since 1924, in mind when he said this—however she never sang Isolde or Brünnhilde like Weidt.[50]

As mentioned previously, the role of the Marschallin lies primarily in the middle register with some brilliant forays to the soprano's top suggesting that a dramatic soprano with a fuller middle than a lyric is necessary to carry over Strauss' dense orchestration. However, the dramatic soprano's strong middle provides a different, typically darker, colour that might suggest

[47] Alan Jefferson, *Lotte Lehmann* (London: MacRae, 1988), 79 and 90.
[48] Beaumont Glass, *Lotte Lehmann: A Life in Opera & Song* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1988), 101.
[49] It is interesting to note that Lehmann performed Octavian to Weidt's Marschallin several times with Strauss conducting in Vienna, Jefferson, *Lotte Lehmann*, 90.
[50] Desmond Shawe-Taylor, "Lehmann, Lotte," *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed March 6, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/16325. Lotte Lehmann is under the heading of dramatic soprano in Owen Jander, et al., "Soprano," *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed March 7, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/26243.

the aged voice. Yeadon McGinnis and McGinnis Willis echo this observation saying that, "the more dramatic the role, the more age and experience one needs in order to be able to perform it effectively [… Furthermore, a]n older singer with years of experience and enhanced training will usually look the part of an older dramatic character, as well as have a more mature-sounding voice."[51] Based on the repertoire in which she excelled, we can assume then that Lehmann unlike Hempel and Siems was a darker and heavier dramatic voice that, as Bruder notes, became the ideal Marschallin: "It was not until Lotte Lehmann's first performances as the Marschallin in 1924 that British critics felt Siems's radiant creation had been matched."[52]

After performing the role of Sophie in 1914 with Siems and Hempel as the Marschallin, Lehmann returned to London in 1924 instead as the Marschallin.[53] As the Princess, Lehmann made a very favorable impression with the British public at the age of 36, close to the original age designated by Strauss. However, as noted earlier by our music critic, *The Times* remarked that "the only fault was the fact that their voices were not sufficiently contrasted in *timbre*. One felt that [Delia Reinhardt's] voice [as Octavian] coalesced too easily with each of the ladies who arouse in turn the passion of the susceptible Octavian."[54] According to this review, the public was left unconvinced by Strauss' intention for three sopranos with a similar vocal colour performing these roles because they lacked distinction among each other. Although this might be for purely aesthetic reasons, opera's combination of music *and* visual drama suggests that this lack of contrast was interpreted as an incongruous representation of the characters' appearances. Again in 1925 when Lehmann, Reinhardt, and Elisabeth Schumann as Sophie returned to Covent

[51] Yeadon McGinnis, and McGinnis Willis, *The Opera Singer's Career Guide*, 7.
[52] Bruder, "Margarethe Siems Strauss's Ideal Soprano?," 395.
[53] Siems and Von der Osten only performed at the premiere and second performance of *Rosenkavalier* in the London premiere in 1913. The audience enjoyed Siems' Marschallin so much that she returned in 1914 to reprise the role, Alan Jefferson, *The Operas of Richard Strauss in Britain, 1910–1963* (London: Putnam, 1963), 74.
[54] Jefferson, *The Operas of Richard Strauss in Britain*, 76.

Garden, *The Times* claimed that "it is Strauss's fault that we get too much of the soprano voice in *Rosenkavalier* and the excess is emphasized by a similarity of *timbre* in these three voices."[55] Critics saw the effective portrayal of these roles differently than the composer's original vision, possibly because of different interpretations of aging at this time in Britain as opposed to Germany, the length of time between the performances of *Rosenkavalier* in both countries, and perhaps the representation of gender. These variables aside, the observation that Reinhardt's soprano-voiced Octavian was too similar to the Marschallin and Sophie could suggest that Lehmann's portrayal continues the lineage of Hempel and Siems, as a lighter soprano which is now undesirable to the public. However, when Lehmann was indisposed at Covent Garden she was replaced by dramatic sopranos such as Frieda Leider (1924, 1929, 1931), Gertrude Kappel (1925), Elisabeth Ohms (1929), Elisabeth Rethberg (1936), all famous Isoldes and Brünnhildes during this time, further emphasizing the tradition of dramatic voices to project the contrast of the aged Marschallin.[56] Because her replacements most likely reflected the public's vocal preference for a Marschallin, it would seem strange to cast Lehmann in the role if she was not a similar voice type to the dramatic sopranos she was alternating it with. Thus, we may assume that audiences perceived Lehmann to have a darker colour and strong middle like the other dramatic sopranos. Furthermore, Lehmann had been singing Sieglinde as early as 1914, so it is likely that the warm generous sound which she is described as having in her Wagnerian repertoire would have contrasted with the light clearness of Elisabeth Schumann's Sophie.[57] It is

[55] Jefferson, *The Operas of Richard Strauss in Britain*, 77. For the last two performances, Freida Leider well known to London audiences as Brünnhilde and Isolde replaced Lehmann as the Marschallin. There is no mention of how her voice contrasted the others.

[56] For more information on each of these German dramatic sopranos see, Scott, *The Record of Singing*; For Leider, 198–200; Kappel, 197–8; Ohms, 187–9; and for Ohms see, Desmond Shawe-Taylor, "Ohms, Elisabeth," *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed March 8, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/50078.

[57] Desmond Shawe-Taylor, "Lehmann, Lotte," accessed March 8, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/16325; Also see, "Lotte Lehmann

more likely then that the criticism of the three soprano voices sounding too similar, referenced by our music critic earlier in this chapter, was referring to Octavian being sung by a soprano, rather than a mezzo-soprano. Because a soprano Octavian does not provide enough vocal contrast to mirror the characters' differences, this sound does not portray Octavian's difference in age and sex from Sophie and the Marschallin. [58] Also, since it was Reinhardt's soprano Octavian that did not provide enough contrast, we may conclude that Lehmann's Marschallin did not sound like Hempel or Siems' interpretation. Based on what we know about the aging voice and how we stereotypically perceive it to become louder and lower, it seems likely that the British critics wanted the Marschallin to portray her aging physically and vocally by casting a more robust Marschallin that stood in distinct contrast to the younger characters.

Following the 1925 production the British press no longer commented on a lack of contrast between the three protagonists' voices possibly because critics grew accustomed to the opera. However, a more probable reason is that Octavian was often cast as a mezzo-soprano and the Marschallin as a dramatic soprano offering significant contrast between their voices. As the most frequently seen Marschallin in London from 1920–40, Lehmann must have exemplified these expectations. When the original production from Dresden visited Covent Garden in 1936, critics were left stunned calling it the most organic production they had seen yet.[59] This is because the cast fit Britain's expectation for contrast between mezzo-soprano Marta Rohs as Octavian and dramatic soprano Marta Fuchs as the Marschallin.[60] However, from 1930 until the

Chronology," *Lotte Lehmann League*, accessed July 5, 2017, http://lottelehmannleague.org/about-lotte-lehmann/ll-chronology/.

[58] Harold Rosenthal and Alan Blyth, "Reinhardt, Delia," *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed March 21, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/23138.

[59] Jefferson, *The Operas of Richard Strauss in Britain*, 84–5.

[60] David Cummings, "Rohs, Martha," *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*. *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed March 13,

end of her career, Lehmann, not Fuchs, was the definitive Marschallin not only in Britain, but all over Europe and America as well. Therefore, it is likely that she also exemplified the new dramatic voice of the Marschallin.

Approaching the age of forty-five, Lehmann's Marschallin was renowned for its humanity. She portrayed this quality through her embodiment of the character particularly the Marschallin's tragic musings about aging and renunciation.[61] Many critics observed that Lehmann tipped the balance in *Rosenkavalier* from comedy to tragedy. Instead of focusing on the irony of her love affair as Strauss intended when he instructed the performer portraying the Marschallin to have one mournful and one joyous eye, critics saw her as a tragic and aging figure. In 1935, after her performance at the Metropolitan Opera, Olin Downes said:

> The Princess is a woman; when she is characterized by a Lotte Lehmann she becomes the dominating and absorbing motive of a lyric drama in which the music makes us know, feel and suffer with her. Mme. Lehmann has long been famous for this characterization, which has everything—the lightness of touch, the manner and accent of the nobly born; the flaming embers of a last passion, the pathos and ache of renunciation. When the Princess took the chair proffered her in the last episode of the drama, seating herself as one to the purple born, and with the bitter knowledge of her years upon her, she knew and everyone who watched knew that for all purposes of the life of the heart she was an old woman. She was saying farewell to the one previous thing, which she was relinquishing to another. This emotion was not only in the face, but in the very folds of the dress and in the set of the head. It was in the musical phrase and the voice itself. As for the quality, from the standpoint of sheer tone, the voice sometimes became edged, for Mme. Lehmann, who had gallantly gone through with her engagement, was singing through a cold. The indisposition, however, was not of a nature to do more than modify quality here and there. But had the voice been in much worse condition, the meaning back of the tone, the communication of

2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O904267; Leo Riemens and Alan Blyth, "Fuchs, Marta," *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed March 13, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/10339.

[61] Jefferson, *Lotte Lehmann*, 120.

> womanly sentiment, the fusing of high intelligence and sincerity, would have carried unmistakably to every listener. This character, the keynote of Strauss's comedy (which, like every great comedy, is touched with tears and with the knowledge of human need and human pain) was most eloquently, and with the utmost art, revealed to yesterday's audience.[62]

According to Downes, the tragedy of the opera became centered on the Marschallin, her renunciation and tragically incessant aging which contradicts her youthful identity. Lehmann's iconic portrayal of the role absorbs the focus of the audience because she herself embodies the process of aging that is so tragic in the narrative, "not only in the face, but in the very folds of the dress and in the set of the head. It was in the musical phrase and the voice itself." By embodying and thereby emphasizing her age through her edged tone, acting, and musical approach, Lehmann accentuates the opera's capacity to be bittersweet making it more akin to tragedy. The Marschallin's age becomes less ironic because she is no longer perceived as young. Instead, she is the age of the performer; the Marschallin and Lehmann become synonymous. In her unofficial biography, Alan Jefferson remarks that in 1944, "Lotte was fifty-seven and, one might think, on the elderly side for Hofmannsthal's and Strauss's creation of about thirty-five, 'between ages.' Lotte continued to maintain that her Marschallin was *exactly the same age as herself*."[63] In Lehmann's portrayal, we hear and recognize that she is older than thirty-two making the Marschallin's renunciation of Octavian all the more tragic and final: she will not go on to find another lover or have Octavian again because she is old. In 1938, Moses Smith also saw Lehmann's portrayal effective because it seemed so authentic:

> Mme. Lehmann's impersonation of the Marschallin is one of the most notable features of the contemporary stage. It has a warmth and humanity that mirror Strauss's music. It is aided by a singing voice that has more than beauty of tone, one that miraculously distills the eternal pathos of fading beauty and on-coming age.

[62] Olin Downes, "Der Rosenkavalier," *The New York Times*, January 4, 1935.
[63] Emphasis mine, Jefferson, *Lotte Lehmann*, 195.

> There is nothing stagey in Mme. Lehmann's presence or singing, even though, with the sort of competition she encountered last night, there was sufficient provocation for such an attitude. There are only sincerity, dignity and nobility.[64]

Critics such as Smith perceived Lehmann's performance as authentic because they saw her embodying the Marschallin's dilemma of aging. As Smith noted, this can be not only seen on her aging body, but also in "the eternal pathos of fading beauty and on-coming age" heard in her voice. Thus, her voice and body portrayed her age as well as the age of the Marschallin. The *Wall Street Journal* also saw the Marschallin and Lehmann as one and the same: "Lotte Lehmann again sang the role of the Princess von Werdenberg in a manner that can be described only by the adjective 'perfection'–perfection in each word, phrase and gesture. She has made the role her own, has indeed become the Princess."[65] Although the *Wall Street Journal* described Lehmann's interpretation as "perfect," as if it is an unchanging and repeated object, in 1940 Edward Downer observed how Lehmann's interpretation had changed with time; how like her it had aged and become something different:

> In the 10 years since the writer first heard the unforgettable "Rosenkavalier" of the Vienna State Opera, Lotte Lehmann's Marschallin has changed. If it no longer has quite the same opulence of voice, her impersonation has grown in depth and subtlety. It has become even more intensely moving than it was. There are Marschallins who are more consciously aristocratic, but none more poignantly human. Last night Mme. Lehmann lived her part as did no one else on the stage. The gentle dignity with which she covers her agony at the thought of growing old, of losing Octavian, her vision of herself as the old Princess, "die site Fuersehtin Rest," the heartbreaking simplicity of the pantomime that closes the first act and the able gesture of renunciation that is the final trio—these are memories of Lotte Lehmann to be cherished, for we shall not soon see them equaled.[66]

---

[64] Moses Smith, "Der Rosenkavalier," *Boston Evening*, March 31, 1938.
[65] "The THEATRE: Der Rosenkavalier." *Wall Street Journal*, December 21, 1938.
[66] Edward Downer, "Der Rosenkavalier," *Boston Evening Transcript*, March 28, 1940.

Downer acknowledged that Lehmann "lives" the role like the previous critics, however he further nuanced this perception by recognizing her *own* aging as a narrative that impacts her portrayal of the Marschallin. Rather than being an unchanging and unaging identity, it is the very acknowledgement of Lehmann's aging that makes her interpretation human. Downer aligned Lehmann's aging with the decline of her voice, as he noted it had "thinned." Yet despite acknowledging her fading body, he claimed that the performance was better than those she gave when she was younger, because with time she created a more nuanced interpretation. For Downer, the performance became more expressive despite the voice's deficiencies. Although Downer separated the voice and the interpretation as two separate objects, in the next review Noel Straus saw them as indivisible. The voice became even more moving because Lehmann's increased nuance is a result of both her mental and bodily aging:

> Although Miss Lehmann's voice possessed less volume than formerly and was used with caution on top tones, her every phrase was so replete with meaning and so deeply communicative that never has her artistry in the role worked with greater conviction or impressiveness. She has become familiar with every slightest detail of the part to such a pronounced degree that last night there wasn't a moment when her portrayal failed to find her completely identified with the character of the Marschallin down to the slightest vocal inflection and gesture. There was all of the pathos of lost youth in the monologue before the mirror and particularly outstanding was the profoundly felt singing of the measures describing the stopping of the clocks in the castle. Surely, vocally as well as histrionically, Miss Lehmann's Marschallin remains the most sensitive and deft achievement the Metropolitan has to offer its patrons today and she fully deserved the prolonged ovation accorded her after the first act and at the last curtain.[67]

Like Downer, Straus noted that Lehmann's aging impacted her voice because it decreased in volume. However, he also congratulated her "familiarity" with the role claiming that she

[67] Noel Straus, "Der Rosenkavalier," *The New York Times*, February 23, 1945.

completely identified with the Marschallin. Lehmann's biographer and friend Beaumont Glass notes that, "Lotte and the Marschallin grew together, she molding the role in her own unique way and the role molding her, until she became identified with the character. From then on an aura of the Marschallin never totally disappeared from her public persona. In the minds and hearts of many admirers she *was* the Marschallin."[68]

Although anachronistic to Strauss' original concept of the role, Lehmann's aging was an asset to how critics received her Marschallin. Despite Lehmann's lack of "an apt instrument," as described by many critics, it did nothing to decrease her fame. Instead, it arguably enhanced it showing her flaws from old age. Ethan Mordden observed that, "[h]er breathiness was so pronounced it virtually became a component of her singing style, and her habit of 'swimming' through her music, as the Viennese put it (*schwimmen*, meaning imprecision in rhythm and pitch) raised an important eyebrow every so often."[69] Despite her inconsistent and steely top that only worsened as she aged, to critics and audiences Lehmann was the definitive Marschallin. Critic Victor Gollancz reminisced about seeing an older Lehmann in *Rosenkavalier* when he said, "[o]f course we heard Marschallins elsewhere, notably Germaine Lubin in Paris; but we thought of them as all wrong, excellent though their singing might be—mere substitutes for the real, the living Marschallin."[70]

Like many singers who performed the Marschallin such as Margarethe Siems, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Evelyn Lear, Kiri te Kanawa, and possibly as of this year Renée Fleming,

[68] Glass, *Lotte Lehmann*, 84.
[69] Ethan Mordden, *Demented: The World of the Opera Diva* (New York: F. Watts, 1984), 75.
[70] Victor Gollancz, *Journey Towards Music, a Memoir* (London: n.p., 1964), 131.

Lehmann chose to end her career in this role. Diva scholar Ethan Mordden explains that this performance paradigm is popular because:

> *Der Rosenkavalier*'s Feldmarschallin, Maria Theresa, Princess Werdenberg […] is especially useful in the years just before retirement, as it suits a mature woman and sits well, for the most part, on a deteriorated instrument. A great Turandot, Brunnhilde, or Norma will be in distress in those parts some time before her voice breaks down altogether, but great Marschallins can schedule *Der Rosenkavalier* for their farewells.[71]

Since Lehmann ended her career with a performance of the Marschallin, the Princess's bittersweet goodbye to Octavian become a metaphor for Lehmann's literal farewell to the theatre. She no longer performed staged operas because she was too old. However, it is the same process that ended Lehmann's career that made her arguably the greatest Marschallin in history. Knowing it was Lehmann's last, the audience not only applauded her performance, but also recognized that her Marschallin was great because she had aged.

As observed when looking at Lehmann's portrayal of the role, if we interpret the Marschallin as an older woman because she is often performed by older singers with a dramatic *Fach*, we can see the impact of Gullette's narrative of decline in opera. As Strauss originally envisioned the Marschallin, she defied Gullette's narrative of decline. Although she is the oldest female character in the opera, she does not look or sound different from Sophie or Octavian, rather she is a thirty-two year old light voiced soprano. This suggests that for Strauss and audiences in Dresden and Berlin in the early twentieth-century the decline narrative was not necessary to signify age. However, following *Rosenkavalier*'s premiere in Vienna with Weidt and the subsequent popularity of an older dramatic voice performing the role as seen with Lehmann in Britain for example, we can assume that critics and audiences preferred the

[71] Ethan Mordden, *Demented*, 121–2.

Marschallin to appear distinctly older than the younger characters. By using stereotypes of old age such as the lowering, darkening, and even the decline of the voice to identify the Marschallin as older than Sophie or Octavian, these performances of *Rosenkavalier* are an example of Gullette's narrative of decline. Choosing performers based on decline age ideology became more popular over the course of the century as famous interpreters of the Marschallin aged and popularized this trend in performance. However, despite the narratives appearance in bodily decline, there is also a positive counter narrative, the impact of age on a performer's interpretation: age as achievement. The more that Lehmann performed and got older the more nuanced her interpretation became. She represented more than a decaying person, she became a more experienced interpreter.[72]

A contemporary example of this aging paradigm is soprano Reneé Fleming. In the recent Robert Carsen production of *Rosenkavalier* at the Metropolitan Opera broadcast to theatres around the globe in *The Met: Live in HD*, Fleming performed what she claimed would be her last Marschallin.[73] In a review written following the broadcast critic Anthony Tommasini asked, "[h]as her voice lost a little bloom and richness? Maybe so. I hardly noticed, for all the melting lyricism, subtle expressivity and emotional vulnerability of her singing."[74] Despite the signs of

[72] Another example of a singer who "ripened" with age was Sylvia Fisher as the Marschallin in Britain. Critics claimed that, "[s]he grew slowly into the character of the Marschallin—as is only to be expected—and in the first season showed little indication of the maturity which she was later to give to the part," Jefferson, *The Operas of Richard Strauss in Britain*, 93; Another review said that, "[p]raise also went to Fisher, whose interpretation of the Marschallin 'has ripened and is not most moving …'," Jefferson, *The Operas of Richard Strauss in Britain*, 97; Also, "[m]iss Fisher had been improving on her interpretation all along but 'she has never touched the heights of her 1st Act performance as the Marschallin'. *The Times* considered that Fisher and Shacklock shared the honours on stage. 'Both had lived with the roles long enough to have discovered all their secrets and subtleties …'," Jefferson, *The Operas of Richard Strauss in Britain*, 100; "'Miss Sylvia Fisher's Princess which, besides being beautifully sung, shows countless new inflexions and subtleties of interpretation which few people would have suspected lay within her grasp when she first attempted the part'," Jefferson, *The Operas of Richard Strauss in Britain*, 103.

[73] Reneé Fleming has performed the role during the past 20 years.

[74] Anthony Tommasini, "Review: Renée Fleming's Poignant Farewell to 'Der Rosenkavalier'," *The New York Times*, April 14, 2017, accessed July 5, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/14/arts/music/rosenkavalier-renee-fleming-met.html?mcubz=2.

Fleming's aging instrument, Tommasini thought Fleming's experience in the role more than outweighed her physical decline. Instead, she had achieved a heightened level of nuance because she had aged to give a "magnificent" performance.

Restoring the Marschallin's Youth

Contrary to the popular dramatic portrayal of the Marschallin discussed so far, in her autobiography Hempel expressed so many concerns about the interpretation of the great monologue in Act I that it is worth quoting at length:

> Strauss himself had great fear that the monologue, into which the Marschallin's thoughts lead her, would be tragically sung and over dramatized. He stressed to me the fact that the philosophy of the Marschallin is not a tragic one. It is rather a philosophy of smiling resignation, an understanding of the fact that one need not fear growing old. The Marschallin must not become a lamenting old woman; she much not cry and pity herself. The monologue must move along in a flowing tempo—it must not drag and grow heavy with tragedy as it so often does today. This is a point of utmost importance also, because if the Marschallin does not properly understand the monologue, the beautiful sense of understanding with which she accepts Octavian's love for Sophie cannot be communicated.[75]

Based on the reviews of Lehmann examined thus far, it seems that critics did not find her portrayal over-dramatized. However, we might question what critics expected from Lehmann's performance. Since she was so famous and human in the role it is likely that they wanted to be moved, as many were, to the point of being completely focused on her tragic portrayal and ignoring the character's ironies.

Although this heavier dramatic portrayal is historically more popular than the way the Marschallin was originally portrayed, like Octavian as a mezzo-soprano, there are many exceptions to this preference. Lisa Della Casa's renowned beauty and youth in the role of the

[75] Hempel, *My Golden Years of Singing*, 123.

Marschallin reminded critics of the lighter portrayals of Siems and Hempel. As Raymond Ericsson observed, this young and light portrayal of the Princess was foreign to mid-twentieth century audiences:

> For once we had a Marschallin who was not only beautiful but looked the age Hofmannsthal assigned to her—about 32. Lisa Della Casa's youth and beauty really posed a problem for Octavian, torn between her and the equally ravishing Hilde Güden in the role of Sophie. It posed problem for the audience too, the same one posed by an actually child-like Juliet. A matronly maturity has become associated with certain episodes like the Marschallin's first-act monologue at the dressing table ruing age and the ravages of time. No one possibly could take Miss Della Casa seriously in such a lament, yet the paradox is inherent in the character called for by Strauss and his librettist. Here is a new experience that I suspect most listeners will enjoy getting used to.[76]

The audience's recognition of Della Casa's youth and beauty destabilized how the Marschallin was interpreted in the 1950s. The Marschallin's conundrum of aging no longer appeared tragic, instead it was paradoxically comedic, arguably more appropriate to the light atmosphere of the opera. With Della Casa, as Ericsson cautioned, audiences had to adjust their expectations for an old "matronly" Marschallin—particularly at the Metropolitan Opera where Lehmann was iconic in the role until 1945 at the age of fifty-six when she last performed there—to instead sympathize with a young and seductive woman no longer burdened by the negative associations of the narrative of decline.[77]

Despite its challenge to Gullette's narrative of decline, Della Casa's youthful portrayal of the Marschallin was often criticized because it contradicted how critics traditionally understood this character to be represented. In a 1968 review written before Della Casa's sudden retirement,

[76] Raymond Ericsson, "Revised Production Der Rosenkavalier," *Musical America*, February 6, 1956.
[77] "Chronology 1937–1951," *Lotte Lehmann League*, accessed July 5, 2017, http://lottelehmannleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Chronology-1937-1951-2014.pdf.

Stan Stanley observed her beauty and seeming youthfulness in the role of the Marschallin even at the age of forty-nine, while complaining that her voice lacked dramatic strength:[78]

> Lisa Della Casa sang for […] most of the time at half voice, and the rest rather less. She looked the perfect Marschallin, the right age, the right dignity. And there were a lot of beautiful things spells of silky, floating voice, and some lovely high pianissimos (at the end of Act I, for example, and at Hab mir's fielobt"). But it lacked fullness and weight, variety of colour, and occasionally control too.[79]

When referring to her "fullness and weight," Stanley described Della Casa's vocal *timbre* which Boldrey classifies as a full lyric soprano.[80] Boldrey describes her voice as "soaring" and "silvery," implying the main characteristic of the full lyric soprano is its beauty as opposed to dramatic power. He also explains that the vocal quality of a full lyric soprano connotes age. He claims that, "whereas the light lyric soprano voice represents a coming-of-age young woman who is experiencing the taste of romance for the first time, the full lyric soprano voice is that of a mature young woman experiencing the full flowering of love."[81] From Boldrey's description, we can assume that Della Casa's *Fach* and beauty were the reasons that her Marschallin appeared younger and less tragic than Lehmann's famous portrayal.

A more contemporary example of another full lyric soprano to find success in the role of the Marschallin is Dame Kiri te Kanawa. In 1977 at the age of 33, Te Kanawa premiered the role of the Marschallin. Although she was one of the most famous Marschallins at the end of the twentieth century, Steane among other critics remarked that, "[i]n *Der Rosenkavalier* it was more a matter of unsuitable tessitura [limiting the audience's enjoyment of Te Kanawa in this role]."[82]

---

[78] Lisa della Casa retired in 1974 at the age of 55 when her fans considered her to be at the height of her career.
[79] Stan Stanley, "Ochs, the hero," *The Times*, March 14, 1968.
[80] Boldrey, *Guide to Operatic Roles and Arias*, 455.
[81] Boldrey, *Guide to Operatic Roles and Arias*, 22.
[82] Steane, *Singers of the Century*, vol. 2, 184.

He explained that, "[t]he glory of the lyric soprano's voice is its upper half, and much of the Marschallin's music lies in the lower area where the more substantial body of the lyric-dramatic voice is wanted."[83] Since she performed the Marschallin internationally until the end of her career, Te Kanawa's divided reception suggests that there is still a clear divide between preferences for a youthful sounding Marschallin and an older one. However, it also suggests that a youthful portrayal became more common than earlier in the century when Lehmann was performing the Marschallin. Perhaps, because singers began to perform more than one of the three soprano roles in *Rosenkavalier* at different points in her career, critics and audiences saw age differently in *Rosenkavalier* in the latter half of the twentieth century. Rather than the Marschallin sounding old in comparison to whomever performed Sophie and Octavian, critics perceived singers as embodying their own age when they performed these characters.

Becoming Sophie, then Octavian, and Finally the Marschallin

To briefly reiterate: in chapter one we observed how Linda and Michael Hutcheon make a distinction between the real body, or the performer themselves, as separate from the body as a sign, or the character he or she is portraying.[84] In the example of our discussion of *Rosenkavalier* so far, we can see how these two theoretical concepts are inextricably linked by age and how they affect the performers chosen to sing certain roles. In the case of the Marschallin, how critics and audiences interpret age aurally and visually affects who they prefer to perform this role, whether it be a heavy voice like Lehmann or a lighter interpretation like Della Casa's. The divide between the real and represented body becomes smaller if we consider singers who perform more than one of the three soprano roles in *Rosenkavalier* over the duration of their career.

[83] Steane, *Voices: Singers & Critics*, 20.
[84] Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon. *Bodily Charm: Living Opera* (Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 23.

As we have explored so far, the aging triangle of women from Sophie through Octavian and finally the Marschallin present categories of age in the libretto that can be understood in different ways depending on the body and voice of the performer. Dramatic voices are usually chosen for the role of the Marschallin to distinguish her age from the younger characters. However, how does our perception of age change when the same singer sings all three roles throughout the duration of her career, from the youngest to the oldest? This phenomenon is possible because the singer herself ages from one role to the next. As I will argue here, audiences and critics recognize when singers age from the young Sophie to the mature Marschallin, and sometimes see their process of aging improving their interpretation of each character. What we shall see then is how sopranos, including Lehmann and Della Casa, progress from the younger soprano roles of Sophie and Octavian to the older role of the Marschallin as they age, and how critics and audiences accept or reject this progression of a singer embodying their own process of aging in performance.

This phenomenon of young singers performing either Sophie or Octavian and then aging to portray Octavian or the Marschallin not only affects their physical portrayal, but also their internal conception of the role. Peter A. Martin observes in a psychoanalytic study of older married woman who engage in love affairs with late teen aged-boys that:

> It is an interesting side note that the performers of the Marschallin role in the opera are older singers who usually grow up from former interpreters of Octavian or [Sophie]. As they play their Marschallin role they can sadly see in the new young mezzo-soprano who is on her way up what they once were. They thus have a realistic feel for this role and the passage of time.[85]

[85] Peter A. Martin, "A Psychoanalytic Study of the Marschallin Theme from *Der Rosenkavalier*," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 14/4 (October 1966): 770.

Martin suggests that when performers age from one role to the next it brings a "realistic" feel to the performance, not only because they themselves have physically aged, but also because the performer can feel and see "the passage of time." Singers have also expressed the benefit of this transition to their performance. Gwyneth Jones notes that her portrayal of Octavian influenced her interpretation of the Marschallin a great deal: "the best way of approaching the Marschallin must be via Octavian. If you have wrestled with his problems then you can understand hers."[86] However, this understanding or feel for the passage of time not only affects the performer, but also the audience who recognizes that the performer has aged physically and vocally. Suddenly the Marschallin becomes closely linked with Sophie because the singer performing the former once performed the latter.

Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, one of the most famous interpreters of the Marschallin following Lehmann, also began her career as Sophie. While in her youth, critics claimed that Schwarzkopf was very well suited to the role of Sophie. Following her premiere in 1948 at Covent Garden, *The Times* said her high notes were, "the final touch of beauty to the concerted music [… and] her characterization is dramatically true in that she conveys in succession the ingenuousness, the spirit, and the sweetness of the girl."[87] Although she was memorably well received as Sophie, in 1952 she was persuaded by Herbert von Karajan and her husband, Walter Legge, to transition to the role of the Marschallin. As Schwarzkopf recalls in an interview[88]:

> It was Karajan who said to me after so many Countesses and Sophies, "Now, my dear, it is time for you to do it. You are the type, you have mind for it, and you have the vocal inflections of a true lieder singer." I can hear Walter saying too, "You need a

[86] John Higgins, "A Welsh Marschallin," *The Times*, November 20, 1975.
[87] Jefferson, *The Operas of Richard Strauss in Britain*, 92.
[88] Alan Jefferson, *Elisabeth Schwarzkopf* (London: V. Gollanz, 1996), 95.

> conductor who keeps the orchestra so far down that even a light voice can get those inflections through." So they persuaded me.[89]

Karajan and Legge saw the potential changes that Schwarzkopf's aging body and voice would undergo, and therefore convinced her to move from the younger role in *Rosenkavalier* to the older one. Legge describes how Schwarzkopf, like Siems and Hempel, tackled *leggero* repertoire in her early career such as Blonde and Zerbinetta, "but the voice was a natural lyric soprano. At my urging she was soon singing Agathe in *Der Freischütz* and the Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro*; the younger Rosina was a girl of the past."[90] Indeed, as Legge perceived, Schwarzkopf was no longer a young girl: instead she embodied her aged voice in new roles. This phenomenon has also been noted by such singers as mezzo-soprano Waltraud Meier. She renounced the role of Octavian because she claimed that her voice no longer sounded like the adolescent boy.[91] Despite Karajan and Legge's conviction that Schwarzkopf was ready to perform the Marschallin, critics in 1952 were not expecting Schwarzkopf's youthful portrayal of the Marschallin, even though she was already 36. As Alan Jefferson recalls:

> *Der Rosenkavalier* provoked extreme views whenever it was produced at the end of the 1950s. Many of those who were, however optimistically, expecting another Lotte Lehmann to reveal herself at Covent Garden, were disappointed by Schwarzkopf when she failed to radiate the warmth and sincerity that had been the hallmark of Lehmann's Marie-Therese. Instead, she presented a skittish young woman in Act I, and in Act III one that a later critic was to describe as "bitter."[92]

Indeed, Schwarzkopf's more youthful and "bitter" interpretation of the Marschallin starkly contrasted Lehmann's tragically sympathetic portrayal of Marie-Thérèse as a more motherly or

[89] David Hamilton, ed., *Metropolitan Opera Encyclopedia* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 308.
[90] Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, *On and Off the Record: A Memoir of Walter Legge* (New York: Scribner, 1982), 139; Boldrey, *Guide to Operatic Roles and Arias*, 48 and 147
[91] Joshua Jampol, *Living Opera* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 196 and 200.
[92] Jefferson, *Elisabeth Schwarzkopf*, 156.

matronly figure.[93] This contrast conflicted with the expectations of some audiences about what it meant to be the Marschallin's age according to Gullette's narrative of decline. Furthermore, I would suggest that memories of Schwarzkopf's success embodying the youth of Sophie also affected the critic's perceptions of her as too young to be the aged Marschallin. In 1966 when Schwarzkopf sang the role at the Liceo Theatre, Barcelona a critic remarked that she "looked ravishing and moved with enchanting grace. Unfortunately her voice had not the firm line the part requires, and her stage presence (particularly Act I) had a coquettish, 'skittish' quality more suitable to the young Resi than to the Mature Marschallin."[94] Once again, Schwarzkopf's portrayal was too young for critics who connected her portrayal with Sophie, and not the wisdom and old age expected from the Marschallin. Furthermore, the suggestion of her lack of "firm line" implies a weight or heavy quality necessary in the voice that is reminiscent of a dramatic soprano rather than her full lyric *Fach*.[95] We can see that during the 1950s into the 1960s audiences still preferred the older Marschallin with her symbols of aging as tragedy as opposed to a woman unaffected by physical decline that is instead psychologically unsteady because she feels the pressures of age ideology. Two years earlier, in contrast to her reception in Barcelona, Schwarzkopf was celebrated at the Metropolitan Opera as the Marschallin. However, her interpretation was received as being more sympathetic by Ericsson. He described her as literally aging on stage during the Act I monologue:

> But she was able to do one thing superbly and uncannily: after looking so youthfully happy in her early love scenes with Octavian, she seemed to age physically as she began to think about the passing years and about losing her lover. This was the element in her performance to which one could not fail to respond, and in the final moments of her deepening awareness of the lonely years

[93] Jefferson, *Elisabeth Schwarzkopf*, 157.
[94] *Opera*, March 1967, 245.
[95] Boldrey, *Guide to Operatic Roles and Arias*, 431.

> ahead she was convincingly and extraordinarily touching. Vocally, Miss Schwarzkopf is no longer the fresh, pure-voiced artist she used to be. The voice has grown larger. At times it is more shrill; at times it has its old blandishments, and she can still manage lovely high pianissimos.[96]

It seems that American critics perceived Schwarzkopf as embodying her age through the growth and shrillness of her voice. As a result, she seemed more sympathetic, real, and less ironic, especially in the monologue. From Schwarzkopf's reception we can conclude that her Marschallin only became more sympathetic once she portrayed the consequences of old age that represent the narrative of decline.

Many sopranos who transitioned from Sophie to the Marschallin were also perceived to be too young to portray the princess. Other examples include: Clara Ebers, a famous Sophie and then Marschallin, who in 1952 at the age of fifty, Eric Bloom considered so "youthful, charming and talented [that she] never suggested the great lady, the ageing women or the oppression of luxurious indulgence"[97]; Evelyn Lear whose beauty was considered by Harriett Johnson to contrast Lehmann and the other "typically Viennese, ample statuesque [prototypes] of the Empress Maria Theresa"[98]; and Della Casa, who we have already discussed. This transition and the evident similarity among performers who originally played Sophie and then progressed to the Marschallin reflects, perhaps, Strauss' intent for three light soprano voices in these roles. This would explain why he asked Hempel to study all three roles, and why critics continue to dislike the similarity between these characters' voices.

---

[96] It is worth noting that this is the same reviewer that noted less than ten years before that Della Casa presented a young Marschallin that challenged the audiences concept of an old woman in the role, Raymond Ericsson, "Der Rosenkavalier," *The New York Times*, October 13, 1964.
[97] Jefferson, *The Operas of Richard Strauss in Britain*, 98; For more on Ebers see, Elizabeth Forbes, "Ebers, Clara," *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*. *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed March 17, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O003262.
[98] Harriett Johnson, "Der Rosenkavalier," *The Post*, February 16, 1974.

On the other hand, there are exceptions to this trend including Lehmann who performed Sophie in her early career. When she sang Sophie, critics considered her inferior to the lighter more youthful sounding sopranos such as Elisabeth Schumann and Claire Dux.[99] Legge notes that he "found no evidence that she had the light, floating C-sharp for the second act, or that in timbre or mien she would convincingly suggest a slip of a girl just out of the convent,"[100] implying that Lehmann even in her youth already had a heavier weight to her voice more suited to the older roles of Octavian and later the Marschallin.

Unlike the sopranos who are perceived as too young after moving from Sophie to the Marschallin, Lucia Popp graduated to the Marschallin late in her career. She was encouraged by critics who remarked that her body and voice were too "plump" to convey Sophie's youth. As John Higgins noted in 1978, and as evidenced on the 1979 Deutsche Grammophon live film of *Rosenkavalier* conducted by Erich Kleiber at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Popp's "tone may now be a shade plump for Hofmannsthal's sweet little mouse straight from the convent." It would not be until 1989 at the age of sixty that Popp would make her debut as the Marschallin to great acclaim.[101] In her 1993 obituaries, writers pointed out Popp's "remarkable […] ability to know just when to move from the soubrette role to that of the lyric soprano. The Queen of the Night led to Pamina, Susanna to the Countess in Figaro, Zdenka to Strauss's Arabella and, perhaps most importantly of all, Sophie to the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier*."[102] Retrospectively these writers acknowledged the impact of Popp's aging on her choice and efficacy in transitioning into new roles. Steane described how Popp's voice in the early 1960s was:

[99] Jefferson, *Lotte Lehmann*, 91.
[100] Schwarzkopf, *On and Off the Record*, 123.
[101] John Higgins, "Strauss in Safe Hands," *The Times*, June 19, 1989.
[102] "Lucia Popp," *The Times*, November 18, 1993.

> a light, bright-edged soubrette; later it filled out, and the last time I heard her in the opera house was as the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier*. The figure had filled out too, and one was aware of a strong back and sturdy swimmer's shoulders beneath the gowns. Her face on stage you always watched. In repose it had an aristocratic cast of feature, with high cheek-bones and heavy eyelids. In its habitual mobility, a thousand shades of merriment and anxiety would cross it, and one came to know a woman of enchanting vitality and innate dignity. When she stood at the doorway in Act III her presence had immediate command: the character we know as the Marschallin is after all the Princess of Werdenberg and a very great lady indeed. She made us more aware of nobility than I can recall in any other performance, and it was done without pompous assertion of rank but with the high bearing of one whom we had previously know so intimately in the privacy (albeit shared and invaded) of her bedroom.[103]

From Steane's description we can assume that he perceived Popp's voice to parallel the changes her body underwent. These changes implied her aging and maturity. Furthermore, he references her humanity and nobility similar to how critics praised Lehmann (perhaps having watched both these sopranos grow and embody more than one role in *Rosenkavalier* is a very intimate experience?). He saw her very facial features that once portrayed a young bourgeois girl become a mature woman with aristocratic authority because she aged into and now embodied the age of the Marschallin. We might also consider that Popp's enthusiastic reception was aided by her decision to perform the Marschallin at such a late stage in her career. At this time she was significantly distanced from her youthful portrayal of Sophie in her early and middle career.

Unlike the numerous Sophies who graduate to the Marschallin, most sopranos who transition from Octavian to the Marschallin are not considered too youthful in body or voice to embody the age of these roles. This is possibly a result of the difference in gender between these two roles, the similarity between the roles' tessituras, or the lesser age gap between Octavian and

[103] Steane, *Singers of the Century*, 202.

the Marschallin. Those sopranos mentioned so far include Lehmann, Ludwig, and Jones, however again there are exceptions, such as Della Casa. Although she became one of the most iconic Marschallins of the 1960s, Della Casa remarked that:

> I certainly enjoyed singing Octavian far more than the Marschallin, for he made me feel young and impetuous, and it was a challenge every time to be a woman playing the part of a man who disguises himself as a female. The score lies pretty low, particularly in the first part of the second act, and one must be careful. The Marschallin, in my estimation, despite some lovely passages and an interesting characterization, is depressing, and—just between you and me—almost a bore.[104]

Della Casa found the portrayal and music of the younger characters, Sophie being her favourite, more interesting than the Marschallin. This is most likely why she is one of the few remarkable sopranos who was able and wanted to perform Octavian again after transitioning to the Marschallin. Other sopranos such as Elisabeth Grümmer would not perform Octavian for several years before attempting to sing the Marschallin because she needed time to negotiate the difference between these two characters.[105] Despite Della Casa's impressive musical feat—most likely a result of her youthful portrayal of the Marschallin—critics found her switch back to Octavian in 1964 disconcerting. This is most likely because they associated her with the Marschallin, and how could she realistically age backwards? At the Metropolitan Opera, Ericsson said:

> Lisa Della Casa, who has sung-and will sing later this season-the role of the Marschallin, appeared as Octavian for the first time with the company. She looked elegant in the second act, less so in the first, and her lovely features did not look well under the male wigs. Her clear voice was not at its best in Octavian's music, since it lies low on the whole, and she tended to phrase sluggishly. Yet she was

[104] Lanfranco Rasponi, *The Last Primma Donnas* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 335.
[105] Rasponi, *The Last Primma Donnas*, 111.

> credibly youthful in action and nicely restrained in the scene where she is Octavian dressed as a maid.[106]

Ericsson noted her youthful enthusiasm for the role, yet also brings to our attention how Octavian's music does not suit her voice, perhaps because she was now used to the Marschallin's phrasing. Although Della Casa may have physically defied age ideology based on her reviews as Octavian, it seems that critics might have still associated her with the roles she had aged into and were not willing to defy their cultural assumptions about age.

From this brief look at the reception of a handful of singers who performed more than one of the protagonists in *Rosenkavalier,* we can see how the narrative of decline impacted their reception. Singers such as Lehmann and Popp who had aged significantly to create a large gap between when they performed a younger role to an older one were positively received because they created a discernable difference between when they were "young" and "old." However, performers who did not change significantly since they performed the younger roles in *Rosenkavalier* and then graduated to the older ones challenged critics' preference for age categories such as Della Casa and Schwarzkopf. We can assume that critics preferred to pity and sympathize with an older Marschallin because they understood the process of aging as a tragic decline. A youthful Marschallin on the other hand, contradicts deeply instilled age ideology thereby discrediting the Marschallin's wisdom and relatability. Although the rhetoric describing the increased nuance of the aged performer and his or her embodiment of more than one of the *Rosenkavalier* protagonists might suggest a narrative of achievement, we only find it when an older diva performs the Marschallin. Before concluding this chapter, in this final section I will look at another performance tradition of aging that happens among these roles to prepare my

[106] Once again, it is worth noting that this is the same Ericsson that described Della Casa's youthful portrayal as an adjustment for most audiences, Raymond Ericsson, "Der Rosenkavalier," *The New York Times*, October 12, 1964.

discussion of the diva in the next chapter. This final section observes how critics interpreted a famous diva passing down her wisdom about performing the role of the Marschallin to another singer now famous in that role, and who in some cases had performed one of the younger roles with the older diva as the Marschallin.

Inheriting the Marschallin

Singers and critics suggest that performing Sophie and/or Octavian and then the Marschallin increases a singer's knowledge of the latter role, and that watching other Marschallins impacts her interpretation. Not only do critics acknowledge that a singer embodies their own process of aging when they graduate to an older role, but also that he or she learns how to portray that character's age from the older singers who have performed it. In this way, performers are passing down age culture from one generation to the next. As discussed in the previous chapter, this is another example of how the theatrical performance of age is like an everyday social performance. Jones, noted that as Ludwig's Octavian she "taught me a great deal and she is the best Marschallin I have sung with."[107] In addition to singers' personal admissions, music critic Paul Hume observed how singers model themselves on past interpreters, "[l]ast week Evelyn Lear reached one of the great pinnacles of her career in the beautifully molded, elegantly sung portrait she offered. It has been her good fortune to have sung Octavian two decades or more, including several with Schwarzkopf […] Even more moving was her regal appearance, manner and singing in the opera's final scenes. Clearly modeled on Schwarzkopf's restraint in movement."[108] Hume connected Lear's performance to Schwarzkopf's because of their similar body movements, and that they had performed Octavian and the Marschallin on stage together before. It was there that he assumed Lear learned how to act older; how to become a great

[107] Higgins, "Welsh Marschallin."
[108] Paul Hume, "Opera: The Marvelous Met," *The Marvelous Met*, February 24, 1974.

Marschallin. Similarly, William Mann observed that in Bernstein's 1972 rendition of *Rosenkavalier*:

> Ludwig gives a more youthful and emotionally more subtle account full of nicely *recherché* inflexions and nuances of vocal colour. The younger portrayal is right, according to the composer, and it happens to appeal more to me (though many young listeners may prefer a Marschallin who sounds more maternal). Elisabeth Schwarzkopf used to be the leading exponent of this younger approach. In the recorded version she made with Karajan […] Miss Ludwig sang Octavian and now shows how attentively she studied and learnt from Schwarzkopf's interpretation—again and again one seems to hear the older singer's voice.[109]

Here, we see again how critics perceive a lineage between new and more experienced performers portraying aged characters such as the Marschallin. This connection is strengthened if we consider that Ludwig performed the Octavian to Schwarzkopf's controversially youthful portrayal of the Marschallin. To better understand how older performers teach younger ones to portray age, we can examine the reception of Schwarzkopf's own production of *Rosenkavalier* at La Monnaie. In this production, Schwarzkopf tutored Elisabeth Söderström, who had also sung both Sophie and Octavian, in the role of the Marschallin:

> The plan behind the Schwarzkopf *Rosenkavalie*r is revealed: it is a star vehicle for the Marschallin and in this Brussels production the Schwarzkopf mantle is being quite consciously passed to her chosen successor in the role, Elisabeth Söderström […] The most obvious outward signs are there in the final scene with the silver wig and aigrette associated with Schwarzkopf. But it is also notable that the resignation sets in very early. Elisabeth Söderström plays the Marschallin as a woman who is all too sadly realistic […] Söderström stresses the obsession with age: […] There is a sudden chill in the voice when she suddenly sees her solitary self in that simple world "Allein". It is a superbly subtle performance, which is always pointing towards the renunciation of the final trio, when Söderström at last unleashed her still considerable full voice. Her eyes were carefully averted from those of Octavian and, not by

[109] William Mann, "Attar of Rosenkavalier," *The Times*, February 26, 1972.

> accident, directed towards the stage box where the other Elisabeth, Schwarzkopf, was sitting.[110]

By acknowledging the process of one famous Marschallin teaching another Marschallin, or more intriguing another Sophie and/or Octavian, critics recognize that aging is a performance that is passed down from one generation of performers to the next. Furthermore, by acknowledging this lineage of performance, critics also see how performers in *Rosenkavalier* grow to embody and perform a role like the Marschallin.

Schwarzkopf was not the only Marschallin to advise another generation of singers about performing this role. This tradition began with arguably the most famous interpreter of the Marschallin, Lehmann. In 1962, at the age of seventy-five, Lehmann was invited to stage the Metropolitan Opera's production of *Rosenkavalier*. For this production, she worked with Régine Crespin who was debuting her Marschallin at the Metropolitan Opera. Many audiences in Europe saw Crespin as the subsequent inheritor of the Marschallin from Lehmann because she was also a Sieglinde sized voice and played the role in a matronly fashion.[111] Furthermore, like critics noted of Lehmann's performance, Mann claimed that "Crespin played the scene more tragically."[112] Unlike Schwarzkopf, we see Crespin inheriting Lehmann's older and more sympathetic interpretation of the Marschallin, thereby demonstrating how different narratives of age are passed down from one performer to the next. Unlike this lineage of age in performance as seen in the example of *Rosenkavalier*, in the next chapter, I explore how audiences reject their expectations of age when watching a diva perform. Instead of seeing the diva as embodying her

[110] John Higgins, "Opera in Brussels and New York," *The Times*, May 20, 1984.
[111] Michael H. Kater, *Never Sang For Hitler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 280.
[112] Mann, "Attar of Rosenkavalier."

age or arguably the character, she is instead seen as timeless and therefore impervious to the narrative of decline.

Chapter 3: Timelessly Decaying Divas; An Analysis of Diva Reception and the Narrative of Achievement

In the previous chapter using the example of Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, I examined the different ways that critics have interpreted an opera singer's aging. Some perceive the singer as embodying her own age when performing the character, and others overlook the performer's age if it contradicts the imaginary world of the opera. For example, during the last decade that Lehmann performed the Marschallin at the Metropolitan Opera, critics noted the large gap between her age and Strauss' intended age for the character. Critics overlooked the discrepancy between Lehmann and the Marschallin's age because her portrayal of the character was renowned. To the listener she was the Marschallin, however this was not the Marschallin of Strauss and Hofmannsthal's imagination, rather a figure born from a reverence for the singer. This propensity for opera audiences to look past a performer's appearance if it contradicts the character he or she is portraying, is a practice that has characterized opera since the eighteenth century.[1] Unlike Lehmann who performs an old Marschallin, why are spectators dramatically convinced when a sixty year old singer performs a sixteen year old character? As I will explore in this chapter, spectators are willing to overlook age discrepancies between a performer and his or her character for the sake of the most important aspect, the music, and how well they know the singer performing it.

Reinterpreting Age on the Stage

Although opera scholarship has yet to do so, theatre scholars examine the gap between the age of the performer's real body and the age of the character they are portraying. These scholars provide a foundation to explore why older performers can portray younger characters

[1] Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, *A History of Opera* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), *passim.*

convincingly on the stage—a phenomena that is even more pronounced in opera. Age scholar, Margaret Morganroth Gullette observes that audiences "are willing to see double" when the actor is not the same age as the character they are portraying.[2] As noted in chapter one, when doing so the audience sees the gap between Linda and Michael Hutcheons' concept of a real body and represented body. The latter is composed of certain age-associated cues to suggest an age likeness, and then these cues are interpreted through the spectator's understanding of age. According to Gullette, through this process or exchange "[t]he stage actor has an audience trained to contribute a great deal to the dramatic illusion" that is his or her implied age. By accepting the dramatic illusion or discrepancy between the performer and character's age, the gap between the real and represented bodies is reduced or simply accepted by the spectator.[3]

Michael Mangan expands on Gullette's concept of spectators contributing to the "dramatic illusion," by analyzing how we as subjects empathize with others. In Mangan's theory of gerontideology discussed in chapter one, the subject has a sense of herself which is created through socializing with the subjects around her.[4] Mangan explains that theatre like gerontideology is "a continually moving, kaleidoscopic spectrum of shared subjectivities and objectivities. The question arises, of course, as to the possibility of sharing subjectivity at all."[5] Mangan believes that this is possible, especially in the theatre, because of our ability to empathize, which he defines as, "the ability to suspend our focus on our own point of view and our own thoughts, perceptions and interests, and to focus on other people's interests, to intuit what someone else is thinking or feeling, and to respond appropriately to their thoughts or

[2] Margaret Morganroth Gullette, *Aged by Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 165.
[3] Gullette, *Aged by Culture*, 165.
[4] Michael Mangan, *Staging Ageing* (Bristol, Chicago: Intellect, 2013), 38.
[5] Mangan, *Staging Ageing*, 40.

emotions."[6] Empathy is one of the many ways that actors can imagine, and then imitate what it is like to be another character and its age. Also, it enables the audience to imagine that the actor is the age meant to be portrayed even though his or her real body is a different age. Spectators can then "project themselves into the emotional life of an actor/character on stage," thereby producing emotions in themselves despite the artifice.[7]

Mangan goes on to explain that this fictitious situation or imaginary world is not only unreal, but that it is known to be so by the audience—like the Hutcheons' duality between the real and represented body:

> Actors do not, contrary to popular belief, lose themselves completely in their parts: the exhausted, sweaty, sobbing, broken figure onstage at the end of King Lear is also a craftsman who knows that he must position his body at this angle to catch the light and create the most effective stage picture, and must modulate his voice in this way so that his "Howl, Howl, Howl" may be heard at the back of dress circle as well as at the front of the stalls. And the audience member whose eyes well up with tears knows perfectly well with another part of her mind that the curtain call is not far off and wonders whether there might be time for a drink after the show. Consciousness, both for the actor and for the audience member, is dual. But that need not prevent the fact that, in the moment, empathy may enable us to embody another's emotions, and "embodying other's emotions produces emotions in us."[8]

As Mangan observes, the listener consciously lends credibility to the dramatic illusion of the performance. Like in the previous chapter using the example of Strauss' *Rosenkavalier*, I argue that the connection between opera's imaginary world and the real bodies performing on stage exists like in theatre, but to a greater extent. Unlike theatre, opera's musical dimension elicits a

[6] Mangan, *Staging Ageing*, 40.
[7] Bruce McConachie, *Engaging audiences – A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 67.
[8] Mangan, *Staging Ageing*, 40.

greater tolerance from the spectator toward the divide between the performers' real bodies and their intended representations.

Transcending the Real Body

Because opera generally demonstrates a greater rift between reality and the imagined world of the performance, listeners overlook the discrepancies between the singer's body and the character he or she is portraying. Because opera performers sing their thoughts instead of speaking them, opera audiences expect a performance that is different from reality. Musicologists Susan J. Leonardi and Rebecca A. Pope explain that music transcends the imaginary world of the opera. Like Catherine Clément, for them, "opera's beautiful music lulls the critical faculties to sleep; it is for [Clément] a sort of reverse siren song that allows the unconscious to consume pernicious representations."[9] However, what then of the opera singer's body? Do we ignore it completely in performance, its weight, its age? On the contrary, Gary Tomlinson claims that, "those who dislike opera do so precisely because they prefer singing voices to be disembodied, pure voice; they cannot accept a convention that, as we all know, can lead to a knob-kneed, fifty-year-old tenor condemned to wobble around the stage in Egyptian fighting gear [in *Aïda*], or a voluminous soprano made to represent a teenage virgin [in Strauss's *Salome*]."[10] As Tomlinson notes, those who do not let the music transcend the physical bodies of the performers are left unsatisfied because an opera singer's body more often than not does not conform to the representations designated in the story.

Although Tomlinson does allude to the gap between the real and represented bodies in opera, he does not explain how music can transcend a performer's body and remain embodied as

[9] Susan J. Leonardi and Rebecca A. Pope, *The Diva's Mouth: Body, Voice, Prima Donna Politics* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 16; Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis, U of Minnesota P, 1998), 20–1.
[10] Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 88.

opposed to pure voice. As briefly explored in chapter one, Jelena Novak explains using theories of ventriloquism that there are two theoretical bodies on stage, the physical body and the vocalic body; the latter can inscribe meaning onto the physical body and this body can also do the same to the vocalic one.[11] The vocalic body serves to fill the gap aurally between the image of the performer's real body and what it should represent, especially if we consider age. Adriana Cavarero alludes to this phenomenon when she says that opera audiences accept the possible difference between the text and the stage because "opera is essentially the sublime working of the human voice, which conquers the meaning of words as well as the visible realm of representation."[12] Thus, like Novak, she suggests that the human voice or the vocalic body is very physical and acts to represent the physical body through the musical score, whereby it conquers "the visible realm of representation."

Using Novak and Cavarero's analysis to conceptualize how listeners perceive the opera singer's body, we can see how the physical body does not carry the same weight to represent as the vocalic one. This means that the listener does not completely ignore the physical body, rather he or she gives it a different degree of importance. In his article "Body and Voice in Melodrama and Opera," Peter Brooks observes this phenomenon in opera:

> The demands made on the voice and body for dramatic representation are not the same, and the claim for their coincidence will very often demand a large dose of faith on the part of the spectator/listener, a willingness to accept an as-if that would seem to be excluded from a genre that traditionally seeks, in its stage settings and effects, such a large measure of illusionism. Lovers of opera do of course accept that as-if. They do not close their eyes as the overage and overweight Radames launches into his adoration of Aida. On the contrary, they revel in the weird excess of the situation. They revel in a form that combines illusionism with clear

[11] See chapter one for an in-depth discussion of Novak's theories on Ventriloquism.
[12] Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 121.

> impossibility, the height of artifice with the most natural of instruments, the human voice.

If we accept Brooks' claim that audiences revel in the artifice of opera, as suggested already by Tomlinson, then they do not entirely ignore the body. Arguably then, they take some pleasure from the "weirdness" of their ignorance. An ignorance that finds justification in the, often ageless, reverence of the opera diva.

The Diva

By combining the methodologies of age seen thus far in this chapter, we can better understand why opera's artifice does not deter opera fans and arguably attracts them. If we apply these concepts to examine the diva, I believe we can move beyond musicologists' desire to fetishize or possess the diva—as suggested by Michelle Duncan in chapter one—and instead propose that audiences do see the singer's real body, especially the diva's body.

As Duncan argues, diva scholars have yet to critically consider the diva's body, rather they claim that the preoccupation of the fan is the diva's voice.[13] Leonardi and Pope describe diva worship as "collaborative as well as a solitary activity" in which the diva, like our age in gerontideology, is "a field for the projection and identifications of the other."[14] Perceiving the diva in this way resembles Duncan's extra-corporeal criticism of scholarship, and is arguably supported by some reviews of famous divas. For example, in a collection called "My diva: 65 gay men on the women who inspire them," Gary Ljungquist says that his "love affair with Joan Sutherland focuses on her voice. Unlike Callas, whose physical being, facial expression, and body language were part of her allure, Joan's voice was the focus of my attraction; the sheer

[13] Michelle Duncan, "The Operatic Scandal of the Singing Body: Voice, Presence, Performativity," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16/3 (2004): 285
[14] Leonardi and Pope, *The Diva's Mouth*, 4 and 15.

physical sound penetrated me in a place that is rarely touched."[15] Here, Ljungquist completely excludes Joan's body from his admiration of her as a diva. From another angle, that of the performer, soprano Edita Gruberova suggests that her fans consider her voice as separate from her body. She explains that the reason she continues to perform roles from her early career such as the title role in Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* is because they are demanded by her fans. She claims that she has sung it "about two hundred time onstage and recorded it twice;" and so she remarks, "I guess I will be singing it forever" with a mocking sigh.[16] Although she was fifty-eight years old at the time of this interview, three times the age of Lucia, Gruberova observes, like many divas, that her career is shaped by the demands of her fans despite her age—in 2017 she performed Lucia again at the age of seventy.

As noted by scholars and both these testimonies, the fan sees the opera singer's voice as essential to be an opera diva. However, what these testimonies seem to neglect is the obvious and commonly overlooked fact that implicates aging: to become a diva takes time. To be a diva, a performer must have a significant amount of experience and exposure to be recognized by the audience as having earned that title. A diva acquires this recognizability by excelling in each role she sings and expanding her repertoire.[17] Mordden notes this expansion of the diva's image when he describes it as:

---

[15] Gary Ljungquist, "Joan Sutherland: Dame Joan and I," in *My Diva: 65 Gay Men on the Women Who Inspire Them*, ed. Michael Montlack (Madison: Terrace Books, 2009), 93.
[16] Niel Rishoi, "Donizetti Kammersangerin An Interview with Edita Gruberova," *The Opera Quarterly* 14/3 (1998): 75.
[17] Mordden further explains why it is so important for opera singers to expand their repertoire unlike dance, "[t]hus opera links its immortalities as no other art can, for no other art consists, largely, of succeeding generations played. Dance has a comparatively smaller core repertory and, besides, even its most formidable classics may be choreographed anew, wholly changing their form and yielding new roles of old character names. Various dancers have played Le Sacre du Printemps' Chosen One in contrasting stagings totally unlike each other; but imagine singers trying Carmen recomposed with new melodies. The spoken stage does have its Portia, Millamant, Mother Courage, Mrs. Tyrone, great roles of unchanging text; but thespians are more concerned with premieres than with

> the changes an opera diva undergoes—from sweet Sophie von Faninal on to the impetuous Octavian, thence to the wise Marschallin as the voice shifts its center of power over the years; or from Mimi to Tosca, Marguerite to Esclarmonde, Cherubino to Countess. In a single season a diva plays femme fatales and trouser parts, princesses of morbidezza and tense verismo queens. She commands Handel, Donizetti, Berlioz, Britten. True, an enthusiasm for bel canto or Wagner will identify one. Yet once fame is won a singer moves beyond specialty, and the image expands.[18]

Mordden clearly expresses that the opera diva's image changes with her body and that audiences see this change in the way and what she performs. As we saw in the previous chapter with the case of Sophie, Octavian, and the Marschallin, audiences recognize and revel in the singer who ages because as Mordden notes her "fame is won" when her aging body necessitates this change.

When choosing to see a certain performer, a spectator recognizes that he or she has aged to accomplish the achievements of his or her career. However, the spectator is either willing to ignore it or let that enhance the artifice of her playing someone younger. Gullette notes this phenomenon of famous divas playing younger characters in a section of her book worth quoting at length:

> When playing younger is not about memoir, many instances are linked to a star's need to go on working and an audience's desire to see her do so. [Sarah] Bernhardt in midlife played Hamlet: the audience wanted to see their icon. In 1995, Carol Channing reprised herself as she had been in Dolly in 1964, three decades past being the midlife widow of Westchester. It wasn't exactly "passing" in the street (as white, or of a higher class, or younger), where the goal is to get viewers not to look twice. Everyone could see the signs of her being "old for the role." But many in the audience–especially spectators closer to Channing's age–wanted the charisma to succeed; they admired the likeness more if they noted a disparity because they'd been taught that Channing's imitation of youth was the sauciest female retort to ageism. There's more leeway for stars. Hired to show "some aspect of herself that

revivals, while opera is currently very weak in new work." Ethan Mordden, *Demented: The World of the Opera Diva* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 296.

[18] Mordden, *Demented*, 293.

> the audience finds identifiable," the star is given more slack than "the character actor [who] is hired to seem to be the character" (as Kathleen Chalfant nicely puts it).[19]

Because the audience "knows" the performer, stars or divas epitomize the duality between the real and represented bodies. Listeners acknowledge a star's previous career because they were enticed to go see the live performance. As a result, listeners are willing to suspend a greater degree of realism when viewing a diva's anachronistic aging, perhaps because they can remember when she was once younger or see her as a timeless icon, as suggested by Gullette. However, unlike Gullette, who suggests that this "illusion depends on our not noticing how much an actor relies on the default [or real] body of his older self to fill in sameness as well as change," I argue that in the case of the diva the recognition of the real and aged body is what adds to this illusion.[20] It is the aged body that represents the diva's identity or persona outside the work and inspires the spectator to overlook the realism demanded by the work's narrative. For example, on Facebook fans post photos with their favourite divas to track her career, and the moments they shared it with her. Admirers are proud of their most recent experiences of the diva preferring her current state as much as her younger image. This phenomenon can be seen in the Edita Gruberova, Nelly Miricioiu, or Joan Sutherland Facebook groups, where fans post not only the most recent performance photos and videos, but also everyday photos of the diva off the stage. Fans do not separate the image of the diva on and off the stage. Although Mordden claims that, "everyone knows that opera singers are not necessarily actors who sing, [but] singers, period," I argue it is quite obvious that fans still idolize the singer's body as well as the voice.[21] As a result, I do not deny the possibility that the "voice is everything" as suggested by Leonardi

[19] Gullette, *Aged by Culture*, 168.
[20] Gullette, *Aged by Culture*, 166.
[21] Mordden, *Demented*, 202.

and Pope, rather I want to expand our understanding of the voice to include Novak's vocalic body as representing the aging performer.

Nostalgia and the Diva

Perhaps because audiences see the diva's real body and revere her vocal abilities, when she begins to decline they choose to praise her despite the faults that occur from aging. As a result, audiences do not deny or ridicule the aged body. Rather they focus on the vocalic body and applaud the diva's perseverance to continue working despite her age. Mordden explains that the reason why audiences seem to finally enjoy divas once they are in decline is because, "it takes most of a career to implant a notion of one's gifts. And by that time one is in decline, the range imploding and the precision losing grip, the photo fading. When a singer has reached greatness, he or she is already turning into history."[22] Although arguably exaggerated, Mordden implies that we interpret the aged diva using what Gullette would describe as a narrative of achievement. Despite the diva's recognized decline, audiences use her past successes to justify her current and continued greatness, like Lehmann in the previous chapter.

This narrative of achievement appears in the few musicological studies of age in popular music. Scholars Ros Jennings and Abigail Gardner in their introduction to *'Rock On': Women, Ageing and Popular Music* explain the impact nostalgia has on the diva turning into history. They state that, "nostalgia might play in the experience of both ageing and also aged performance for both the performer and audience, allowing the artist to operate in a different discursive space and assume new roles such as 'national treasure' or cultural icon."[23] This new discursive space instead of reiterating the narrative of decline denies the categorization of age.

---

[22] Mordden, *Demented*, 292.
[23] Ros Jennings and Abigail Gardner, "Introduction: Women, Ageing and Popular Music," in *'Rock On': Women, Ageing and Popular Music*, ed. Ros Jennings and Abigail Gardner (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 3.

Rather than criticizing the diva for her old age, she is congratulated for her achievement over time. However, since the diva is still performing roles that she did in her youth, her achievement is not based on embodying her age in the role, like Lehmann, but connoting her vanished youth and the listener's ensuing nostalgia.

We can see this narrative used by several critics regarding divas such as Sutherland. At the end of her career, which lasted until she was sixty-three years old, critics evoked her previous successes to compensate for her aged body and voice. After a performance at the Metropolitan Opera of Vincenzo Bellini's *I Puritani*, *The Times* observed that:

> One does not, of course, look for the bloom and freshness of youth in the performance of a 60-year-old, and Sutherland seemed tentative at the start, her tone somewhat covered. The wonted authority soon returned, however, and she invariably rose to the big moments masterfully. If she by-passed some of the altitudinous challenges, what she attempted she achieved, quite simply as no one else can today. Accustomed to hearing the pitchless swoops that now pass for coloratura, one was struck by Sutherland's ability to make meaningful contact with virtually every note encompassed in a run. From her acting we expect less, and if she regally walked through the youthful role, that seemed good enough at least for this occasion.[24]

Despite the vocalic body's failure to mask her age, this critic vindicated Sutherland's performance by describing it as a glimpse of her previous greatness. Furthermore, the critic claimed that Sutherland's aged performance was still better than any contemporary singer. When Mordden describes the diva as "turning into history," he also implies that critics hold up the previous generation of singers to the current one. Similarly, after the Metropolitan Opera Gala performance in 1987, Will Crutchfield claimed that:

> a great singer past her prime is always better than a singer who had no prime. There is no way around reporting that Miss Sutherland

[24] "Bellini's I Puritani," *The Times*, December 2, 1986, 13.

> did not sound as though she had years and years of singing yet ahead, but she gave ample demonstration of what was special about the years that lie behind.[25]

Complementary observations have also been made of a contemporary diva, Gruberova, who is nearing the end of her forty-year long career. After a performance of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* at the age of sixty-nine in 2015 a reviewer remarked that:

> It would be pointless to analyse vocal defects. Yes, sometimes she sounds as though she's squeezing her high notes out like toothpaste from a tube; yes, it occasionally seems as though the cello's stuck his spike in her foot; yes, her intonation is sometimes off (though she corrects it swiftly); and yes, she sometimes growls like an injured lion from her lower register. All this has been present in her voice for years, and the miracle of Edita Gruberova is that she can offer so much more to compensate. Just her encore, after such a demanding programme, demonstrated her generosity, strength and passion, for which the two-thousand people at La Scala were very grateful indeed as well as the orchestra and chorus who applauded her enthusiastically.[26]

This reviewer admitted the aging defects of Gruberova's voice and, as we saw in the case of Sutherland, used her previous successes to justify her current performance.[27] Reviews like these that do not belittle an aging diva and instead respectfully document the great artist, represent the majority of reviews of divas at the end of their career.

If we return to Sutherland's reception, one can see that by "turning into history," as Mordden would say, the diva becomes an ageless and unchanging object, as Jennings and Gardner would note. In a review of Sutherland in 1986, Peter Goodman described her as:

> A monument, in the Egyptian desert, weathered and pitted but still bearing the unmistakable magnificence of her freshest days. She sings with more care today, picking her moments and launching

[25] Will Crutchfield, "Broadcast/Telecast Review," *The New York Times*, January 11, 1987.
[26] "Overwhelming applause for Gruberova and her queens at La Scala," *Gramilano*, July 27, 2015, https://www.gramilano.com/2015/07/overwhelming-applause-for-gruberova-and-her-queens-at-la-scala/.
[27] Another review of a Gruberova performance in 2012 claims that "[h]er colleagues are a strong lot, but Gruberova is not. By the time of this November 2012 recording her voice was in sad state. It squalls and wobbles. It barely manages. High notes are shrieks. What a pity," "La Straniera," *American Record Guide* 78/4 (2015): 75.

> herself upward cautiously. The wobble in her voice has grown, but it was never out of control Friday. She hit every note she aimed for, did not swoop, did not crack, and sang with plenty of strength and still-remarkable precision.
>
> Most singers today, from stars in their prime to novices just-starting out, would be proud to sing as well in their youth as Sutherland sings in her maturity. Even as one gentleman in the audience grew hoarse shouting "La Stupenda," she never faltered.[28]

By describing Sutherland as a monument, Goodman suggested the unchanging nature of her performance. Despite listing the effects time has had on her voice, Goodman relegated Sutherland to the timeless discursive space of an icon claiming that she "never faltered." Jennings offers an explanation for the exemption of age in this nostalgic discursive space using the example of pop diva Shirley Bassey. She explains how:

> Bassey is placed firmly within the canon of "showbiz" and explores how, through an embrace of "showbiz" codes of artifice and the masquerade, paths are opened up for women performers to proceed along through older age in ways that continue to mark them out as "fabulous". This is precisely because they are fabricated as something other than the "natural" woman who ages. They are, as a result, exempt from similar critiques of an ageing process of which they are still part of, but not prey to. Bassey has become a timeless icon of camp, a diva whose own personal tragedies and provenance construct a recognizable diva trajectory.[29]

Like pop divas, we can argue that opera divas become "something other than the natural woman who ages." However, what is ostensibly more complex about opera divas in comparison to pop divas is that when performing in an opera a diva must portray a character yet at the same time, as we can see from the diva worshippers examined above, we also perceive the diva's persona.

[28] Peter Goodman, "Sutherland Sings Bellini at the Met," *Newsday*, November 14, 1986.
[29] Jennings and Gardner, "Introduction: Women, Ageing and Popular Music," 6.

Old Divas Growing into Young Roles

We have observed thus far that when critics see the diva's aged body they evoke its previous successes. How then does the opera diva become associated with youthful roles like Gullette's example with Carol Channing? Mordden explains that this is a result of the diva's fame, it is:

> hemmed in by certain expectations, both from colleagues and from the public. This is not simply a matter of age limiting a diva, for age does not dwindle in Isolde, Tosca, or Lucia the way it does a movie actress. Like those fifty-year-old Beatrices of the Ellen Terry era, divas actually age into young parts. But divas do become prisoners of their celebrity, unable or unwilling to move into other kinds of roles, different music. It is as if one spends one's youth learning great roles and one's seniority becoming their victim.[30]

As Mordden observes, divas must perform what is expected of them. Like Gruberova as Lucia, audiences associate divas with particular roles and the more they age and consequently perform that role, arguably the more their fame in said role increases.

Returning to Sutherland's reception, in a review by John Higgins, he also noted this phenomenon in her performance:

> Most sopranos grow out of roles. Dame Joan Sutherland has steadily grown into Lucia. She may have brought a trunkful of new costumes from Sydney, including a fetching turquoise and tartan number for the Fountain Scene, but many of the details from Zeffirelli's production of 26 years ago remain the same: the shadow cast on the wall before the entry for the Mad Scene and the dash down the steps before she stops and seizes the scenery for support, the little skittering run across the stage as Lucy remembers the wedding day that was not, "O lieto giorno."[31]

Higgins observed that the only thing that changed since Sutherland's debut in Zefferelli's *Lucia*, is Sutherland. Ironically like Mordden, he thinks that she has matured into the younger role noting that she had performed it several years ago. However, it is not Sutherland that grew

[30] Mordden, *Demented*, 279–80.
[31] John Higgins, "Opera," *The Times*, April 15, 1985, 9.

younger. Rather it is her fame that has grown, her own persona outside of the opera, which then affects how she is perceived in the opera, even her age. Like many divas such as Montserrat Caballé and even Bassey, Sutherland brings her own costumes to the production emphasizing that she is performing Dame Joan Sutherland, not Lucia.[32] Then age is based on her discursive realm of the diva as opposed to the imaginary world of the opera. These reviews are a testament to spectators acknowledging the diva's body and aging, and how it enhances their belief in her performance of youth and timelessness.

In a magazine article published in 1976, Richard Dyer observed Sutherland's failure to expand her repertoire due to her glory in her previous young roles:

> Today, Miss Sutherland's self-awareness has a decisive influence on what roles she will sing. For many years now she has not appeared in the parts in which she was—and still would be—vocally supreme, the virginal ingénue Amina in Bellini's "La Sonnambula." ("I can't romp on like that any more.") It seems more fitting to her to tackle mature roles like the passionate mother Donizetti created in her operatic version of the Lucrezia Borgia story.[33]

As Dyer noted, Sutherland attempted to perform more "mature" repertoire, however despite the addition of Lucrezia she continued to reprise the roles for which she was famous, especially as

[32] "There's something about the stage personality that I love. [Montserrat Caballé] can be so funny. I remember she did a Traviata here [in London] in that Visconti production, and of course she wasn't going to wear those boring black-and-white costumes. She brought her own and did Act I in black and Acts II and III in lavender, I think, a huge lavender crinoline. And she brought her own parasol, because that's how she did Traviata. At the first curtain call, she came out with her glass of champagne, there was a big ovation, and she very, very slowly poured the champagne over her bosom, which then glistened in a voluptuous fashion. The grin on her face! The audience just went berserk. Now, I know that hasn't got a huge amount to do with Traviata, but as an event .... Here's a girl with a smashing sense of humor, and wickedness!" Rodney Milnes observed that his enjoyment of the opera was not about *La Traviata*, but the persona of Caballé within it even if it contradicts the work—and in this example the famous Visconti production originally tailored for Maria Callas. In other words, the diva becomes much larger than the work. We can apply Milnes's infatuation with the diva to aging as well. Audiences may see that the age of the performer contradicts the libretto, however, their admiration of the diva separates the performer from the opera whereby they can be whatever age and not affect the opera's imaginary world; Ira Siff, "Life is a Caballe," Opera News 67/5 (2002): 16.

[33] Richard Dyer, "Sutherland, Bonynge and 'The Voice': Set for the Met," *New York Times*, February 22, 1976, 18.

she neared retirement. These roles include Elvira in Vincenzo Bellini's *I Puritani*, Lucia, and Amina in Bellini's *La Sonnambula*. As Mordden claims about all divas, Sutherland aged into these younger roles because she had been internationally identified with them since the beginning of her career; the role that made her an overnight sensation in 1959 at Covent Garden was Lucia. Responding in the article quoted above, Richard Bonynge, Sutherland's husband, echoed the thoughts of Sutherland's fans wishing that she would perform the role of the adolescent Amina again despite previously admitting that she had grown too old to portray it convincingly. Despite this conclusion in 1976, Sutherland and Bonynge recorded *La Sonnambula* for the second time in 1980 for Decca, almost twenty years after their first collaboration on disc in 1962 with this opera. Although we cannot see her on stage "romping around," when comparing one recording to the next it is interesting to hear how Sutherland's voice and interpretation has aged. Like the descriptions of Sutherland's voice in the reviews quoted above, one hears that her voice has grown larger and heavier over the course of almost twenty years. Her coloratura is no longer as light, dainty, or daring as it was in 1962, and her high register is more carefully controlled and thin. However, Sutherland's lower register has filled out in the later recording portraying a more mature sound than in the first. Like Amina, Sutherland reprised the young heroines whom she was famously associated with on disc throughout her career. It seems likely that she did so not because she could portray their youth better than when she was young, but because she anticipated her fan's desire to wax nostalgic about her art. As a result, Sutherland performed roles at the end of her career that are perceived as a narrative of achievement by her audience.

In the next chapter, I will explore how age narratives have changed with the advent of technology, particularly filmed opera. Because it captures and zooms in on the performers it

limits their illusionary space and the vocalic body. What then happens to the diva? Michel Poizat describes the singularity of the diva in opera by explaining the divine status of the word:

> But what is new in the appellation 'diva' is that now it is the female singer and she alone who is accorded divine status, as though it were her power to transform herself into pure voice, inasmuch as she is one incarnation of many successive roles, that allowed her to be characterized as divine.[34]

As discussed so far it is the listener's recognition of the diva outside of her many incarnations in opera that constitute her fame and deny the aging constraints of the opera. However, this balance in ephemeral live theatre is challenged by the permanence of filmed opera that focuses the listener on the visual and narrative dimensions of the opera as opposed to the diva's voice. In the next chapter, I explore how the diva's narrative of achievement is renegotiated with technology, thereby intensifying the narrative of decline.

[34] Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 180.

Chapter 4: Ageism and the Mediatisation of Opera

In the last two chapters, I analysed two contrasting paradigms of how an opera performer's age is received and interpreted. To summarize, in the first a performance benefits from the singer's representation of her own age. In the second the diva transcends her appearance. Throughout the twentieth century, both paradigms were changed by the preservation and dissemination of performances using new technologies. In this final chapter, I examine the impact technology, particularly mediatisation, has had on how age is represented in operatic performances.

The tendency to evaluate an operatic performance based on a performer's visual features is amplified by technology's capacity to vividly capture moments in time using screens and cameras. Because cameras can now reproduce an event almost exactly, we believe that they convey empirical truth. However, like analysing our own age in a mirror, this truth is still a second hand and manipulated image of oneself. At the beginning of her book *Aged by Culture*, Margaret Morganroth Gullette warns us that technology has increased the prevalence and dissemination of negative representations of age.[1] She reflects upon an exhibit called "Secrets of Aging" that travelled across America in which the focus was a cyber-fi booth called the time machine. Participants had to be between the ages of one and eighteen. When the participant stepped into the booth, the camera took a photo and aged the participant year by year until the age of sixty-three. Created by a company called Core Digital, the program used a computer-generated algorithm to accentuate the stereotypical signs of aging already existing on the participant's body such as wrinkles, freckles, or moles. Thus, to make participants look older, the algorithm made the participants less attractive according to the standard image of beauty.

[1] Margaret Morganroth Gullette, *Aged by Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 6–7.

Immediately problematic about this representation of aging—demonstrated by the terrified children who left the booth—is its representation of aging as only making you look worse. Furthermore, the experiment did not consider the unique experiences that impact our individual aging processes, possibly making us look older or younger than we are. By overlooking the impact of personal experience on our own aging, the scientists created a hypersensitive mirror that claimed to be prescient, but instead inaccurately showed its audience in decline.

My first chapter explored how the concept of the mirror ages us because we see more than one image of ourselves, but using the example of Gullette's time machine, technology gives us another mirror, the camera. The camera, like the mirror, focuses our understanding of age and its associated changes on our physical appearance. Gullette explains using her example of the time machine that:

> The first photo each child saw established the monitor as a mirror––and belief in cultural mirrors has devastating consequences in our hypervisual culture. Susan Sontag once observed, "The camera has ended by effecting a tremendous promotion of the value of appearances." Appearance and selfhood, increasingly, are stickily twined, so that your appearance (minus your expressions) is yourself. The crude algorithm of the exhibit was modeled on a dominant cultural assumption: that the body declines as if with no cultural intervention. (Everyone forgot that Core Digital intervened.).[2]

The use of the camera, like the mirror, shifts our understanding of aging away from an individual's personal narrative, including the individual experiences that shape his or her aging, and instead zooms in on his or her appearance. Like Sontag suggests, if our appearance represents our entire selfhood and it appears to be in decline, we then believe that as we age our lives only get worse. However, this is a cultural rather than a biological truth that the photo booth

[2] Gullette, *Aged by Culture*, 7; Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Allen Lane, 1978), 87.

claims to be scientific. As Gullette notes, the camera was a biased mirror that did not reflect, but instead projected, Core Digital's perception of aging. The algorithm used by Core Digital's scientists to age the participants was based on their beliefs of what it should look like to age. Since they showed the participants in decline, it is evident that they used their cultural concept of aging and claimed it was scientifically verifiable when in fact the booth was just a subtle representation of our own deeply engrained belief in decline age ideology.[3]

Ten years after Gullette, Mangan notes that consumers no longer need to go to an exhibit to use science like the cyber-fi booth to predict how they will look when get older. Applications are now available at our finger tips. For example, we can use the camera on our smart phone to age ourselves.[4] As a result, every person with a smart phone can access this extreme example of aging-as-decline, making its effect more pervasive than ever before. We can see the same effects of ubiquitous cameras in opera performance today accentuating and emphasizing the importance of appearance on stage over the music, and sometimes to the detriment of it.

Ageism in Opera

Since opera's inception, its audiences have been critical of the way that performers look on stage. Most nineteenth- and twentieth-century opera critics focus on what they see before discussing the music, including the sets, costumes, and performers' appearances. Many of the performers discussed in these reviews were famous for their beauty and dramatic presence, such as Giuditta Pasta, Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient, and Mary Garden. The pressure to appear young and beautiful on stage dramatically shaped the course of more than one opera singer's career. The most famous example is the drastic weight loss of Maria Callas. She claimed that she

[3] Sontag calls this faster seeing in *On Photography*, 124.
[4] Michael Mangan, *Staging Ageing*, 49–51.

lost the weight because spectators saw—and according to her, heard—her as fat, awkward, and unconvincing when she performed young beautiful heroines.[5] By looking slimmer she would not only look more seductive, but also more like an adolescent. A more recent example of dramatic weight loss for the sake of realism on stage is the career of soprano Deborah Voigt.[6] Voigt was fired in 2004 from the Covent Garden production of Richard Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* because she was too big for the director's vision of Ariadne in a "little black dress." After being replaced by a much thinner soprano, Voigt underwent gastric bypass surgery to change her appearance. Although Voigt's justification for the surgery was not specifically age related, one cannot deny that by looking slimmer Voigt can more convincingly pass for an adolescent from a distance. This weight loss also did not detract from her physical portrayal of the sixteen-year-old Brünnhilde in the Metropolitan Broadcast of Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in 2011. Voigt is one of the increasing number of voices speaking out against the discrimination against singers for their appearance. As evidence of the changing demands of size in opera, she provides examples such as Jessye Norman, Jane Eaglen, and Margaret Price who had illustrious careers despite their weight. However, as we saw in the first chapter, the appearance of the body has become more important over time, so much so that it is no longer acceptable for divas to transcend the appearance of the characters they are meant to represent, especially in the age of technology.

---

[5] When asked why she lost the weight by Edward Downes, Maria Callas explained that, "I was getting so heavy that even my vocalizing was getting heavy. I was tiring myself, I was perspiring too much, and I was really working too hard. And I wasn't really well, as in health; I couldn't move freely. And then I was tired of playing a game, for instance playing this beautiful young woman, and I was heavy and uncomfortable to move around. In any case, it was uncomfortable and I didn't like it. So I felt now if I'm going to do things right—I've studied all my life to put things right musically, so why don't I diet and put myself into a certain condition where I'm presentable." Edward Downes, "Interview with Edward Downes," *La Divina Complete*, EMI Classics, CD 4.

[6] See the chapter titled "Little black dress and sexy Salome," in Deborah Voigt, *Call me Debbie: True Confessions of a Down-to-earth Diva* (New York: Harper, 2015).

Gullette's "narrative of decline" came into startling clarity in 2010 when one of opera's famous divas, Daniela Dessì (a Riccardo Muti favourite) quit a production due to criticism about her age. As Rachel Antman notes:

> When renowned soprano Daniela Dessì, 52, quit a [Franco] Zeffirelli production of *La Traviata* in January of this year, the issue of ageism in opera suddenly attracted worldwide attention. According to the international media that covered the story, she did so because Zeffirelli had publicly complained about her weight and her age. Zeffirelli subsequently told the U.K.'s Daily Mail, "Violetta in my eye was young . . . My 'Traviata' was an opera for young people with young people."[7]

Zeffirelli's complaints about Dessì's age and weight contradict the diva paradigm analyzed in the previous chapter, and demonstrates a preference for realism in live opera. With his background in film and television as a director and producer, Zeffirelli approaches the representation of age in opera as he would in those genres. In the magazine article "The Shame Old Story: Ageism in Opera," Antman explains that Zeffirelli is only one recent example of ageism in the opera world. She claims, as do many other opera singers, that opera is no longer ruled by conductors like Herbert von Karajan, but instead stage directors like Zeffirelli who believe that "seeing as well as hearing is believing."[8] As a result, directors, and more importantly audiences, believe that opera should have the same visual demands as spoken theatre and cinema, that used to be overlooked in the case of the diva. In a later article, Antman quotes another singer named MacLean who justifies this discrimination because, "more and more, directors look at opera as theater." She explains that, "in a small venue where the audience is close to the singers, they want singers to look like the characters they are playing."[9] Although as we saw in chapter three there is more

---

[7] Rachel Antman, "The Shame Old Story: Ageism in Opera," *Classical Singer* 23/3 (March 2010): 18, https://www.classicalsinger.com/magazine/article.php?id=2071.
[8] Antman, "The Shame Old Story," 18.
[9] Rachel Antman, "Delayed Debutants: Singers Who Enter the Opera Scene Later in Life," *Classical Singer* 28/3 (March 2015): 26–9.

pressure in theatre than opera for performers to look like the characters they are portraying, when analysing the representation of age on stage Lionel Barrymore explains that, "[t]he stage actor has an audience trained to contribute a great deal to the dramatic illusion," however, "[t]he film audience is not so trained."[10] Like Barrymore, I argue that the film and theatre audiences have different expectations for realism in each of these venues. However, with film's increased popularity and accessibility, audiences now hold live theatre—like opera—to adhere to similar expectations of realism as would been seen in a film or television show. Thus, the audience no longer accepts dramatic illusions to the same degree.

Opera in Film

Since the early twentieth century when media began to rapidly improve, particularly the camera, the competition between live performance and film has increased. In his book *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, Philip Auslander expands on Herbert Blau's understanding of the competition between media and live performance saying that:

> theatre and other forms of live performance compete directly with mediatized forms that are much more advantageously positioned in the marketplace. By calling the pressure of live performance's competition with the mediatized "a datum of practice" [Blau] suggests that performance practice inevitably reflects this pressure in the material conditions under which performance takes place, in the composition of the audience and formation of its expectations, and in the forms and contents of the performance itself.[11]

As Auslander and Blau both note, mediatized forms are more popular with the public than live performance. This is a combination of these media's accessibility, for example a television screen in every home, and the enhanced visual effects that result from filmed performance. The popularity and increased exposure audiences have to these electronic media shape their

[10] Gullette, *Aged by Culture*, 165.
[11] Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), 6.

expectations of a performance, whether taped or live. As Auslander observes, "[t]o put it bluntly, the general response of live performance to the oppression and economic superiority of mediatized forms has been to become as much like them as possible."[12] In its youth, film and television copied theatre to innovate and draw audiences. But now as audience expectations are molded more by film and television, theatre is using techniques from these media to attract audiences.[13]

Mediatisation's effect on opera and tangentially the way it changes our view of aging can be clearly seen in filmed opera. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the high demand for opera spurred the creation of many filmed adaptations.[14] One of the most famous examples, particularly relevant to our focus on ageism, is Zeffirelli's 1982 film adaptation of *La Traviata*. Released in theatres in Italy and the United States to a resounding success, Zeffirelli enhanced the opera using film to visually captivate his audience with cinematic techniques that are impossible to imitate in the opera house. As Marcia J. Citron recalls:

> Soon there appeared Zeffirelli's *La Traviata*, a film critics loved and audiences flocked to see. I went with high hopes but came back with mixed emotions. Once again I felt that something special had happened. Yet I was angry at being reduced to tears when Violetta died at the end. This, I thought, was excessive. The director was exploiting film's expressive potential by overpowering me with huge close-ups of her sickly face as Verdi's sentimental music played on. I had lost control as a rational viewer. I was being manipulated by some larger force and cinema had won. It was clear that the medium wielded enormous power to shape interpretation and my response to it.[15]

[12] Auslander, *Liveness*, 7.
[13] Auslander, *Liveness*, Chapter 2.
[14] Marcia J. Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 20.
[15] Citron, *Opera on Screen*, 1.

Despite her tone here, throughout her book Citron defends film's capacity to enhance opera visually and affect the audience through their eyes and their ears. The expressive potential that she alludes to are the close-ups on Violetta's face, the beautiful Teresa Stratas. As Zeffirelli noted when criticizing Dessì's portrayal of Violetta twenty years later, Violetta should be young like the portrayal by Stratas in his film. Using lighting, make-up, skilled acting, and carefully chosen camera angles, film has the capacity to make Stratas at the age of forty look like the young courtesan. Unlike on the stage where a larger Violetta like Montserrat Caballé is applauded for her skill at singing the role, on the screen realism becomes possible and essential. Citron explains that this difference between realism on the stage as opposed to the screen is because:

> Opera establishes a theatrical world of pretense that is framed by the proscenium arch and articulated by an unnatural means of communication. Cinema, in contrast, promotes a greater sense of realism and fosters the illusion of a space without limits. As in the real world, speaking is more bounded spatially, it also thrives on realism—in fact, the use of videotape often creates a feeling of "hyper-realism."[16]

This hyper-realism requires the bodies that perform on screen to also conform to this illusion, such as Stratas. Through the camera lens, this hyper-realism in "screen opera brings the viewer into an intimate relationship with characters and singers," unlike live performance.[17] Because the camera is the primary medium through which we see the narrative, it can control what we see more acutely than on stage where our eyes may roam freely.[18] As a result, the camera can portray an illusion, of age for example, better than on the stage because it closely controls what we see and hear, as seen with Stratas' Violetta.

[16] Citron, *Opera on Screen*, 8.
[17] Citron, *Opera on Screen*, 7.
[18] Citron, *Opera on Screen*, 12.

Citron supports film's capacity to create illusion because, "[e]ach format appeals to different aspects of aesthetic experience. Moreover, their differences create tensions that inject new life into the other and invigorate opera in the larger sense."[19] For example, the realistic expectations from film and television that are now the norm in opera have pushed the boundaries of operatic staging. Citron notes these changes or "new life" in the opera house including:

> Movement and gesture, for example, might be paced more quickly to reflect the speed of MTV, commercials, and television. Stage productions prepared for the camera might be especially prone to this influence but there is probably a similar effect in stagings not geared to recording. As time passes and more directors and singers come to the opera as consumers of television and video culture, the impact of visual media should become more apparent on the stage.[20]

Eight years after the publication of Citron's book, Auslander notes the increased prevalence of directors trying "to replicate television, video, and film, and to incorporate digital media" into live performance.[21] He explains that:

> The celebrated helicopter effect in Miss Saigon, to choose but one small example, represents a direct importation of cinematic or televisual realism in the theatre. As theatre designer Wendall K. Harrington has said, "theatre-goers today have been raised on television. They have a cinematic vocabulary that one must deal with" (quoted in ibid.: 132). This development lends credence to Patrice Parvis's claim that "the formation … of audience taste by television necessarily rebounds on the future audience for theatre, particularly in the demand for realism" (Parvis 1992: 121). Theatre audiences are not only seeing live performances that resemble mediatized ones as closely as possible, but are apparently modeling their responses to the live event on those expected of them by television.[22]

[19] Citron, *Opera on Screen*, 9.
[20] Citron, *Opera on Screen*, 23.
[21] Auslander, *Liveness*, 25.
[22] Auslander, *Liveness*, 26–7.

We can see this same phenomenon in opera productions. Robert Lepage's stage concept for Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at The Metropolitan Opera is a perfect example of how a set can replicate film's ability to smoothly create and transition between scenes using projections and mechanical beams.[23] However, hyper-realism affects more than the sets in opera.

Like our gaze, cinema also controls what we hear. Returning for a moment to the example of Zeffirelli's *La Traviata*, the voice is prerecorded and not embodied by the performers caught on camera. Citron explains that in film:

> the realism-artifice relationship is inverted when it comes to sound. Opera delivers real and embodied sound: it is emitted at the same time it is heard and the physical source is generally knowable. For cinema and most of television, sound is emitted at the time the work is recorded, not when it is screened. In the case of film versions of opera, the situation extends even further. Here the music is usually prerecorded and later lip-synchronized to playback when the film is recorded by the camera. Singers become vessels from whom sound appears to originate, even though they only mouth the words. This artificial means of dealing with the music of the opera brings to mind the artifices of opera, but of course it is cinema's demands for realistic movement and consistent sound quality (as well as error-free performance) that cause this idiosyncrasy.[24]

What happens then when live opera is filmed? Although the relationship between realism and artifice is inverted when it comes to sound in operatic film, *The Met: Live in HD* series creates a product using technology that imitates the live experience. *The Met: Live in HD* seemingly restores this relationship by preserving live performance. As Sam O'Connell observes, "Both spaces on either side of the screen are social spaces occupied by audiences who have gather together to experience the performance event of the same opera."[25] Because, as O'Connell notes,

---

[23] Matthew Wilson Smith, "Gesamtkunstwerk and Glitch: Robert Lepage's Ring across Media," *Theater*, 42/2 (2012): 67–8.
[24] Citron, *Opera on Screen*, 8.
[25] Sam O'Connell, "Making Culture Popular: Opera and the Media Industries," in *Opera in the Media Age: Essays on Art, Technology and Popular Culture*, ed. Paul Fryer (Jefferson: McGarland & Company, 2014), 38.

The Met: Live in HD is a hybrid form between cinema and live performance that brings together two distinct audiences on either side of the screen to experience a "live" event, we might further question the results of this hybridity on the representation of age given the technological sophistication brought to bear in disseminating the event.

Hybrid Forms of "Live" Performance

Created in 2006, *The Met: Live in HD* is a selection of The Metropolitan Opera's season broadcast live to theatres around the world.[26] Because these broadcasts are live, before an actual audience, and in an opera house, there is a pretense that we are witnessing this performance unfiltered. However, the multiple camera set up "replaces the wandering eye effect in theatre," and reduces the distance between the audience and performers. Not only is what we see controlled, but also what we hear. The microphones enhance the singers' voices thereby creating a carefully constructed, yet somewhat elusive, filmed adaptation.[27]

In 2000, six years before the inception of *The Met: Live in HD* series, Citron tried to placate worries that "reproduced opera will replace live opera," by arguing that, "[l]ive and screen opera do not compete with each other but enhance each other. Screen opera expands the interpretive potential of opera in all its forms as it makes the genre available to millions who

[26] Here is a summary from the Metropolitan Opera's website about the *The Met: Live in HD*: "In December 2006, the company launched The Met: Live in HD, a series of performance transmissions shown live in high definition in movie theaters around the world. The series expanded from an initial six transmissions to 10 in the 2014–15 season and today reaches more than 2,000 venues in 70 countries across six continents. The Live in HD performances are later also shown on public television, and a number of them have been released on DVD. In partnership with the New York City Department of Education and the Metropolitan Opera Guild, the Met has developed a nationwide program for students to attend Live in HD transmissions for free in their schools." "Our Story," The Metropolitan Opera, http://www.metopera.org/About/The-Met/; "The 2008-2009 season will represent the third year of the Met Opera's live HD Simulcast transmissions. In its second year, the Simulcast series tripled the number of locations from the previous year to include nearly 600 theaters across the globe, including, for the first time, Australia, the Netherlands, Poland, the Czech Republic, Belgium, Puerto Rico, and Luxembourg. In total, 15 countries exhibited the events either live or on time-delay. The estimated audience for the eight live performances of the 2007-2008 season was 908,000, exceeding the total number who attended performances at the opera house (about 850,000)." Burton D Fisher, *Opera Journeys' Guide: Met Opera HD Simulcasts 2008-2009 Season* (US: Opera Classics Library Series, 2000), 7.

[27] Auslander, *Liveness*, 19.

might not otherwise see it."[28] The objective of *The Met: Live in HD* broadcasts also espoused Citron's utopian ideal to bring opera to as many people as possible, and encouraged them to attend performances at the Metropolitan Opera and their local opera companies. These attempts at opera's revitalisation in a technological era brings to mind Auslander's observation that, "[t]o an ever-greater extent, live performances are economically tied to mediatisation."[29] Despite these lofty goals, the *The Met: Live in HD* opera did not achieve all of its anticipated results. According to a study conducted by Stephan van Eeden at the University of British Columbia, the program did attract newcomers to opera, but if they were introduced to opera by *The Met: Live in HD* screenings, they preferred the mediatised experience to live opera.[30] Because spectators considered it a new experience altogether, it did not draw current audiences away from opera as feared by scholars, but it did not add to the pool of live opera attendees either. Instead, it created a niche audience for live filmed opera. This audience included live opera attendees for whom it did not replace the live experience, but instead offered more opera.

Among the many reasons why opera viewers chose to attend *The Met: Live in HD* broadcasts instead of live opera was the closer and cheaper seat not available in a larger theatre.[31] From this proximity, audiences expect the beautiful bodies seen in film live on the stage. A 2007 editorial called "Age is an Operatic Issue" explores this expectation considering the casting choices of Peter Gelb, the director of the Metropolitan Opera and creator of *The Met: Live in HD* program. The editor John Allison claims that:

> This situation is clearly becoming a cultural issue—or, more accurately, a televisual issue. But even with increasing Met

[28] Citron, *Opera on Screen*, 9.
[29] Auslander, *Liveness*, 28.
[30] Stephan van Eeden, "The Impact of The Met: Live in HD on Local Opera Attendance," (master's thesis, UBC, 2009), 47.
[31] Eeden, "The Impact of The Met," 24–5.

> telecasts, it's hard to imagine fans writing in great numbers demanding the removal of those chunky middle-aged tenors in favour of younger bodies and voices. Fortunately, in the opera house one doesn't have to see perfectly well that music has transforming power, and that sopranos and tenors who may look ludicrous until they open their mouths can be enthralling when they start to sing. From Rita Hunter to Luciano Pavarotti, to name but two recent examples, this has always been the case.[32]

As explored in chapter three, singers who do not represent the visual expectations of the role in opera can still be convincing, and as seen in the introduction, there are stereotypes such as the corpulent opera singer that perpetuate an idea of weight equalling operatic talent. However, as the author suggests, this phenomenon has changed because audiences are now more focused on the visual characteristics of the performers and how those represent the characters in the opera. Audiences now, like in film or television, want performers to look the appropriate age of the role because they expect in *The Met: Live in HD* broadcast to see them up close. Paul Heyer expands on the effects television has had on audience expectations of opera. Using his definition of *The Met: Live in HD* experience as "digital broadcast cinema" (DBC) to refer to the virtual experience of seeing a live opera on a big screen in high definition, he explains that[33]:

> Habituated to the close-up television, we often find it used in the DBC transmissions. The resulting problem is that singers who are used to performing onstage where they are viewed from "public distance," to appropriate Edward Hall's terminology (1966), are now being seen from "personal" and, at times, even "intimate distance." Questions have therefore arisen regarding the importance of appearance to performance, and whether a singer will now have a look compatible with the roles they play in order to be convincing.[34]

[32] John Allison, "Age is an Operatic Issue," *Opera* 58/7 (2007): 771.
[33] Paul Heyer, "Live from the Met: Digital Broadcast Cinema, Medium Theory, and Opera for the Masses," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 33/4 (2008): 591.
[34] Heyer, "Live from the Met," 597.

As we explored earlier, this author notes that performer physique has always been important to operatic performance, however he elucidates how camera close-ups have readjusted this balance in favor of the performer's appearance. This is brought into greater clarity if we acknowledge James Steichen's example of the 2013 *The Met: Live in HD* broadcast of Bizet's *Carmen*. He summed up the experience with one remark from a singer who said, "you can't see *that* in the Family Circle." He elaborated by explaining that:

> This particular remark emerged in response to a lascivious flick of the tongue by Carmen at the hapless Don José, a detail that would have certainly gone unnoticed in the upper balconies if not the prime parterre, but which was on full display for us and tens of thousands of other remote audience members worldwide […] It would be stretching it to call a few sexed-up gestures either an operatic revolution or a signal of opera's imminent demise. But it's hard to imagine Marilyn Horne leaping on and off of a table and wagging her tongue during the *séguedille* like Elīna Garanča. And Garanča would not be acting the way she did without the "numerous robotic cameras" dancing at her feet, ready and able to pick up such small gestures for immediate digital distribution.[35]

This "reinvention" of opera allows us to see aspects of the body on stage that were impossible before. The Metropolitan Opera has not only adjusted the blocking of the singers on stage, but also its choice of singers based on their appearance, particularly their age. To fulfil the expectations of filmed opera, the Metropolitan Opera casts younger singers to portray the desired body that audiences want to see up close. Like the Metropolitan Opera, other important companies such as the English National Opera have also promoted the under casting of roles to create televisual realism on stage.

By reinventing itself and finding new audiences, Steichen claims that *The Met: Live in HD* screenings might be opera's natural progression to survive: "In this sense, by collaborating

[35] James Steichen, "HD Opera a Love Hate Story: Staging the Backstage at Carmen, Live in HD," *The Opera Quarterly* 27/ 4 (December 2011): 455–6.

with the likes of All Mobile Video and the NCM (National CineMedia) Fathom network of live broadcast entertainment, the Met is doing what opera has always done—changing and adapting to meet new institutional and economic circumstances."[36] When asked, many opera directors also argue that imitating media in live performance and using realistic-looking performers is a strategy to attract new audiences. "However unpleasant as it may be," Antman explains that:

> ageism is a reality in the industry. As they strive to attract new audiences to the opera house, companies are forced to consider the expectations of younger generations, who are bombarded with media images of young, beautiful people—not to mention the growing popularity of high-definition television. It's little wonder, then, that adolescent singers "with a cute smile but not much behind it tour the world and earn a fortune," as Michael White of the Daily Telegraph describes the phenomenon. "It's depressing. It's unjust," he says. "But presentation counts."[37]

Although the business of opera has already moved toward younger performers, many artists wonder how this might impact present and future performances, particularly their musical standards. Opera singers are usually older than the characters they portray because it takes time to hone their craft, arguably longer than any other artform. A singer's ability to meet our musical expectations, set before filmed opera was as accessible as it is now, is dependent on their body having grown enough, physically and vocally, to fill a 4,000 seat theatre. This usually does not happen until their thirties if not later, making them older than most operatic roles. How then do our expectations for young singers on the stage impact their voices? Singers such as Maxym fear that, "[t]here are very few really distinctive voices on the main stages today," she says, "I think that is largely because they are introduced to the world at a young age before they have had time to fully develop their color and personality."[38] Without time to mature as a performer and

[36] Steichen, "HD Opera a Love Hate Story," 452–3.
[37] Antman, "The Shame Old Story," 21.
[38] Antman, "The Shame Old Story," 20.

physically grow, singers lack the necessary experience. Without this time to mature some singers question the longevity of the artform. D.S. a 41-year-old dramatic soprano warns that, "there will be fewer and fewer performances of Wagner, [Richard] Strauss, and other composers whose works are suited to the dramatic voice and large orchestras because there are no singers left to perform them."[39] D.S. notes that young singers who perform heavier repertoire such as Wagner and Strauss can put too much strain on their voices before they are ready to handle it, thereby cuasing permanent damage. On the business side, William Powers, the director of administration and artistic operations at Pittsburgh Opera, says, "I don't know of any 15-year-olds who can sing Cio-Cio-San and meet the audience's expectations. Some 50-year-olds make fine Susannas. There is a reason why we have wig and makeup people on staff. Age range for many characters can be explorable."[40]

Despite Powers' belief that wigs and make up should be enough, audiences still prefer performers to look as realistic and age appropriate as possible. Mezzo-soprano Jennifer Larmore observes in a 2017 interview that she is visibly too old for certain roles and has changed her repertoire as a result:

> For Octavian it is simply too late. That is the same story as with the Rosina's and all the other bel canto heroines: I no longer have the proper age for them.
>
> Interviewer: "Does this perhaps have something to do with the visualisation of opera?"
>
> Most certainly! The new media and the live movie-theater transmissions have given an extra dimension to the brand opera: credibility. It is no longer possible to sing Mimi when you are 65

[39] Antman, "The Shame Old Story," 20.
[40] Antman, "The Shame Old Story," 20.

> like Mirella Freni did, even though your voice is still fresh. Looks are important too, especially with all those close-ups all the time.[41]

Perhaps, audiences today are more entertained when watching younger performers on camera than by opera's music, but we must keep in mind that opera is unique in that it is first and foremost musical, otherwise it would just be theatre. When we assign ownership to an opera we do not say that it was composed by its librettist such as Hugo von Hofmannsthal, rather it is Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*. Although the dramatic presence of opera is partially visual, when we say the composer's name first we have made a historical and cultural decision that these works are musical. As a result, we must take into consideration how to nurture the fundamental aspects of this artform including the voice when adjusting its other important facets including the representation of the aged body. Powers raises an important point when he asks, why are young bodies necessary when we have make-up to make age explorable on stage? Why not then offer a multitude of interpretations nuanced with different ages? Perhaps *Regieoper*—or director's opera—when the stage director might change the composer or librettist's intention and modernize the production, is one possible answer to ageism in opera, or maybe science will advance make-up to a point that we can completely disguise any performer's age. Until then, it seems these questions still require further exploration. Since the number of people who attend the Metropolitan Opera's broadcasts surpasses the number of patrons who attend its in-house performances, it seems likely that film is here to stay, and that ageism will remain a contentious issue in opera production and criticism.

[41] Basia Jaworski, "Interview in Dutch: Jennifer Larmore," trans. Remko Jas, *Basia con Fuoco*, March 27, 2017, https://basiaconfuoco.wordpress.com/2017/03/31/jennifer-larmore-interview-english-translation/.

Bibliography

Abbate, Carolyn. "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" *Critical Inquiry* 30/ 3 (2004): 505–36.

Abbate, Carolyn, and Roger Parker. *A History of Opera*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012.

Allison, John. "Age is an Operatic Issue." *Opera* 58/7 (2007): 771.

Antman, Rachel. "Delayed Debutants: Singers Who Enter the Opera Scene Later in Life." *Classical Singer* 28/3 (March 2015): 26–9.

———. "The Shame Old Story: Ageism in Opera." *Classical Singer* 23/3 (March 2010): 18. https://www.classicalsinger.com/magazine/article.php?id=2071.

Auslander, Philip. *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. London; New York: Routledge, 2008.

———. "Music as Performance: The Disciplinary Dilemma Revisited." In *Taking It to the Bridge: Music as Performance*, edited by Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill, 1–19. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013.

Barthes, Roland. "The Grain of the Voice." In *The Responsibility of Forms*, 267–77. Berkley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991.

Basting, Anne Davis. *The Stages of Age: Performing Age in Contemporary American Culture*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998.

"Bellini's I Puritani." *The Times*, December 2, 1986.

Berger, Karol. "Musicology According to Don Giovanni, or: Should We Get Drastic." *Journal of Musicology* 22 (2005): 490–501.

Boldrey, Richard. *A Guide to Operatic Roles & Arias*. Dallas: Pst, 1994.

Bologna, Corrado. *Flatus vocis: Metafisica e antropologia della voce*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2000.

Boone, Daniel R. "The Singing/ Acting Voice in the Mature Adult." *Journal of Voice* 11.2 (June 1997): 161–4.

Bruder, Harold. "Margarethe Siems Strauss's Ideal Soprano?" *The Opera Quarterly* 15/3 (1999): 391–400.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge, 1993.

Cavarero, Adriana. *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.

"Chronology 1937–1951." *Lotte Lehmann League*. Accessed July 5, 2017, http://lottelehmannleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Chronology-1937-1951-2014.pdf.

Citron, Marcia J. *Opera on Screen*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

Clément, Catherine. *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*. Translated by Betsy Wing. Minneapolis, U of Minnesota P, 1998.

Cole, Thomas R., and Ruth E. Ray. "Introduction: The Humanities Study of Aging Past and Present, or Why Gerentology Still Needs Interpretive Aging." In *A Guide to Humanistic Studies in Aging: What Does it Mean to Grow Old?*, edited by Thomas R. Cole, Ruth E. Ray, and Robert Kastenbaum, 1–32. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.

Cook, Nicholas. *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Cook, Nicholas, and Richard Pettengill, "Introduction." In *Taking It to the Bridge: Music as Performance*, edited by Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill, 1–19. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013.

Crutchfield, Will. "Broadcast/Telecast Review." *The New York Times*, January 11, 1987.

Cummings, David. "Rohs, Martha." *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*. *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press. Accessed March 13, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O904267.

Downer, Edward. "Der Rosenkavalier." *Boston Evening Transcript*, March 28, 1940.

Downes, Edward. "Interview with Edward Downes." *La Divina Complete*, EMI Classics.

Downes, Olin. "Der Rosenkavalier." *The New York Times*, January 4, 1935.

Duncan, Michelle. "The Operatic Scandal of the Singing Body: Voice, Presence, Performativity." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16/3 (2004): 283–306.

Dyer, Richard. "Sutherland, Bonynge and 'The Voice': Set for the Met." *New York Times*, February 22, 1976.

Eeden, Stephan van. "The Impact of The Met: Live in HD on Local Opera Attendance." Master's thesis, UBC, 2009

Ericsson, Raymond. "Der Rosenkavalier." *The New York Times*, October 12, 1964.

———. "Der Rosenkavalier." *The New York Times*, October 13, 1964.

———. "Revised Production Der Rosenkavalier." *Musical America*, February 6, 1956.

Featherstone, Mike, and Mike Hepworth. *Images of Aging: Cultural Representations of Later Life*. London; New York: Routledge, 1995.

Ferrand, Carole. "Harmonics-to-Noise Ratio: An Index of Vocal Aging." *Journal of Voice* 16.4 (Dec. 2002): 480–7.

Fisher, Burton D. *Opera Journey's Guide: Met Opera HD Simulcasts 2008-2009 Season*. US: Opera Classics Library Series, 2000.

F. L. W. "'Der Rosenkavalier' at Metropolitan First Philadelphia Performance of Strauss Opera With Ober in Title Role." *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, December 14, 1915.

Forbes, Elizabeth. "Ebers, Clara." *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera. Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press. Accessed March 17, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O003262.

Gilliam, Bryan. *Rounding Wagner's Mountain: Richard Strauss and Modern German Opera*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Glass, Beaumont. *Lotte Lehmann: A Life in Opera & Song*. Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1988.

Gollancz, Victor. *Journey Towards Music, a Memoir*. London: n.p., 1964.

Goodman, Peter. "Sutherland Sings Bellini at the Met." *Newsday*, November 14, 1986.

Gullette, Margaret Morganroth. *Aged by Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Hamilton, David, ed. *Metropolitan Opera Encyclopedia*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.

Harris, Kenn. *Opera Recordings: A Critical Guide*. New York: Drake Publishers Inc., 1973.

Hempel, Frieda, William R Moran, and Elizabeth Johnston. *My Golden Age of Singing*. Portland: Amadeus Press, 1998.

Heyer, Paul. "Live from the Met: Digital Broadcast Cinema, Medium Theory, and Opera for the Masses." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 33/4 (2008): 591–604.

Higgins, John. "A Welsh Marschallin." *The Times*, November 20, 1975.

————. "Opera." *The Times*, April 15, 1985

————. "Opera in Brussels and New York." *The Times*, May 20, 1984.

————. "Strauss in safe hands." *The Times*, June 19, 1989.

Hofmannsthal, Hugo von. "*Der Rosenkavalier*." In *Richard Strauss, Der Rosenkavalier: Comedy for Music in Three Acts*, of the Metropolitan Opera Classics Library. Boston: Little, Brown, 1982.

Hume, Paul. "Opera: The Marvelous Met." *The Marvelous Met*, February 24, 1974.

Hutcheon, Linda, and Michael Hutcheon. *Bodily Charm: Living Opera*. Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press, 2000.

"La Straniera." *American Record Guide* 78/4 (2015): 74–5

Lehmann, Lotte. *Five Operas and Richard Strauss*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1964.

Levin, David. *Unsettling Opera: Staging Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, and Zemlinsky*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Ljungquist, Gary. "Joan Sutherland: Dame Joan and I." In *My Diva: 65 Gay Men on the Women Who Inspire Them*, edited by Michael Montlack, 91–3. Madison: Terrace Books, 2009.

"Lotte Lehmann Chronology." *Lotte Lehmann League*. Accessed July 5, 2017, http://lottelehmannleague.org/about-lotte-lehmann/ll-chronology/.

"Lucia Popp." *The Times*, November 18, 1993.

Jampol, Joshua. *Living Opera*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Jander, Owen, et al. "Soprano." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press. Accessed March 7, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/26243.

Jaworski, Basia. "Interview in Dutch: Jennifer Larmore." Translated by Remko Jas. *Basia con Fuoco*, March 27, 2017. https://basiaconfuoco.wordpress.com/2017/03/31/jennifer-larmore-interview-english-translation/.

Jefferson, Alan. *Elisabeth Schwarzkopf*. London: V. Gollanz, 1996.

———. *Lotte Lehmann*. London: MacRae, 1988.

———. *The Operas of Richard Strauss in Britain, 1910–1963*. London: Putnam, 1963.

Jennings, Ros, and Abigail Gardner. "Introduction: Women, Ageing and Popular Music." In *'Rock On': Women, Ageing and Popular Music*, edited by Ros Jennings and Abigail Gardner, 1–16. Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington: Ashgate, 2012.

Johnson, Harriett. "Der Rosenkavalier." *The Post*, February 16, 1974.

Kater, Michael H. *Never Sang For Hitler*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Kramer, Lawrence. "Music, Metaphor, Metaphysics." *The Musical Times* 145, 2004: 5–18.

———. "On Voice: An Introduction." In *On Voice*, edited by Walter Bernhart and Lawrence Kramer, i–xiii. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014.

Leonardi, Susan J., and Rebecca A. Pope. *The Diva's Mouth: Body, Voice, Prima Donna Politics.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996.

Madrid, Alejandro L. "Why Music and Performance Studies? Why Now? An Introduction to the Special Issue." *Revista Transcultural de Musica/Transcultural Music Review* 13 (2009): https://www.sibetrans.com/trans/article/1/why-music-and-performance-studies-why-now-an-introduction-to-the-special-issue.

Mangan, Michael. *Staging Ageing*. Bristol; Chicago: Intellect, 2013.

Mann, William. "Attar of Rosenkavalier." *The Times*, February 26, 1972.

————. *The Operas of Richard Strauss*. London: Cassell, 1964.

Marek, George R. "Introduction: The Music of Poetry or the Poetry of Music?" In *Richard Strauss, Der Rosenkavalier: Comedy for Music in Three Acts*, of the Metropolitan Opera Classics Library. Boston: Little, Brown, 1982.

Martin, Peter A. "A Psychoanalytic Study of the Marschallin Theme from *Der Rosenkavalier*." *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 14/4 (October 1966): 760–74.

McConachie, Bruce. *Engaging Audiences – A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre*. New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Miller, Richard. *On the Art of Singing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

————. *Training Soprano Voices*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Mordden, Ethan. *Demented: The World of the Opera Diva*. New York: F. Watts, 1990.

Nancy, Sarah. "The Singing Body in the Tragédie Lyrique of Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France: Voice, Theatre, Speech, Pleasure." In *The Legacy of Opera: Reading Music Theatre as Experience and Performance*, edited by Dominic Symonds and Pamela Karantonis, 65–78. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013.

Novak, Jelena. *Postopera: Reinventing the Voice-body*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2015.

O'Connell, Sam. "Making Culture Popular: Opera and the Media Industries." In *Opera in the Media Age: Essays on Art, Technology and Popular Culture*, edited by Paul Fryer, 32–42. Jefferson: McGarland & Company, 2014.

Opera, March 1967, 245.

Our Music Critic. "Perspective and Detail in Der Rosenkavalier." The Times, December 20, 1963.

"Our Story." The Metropolitan Opera. http://www.metopera.org/About/The-Met/.

"Overwhelming applause for Gruberova and her queens at La Scala." *Gramilano*, July 27, 2015. https://www.gramilano.com/2015/07/overwhelming-applause-for-gruberova-and-her-queens-at-la-scala/.

Palileo, Ruth Pe. "'What Age am I now? And O?': The Science of the Aged Voice in Beckett's plays." In *Staging Age: The Performance of Age in Theatre, Dance, and Film*, edited by Valerie Barnes Lipscomb and Leni Marshall, 129–49 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)

Poizat, Michel. *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.

Rasponi, Lanfranco. *The Last Primma Donnas*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982.

Reynolds, Michael. *Creating Der Rosenkavalier*. Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016.

Riemens, Leo, and Alan Blyth. "Fuchs, Marta." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press. Accessed March 13, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/10339.

Rishoi, Niel. "Donizetti Kammersangerin An Interview with Edita Gruberova." *The Opera Quarterly* 14/3 (1998): 73–81.

Risi, Clemens. "Poses by Anna Netrebko: On the Perception of the Extraordinary in the Twenty-First Century." In *Technology and the Diva: Sopranos, Opera, and Media from Romanticism to the Digital Age*, edited by Karen Henson, 150–158. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Rosenthal, Harold. "Osten, Eva von der." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press. Accessed March 5, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/20537.

Rosenthal, Harold, and Alan Blyth. "Reinhardt, Delia." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Accessed March 21, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/23138.

Sataloff, Robert, Joseph Spiegel, and Deborah Caputo Rosen. "The Effects of Age on the Voice." In *Vocal Health and Pedagogy*, edited by Robert Sataloff, 585–604. San Diego: Singular Publishing Group, 1998.

Schwarzkopf, Elisabeth. *On and Off the Record: A Memoir of Walter Legge*. New York: Scribner, 1982.

Scott, Michael. *The Record of Singing*. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979.

———. *The Record of Singing: To 1914*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1977.

Shawe-Taylor, Desmond. "Lehmann, Lotte." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press. Accessed March 6, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/16325.

———. "Ohms, Elisabeth." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press. Accessed March 8, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/50078.

———. "Weidt, Lucie." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press. Accessed March 7, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/30024.

Siff, Ira. "Life is a Caballe." Opera News 67/5 (2002): 16.

Smith, Matthew Wilson. "Gesamtkunstwerk and Glitch: Robert Lepage's Ring across Media." *Theater*, 42/2 (2012): 65–77.

Smith, Max. "Review of Der Rosenkavalier." *The New York American,* September 12, 1913.

————. "Review of Der Rosenkavalier." *The New York Press*, November 20, 1914.

Smith, Moses. "Der Rosenkavalier." *Boston Evening,* March 31, 1938.

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. London: Allen Lane, 1978.

Stanley, Stan. "Ochs, the hero." *The Times*, March 14, 1968.

Steane, J.B. "Arndt-Ober, Margarethe." *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*. *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press. Accessed March 6, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O003637.

————. "Nast, Minnie." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press. Accessed March 4, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/41600.

————. *Singers of the Century* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1996–2000).

————. *Voices: Singers & Critics*. Portland: Amadeus Press, 1992.

Steichen, James. "HD Opera a Love Hate Story: Staging the Backstage at Carmen, Live in HD." *The Opera Quarterly* 27/ 4 (December 2011): 443–59

Straus, Noel. "Der Rosenkavalier." *The New York Times,* February 23, 1945.

"The THEATRE: Der Rosenkavalier." *Wall Street Journal*, December 21, 1938.

Tomlinson, Gary. *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Tommasini, Anthony. Opera: *A Critic's Guide to the 100 Most Important Works and the Best Recordings*. New York: Times Books, 2004.

————. "Review: Renée Fleming's Poignant Farewell to 'Der Rosenkavalier'." *The New York Times*, April 14, 2017. Accessed July 5, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/14/arts/music/rosenkavalier-renee-fleming-met.html?mcubz=2.

Varnay, Astrid. *Fifty-five Years in Five Acts: My Life in Opera*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000.

Vienna Staatsoper Archiv. "Lucie Weidt als „Die Feldmarschallin" in „Der Rosenkavalier"." Accessed March 13, 2017, https://archiv.wiener-staatsoper.at/search/person/6025/role/142.

Voigt, Deborah. *Call me Debbie: True Confessions of a Down-to-earth Diva*. New York: Harper, 2015.

Williams, Simon. "The Vocal Persona of Jussi Björling." In *On Voice,* edited by Walter Bernhart and Lawrence Kramer, 29–42. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014.

Yeadon McGinnis, Pearl, and Marith McGinnis Willis. *The Opera Singer's Career Guide: Understanding the European Fach System.* Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010.

Zumthor, Paul. *Oral Poetry: An Introduction*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990.