

quarrelsome atmosphere of that city. The difficulties of his later years are attributed to malicious gossip and slander put about by envious competitors; because they could not fault his music, they spread lies about his extravagance.

Nevertheless, although this book is more hagiography than biography, many notions and stories about Mozart originated with Niemetschek. These include the composition of the overture to *Don Giovanni* in the few hours before the premiere in Prague, and Mozart's method of composing in his head before writing out near finished works on paper, so that when he was actually completing his manuscripts he could chat with others. It is to Niemetschek that we owe the survival of Haydn's letter to Prague in 1797 in response to an invitation to write an opera, in which he praised Mozart's profundity and musical intelligence. It is interesting that Niemetschek's explanation of Mozart's financial difficulties—that although he earned large sums from time to time, his income was irregular, and expenses were high, particularly because of Constanze's poor health—is not far from the conclusion of modern commentators.

Niemetschek was aware of a wide range of Mozart's music, some of which he may never have heard. His taste is reflected in his special praise for *La clemenza di Tito*, an opera that is described in much more detail than any other. But it is perhaps not for the critique of contemporary music that we turn to Niemetschek but, rather, to enjoy the warmth and affection that shine through in a manner rare in biography.

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doi:10.1093/ml/jgcm052

Voicing Gender: Castrati, Travesti, and the Second Woman in Early-Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera. By Naomi André. pp. xvi + 230. (Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2006, \$60. ISBN 0-253-34644-4.)

Naomi André's *Voicing Gender* sets out to consider a number of issues: how we might attempt to 'hear' historical voices; the transitional period between the decline of the castrati and the rise of the prima donna in the early nineteenth century (the *primo Ottocento*); and the emergence during this period of a different type of female heroine, the 'second woman'. This latter figure was essentially, according to André, a 'hybrid', containing elements of both soprano roles and the high-voiced *male* roles which had originally been written for the

castrati. Furthermore, the prima donna in later nineteenth-century roles was also to become a 'hybrid': 'the Romantic heroine, the normative leading role for a woman in opera in the second half of the nineteenth century, was actually a *hybrid* role that included a combination of elements from both the first and the second woman of the *primo ottocento*' (p. 8, emphasis original). André rejects the idea of the operatic heroine 'as only, or exclusively, weak and helpless', preferring to envisage her character as more complex than one who simply suffers and 'expires' (p. xiii). Indeed, the question that originally triggered André's research was: 'Why do women in opera always die at the end?' (p. ix).

This is a question fans of opera and opera criticism might well have heard elsewhere, and of course André introduces Catherine Clément's famous study at an early stage (*Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis, 1979)) (pp. 1–2). André points out, though, that early nineteenth-century female heroines—up until around 1830—rarely died; in fact they evinced a kind of heroism and power derived largely from their castrato forebears. One of the explanations André gives for the presence in nineteenth-century female roles of traces of castrato heroism is that while 'the *sound* of the castrato voice was [still] desired; the *sight* of the castrato on the opera stage had fallen out of vogue' (p. 89). That is, nineteenth-century audiences retained a taste for the 'uncanny' and spectacular castrato voice while balking at the 'uncanny' physical presence of the castrato (see pp. 16–35). André traces roles for female singers from the end of the eighteenth century until, roughly, the middle of the nineteenth century, and suggests overall that despite the disappearance of castrati from the stage and—later on—the decrease in female travesty roles, there remained in solo female voices a trace of heroism and 'masculinity' inherited from their vocal predecessors.

André finds Giuditta Pasta (1797–1865) to be a poster girl for female vocal versatility, playing as she did both male and strong female roles throughout her career: 'The voice of Giuditta Pasta was a vortex that brought everything together. . . . As one of the central voices of the time, her career demonstrates the simultaneity of how the voice of heroism evolved through the different representations of masculinity. . . . and what a female voice was allowed to express regarding triumph, revenge, defeat, and self-sacrifice' (pp. 169–70). Ultimately, then, the doomed nineteenth-century heroine is not merely a victim, an excuse for

suffering, but represents strength through her historical and vocal ‘hybridity’. André further suggests that by examining the musical and also pictorial evidence of such careers we may in the twenty-first century ‘hear’ historical voices by approximating the use of a ‘period ear’.

There are some convincing elements in this study. André outlines the circumstances—both formal and informal—under which sopranos and castrati trained together, suggesting that sharing tuition and, occasionally, the stage with castrati had an effect on the sopranos’ technique: ‘It is hard to imagine that these women [such as Francesca Cuzzoni or Faustina Bordoni] did not internalize and, when advantageous, adapt elements of the castrato singing method for their own use’ (p. 38). This argument emphasizes the view that female roles were in turn influenced by soprano performers’ proximity to castrato power and technique.

A further point in the book’s favour is that it concentrates on a period, 1800–30, that often goes unnoticed in similar studies of voice/gender in opera. Clément certainly does not dwell in this era and neither does Michel Poizat in his *The Angel’s Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera* (trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca, NY, 1986)). As André seems to imply, the fact that heroines often survive in these *primo Ottocento* operas constitutes something of a problem within the critical tropes of ‘opera as death’, ‘voice as death’, and ‘voice as dying woman’ (pp. 5–6). Although Clément’s approach is now relatively elderly in critical terms, it still demands attention, and *Voicing Gender* offers an unusually positive response, even though André’s alternative construction of a less victimized nineteenth-century heroine can tend towards the banal (as e.g. in her claim that ‘the Romantic heroine achieves an element of independence as she faces death. Usually suffering alone, her death is a direct result of her decision to remain true to her personal code of honour’ (p. 170)).

Banality, unfortunately, is one of numerous problems encountered with this book. A principal complaint is that critical statements are often made and not expanded upon until much later in the text. Many times in the opening pages, André tells us that castrato singers fell out of fashion, but it is not until page 47 that she proposes—by way of an incongruously placed second-hand gender theory of Thomas Laqueur—that ‘[the] decline of the castrati in opera at the end of the eighteenth century and disappearance from the stage at the beginning of the nineteenth century reflects the changing

sentiments of the time’. Arguments are generally difficult to navigate, despite the extraordinary repetition of ideas that scarcely require emphasis. The ‘Interlude’, for example, provides us with the wholly unnecessary piece of information (iterated a number of times already) that ‘[i]n the eighteenth century the hero and heroine had similar vocal timbres; both came from the treble voices of castrati and women’ (p. 90).

It is sentences such as this that give rise to the question of readership. André provides us with explanations for technical terms—‘the gender of the role [in travesty operas] is primarily articulated through the *tessitura* (general range where the role has the most notes)’ (p. 4)—and there is a ‘Glossary’ at the back of the book explaining such abstruse terms as ‘aria’ and ‘librettist’. She also feels the need to explain why there are ‘no recordings of Pasta’s voice’ (p. 132). By contrast, considerably more erudite ideas are breezed past without clarification, often—it has to be said—when the author is borrowing theories from writers possessing a more complex literary style than her own (see e.g. the paraphrasing of Linda Nochlin’s essay on page 11 and the discussion of Bakhtin on page 93).

Such ‘borrowing’ is not in itself a particular problem, but here it does highlight the general critical inconsistency. Modern and historically contextual theories are employed seemingly at random in order to provide crutches for various arguments in the first half of the book. Postmodern mingling can, of course, be refreshing, but here the appropriation of other critical standpoints represents an uneasy blend.

This is especially apparent because the various theories, ideas, and images utilized in the early stages of the book are largely mislaid during the rest of the work. André employs the image of the ‘ultrasound sonogram’ in the opening pages (pp. xii–xiii) to illustrate a ‘picture drawn by sound’, announcing that this provided the ‘critical touchstone’ for illuminating how we might ‘hear’ something by looking at a visual representation. Despite representing the book’s theoretical foundation, with its strong implications of uniquely female productivity, the sonogram makes no further appearance. Moreover, the critical standpoint it embodies—that of an image representing sound—constitutes a relatively short section of the book as a whole (mainly in the ‘Interlude’, pp. 89–102).

The ‘period ear’ theory, at its first appearance, seems to suggest nothing more radical than the idea that people listened differently

in the past. It is expanded later on as André 'reconstructs' a vocal 'sound' informed by the roles a particular singer tended to play. However, the vast amount of detail in chapters 3, 4, and 5 often obscures the focus. This problem afflicts the other key theory, that of the 'second woman' construction. It is a shame that André's work was not rationalized in the editing process, for what is manifestly a great deal of dedicated research reads, at times, as a sequence of undifferentiated facts.

Discussion of twentieth-century divas—despite appearing somewhat incongruously in a book on nineteenth-century singers—promises some interesting reflections on the marketing of recordings according to the 'popular' perception of particular female singers (pp. 94–6). André points out that the photographs on the cover of Cecilia Bartoli's CDs of female-role arias display her at her feminine, voluptuous best, and suggests that this is the preferred public image of the singer. However, photographs on the front of CDs where Bartoli has recorded *male*-role arias are not described at all, nor are CD covers of recordings made by other singers analysed for the purposes of useful comparison. The point of this digression, and indeed of the latter stages of the book in which she considers nineteenth-century performers in some detail, seems merely to be that performers (Pasta aside) generally demonstrate a preference for a particular type of role—often delineated along gendered lines.

The Coda (pp. 171–5) launches unexpectedly into political history in order to provide a reason why dying heroines may have become more attractive: 'In the world of the Risorgimento, the climate of dying for what you believe in can be translated into martyrdom. Such a sacrifice may then become a noble death that reveals the steadfastness of holding true to your ideas and principles, despite all the odds. . . . A new voice for heroism [in the opera house] and a new outcome for the resolution of the drama onstage reflect the changing social and cultural norms in the daily lives of the members in the audience' (pp. 174–5). Such correlation between politics and the opera house is entirely reasonable (although dealt with very summarily), but in the entire absence of any *other* political context throughout the book, its appearance at the end strikes a bizarre note.

On a smaller scale, there are also citation problems—such as the missing references to the musical examples in chapter 4 (pp. 108–9)—and some inaccurate indexing. Structurally, there is insufficient flow between ideas, which often

appear in strange juxtaposition to each other. This is particularly a problem in chapter 2.

Though a strength of the book lies in its positive reaction to Clément's thesis, exploration of the 'hybrid' female role is performed far more convincingly elsewhere—not least in Carolyn Abbate's 'Opera, or the Envoicing of Women' (in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (Berkeley, 1993), 225–8), which André does not seem to have read. Readers can also find, strange though it may seem, a considerably more authoritative and rigorous approach to the culturally 'hybrid' female role in Carol Clover's 'Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film' (in *Screening Violence*, ed. Stephen Prince (London, 2000), 125–74), which follows a remarkably similar trajectory in an entirely different context.

The way in which this book is constructed is its principal weakness, as well as its strange inconsistency of tone and insecure grasp of its target audience. Naomi André's thesis is a strong one; the pity here is that it so often gets lost.

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doi:10.1093/ml/gcm076

Operatic Migrations: Transforming Works and Crossing Boundaries. Ed. by Roberta Montemorra Marvin and Downing A. Thomas. pp. xvi + 274. (Ashgate, Aldershot and Burlington, Vt., 2006, £65. ISBN 0-7546-5098-7.)

Operatic Migrations is a collection of thirteen essays on the creation, performance, and reception of opera, developed from an interdisciplinary summer research seminar that took place at the University of Iowa in 2001; it is made up of contributions that address opera as genre, performance, musical work, institution, aesthetic problem, and multi-media representation, among other issues, in varying social and historical contexts that span the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. Like many edited volumes of collected essays that have proliferated in music and in the humanities more broadly, *Operatic Migrations* signifies more than a collection of individuals who share an interest in a subject and its related issues. This very format provides the essential venue for multifaceted perspectives and cross-disciplinary interrogation that opera as a field of enquiry realistically demands. It is here that the overarching theme is most effective. The volume embraces wholeheartedly the notion that opera itself is an itinerant object and concept, 'migrating from one