

The Exotic in Nineteenth-Century French Opera, Part 2: Plots, Characters, and Musical Devices

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Part 1 of this article discussed various more or less distant lands that formed the setting for numerous French operas in the nineteenth century. It focused primarily on peoples and locales that were considered exotic (fascinating, dangerous, etc.) by the makers of nineteenth-century French operas and by the audiences that attended. The lands examined included (among others) Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain, sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas, East Asia, and a vast region that, in English, might best be called, with pointed looseness and inaccuracy, “the extended Middle East” (stretching from Morocco to Persia and India).¹

This, the article’s second and final part, begins by discussing the sorts of plots and characters that were often found suitable and effective for these operas and concludes by exploring the musical means that the operas employed, including highly distinctive ones (often thought, however inaccurately, to be characteristic of the actual music of the region in question) and the wide range of “normal” musical and musicodramatic devices that took on special effectiveness when applied to an exoticist setting and plot.²

¹Part 1, “Locales and Peoples,” can be found in this journal 45:2 (2021): 93–118. It begins with general considerations and includes an Appendix (“Four Guides to Terminology and Repertory”) that is also applicable to Part 2. The two parts should ideally be read in published sequence, but Part 2 can be read on its own. For reasons of space, the preliminary unnumbered footnote with acknowledgments is likewise not repeated here.

²The first two sections of Part 2 treat matters explored in somewhat different ways (e.g., frequently recurring images, such as wild or lush natural surroundings or mentions of incense or evil spirits) in two important studies by Hervé Lacombe dealing with exotic French operatic librettos: *The Keys to French Opera in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Edward Schneider (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), esp. 179–205; and “The Writing of Exoticism in the Libretti of the Opéra-Comique, 1825–1862,” trans. Peter Glidden, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 11:2 (1999): 135–58.

Placing an opera in a locale considered somehow exotic had multiple advantages for the nineteenth-century opera librettist who was helping to create a work set in some Elsewhere. It could differentiate a new work from others already in the repertory, and the differentiation could be profound or superficial. (Music critics often complained that a work's sets and costumes barely cloaked an all-too-familiar plot and musical manner.)³ It could give a hook on which to hang plot points basic to opera, such as setting up a mutual romantic attraction between a soprano and a tenor and then making sure it is impeded by, say, a baritone who is jealous or a bass (often an authority figure) whose views are rigid and intolerant. It could help audiences accept behaviors and actions that might have struck them as implausible or offensive if the work had been located in a French city or town. An exotic locale may also have allowed an audience member to identify with one or another of the foreign characters in an opera. Or—almost the opposite—it could give her or him a reassuring feeling: “At least I’m not like *those* strange people!”

Often in operas set in exotic lands there is only one important female character—outfitted, perhaps, with a handmaiden and a chorus of female friends—amid several important males plus a male or mixed chorus. This primary focus on a single woman is of course widely encountered in nineteenth-century opera: for example, in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Verdi's *La traviata*. The woman involved may feel quite isolated and vulnerable, usually for good reason, or she may be full of agency, set in relief against a background of great social hostility. Literary scholars have tended to put the matter in terms of weakness or strength: the *femme fragile* is sensitive, pure, and subservient or self-sacrificing; the *femme fatale* is manipulative, seductive, and dangerous. The *femme fatale* figure is a particularly ambivalent one from a present-day viewpoint. She expresses

desires and acts on them, more than was generally permitted to female characters at the time. But her actions often lead to her doom and to that of the man or men on whom she focuses her attentions.

This near-obsessive focus on a central female role helps explain why the titles of so many nineteenth-century French exotic operas consist solely of a woman's name or epithet: notable examples include Félicien David's *La Perle du Brésil* (the “pearl” being the Brazilian native Zora; Opéra-National, 1851, rev. 1858) and *Lalla-Roukh* (Opéra-Comique, 1862), Massenet's *Hérodiade* (Brussels, 1881) and *Thaïs* (Opéra 1894, rev. 1898), Offenbach's *La Périochole* (Théâtre des Variétés, 1868), Saint-Saëns's *La Princesse jaune* (though that character never appears; Opéra-Comique, 1872) and *Samson et Dalila* (Weimar, 1877), Bizet's *Djamileh* (Opéra-Comique, 1872) and *Carmen* (Opéra-Comique, 1875), Delibes's *Lakmé* (Opéra-Comique, 1883), Ernest Reyer's *Salammbô* (Brussels, 1890), and André Messager's *Madame Chrysanthème* (Théâtre de la Renaissance, 1893). Indeed, judging from the autograph manuscript, Saint-Saëns originally intended to entitle *Samson et Dalila* simply *Dalila*.

The weak/strong binary for women characters can acquire special meaning when the society being portrayed lies outside of France or, even better, outside of Europe, since that easily allows for the presence of a noxious male authority figure who recruits the *femme fatale* for nefarious purposes or oppresses the *femme fragile*. Furthermore, the central female figure is often presented as attractive to a male who comes from Outside (that is, from beyond her exotic locale). In some cases, this male protagonist is European: for example, the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama in Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* (Opéra, 1865; first drafted in the 1840s–50s). In others he is part of a local non-European community that, in the opera's primary exoticized frame, symbolizes the West. Thus *Samson et Dalila* is set in the land of the Philistines, who evince traits identified in Saint-Saëns's day with what we call Middle East; yet Samson, as a Hebrew, stands for the future Christian world and takes action against those pagans and their immorality.

³For example, Fétis on *Le Portefaix* (set in Spain; music by the Spanish-born Gomis; Théâtre des Nouveautés, 1835), cited in Lacombe, “Writing,” 138.

A related feminine category, less often mentioned, combines *fragile* and *fatale*: the woman—she may be a priestess, *bayadère* (Hindu temple dancer), or priest's daughter—who is expected to remain pure but who strays. The general concept is familiar from nonexotic operas set in the ancient world, such as Spontini's *La vestale* (Opéra, 1805) and Bellini's *Norma* (La Scala, 1831), both of which involve ancient Rome. But when shifted to India or Ceylon, the role can resonate with modern-day concerns, including imperialism. Notable cases include Bizet's *Les Pêcheurs de perles* (Théâtre-Lyrique, 1863), Massenet's *Le Roi de Lahore* (Opéra, 1877), Delibes's *Lakmé*, Catel's *Les Bayadères* (Opéra, 1810), and Auber's *Le Dieu et la Bayadère* (Opéra, 1830). (Several of these were discussed in Part 1.)

Two oft-performed exotic operas give their central female character a fresh twist halfway through by having her develop from being a *femme fatale* to something quite different. The title character in *Carmen* is exotic by the very fact of being a Gypsy woman. She carelessly (or even pointedly) wrecks the career of the weak-willed Spanish soldier José, then passes through a stage of withdrawal or depression (in the Card Trio in act III) en route to becoming, at the end of the opera, an individual who sacrifices her life rather than give up her independence. An even more explicit aura of saintly self-sacrifice surrounds the title figure of Massenet's *Thaïs*. *Thaïs* begins—like *Carmen*—as an exotic woman who enjoys entertaining crowds and seducing men. But she gradually adopts the Christian monk Athanaël's ethos of self-abnegation and ends up in a convent, surrounded by nuns. Indeed, the character is based on an actual Saint *Thaïs*, long honored in the Catholic church.⁴

Women in these exotic operas are often explicitly associated with nature images, such as springtime, flowers, birds, insects, and gently flowing water. *Lalla-Roukh*, *Le Roi de*

Lahore, *Lakmé*, and *Madame Chrysanthème* all contain a duet for the heroine and her female companion that focuses on flowers or on the beauty of evening. One or more of these four “flower duets” may have helped inspire the famous flower duet for Cio-Cio-San and her maid Suzuki in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (La Scala, 1904; revised version: Opéra-Comique, 1906, in French translation). These duets set the women in sharp contrast to the local men, who, even more than in non-exotic operas, tend to be associated with harsh religious doctrines and the waging of war. There may arguably be a proto-feminist subtext here, as the two women in each of these operas create an idyllic separate space for themselves, set apart from world of the local men, which is often manipulative or—toward the women—outright menacing.

Occasionally an exotic opera offered a highly individual element that distinguished it from the rest. Act III of Massenet's *Le Roi de Lahore* is set in a supposed Hindu version of heaven. This allows something to occur that is almost unknown in any other nineteenth-century French opera: a divine figure (Indra, a bass role) alters the plot in a major way. He interacts at length with the recently deceased King Alim and allows him to return to life and rejoin the priestess Sitâ. In dozens of other ways, though, *Lahore* resembles many non-exotic operas and ballets of the era. Not least, the soprano and the tenor die together (Alim now dying a second time) and thereby achieve a mystical union or apotheosis, analogous to the endings of Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* (Dresden, 1843), Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* (Théâtre-Lyrique, 1867), *Tristan und Isolde* (Munich, 1865), the *Ring Cycle* (first complete performance: Bayreuth, 1876), and Tchaikovsky's ballet *Swan Lake* (Moscow, 1877).

THE PARADIGMATIC PLOT AND THE COLONIAL PROJECT

I have elsewhere laid out a paradigmatic plot for French (and other) operas set in lands that were perceived at the time as exotic. I will summarize my main points about that plot here, and also point to some plots that vary it, no doubt with

⁴Saint *Thaïs*'s place on the church calendar is October 8. As for *Carmen*, Lesley A. Wright discusses her as, if not a saint, then at least a kind of “martyr”: “Profiles in Courage: Two French Opera Heroines,” *Fu Jen Studies: Literature and Linguistics* 30 (1997): 58–70.

the aim of creating new works that combine the familiar with the fresh and distinctive.⁵

The single most frequently recurring plot in exotic operas that have remained in the repertory involves a quest: a male of heroic caliber, usually from the West, arrives in a land of darker-skinned or otherwise different-looking people and is drawn to a young woman, who, as just noted, may be either delicate or conniving. Whichever of these two types the foreign woman is, the man's relationship with her is doomed. The relationship usually dooms him as well, causing him to abandon his loyalty to his own army or people and to be opposed, sometimes killed, by a male authority figure—such as a religious or military leader—of the Other people. The leader of the Others often acts with support of a chorus of local male underlings. The use of a negatively skewed men's chorus parallels what one finds in certain nonexotic works, such as the chorus of Catholic nobles in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* (Opéra, 1836).

The paradigmatic plot just sketched is readily found at work in:

L'Africaine (a Portuguese explorer meets a dark-skinned queen whose island realm is off the coast of Africa; he travels with her to that land that no European has seen);

Carmen (Don José, a soldier from northern Spain, meets a sexually voracious Gypsy woman; in spoken dialogue he specifically mentions Carmen's dark skin coloring; and the men's chorus does the same in a sung passage with regard to the other women working in the cigar factory);

Samson et Dalila (a Hebrew warrior—understood as a proto-Christian—meets a manipulative Philistine temptress, representing paganism); and

Lakmé (an English soldier meets the docile daughter of a Hindu priest; the priest attempts to murder him).

⁵Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 180–202; I first articulated this paradigmatic plot in Locke, "Constructing the Oriental 'Other': Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila*," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3:3 (1991): 261–302; Locke, "Beyond the Exotic: How 'Eastern' Is *Aida*?", *Cambridge Opera Journal* 17:2 (2005): 105–39; and Locke, "Aida and Nine Readings of Empire," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 3:1 (2006): 45–72.

Two of these operas, *Carmen* and *Lakmé*, form part of a sub-group that James Parakilas has dubbed "The Soldier and the Exotic": operas based on a relationship between an exotic woman (a mezzo or, in *Lakmé*, a coloratura soprano) and a soldier or colonial official (a tenor).⁶ But the basic plot that I have just sketched goes beyond works involving a foreign soldier or explorer. Take Bizet's *Les Pêcheurs de perles*. Nadir is not a Westerner. Like everyone else in the cast, he is an inhabitant of Ceylon (today's Sri Lanka). He does, however, travel a great distance, through dense forests filled with wild beasts, to a fishing village on the coast, searching for the veiled priestess he once knew. There he encounters threats from powerful males and from their supportive male chorus. The plot has two distinctive complications: Zurga, the archetypal male leader of the locals, was close friends with Nadir years earlier, and the priestess Léïla, when very young, had saved Zurga's life. In the end, the baritone Zurga, gratitude triumphing over jealousy, protects the soprano and tenor from the wrath of the local priest Nourabad and the chorus. He watches them go off to safety and stands alone as the curtain falls.⁷

In *Thaïs*, set in Greek-controlled Egypt, the paradigmatic plot is given a more extreme twist. As the opera moves toward its conclusion, the formerly hedonistic and frivolous Thaïs, so thoroughly pagan that she has always cherished a statuette of the god Eros, becomes devoutly Christian and enters into a life of chastity and, in the desert scene that begins act III, mortification of the flesh. Meanwhile, the Christian monk Athanaël, who had introduced her to his religion, makes the opposite swerve, away from monasticism and toward pagan sexual freedom. In the final scene, Athanaël visits the cloistered Thaïs, but she is slowly dying, as if her conversion to the religion of the West has sapped her life energy. She can recall neither their once-passionate relationship nor the

⁶See James Parakilas, "The Soldier and the Exotic: Operatic Variations on a Theme of Racial Encounter," part 1, *Opera Quarterly* 10:2 (1993): 33–56.

⁷In some inauthentic versions of the opera, the priest's henchmen assassinate Zurga for this betrayal. On the problem of how to end Bizet's opera, see Hugh Macdonald, *Bizet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 80–81, 241–42.

person she once was. The opera seems to suggest that nothing good can come of any attempt at Westernizing a land that has its own vitality, however superficial or misguided the culture of that land may seem to Western observers. Indeed, one of the composers discussed here, Saint-Saëns, several times expressed doubts about the supposed advantages of France's vaunted colonizing mission in such places as Algeria and Indochina.⁸

The preceding paragraphs have summarized the basic plots of six exotic works that are well known to opera lovers. Each opera gives evidence of a fascination with the often-tense relations between the European metropolis and various colorful but "less developed" Others. Yet it is worth pointing out that only one of these works, *Lakmé*, takes place in what would have been at the time "the present day" or even the recent past. Thus Karen Henson, after reading stacks of reviews of French operas from the mid and late nineteenth century, felt compelled to report, perhaps with a touch of regret, that she found "not . . . a single reference to France's colonial projects and conquests."⁹

Inge van Rij notes that there is a strong echo of France's recent conquest and settling of North Africa in Berlioz's *Les Troyens* (acts III–V only: Théâtre-Lyrique, 1863; complete: Karlsruhe, 1890). She mentions the work's "concrete interaction with colonization and imperialism."¹⁰ But such parallels are metaphorical and may have gone unnoticed at the time. A much more "concrete interaction" with daily events can be found in comic or semi-comic operas such as Ambroise Thomas's *Le Caïd* (Opéra-Comique, 1849) and André Messager's *Madame Chrysanthème*.¹¹

⁸For example: "Wherever Europe gains a foothold it destroys the land and creates ugliness and misery." Saint-Saëns, letter of 13 July 1907 to "mon cher confrère," in catalogue no. 55 of the music dealer Lisa Cox (2007), item 99.

⁹Karen Henson, *Of Men, Women, and Others: Exotic Opera in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (D. Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1999), 19.

¹⁰Inge van Rij, *The Other Worlds of Hector Berlioz: Travels with the Orchestra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 249.

¹¹*Le Caïd* is set in Algeria in the current day, involves tensions between the local ruler—the title role—and the French soldiers and recent settlers (a hairdresser and his beloved, a milliner), and presents both the French and the Algerian characters as, to varying degrees, selfish and ignoble. The work

And even these are few in number and relatively less well known today.

My basic explanation for the relative lack of operas about current-day imperialist exploits is simple. Throughout its 400-year existence, opera has tended to comment only indirectly on the day's headlines. Explicit references to political, religious, and other fraught cultural topics could easily arouse unfavorable reactions from those in power. Sometimes fatally, they could gain the attention of a governmental or ministerial censor. In nineteenth-century France, as in Italy and some other countries, the censor's office could block a libretto from being set to music, or it could insist on drastic alterations, thereby blunting the most pointed messages. A further problem, as librettists, composers, and impresarios surely realized, is that highly specific allusions to current events can become obscure with the passage of time, rendering the work less effective and even causing it to be shelved.¹²

For all these reasons, the few nineteenth-century French exotic operas that are placed in a recent time period tend to have roots in the (more or less) comic genres. Comic opera, in France as elsewhere, had long been readier than operatic tragedy to put concrete aspects of life "today" on stage.

It is worth returning for a moment to Berlioz's *Les Troyens*. As Julian Rushton, Edward Said, and others have noted, this complex and politically

was given 422 times at the Opéra-Comique by the early twentieth century. Its musical qualities were appreciated by Berlioz and others.

¹²Certain nineteenth-century operas had to be designed, or altered, to suit the requirements of the censors: for example, three by Verdi—*Rigoletto*, *La traviata*, and *Un ballo in maschera*—and Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini*. Examples from before 1800 include important operas and oratorios by George Frideric Handel and his contemporary Johann Adolf Hasse. Handel's dramatic oratorios allude to British imperialism but only by implication. They repeatedly praise biblical monarchs such as David or Solomon and the Israelite conquest of Canaan, but rarely draw overt parallels to Britain's monarchs and the nation's increasing military and mercantile power overseas. See Ruth Smith, *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), and my *Music and the Exotic from the Renaissance to Mozart* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 201–07, 248–66. On two operas by Handel and by Hasse that are set in India (to more or less the same libretto), see my "Alexander the Great and the Indian Rajah Puru: Exoticism in a Metastasio Libretto as Set by Hasse and by Handel," *Revue de musicologie* 102:2 (2016): 275–318.

ambivalent work reflected nineteenth-century French imperialistic ambitions in North Africa, through the benevolent queendom that Dido, a Phoenician (from Tyre, on the coast of what is now Lebanon), establishes in Carthage (in what is today Tunisia).¹³

Yet Berlioz took care to downplay any suggestion that Dido and her fellow Tyrians are now dominating the native population, in classic imperialist manner. Only three brief dance numbers portray people who are understood as being held captive: local dancing women in the “Pas des almées,” slaves of unstated origin in the “Pas des esclaves,” and female slaves from what we would today call Sudan in the emphatically primitive-sounding “Pas d’esclaves nubiennes.”¹⁴ Otherwise, the opera shows the Carthaginians as universally welcoming Dido, the settler-queen, and singing her praises along with her fellow countrymen and -women from Tyre.¹⁵

Berlioz’s primary concern in this opera (as both librettist and composer) was clearly not to comment on French imperialism in North Africa but rather to present Dido’s realm as a kind of ideal society, in which hard and skillful work of all kinds, including physical labor and artistic achievement, would, for once in world history, be duly rewarded.¹⁶ Any comment on French imperialism seems largely confined to

the aforementioned three ballet numbers, and their possible impact risks disappearing when, as in many productions today, one or more of them are simply omitted as not helping to advance the drama.¹⁷ But we should bear in mind that, although Berlioz does not explicitly treat imperialism in the work, his very decision to complete an opera based on the *Aeneid*, a story bound to the foundation of the Roman Empire, may be seen as a kind of encomium to Napoléon III and his growing imperialistic designs. In this respect, Berlioz was continuing an honored French tradition—as in the days of Lully and Rameau—of using opera to glorify the king.¹⁸

MUSICAL STYLES AND MUSICODRAMATIC DEVICES

We conclude now by looking at the specific contributions that the musical elements make in nineteenth-century French exotic operas. Our instances come, as before, from works of many different types: *grand*, *lyrique*, *comique*, or even *bouffe*.

The musical elements in a French exotic opera may strive to suggest the locale in three main ways: through elements understood as typical of the remote region and people; through elements intended to be perceived as odd, grotesque, or unpredictable; and through elements that do not differ at all from those that would have been used in an opera set in France or elsewhere in Europe. The first sub-section below discusses the first two categories together (the ethnically “typical” and the merely “odd”), because it is often difficult to know whether an unusual musical element was or was not understood, at the time, as referring to a particular region.¹⁹ The third category—normal musical means employed in

¹³See quotations from Rushton and Said in van Rij, *Other Worlds*, 312 and 316. France began conquering Algeria in 1830, subsequently adding Tunisia and, eventually, also Morocco.

¹⁴Nubia, or the kingdom of Kush, was a land of dark-skinned people, roughly equivalent to today’s Sudan. Nubia was a rival of ancient Egypt and even conquered Egypt for a time (the 25th Dynasty, 744–656 BCE). Nubia/Kush is the land that, in Verdi’s *Aida*, is referred to (confusingly, to today’s audiences) as Ethiopia.

¹⁵Further, see van Rij, *Other Worlds*, 245–319. In the course of *Les Troyens*, Carthage is invaded by Numidians, under the fearsome Iarbas, but these people are in no way presented as Carthaginians but as a tribe of marauding outsiders. Between acts III and IV, Dido’s well-trained Tyrians help the Carthaginians drive Iarbas’s troops back into the desert.

¹⁶In that sense, Dido’s Carthage reflects Berlioz’s idealistic (and short-lived) attraction to Saint-Simonism, a Utopian Socialist movement from the early 1830s. See my *Music, Musicians, and the Saint-Simoniens* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 114–22, or the fuller presentation in my “Autour de la lettre à Duveyrier: Berlioz et les saint-simoniens,” *Revue de musicologie* 63:1–2 (1977): 55–77, and 64:2 (1978): 287.

¹⁷Van Rij, *Other Worlds*, 315–19.

¹⁸The parallel between the opera’s plot and French imperialism seems more evident in the original, extended final scene that Berlioz wrote, and that has only been recorded once (and not complete), namely under John Eliot Gardiner (Opus Arte DVD OA0900D). See Peter Bloom’s discussion in his forthcoming *Berlioz in Time: From Early Recognition to Lasting Renown* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press), chap. 10: “The Political Implications of the Ending of *Les Troyens*.”

¹⁹Some of the devices arrayed below are briefly discussed in Lacombe, *Keys*, 200–05.

ways that reinforce exotic characterization and dramatic action—is rarely discussed by writers commenting on exotic operas. It will be discussed subsequently in its own sub-section.

Unusual or “Typical” Devices. The distinctive elements of musical style to be explored in this sub-section were often used in overtures or act-preludes; in solo arias, which allow a character to define him- or herself; and in numbers—such as dances, choruses, and ceremonial processions—that involved large numbers of participants. All three uses were particularly well suited to setting a conceptual frame within which the characters and actions in the opera could be understood. But the styles and style-elements discussed in this sub-section could also appear elsewhere in a work. And, wherever they occurred, they could intensify the sense of ethnicity and place that was already set in place by the plot, sets, and costumes.

Of course, music in opera has often helped convey a sense of place generally. Over the course of the nineteenth century, composers across Europe increasingly explored what had come to be called “local color”: styles or musical devices considered appropriate to a particular country, region, or activity.²⁰ Local color was often understood in the strict etymological sense as referring to a place. Numerous instances occur in nineteenth-century French operas that are set in countries or regions other than France, both near and far.²¹ But “local color” could also apply more generally to an activity or occupation. For example, the rocking rhythm of a barcarolle might evoke either Venice or, more generally, sailors or travel by boat, as in Delibes’s *La Fille du Golfe* (an 1859 *opéra de salon*, discussed in Part 1).²²

The kinds of style elements intended to evoke a geo-cultural locale far from here were numerous and varied. We can begin with the three most concrete and easily identifiable types of devices:

- Foreign musical instruments; or Western instruments used in ways that make them sound foreign. Particularly valuable to a composer in this regard are the woodwinds, especially when any of these is given an extensive solo of an “arabesque” or a “melancholy-minor” type.²³ Quick scalar passages in pizzicato strings plainly imitate an ‘oud-like instrument in the introductory measures to solo arias in both *Lalla-Roukh* (the act I song of the supposed minstrel) and the title character’s sad song of longing (labeled *ghazel*) in *Djamileh*.²⁴ Harp and celesta together evoke the plucked instruments of Japan—the *koto* or *shamisen*—in one striking passage in Messenger’s *Madame Chrysanthème* (the duet for the heroine and her adoptive sister at the beginning of act IV). Likewise valuable are unpitched percussion instruments, such as triangle, gong, small bells, small drum, bass drum, and tambourine. The last of these occurs prominently, with two weirdly dancing piccolos, in the chorus that opens act II of *Les Pêcheurs de perles*. And Berlioz specifies a Middle Eastern tarabouka in *Les Troyens* (see p. 197).²⁵
- A tune closely identified—perhaps over decades or centuries—with a foreign region or culture. French operas set in Spain, perhaps because the country was nearby, offer notable instances. Cherubini’s *Les Abencérages* (Opéra, 1813) and Adolphe Adam’s *Le Toréador* (Opéra-Comique, 1849) both quote, pointedly, a Spanish tune and harmonic progression that had been used by numerous composers over the previous two centuries: *La folia* (generally called in French

²⁰Lacombe, *Keys*, 186.

²¹What is sometimes called “musical nationalism” likewise made use of musical local color, as in compositions evoking the French provinces (d’Indy’s *Symphony on a French Mountain Tune*) or depicting an Eastern European setting (the folk-dance episode in Smetana’s *The Moldau*).

²²In this broader sense, local color can become a near-synonym for “characteristic” styles or musical “topics.” See Danuta Mirka, *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). (Corrigendum: In Part 1 of the present article, I erroneously referred to Delibes’s short opera as *La Jeune Fille du golfe*.)

²³The English horn, in particular, can be a strong marker of ethnic difference because of its “covered” sound and because it is used less often in Western art music than the flute, oboe, or clarinet.

²⁴Oddly, this number is devoid of the poetic features most typical of a Persian *ghazal* (such as frequent repetition of a rhyme word, or of several words at the end of a line). Numerous nineteenth-century German poems (and thus their settings as German Lieder) do make use of the distinctive formal features of the Persian literary genre (e.g., Brahms’s “Wie bist du, meine Königin,” to a poem by Georg Friedrich Daumer).

²⁵For more on the use of unusual instruments and sonorities, see Lacombe, *Keys*, 202–05.

"Les Folies d'Espagne").²⁶ Massenet's *Don César de Bazan* (Opéra-Comique, 1872) tosses the opening phrases of the famous "Jota aragonesa" tune into the orchestral accompaniment of the title character's first aria.²⁷ Three years later, Bizet freely based the Habanera in *Carmen* on a song by Sebastián Iradier, and the prelude to act IV on a serenade sung under a woman's window in an opera by Manuel García, *père*.²⁸ Further examples of intra-European "quoting" include the Lutheran chorale "Ein feste Burg" in Meyerbeer's *Les Huguenots* and sixteenth-century English virginal tunes in Saint-Saëns's *Henry VIII* (Opéra, 1883).

A tune that today may seem geographically puzzling occurs in Cherubini's *Ali-Baba, ou Les Quarante Voleurs* (Ali-Baba, or the Forty Thieves; Opéra, 1833), a partly comic work, though one that, unusually, is sung throughout (Opéra, 1833). The first act (or prologue) includes a march incorporating elements from a largely pentatonic Chinese tune that had been printed in several prominent books, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau's famous musical dictionary of 1768. Music lovers today know the tune best from Carl Maria von Weber's incidental music (1809) to the play *Turandot* and from Hindemith's *Symphonic Metamorphosis of Themes of Carl Maria von Weber* (1943). The same tune appeared in 1893 in a work set in Japan, Messenger's *Madame Chrysanthème*. There, prominent phrases from the tune form the basis of the orchestral music that underlies the close of act I, including the revelation—to the French sailor Pierre and to the audience—of the heroine's name.²⁹

To my knowledge, no writer has ever drawn attention to presence of this iconic Chinese

tune in Cherubini's *Ali-Baba* or in Messenger's *Madame Chrysanthème*, much less tried to explain what each composer had in mind and how operagoers who recognized it might have reacted. *Ali-Baba* incorporated many passages from Cherubini's *Koukourgi*, an opera set in China (composed in 1793 but not performed in the composer's lifetime). No doubt the famous *air chinois* traveled to Arabia, somewhat unbidden, as part of one of those big self-borrowings. As for Messenger, the simplest explanation is that he figured that China and Japan were close in geography, religion, and culture—or at least close enough that a tune from one could serve for the other. Puccini would make a similar decision (using a different Chinese tune) in *Madama Butterfly*, an opera indebted, if less directly, to the same Pierre Loti novel that had been the primary basis for the Messenger.³⁰

As for the famous Bacchanale from *Samson et Dalila*, its single most memorable tune (discussed earlier) is most likely Algerian. Saint-Saëns claimed to have received it from a French military man, Joseph Vantini (known as "General Yousouf") who had led French forces in Algeria.³¹ The tune, in the *hidjāz kār* mode, makes use of the interval of an augmented second in two different sets of pitches (between scale-degrees ♭2 and 3 and between ♭6 and 7). Saint-Saëns accompanies it with an ostinato drone in the low instruments, using the syncopated rhythm of three eighth notes, three eighth notes, two eighth notes—a relatively simple but immediately recognizable example of a cyclical rhythmic pattern known in Arabic and Ottoman music as a *wazn*, *darb*, or *usul*. This leads us to the third main type of device.

- Styles and rhythmic patterns that (like the iconic tunes) had become identified with a particular foreign land or region. Examples include Tyrolian yodeling figures in Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*, symbolizing the

²⁶On Spanish elements (visual and musical) in the Cherubini, see James Parakilas, "How Spain Got a Soul," in *The Exotic in Western Music*, Jonathan D. Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 137–93, 333–42 (here 139–40, 145–47).

²⁷The "Jota aragonesa" had already been incorporated in instrumental works by Liszt, Glinka, and Gottschalk.

²⁸See my "Spanish Local Color in Bizet's *Carmen*: Unexplored Borrowings and Transformations," in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830–1914*, ed. Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 316–60; also Hervé Lacombe and Christine Rodriguez, *La Habanera de Carmen: Naissance d'un tube* (Paris: Fayard, 2014).

²⁹Messenger uses a dotted-rhythm version of the tune's opening phrases, suggesting that he was familiar with the

version Weber had used in the latter's incidental music, op. 37, to the Gozzi-Schiller *Turandot* (J. 75, 1804–9).

³⁰W. Anthony Sheppard, "Puccini and the Music Boxes," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 140 (2015): 41–92.

³¹In an article that he published in 1912, Saint-Saëns admitted to having received this melody from Vantini—*Camille Saint-Saëns: Écrits sur la musique et les musiciens 1870–1921*, ed. Marie-Gabrielle Soret (Paris: Vrin, 2012), 796. Most discussions of *Samson et Dalila* (including my own until now) show no awareness of the composer's clear statement.

righteous uprising of Swiss patriots against Austrian tyranny; barcarolles in Auber's *La Muette de Portici* (Opéra, 1828; the opera takes place in Naples rather than in Venice, the city more usually associated with barcarolles); a particularly lovely barcarolle, in *Les Pêcheurs de perles*, for the Ceylonese women as they welcome the priestess Leïla to their island home (here the barcarolle may reflect her arrival over the water by dugout canoe, thus creating a slightly odd analogy to the music of Venetian gondoliers); a spirited *saltarello* rhythm in Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini* (Opéra, 1838); a bolero (misleadingly labeled *Sicilienne*) in Verdi's *Les Vêpres siciliennes* (act V, sung by the Austrian duchess Hélène; the work takes place in Spanish-controlled Sicily; Opéra, 1855); and a "Danse de la Gipsy" in the ballet that ends act II of Saint-Saëns's *Henry VIII* (Opéra, 1883). The introduction to Saint-Saëns's Gypsy dance features melodic devices frequently encountered in certain Spanish and Middle Eastern musical traditions, notably an augmented second between degrees 2 and 3. (The Roma were often thought to have come from Egypt, as the now-discredited English word "Gypsy" suggests.)

Often a rhythmic pattern was used that derived from dances typical (or thought to be typical) of the country portrayed. The syncopated accompaniment in the Habanera from Bizet's *Carmen*, for example, is a dotted variant of the *tresillo* rhythm that continues to be used in Cuban dance-based music today. The underlying rhythm in this most famous Bizet number is, in sixteenth notes, 3+3+2, the same pattern as the *usul* / *wazn* echoed in Saint-Saëns's *Bacchanale*.³² Significantly, the word "Habanera" means "song in the style of what is heard in Havana."³³ Bizet's nomenclature was significant, for he was here adapting a melody that Sebastián Iradier (or Yradier) had published after an extended stay in Cuba.

The *alla turca* or "Janissary style" is familiar today from, for example, Gluck's

French opera *La Rencontre imprévue* (Vienna, 1763–64) and three major works by Mozart: *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, the Violin Concerto No. 5, and the "Rondo alla turca" from the Keyboard Sonata in A Major/Minor, K. 331. Boieldieu applied the style to good effect in the familiar overture to his *Le Calife de Bagdad* (Opéra-Comique, 1800), but French-opera composers seem to have generally abandoned it thereafter. Perhaps they felt it had become too predictable.³⁴

As these examples suggest, exotic musical markers, whether "authentic" or invented, could be used indiscriminately in regard to quite disparate cultural Others. Consider Ernest Reyer's *Salammbô* (Opéra, 1892), based on a Flaubert novel and set in Carthage in 240 BCE, shortly after the First Punic War. The opera primarily involves the Phoenician rulers and the aggrieved Lydian and Numidian-Berber mercenaries who had fought for Carthage against Rome and were now in revolt because they had not been paid. The opera thus feels very different from Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, which, as we have noted, acts as if the Tyrians (Phoenicians) and the Carthaginian natives were friendly co-laborers and portrayed the Numidians as violent invaders from outside of Carthage.

The lengthy ballet sequence that opens act IV displays musical features that a listener today might associate more readily with Eastern Europe—as in the *Slavonic Dances* of Dvořák—than with either Lebanon or Libya/Tunisia (to use the modern designations). Perhaps Reyer felt that the main point was for the music to sound different from what was becoming the norm in French grand opera: a mixture of Meyerbeer and Gounod, ladled with features drawn from Wagner, notably extensive motivic development and some harmonic audacities. Reyer's limited application of markers of Otherness may strike us as surprisingly casual or timid. But perhaps it conveys with special acuity a blindly

³²This common feature in Spanish and Arab music is presumably a result of Arab cultural influence on the Iberian Peninsula from the eighth century CE to the end of the fifteenth.

³³The word "Habanera" should thus have no tilde over the n, since the n in the city's name has none (La Habana).

³⁴For a comprehensive list of *alla turca* features, see Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 110–26; further discussion in Locke, *Music and the Exotic*, 26–27, 36, 299–301; see also Locke, "Cutthroats and Casbah Dancers, Muezzins and Timeless Sands: Musical Images of the Middle East," this journal 22 (1998): 20–53 (here 24–28); a somewhat shorter version (but with fuller notes) appeared in Bellman, *Exotic*, 104–36, 326–33.

Eurocentric (or West European-centric) attitude on his part. Put another way, the non-Europeanness of characters that the opera professes to be about—those colonizers from the Holy Lands (broadly understood) and the native North Africans that they had conquered—nearly vanishes from the music during one of the opera's prime moments of onstage ethnic display.

The gradual decline of the *alla turca* style-convention is part of a broader shift in the use of music to reinforce an onstage portrayal of the exotic. Composers seem to have begun to suspect that relying on pre-existing, supposedly authentic tunes, or on unusual styles and rhythms that were supposedly typical of an ethnic group, would limit their creativity and result in monotony both within and between works. Accordingly, they began to combine various simple style elements in ways that were unusual at the time in nearly any current musical or operatic genre.

I array fifteen such elements in the bulleted list below. I stress the central principle of *combining* various simple elements. Any one of these elements, if examined in isolation, would convey little ethnic color. But when two or more of them were combined, they could make—and can still make today—a strong exotic effect. For example, a stolid or quirky rhythm, not in itself ethnically “marked,” might be assigned to an unusual combination of instruments. Or a non-normative scale might be combined with a simple, stubbornly repeated rhythmic figure to form a “distinctive (but not geographically identifiable) rhythmic pattern” (see the seventh bullet point below). As a result, I sometimes mention one or more additional style features that reinforce or complicate the main one being bulleted. Or the reverse: I sometimes mention one piece in more than one bullet point.

And we should not forget: the stylistic oddities are being heard and understood in the context of verbal and visual elements—plot, staging, characters' names, and so on—that manifestly invoke an exotic land and people.³⁵

³⁵The bullet points expand upon (and reorder) selected items from a longer list of exotic style elements in my book

- Scales and modes considered non-normative in France at the time, such as “gapped scales,” the most renowned of which is the pentatonic scale equivalent to a major scale without degrees 4 and 7. (One instance of this is the black keys on the piano, starting on F#.) Pentatonic or not, the unusual scales and modes preferred in exotic operas (for example the Aeolian mode: the white keys beginning on A) often lack the leading tone, and thus could not produce the dominant triad with its inherent sense of tension and urgency. Such scales and modes strongly convey a sense that the society they portray is marked by stable, unchanging sociocultural conditions, unlike the more dynamic societies thought to prevail in modern cities. In the beginning of act I of *Hérodiade*—a market scene in first-century Jerusalem—Massenet makes use of pandiatonic harmony, freely mixing and superimposing chords or open fifths available within the C-major scale, such as F–C over G–D). The scene involves merchants and slaves from different neighboring lands.³⁶

Sometimes the composer simply incorporates a representative tune that uses a distinctively nonstandard scale or mode. We have already seen an instance in the well-attested pentatonic tune from China used in both Cherubini's *Ali-Baba* and Messager's *Madame Chrysanthème*. At other times a brief reference to a scale or mode suffices. For example, the opening song for the title character in *Madame Chrysanthème* ends with a cadential phrase that lacks degree 6 (whereas the more usual pentatonicism, as mentioned, lacks degree 7: the leading tone). Thus Messager, in one and the same work, uses two different “gapped” scales to indicate Japan. (And more than two: see the next bullet point.)

- Music in which the tonic seems to shift from one note, mode, or scale to another in close

Musical Exoticism, 48–59 (see especially Fig. 3.1). This may seem inconsistent. But consistency was not necessarily a value; indeed, too much consistency in using a style understood as “limited” might have undercut a composer's attempts at imbuing characterization and drama with the necessary variety and surprise.

³⁶Pandiatonic style can also indicate early Christianity, as in the chorus for women followers of John the Baptist in the same opera (*Hérodiade*). This particular instance can also be regarded as a manifestation of neo-medievalism—one that, on a purely technical level, looks ahead to neoclassic Stravinsky. For more, see Locke, “Cutthroats,” 42–43 (ex. 9 gives the opening of the Jerusalem market scene).

succession, thereby suggesting a society that is not rationally organized. The opening melisma in Lakmé's "Bell Song" is unsettled in just this way. The unaccompanied flute solo in act III of Massenet's *Le Roi de Lahore* alternates fascinatingly between the parallel major and minor, as does each of the subsequent orchestral variations on the flute's tune. The sacred chorus that opens act III of Messager's *Madame Chrysanthème* is introduced and interrupted by unison orchestral statements that use two different pentatonic scales in alternation. The Lamento of the title character in Bizet's *Djamileh* plays powerfully with modal ambiguity across its first five vocal phrases. Are we in A-Aeolian (see the "descending melodic minor" bullet below) or a kind of Andalusian or "Gypsy" mode on E? (F and G are sometimes raised and sometimes not.) The key signature (no sharps or flats) might suggest some kind of A minor, but the whole number begins and ends on an E-major chord, which there feels like a tonic, not a dominant.

- Prominent use of the interval of an augmented second in melodic statements. This unusual interval (which composers before the nineteenth century generally took care not to use in melodies) is repeatedly highlighted in the aforementioned North African tune in the *Samson* Bacchanale. But the augmented second can occur in freshly composed tunes as well, such as the slow, florid solo-oboe introduction to that same number. The downward-spiraling melody in *Carmen* that is often called the "Fate" motive presents no fewer than three consecutively lower statements of the augmented second (on scale-steps $\flat 7$ – $\flat 6$, then $\sharp 4$ – $\flat 3$, then $\flat 3$ – $\flat 2$). Thus the melody's pitches, if rearranged to form a scale, contain both the major third degree and the minor (or lowered) one. The highly non-normative result suggests the intense foreignness of the title character and perhaps also her unruliness.
- "Descending melodic minor." A very different effect, but likewise often sounding exotic in context, is the melodic use of the minor mode with lowered degrees 6 and 7, a scale that musicians then and now have often associated with "ancient days" or less "civilized" lands. The association derives from the fact that this same scale, when used in ascending form, is identical to a mode, the aforementioned Aeolian, frequently used in medieval and

Renaissance music. An exquisitely handled instance in a French exotic opera is the first vocal phrase of "Sous le feuillage sombre," the title character's first aria in Félicien David's *Lalla-Roukh*. The yearning of this Mughal princess from Kashmir for the mysterious minstrel Nouredin is reinforced by the ending of her first phrase, on pitches $\flat 3$ – 2 – 1 – $\flat 3$ – 4 – 5 – $\flat 7$ – $\flat 6$ – 5 and by that phrase's irregular five-measure length.³⁷

- Prominent use of linear passages of melodic chromaticism. This device can easily, in context, suggest such things as mysteriousness or sexy slithering. Examples include the opening vocal phrase in the "ghazel" sung by the title figure in *Djamileh* ("Nour-Eddin, roi de Lahore, / Est fier comme un dieu"—a twisting line that moves across four closely spaced pitches, then upward three, then downward six); the orchestral music accompanying the *almée* (dancing woman) in that same opera; the opening vocal melody of Carmen's "Habanera" ("L'amour est un oiseau rebelle"); and the climactic phrase in Dalila's yearning plea to Samson in act II ("Ah! réponds à ma tendresse!"). The last of these travels across ten descending notes, again closely spaced, often moving by half step.
- Bare textures, such as unharmonized unisons or octaves, parallel fourths or fifths, and drones (pedal points—whether a bare tonic pedal or an open fifth); and static harmonies often based on a single chord or else employing two chords in lengthy, perhaps somewhat slow oscillation. For example, in several scenes in Massenet's *Thaïs*, open fifths in the accompaniment reinforce what we are seeing (and/or hearing described): the vast emptiness of the Egyptian desert.
- Distinctive repeated rhythmic or melodic patterns. These may derive from dances of the country or group being portrayed, as in the Cuban-derived syncopation in the accompaniment to Carmen's "Habanera." Or the

³⁷This ending phrase is harmonized as a perfectly normal half-cadence. An almost identical vocal phrase (2 – $\flat 3$ – 4 – 5 – $\flat 7$ – $\flat 6$ – 5) occurs, with a more consistently modal harmonization, in Liù's final aria in *Turandot* ("Tu, che di ciel sei cinta") at the first appearance of the words "l'amerai anche tu." Did Puccini know the David aria and (unconsciously?) re-use this memorable melodic gesture? Both arias are sung by an archetypal *femme fragile* who finds a core of inner strength as the respective opera goes along.

patterns may be quasi-invented but nonetheless suggest, by their rigid insistence—their lack of “sophisticated” variation—the supposed simplicity of a non-Western culture. An example of the latter is the accompanimental rhythm in Djamilah’s aforementioned “Ghazel” in $\frac{2}{4}$ meter: two sixteenth notes (beginning at the downbeat) followed by three eighths—a rhythmic pattern that is then ceaselessly repeated. This specific device, a repeated short rhythmic pattern that begins with a subdivided downbeat, seems to have served as an all-purpose signifier of the exotic in nineteenth-century French opera. It pervades the Nile River boatmen’s chorus that begins *Djamilah* and the chorus “Nous allons donc voir la princesse” in Chabrier’s *L’Étoile* (act II), a daffy work set in a teasingly unidentifiable fantasy-Asian land. Bizet used a $\frac{3}{4}$ -meter version of the pattern as the basis for the chorus “A dos cuartos” outside the Seville bullring in *Carmen* (act IV). Music critics at the time, on the lookout for particularly vivid “Oriental” elements in an opera, often focused on any case of an incessantly repeated simple accompanimental rhythmic pattern.³⁸

- Arias and choral numbers relatively simple (usually strophic) in structure and song- or dancelike in style, suggesting that the characters who are singing are less refined and cultured than European city-dwellers. The title figure in Bizet’s *Carmen* sings three of these in act I alone (“Habanera,” “Tra-la-la . . . Coupe-moi, brûle-moi,” and “Séguedille”). These numbers mark her as very different from Micaëla and Don José: in that same act, the latter two are presented in a structurally elaborate duet (“Parle-moi de ma mère”) that could as easily have been assigned to aristocratic figures on the stage of the Opéra. In Félicien David’s *Lalla-Roukh*, the minstrel Nouredin sings a modest strophic song, further disguising—through words and music—the fact that he is actually the King of Samarkand. The present category tends to overlap with the previous one, because a melody simple in style and

structure, and hence understood as folklike, was often supported by a simple, rigidly repeated rhythmic accompaniment. One such case is the perky instrumental episode—marked “leggiero” and featuring woodwinds—in the middle of “Sur la grève en feu,” the opening chorus of *Les Pêcheurs de perles*. An anonymous reviewer noted that “the Indian dance tune that the oboe sings out . . . [is] at once naïve and bizarre.”³⁹

- Exotic characters in nineteenth-century French operas are more likely to dance *while* they sing than are European characters. Such comprehensive self-expression suggests that the emotional makeup of this Other group is less inhibited, more “natural,” than Ours is. Carmen dances while she sings in the “Chanson bohème” that begins act II; the stage direction indicates that she sits down, somewhat winded, afterward. She also dances in her intimate performance, with castanets, for Don José later in the same act. Various productions have her dancing several times in act I as well. Another instance is the entertainer (with overtones of priestess?) known as “La charmeuse” in act II of Massenet’s *Thaïs*. Saint-Saëns’s Dalila does not necessarily sing with the Priestesses of Dagon (well, Christa Ludwig chooses to, softly, on the recording conducted by Giuseppe Patanè), but we are plainly told in the stage directions that “[Samson’s] eyes, in spite of himself, follow all the movements of the enchantress as she joins in the voluptuous poses and gestures of the young Philistine maidens.”⁴⁰
- Despotism legalistic decrees that make use of declamation in a monotone and/or without accompaniment, often in a rigid, undifferentiated rhythm. Examples include the repeated password-phrase “Sésame, sésame, ouvre-toi!” (Open, sesame!) in Cherubini’s *Ali-Baba* and Zurga’s threats to Léila in act I of *Les Pêcheurs de perles*.
- Rapid rhythms in equal note values, so as to suggest quasi-mechanical chatter or a business-like list of items. This occurs in Messager’s *Madame Chrysanthème*, act I,

³⁸Hervé Lacombe, *Georges Bizet: Les Pêcheurs de perles: Dossier de presse parisienne (1863)* (Heilbronn: Musik-Edition Lucie Galland, 1996), 36–39, 58. Some of these reviewers claim that Bizet borrowed excessively from David’s *Lalla-Roukh* (which had been well received at its first performances a year before) and that he did not succeed in matching David’s genius.

³⁹“L’air de danse indien que chante le hautbois . . . [est] plein de naïveté et de bizarrerie,” *Revue française*, 1 November 1863, quoted in Lacombe, *Georges Bizet: Les Pêcheurs de perles*, 38.

⁴⁰Further, see Locke, “Cutthroats,” 45.

when Monsieur Kangourou proudly announces his many skills to the French sailors Pierre and Yves.⁴¹ Of course, Rossini's Figaro, in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (Rome, 1816), uses the device for the same purpose in his entrance aria ("Largo al factotum"), and he does not come across as exotic despite the work's setting in Spain. But, in the Messenger, the Japanese location—and the emphasis, throughout the work, on Kangourou's superficiality and empty bragging—gives the portrayal a racist edge lacking in Rossini's largely admirable manipulator. The stereotype is already at work a few minutes earlier when Madame Chrysanthème tells Pierre, in similar chattering rhythm, about having been orphaned and having built a substitute family of friends (all with flower names).

- Departures from normative types of continuity. These departures may include asymmetrical phrase structure, rhapsodic melodic motion, sudden pauses, sudden long notes or quick notes, and intentionally excessive repetition, whether of melodic fragments or accompanimental rhythm. A remarkable example occurs in the overture to Cherubini's *Ali-Baba*: triangle and drum make puzzling interjections, and the two instruments are struck one after the other, not simultaneously as in the usual operatic "Turkish band."
- Quick ornaments applied to near-excess and presumably intended to be perceived as either purely decorative encrustation or dissonant, nerve-jangling annoyance rather than as organically integrated design. The opening phrases of the march in act IV of Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine*, when the audience first sees Sélika's exotic homeland and people, present two such features: a trill and a quick dotted hopping figure. The primitiveness is all the more emphatic because these phrases are played in unison by the entire orchestra.
- Floating, "timeless" vocal melismas, often modally inflected, such as in Lakmé's introduction to her "Bell Song" (act I); or similarly flexible instrumental solos, such as the introduction, for oboe solo, to the Bacchanale in act III of *Samson et Dalila*.

In the introduction to the "Bell Song," there is a suggestion that Lakmé is enacting a strange ritual, since she is the daughter of a Brahmin priest and she is singing entirely on the vowel "Ah!" In *Djamileh*, the title character's "ghazel" is in a modally inflected D minor and ends with a wordless melisma in D major. Though marked *douleureusement*, this closing passage also conveys a subtle sexual invitation, given that Djamileh is singing for the man she secretly loves, the caliph Haroun.⁴²

- Distinctive uses of vocal range and tessitura. These could include making the main female character a contralto or deep mezzo-soprano; inviting the singer to use unusual styles of vocal production, such as "darkened" sound or throbbing vibrato, either of which may be understood to indicate seductiveness or passionate intensity; or sometimes the opposite: coloratura passages whose supposed "superficiality" can suggest the exotic character's heartlessness.⁴³ All three of these qualities can be found in Saint-Saëns's Dalila; for example, moments of brazen coloratura—triumphant long upward chromatic runs—in her second aria ("Amour, viens aider ma faiblesse") and in the opera's final scene.

It is worth stressing that none of the characteristics just enumerated originated in any non-European musical culture. They were, rather, invented; or else they were available, but somewhat unusual, within the general musical style of the day. Yet they could and still can create an exotic effect when heard in conjunction with the onstage sets, costumes, and action, especially when several of them are heard in combination.

For example, the "Pas d'esclaves nubiennes" (Dance of Female Nubian Slaves) in Berlioz's *Les Troyens* has a small women's chorus (four altos) singing, to meaningless syllables, a melody in the intensely exotic-sounding Phrygian mode, whose flatted second degree often occurs in flamenco, Hungarian-Gypsy, and Middle Eastern traditional musics. Meanwhile a seated *tara-bouka* player, seconded by a small drum in the

⁴¹Monsieur Kangourou (originally a character in the Pierre Loti novel) is equivalent to the ever-calculating Goro in *Madama Butterfly*; Goro's name is clearly derived from that of Loti's and Messenger's character.

⁴²Haroun was probably named after the philosophical caliph of that name who features prominently in the *Thousand and One Nights*.

⁴³For more on lower women's voices as indicating chicanery and/or sexual desire, see Locke, "Cutthroats," 47–48.

orchestra, raps out a very plain rhythm unceasingly.⁴⁴ Little sense of harmony is present unless one counts a rhythmicized open-fifth drone (E–B) in the violas and cellos. Listeners who are familiar with opera and Western art music would likely sense by ear alone that the singers and instrumentalists are representing a non-European people. Still, the opera's *danseuses* make this even more explicit by means of dark makeup, costumes suggestive of sub-Saharan Africa, and choreography that is, however broadly or subtly, "primitive."⁴⁵ (Ancient Nubia consisted of territory roughly equivalent to today's Sudan.)

Normal Stylistic Resources in the Service of Exotic Plot and Characterization. But what about the many passages in which the basic musical materials are not unusual for their day? After all, an exotic opera is still an opera. Thus, on many occasions, musical devices that were broadly current at the time (and in a given type of opera: *grand*, say, or *bouffe*) will be employed in an opera involving a land or people that was perceived at the time as exotic. For example, a mid-century *opéra-comique* set in some exotic Elsewhere—say, Auber's *Le Cheval de bronze* or Ambroise Thomas's *Le Caïd*—would most likely be studded with features that we associate with the mostly non-exotic comic operas of Rossini from thirty years earlier: cabaletta-like concluding sections or basic harmonic, rhythmic, and textural devices such as the "Rossini crescendo." In *Le Caïd*, the not-quite-love duet for the strapping French soldier Michel and the harem woman Fatma (conclusion of act II, no. 7) even includes some coloratura duetting in sixths and tenths,

indicative of the love that she feels for him and that he pretends to feel for her. And then there are even more basic considerations that shape nearly any opera. What will make it gratifying for the singers, orchestra, and audience alike? And how should it meet certain generic requirements of nineteenth-century opera: for example, that each main character get an aria and that the soprano and the tenor interact in one or more duets?

It is here that the "All the Music in Full Context" paradigm (see Part 1 of this article) becomes particularly valuable. Musicodramatic principles and musical styles that were perfectly normal in nonexotic operas of the day may also participate actively in the representation of an exotic land and people, making characterizations more specific and intensifying events in the unfolding drama. A few examples may suffice to illustrate the possibilities more readily than would a quasi-theoretical exposition. These, I hope, will help put to rest (once and for all) the assumption, frequently encountered even today, that only exotic style-markers can contribute to the representation of "the exotic" in opera. As before in this article, my examples are varied: some are familiar nowadays, others less so; some are serious, others comic or semi-comic.

- "Amour, viens aider ma faiblesse," the second of Dalila's three highly contrasting arias in *Samson et Dalila*, has received little comment from scholars. It is noticeably free of exotic color. Yet, as her only soliloquy, it tells us things about this archetypal exotic temptress and her motivation.⁴⁶ Most notable, though rarely if ever mentioned, is that the main music for this ABA aria, the short prelude and the two A sections, is distinctly waltzlike. Dalila is here urgently awaiting the return of Samson, who has rejected her love three times in the past. Her complex motivations for repeatedly trying to draw Samson to her have been debated by commentators and suggested in concrete ways by this or that mezzo on stage. Dalila will claim, in her subsequent duet with the High Priest of the Philistines, that she was never attracted to Samson; she has been feigning love in order to

⁴⁴Berlioz calls this drum a *tambourin*. It is medium-sized and typically used in southern France in combination with a kind of fife (*galoubet*). Writers sometimes confuse the instrument with the tambourine, but the latter is called, in French, *tambour de basque*. As for Europe's "Phrygian fringe," see Peter Van der Merwe, *Roots of the Classical: The Popular Origins of Western Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 46, 63–64, 102–03, 144–54, 159–64. Van der Merwe's examples largely refer to what has sometimes been called the "Andalusian" or "Gypsy" scale or mode, with a lowered second degree but *major* third degree (resulting in the interval of an augmented second between them). Berlioz's dance here, intriguingly, goes for a true music-history textbook Phrygian, with lowered degrees 2 and 3.

⁴⁵Van Rij, *Other Worlds*, 296–319.

⁴⁶In the opera, though not in the Bible, Dalila is clearly Philistine herself. She refers to the Philistine men as "mes frères."

subjugate the Hebrew strongman and learn the secret of his strength. But the music of the aria suggests that Dalila is more drawn to Samson than she might like to admit. The waltz, of course, was the preeminent couple-dance of the nineteenth century, famous for allowing a male and female to face each other in near-embrace.⁴⁷

Saint-Saëns builds even more urgent forward motion into the music through a precise use of meter and rhythm. A recurring rhythmic motive, two eighth notes and a quarter, first occurs at the beginning of a measure, repeatedly so in the prelude, and then in the singer's first two measures: "A- | *mour* | **viens ai-der** ma fai- | *bles-* | *se.*" (I put the three-note rhythmic motive in boldface, and I italicize each downbeat.) The rhythmic motive soon shifts to the words "le poison" on beat 3 and the following downbeat: "*Ver-se* **le poi-** | **son** dans son | *sein.*" The shift creates a sort of hemiola, regrouping the six beats, such that two measures of $\frac{3}{4}$ become, effectively, three measures of $\frac{2}{4}$: "*Ver-se* | **le poi-son** | *Dans son* | [*sein*]."⁴⁸

The effect is even more pronounced if one actually follows the tempo indication in the full score: "Moderato (92 = ♩)."⁴⁹ Unfortunately, mezzos have a habit of singing the number much more slowly, a decision that helps a singer's voice bloom and, in the B section, frees her to emote hyperdramatically. (This is where Dalila indicates her desire to enslave Samson—whatever those words may mean for her at the moment.)⁵⁰ The composer's request for a forward-moving tempo makes more sense, implying a clear personal motivation for Dalila—some combination of sexual

attraction and a yearning to prove her desirability?—that underlies and reinforces her patriotic support of the Philistines' campaign against the oppressed Hebrews.

- The "Lamento" for the title character in *Djamileh* ("Sans doute, l'heure est prochaine") contains a six-measure prelude (stated before each of the two strophes) whose highly chromatic harmony and melodic motion make it a near-quotation of the famous opening of Wagner's *Tristan* Prelude (1865, seven years earlier). The intense sadness and yearning almost inherent in the harmonic progression is of course not in any way exotic, whether by origin or association. Still, the emotional state evoked by the music interacts with the plot and onstage setting to deepen our concern for this young harem woman, who has dared to think that she could win the heart of her master Haroun (thus securing her livelihood and perhaps saving her life).

Our concern for *Djamileh* is presumably also based on a stage tradition of evoking the audience's empathy for any woman who has been taken captive, and especially one who is trapped in a Middle Eastern country, where, as the playwright Beaumarchais put it in 1787, "love borders on ferocity, and the urges of the Great Ones [caliphs and sultans] know no constraints."⁵¹

- Bizet instructs Carmen, in the act III "Card Trio," to sing her solo ("En vain pour éviter les réponses amères") "simplement et très-également" (simply and with very even pulse, hence without expressive tempo changes or rubato). The resulting relentlessly steady pace produces an eerie effect, as if Carmen were repeating, in quasi-impersonal fashion, the disturbing prediction that she sees in the cards.⁵² Indeed, she seems helpless to question or resist the message from, as she sees it, Destiny. Here a "purely musical" device, an unyielding tempo that does not sound "exotic" at all, stands in tension with the dramatic situation and thereby reveals a previously undisclosed side of Carmen's "Gypsy" nature: her superstitious fatalism.⁵³

⁴⁷Hugh Macdonald argues that, in this aria, "love is invoked only as an instrument of treachery, not to satisfy any longing of [Dalila's] own." But even he admits that "the mention of love brings tenderness to her voice"—that is, to her music: *Saint-Saëns and the Stage: Operas, Plays, Pageants, a Ballet and a Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 64.

⁴⁸"Dans" gains emphasis from being a long, highish note (dotted-quarter), reached by a leap. The hemiola is gently seconded by the viola line when the phrase is first sung and, when the A section returns, by the first and second violins in octaves (doubling Dalila's melody). Macdonald: "The aria is superbly scored, with even warmer support for the return of her opening bars" (*Saint-Saëns*, 64).

⁴⁹All scores have the metronome mark. In addition, the Durand full score (ca. 1900) adds, presumably with the composer's approval: *sans lenteur* ("not slow" or perhaps "without dragging"). IMSLP.org, though, shows a full score (with sung text in both French and German) that lacks those two words.

⁵⁰A slowish tempo can also help her negotiate the rapid, nearly two-octave downward scalar swoop (on "*bra-* | [*ve*"] at the end of the B section.

⁵¹Beaumarchais's preface to *Tarare* (opera with music by Salieri), in Thomas Betzwieser, *Exotismus und "Türkenoper" in der französischen Musik des Ancien Régime: Studien zu einem ästhetischen Phänomen* (Laaber: Laaber, 1993), 336; and Locke, *Music and the Exotic*, 304.

⁵²That is, the music produces this effect when the singer and conductor follow the performance indication requiring a steady tempo. This does not always happen.

⁵³For more on *Carmen* and the "Card Trio," see Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 160–74.

- Composers often created an expansive climax in the middle or end of a finale or other large-ensemble scene by introducing a broad lyrical melody stated several times by various characters on stage, separately and/or together. A classic instance is the “sextet” in the act II finale to Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Naples, 1835). This technique, which of course has nothing inherently “exotic” about it, is applied at the end of act I of Massenet’s *Thaïs*. After teasing Athanaël for remaining celibate, Thaïs launches a captivating tune in (effectively) $\frac{12}{8}$ meter to the words “Rien n’est vrai que d’aimer, / tends les bras à l’amour!” (Nothing is true but loving: open your arms to love!). Thaïs’s latest fling, the sybaritic Nicias, then repeats the entire glorious melody along with the Alexandria crowd. Athanaël, to highly declamatory phrases, declares himself determined to save Thaïs’s soul. She replies by uniting with Nicias and the crowd in a third, climactic statement of what we may well call the “Temptation of Life’s Pleasures Song.” Thaïs then prepares to mime the gestures of Aphrodite, dropping her clothes while positioning herself in front of Athanaël. As the curtain falls, the monk—unable to resist if he stays—“flees, while indicating his horror” (*fuit avec un geste d’horreur*). The threat to supposed Christian virtue posed by pagan (here, Middle Eastern) sensuality has never been more vividly embodied on the operatic stage.
- Opera composers often invoked musical styles that were not geographically specific but instead referred to natural phenomena (storm, or ocean waves) or to human activity (lulling a child to sleep; or an army marching). These broader sorts of descriptive devices were geographically or ethnically “unmarked”; they were perceived as at once Western and universal. They, too, can be contained under the broad category of “local color.” And, by virtue of being understood as universal, they could, with little or no change, find functional use in an opera set in an exotic land. For example, in Massenet’s revised version of *Thaïs* (Opéra, 1898), the opening of the new and substantial desert-oasis scene (act III, sc. 1) reinforces what the audience is about to see through orchestral music plainly evocative of rippling water. We “hear” the much-desired water before Thaïs and Athanaël, weary and parched, come across it. And, of course, the water figures never sound like actual North African music, nor do the desolate open fifths representing the desert sands (at several points in the work).
- Similarly, Massenet’s *Le Roi de Lahore* offers conventional and very effective “military” use of

brass and winds to evoke the Hindu troops of King Alim and their battlefield confrontations with the Muslims’ “black battalions.” (The latter perhaps come from Central Asia; their origin is never made clear.) We are thus told—by the words but also by the music—to be scared of these dark outsiders, evidently representatives of militant Islam, even though the music in which their offstage presence is announced does not sound remotely foreign. As noted earlier, these Muslim invaders may have symbolized the Algerian fighters, primarily Muslims, who resisted nineteenth-century French imperialism.

- Yet another type of quasi-universal “local color,” choral music in a quasi-ecclesiastical style, occasionally crops up in exotic operas and can serve fascinating purposes. In Bizet’s *Les Pêcheurs de perles* (middle of act I), the chorus of Ceylonese islanders sings a hymn of praise to the Hindu divinity Brahma (“O Brahma, divin Brahma”). The music, had it been outfitted with a Latin text, could have easily been accepted in church. The first eight measures put forth a hymnlike series of root-position chords (I iii | vi I | V vi | V/V V | etc.) such as have long been associated with church hymns and with final Amen phrases in grandly scaled sacred works. Furthermore, Bizet concludes the chorus’s statement with a sonorous phrase (eight measures in length) that is full of suspensions strongly typical of Baroque-inspired sacred music for chorus and/or organ. Indeed, we now know that the phrase comes directly from Bizet’s early *Te Deum*, written in Rome in 1858, when he was twenty, for a church-music competition.⁵⁴ The music’s ecclesiastical aura helps seal the vow of chastity that the Hindu priestess Léïla has just taken, even though—or, rather, precisely because—the style is purely Western.⁵⁵

⁵⁴Macdonald, *Bizet*, 38–39, 76. The *Te Deum* was finally published and performed in 1971.

⁵⁵The whole choral passage, including the *Te Deum* borrowing, returns at the end of act III to clinch the chorus’s approval of Nadir’s arrest for having trespassed on sacred ground and, worse, for having drawn near to the supposedly chaste priestess. The *Te Deum* text had, for centuries, been set by composers to thank God for a recent military victory. Its association with military heroism and national pride remained alive in the nineteenth century. Berlioz originally created parts of his *Te Deum* (1849) for a work (which he never finished) commemorating the achievements of Napoleon I. He ended up dedicating the *Te Deum* to Queen Victoria’s husband, the Prince Consort Albert.

- Music not marked as exotic can be purposefully juxtaposed with notably exotic-sounding music in order to emphasize their respective features and to aid in characterization and drama. Returning for a moment to Massenet's *Thaïs*, we find that this is precisely what happens in the remarkable act I quartet, where the sybaritic Prince Nicias and the two fun-loving [*rieuses*] female slaves Crobyle and Myrtale bathe Athanaël in perfumes and dress him in jewelry and fine robes. As I have noted elsewhere, "Massenet allow[s] the women's exquisitely playful and arabesque-laden music to float intermittently to the orchestral surface but to fade out whenever Nicias urges Athanaël to enjoy the women's teasing attentions and when the latter prays for strength to resist them."⁵⁶
- As a final instance of how "normal" musical means could function in a French exotic opera, we can consider *Le Cheval de bronze* (Opéra-Comique, 1835), an opera set in a legendary, even rather fantastical version of China. *Le Cheval de bronze* is a somewhat unusual example of an *opéra-comique* in that it involves supernatural elements and even some interplanetary travel. This generic mixture is reflected in its genre-subtitle: *opéra-féerie* (fairy-tale opera) and makes the work, despite its primary location in China, quite different from most French exotica.

At the beginning of the act II finale, Tsing-Sing, a wealthy mandarin, is transformed into a lifeless statue for having revealed to other characters—though he had been firmly warned not to—the fact that he had recently flown through the skies, on a bronze horse, to the planet Venus. Tchin-Kao, the father of Tsing-Sing's fiancée Péki, arrives, assisted by some "musicians carrying Chinese musical instruments." They sing, and presumably "play," a gentle hymn of greeting to Tsing-Sing, who they assume is simply dozing. This harmonious choral passage does not sound East Asian in any way. Quite the contrary, it uses pastoral style, a "topos" that is notable for its repeated low tonic pedal notes. This style flourished in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (for example in Italian "Christmas concertos"), and derived ultimately from the playing of rural Italian bagpipers. Tchin-Kao's hymn of greeting, had it been provided with different words, could easily have served instead in an oratorio about, say, the New Testament shepherds coming to greet the baby Jesus. But the

words that the chorus sings here are a Westerner's smirking parody of the flattery that people in China supposedly offer to a powerful person:

Miroir d'esprit et de science,
O vous que nous admirons tous,
Éveillez-vous!
Astre de gloire et de puissance,
Dont le soleil serait jaloux,
Éveillez-vous!

(Mirror of wit and knowledge,
O you whom we all admire,
Awaken!
Star of with glory and power,
Of whom the sun would be jealous,
Awaken!)

When Tsing-Sing does not respond to this chorus of extravagant praise, everyone else on stage becomes anxious and the music obediently turns to a mood of solemn intensity, in the minor. At this point, the audience is likely to understand that Tchin-Kao and his friends are as desperate as, say, the people of Crete when, at the end of act II of Mozart's *Idomeneo*, a sea monster brews up a storm. This sudden shift in tone from the obsequious sweetness of the hymn allows us to identify, however briefly, with the Chinese people whom we are seeing and even with Tchin-Kao, who frantically urges the chorus to sing louder and louder in hopes of getting Tsing-Sing to awaken.

Yet before this section of the finale is over, all of the characters on stage, except of course for the stiff-as-wood Tsing-Sing, join harmoniously with a quick, dance-like duple-meter tune played in the orchestra. The music sounds more flippantly Offenbachian, two decades before Offenbach, than grimly Mozartean. Presumably, the return to musical gaiety helped Auber's audience maintain a certain emotional distance from the fright experienced by the denizens of Shantung province. But the finale suddenly returns to the minor mode, as Péki, now dressed in men's clothing, bravely mounts the magical bronze horse to fly to the planet Venus to learn how to break the magic spell.

Through these quick shifts of mood, Scribe and Auber have faithfully reflected the essential ambivalence within Western attitudes toward China and other distant lands: an unsettled alternation between empathy based on our common humanity and ridicule spurred by visible and cultural differences. And this is true even though the contrast of musical moods just described has, presumably, nothing to do with Chinese musical traditions, whether as they existed in reality or as they were "known" to Europeans.

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⁵⁶Locke, "Cutthroats," 45.

The musical elements that I have isolated in these nine examples from seven works are quite varied. They include, among other things, curvaceous vocal lines, intensely chromatic harmony, unyielding tempo, recurrence of a surging lyrical melody, military style, choral music that would normally be deemed suitable for use in church or on a state occasion, and quick shifting of tempo and musical material in response to onstage developments. All of these features occur in thousands of "normal" nineteenth-century French works, including orchestral and chamber pieces, songs and choral works, and nonexotic operas. Yet here, through the alchemy that is such a basic aspect of the operatic genre, these "normal" features intensify central elements of exotic characterization or depiction in the libretto, sets, and costumes, and thereby also tend to reinforce the *exoticist* attitudes upon which the works as a whole were premised.

ONGOING RESONANCES OF ELSEWHERE

It would be futile to try to sum up in a few paragraphs this extensive two-part tour of how exotic realms were evoked in a century's worth of French operas. Furthermore, we have barely scratched the surface of each of the works discussed and have left many other notable and effective works unmentioned.

Still, one issue has occurred again and again: the complex relationship between "the West," or more specifically France, and the various Elsewheres and Others portrayed in the works. We have found plentiful evidence of what nowadays would rightly be termed racial and ethnic stereotyping. But we have also found evidence that some of these works evoked feelings of involvement and empathy with, rather than emotional distance from or fear of, the ethnocultural and/or racial Other. And it seems clear, though critics at the time rarely mentioned it, that some exotic operas used the "Other" land as a screen on which to project more general values and concerns about, among other things, relationships between men and women or between the ruler and the ruled. In short, an exotic opera was often, perhaps nearly always, at once about and not about the land and people that it evoked through costumes, sets, certain

word choices, certain distinctive musical styles, and apt uses of more normative musical devices.

Perhaps Offenbach and his librettists had something of this sort in mind when they built the plot of *Les Brigands* around characters in Italy awaiting a delegation bringing a princess from Granada to marry the prince of Mantua. The opera gives the no-doubt-intentional impression that Spain and Italy are direct neighbors: some of the characters casually refer to a road that leads from one city to the other and that crosses the border (*la limite des deux pays*). Of course, there is no border between Spain and Italy.⁵⁷ Yet in another sense, there is indeed a kind of "border": more precisely a broad *borderland* between the two countries. It is called France. Viewed this way, Offenbach's scheming mountain ruffians and dishonest court officials, despite (or because of) their exaggeratedly comical foreign accents and their stereotyped allusions to life in the Italian mountains and to intrigues in the court of Mantua, may in fact be French people, lightly disguised: French bullies, French cowards, French womanizers, and so on.

Might this not be true, to a large degree, for the works discussed in the previous pages?⁵⁸ In many of them, audience members meet not only the Other but also whoever is Other to that Other: Carmen but also Micaëla and José; Dalila and the seductive Philistine priestesses but also Samson and the sententious Old Hebrew; Lakmé and the murderous Nilakantha but also the British soldier Gérald and the prissy governess Miss Bentson. For an operagoer with a little imagination, any of these could also be Us. As the New York critic Margo Jefferson wrote in regard to a 1996 Broadway production of a much-loved but sometimes excoriated Rodgers and Hammerstein musical: "That's the thing about 'The King and I': there are so many fantasies to enter and exit from; so many characters whose skin you can move in and out of."⁵⁹

⁵⁷See the full text in *Théâtre de Meilhac et Halévy*, vol. 7 (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1901), here 192.

⁵⁸For further discussion of "Who Is Us?" in nineteenth-century opera (primarily French and Italian), see my *Musical Exoticism*, 150–213.

⁵⁹Margo Jefferson, "Culture Clashes Still Intrigue in 'King and I,'" *New York Times*, 28 April 1996. Compare Locke, *Musical Exoticism*, 262, 319–20.

Best of all, many of the operas discussed above, in a sensitive and imaginative production and with insightful program-book essays or pre-performance lectures, might well operate in a similar way for audience members today. The resulting pleasure and puzzlement, together, can challenge and enrich our thinking and feeling about ourselves and the larger world.



Abstract.

Nineteenth-century French opera is renowned for its obsession with “the exotic”—that is, with lands and peoples either located far away from “us” Western Europeans or understood as being very different from us. One example: hyper-passionate Spaniards and “Gypsies” in Bizet’s *Carmen*. Most discussions of the role that the exotic plays in nineteenth-century French opera focus on a few standard-repertory works (mainly serious in nature), rather than looking at a wider range of significant works performed at the time in various theaters, e.g., the Opéra, the Opéra-Comique, and Offenbach’s Bouffes-Parisiens.

The present article attempts to survey the repertory broadly. Part 1 examines various “different” (or Other) lands and peoples frequently represented on stage in French operas. Part 2 discusses typical plots and character types found in these operas (sometimes regardless of the particular exotic land that was chosen) and concludes by exploring the musical means that were often employed to impel the drama and to convey the specific qualities of the people or ethnic group being represented (as a community—through chorus and authority figures—and through the feelings and

actions of individual characters). These musical means could include special or unusual traits: either all-purpose style markers of the exotic generally (oddities, one might say) or more specific style markers associated with an identifiable people or region (e.g., tunes, rhythms, and other devices understood as signaling one particular region). But the musical means could also include any of the rich fund of devices that opera composers *normally* used when creating drama and defining character: melodic, harmonic, structural, and so on. This last point is often neglected or misunderstood in discussions of “the exotic in music,” which tend instead to focus primarily on elements that indisputably “point to” (as if semiotically) the specific land or people that the work is seeking to evoke or represent.

In both Parts 1 and 2, instances are chosen from works that were often quite successfully performed at the time in French-speaking regions and that, even if little known today, can at least be consulted through recordings or videos. The works come from the standard recognized operatic genres: e.g., five-act *grands opéras*, three-act *opéras-comiques*, and short works in *bouffe* style. Composers whose works are mentioned, or discussed in some detail, include (among others) Adam, Auber, Berlioz, Bizet, Chabrier, Clapisson, Félicien David, Delibes, Flotow, Gomis, Gounod, Halévy, Messager, Meyerbeer, Hippolyte Monpou, Offenbach, Ernest Reyer, Saint-Saëns, Ambroise Thomas, and Verdi (*Les vêpres siciliennes*, *Don Carlos*).

Examining certain lesser-known works reveals merits that have gone relatively unheralded. As for the better-known works, approaching them in this wide-angled way grants us a richer appreciation of their strengths and their often-enlivening internal contradictions. Keywords: exoticism, imperialism, local color, opera, nineteenth-century French opera, libretto, staging, sets, costumes

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