



PEDRO V.

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# Macao's Two Opera Seasons in 1833 and 1865

## A Study of Travelling Musicians and Maritime Connections in the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century World<sup>1</sup>

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'I got Rossini's "Memoirs" from the library, and amused myself with them till it was time to go to hear one of his best operas, "Barbiere de Seviglia." ... Oh, the Italians certainly have the soul for music! If I were anything but an American, I would choose to be an Italian, with an English education after I was twelve years old. I admire their nature, their enthusiasm, their strength and warmth of feeling, and their love of music, which I think must be innate ...'<sup>2</sup>

So wrote the animated Harriet Low (1809-1877), a young American resident of Macao, about Italian music in her diary on 7 June 1833. By 'Italian music', Low was evidently referring to Italian opera, specifically the works by the famed Italian composer, Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868). In another entry one week earlier on 30 May, Low reflected on her evening at Rossini's *Tancredi* and wrote in closing: 'I begin to admire the Italian music very much. It is quite an acquired taste.'<sup>3</sup> The very musicians who sparked Low's curiosity in Italian music were the '*Corps d'Opera ambulant*', so identified in a local weekly, which was an opera company of six from South America who stayed in Macao from April to October 1833 on their way to Calcutta.<sup>4</sup> While in Macao, the company performed weekly and presented 'no less than eleven

separate operas' of predominantly Italian selections.<sup>5</sup> So extensive was the company's journey that the local press rightly called them 'the adventurous *corps* of Operatic circumnavigators'.<sup>6</sup>

To many contemporary observers, Italian opera and Macao may seem an odd couple. Yet the meeting of the two was by no means a fluke. Opera was a global phenomenon in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was primarily an Italian affair. By the 1850s, popular works of Italian opera were performed in Europe, across the Americas, and in Australia, India, and South Africa.<sup>7</sup> A Portuguese settlement from around the 16<sup>th</sup> century to 1999, Macao's musical culture has mirrored trends in Europe, especially in Portugal.<sup>8</sup> Reflecting its colonial past, Macao has adopted new musical styles, such as band music, from Portugal during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup> Although European influences in Macao's musical culture have been widely noted, opera has received scanty attention beyond brief references in surveys or in footnotes to case studies on other musical genres.<sup>10</sup> This article focuses on two opera seasons in Macao by touring companies in 1833 (quoted previously) and in 1865, and uses these cases to situate Macao and Asia in the global movement of musicians and musical ideas in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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### OPERA AS WORLD CULTURE

Opera was already a cultural establishment in European cities in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>11</sup> Yet during the 19<sup>th</sup> century opera circumnavigated the globe and grew

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to become 'the earliest example' of world culture.<sup>12</sup> When it came to operatic expansion of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was primarily an Italian affair. The years between 1814 and 1830 witnessed a 'Rossini fever' when the composer gained the international reputation as the most celebrated opera creator of the time.<sup>13</sup> His early works, such as *Tancredi* (1813) and *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (1816), were phenomenal successes both

artistically and financially in such major cities as Vienna, Manchester, Odessa, Constantinople, New York, Havana, and Caracas.<sup>14</sup> The global appeal of Italian opera was by no means Rossini's one-man show. His early retirement from opera composition in 1829 in France following the premier of his last opera, *Guillaume Tell*, at the Paris Opera, only coincided with the blossoming careers of contemporary and younger creators, such as Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835), Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848), and a decade later, Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901).<sup>15</sup> By the 1850s, their works, along with Rossini's, were well incorporated into the operatic repertoires across Europe and the Americas. The wave of Italian opera also reached as far afield as Australia, India, South Africa, and other remote regions.<sup>16</sup>

On one level, the ever-expanding reach of opera was a product of sweeping popularisation of the genre in Europe during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For example, in Italy and France, in particular, the published transcriptions of popular operas were rearranged into a variety of vocal and instrumental pieces and were played regularly at private salons, often by amateur musicians. Operatic tunes and texts also found their way into 'less grand venues', such as marionette and burlesque theatres in Italy and England, respectively. Equally relevant was the foundation of journals and intellectual outlets dedicated specifically to the discussion of opera and operatic activity, which engendered public discourse about opera.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, a series of innovations in opera production since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, first in Italy and across Europe, paved the way for the impending diffusion beyond Europe in the following century. By the closing decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, opera branched

out from a category of spoken theatre and established itself as a musical genre, suggesting that music gradually took over librettos as its primary component.<sup>18</sup> The growing importance of the musical element meant that opera composers were now gaining influence in opera industry so much so that they could set in place a new operatic taste through their compositions. Rossini, for instance, played a pivotal role in starting a new trend of vocally demanding serious opera, which by the 1820s had replaced the previously prevalent comic opera as the new reigning genre.<sup>19</sup> As serious opera gained popularity, modest companies with limited vocal range, who for generations had made living by producing comic opera at low-end theatres, were losing their niche in the European market and looking to new opportunities abroad.<sup>20</sup>

The means of opera production was also in transition. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, opera houses were commonly owned by the nobles and were integral to affairs of the ruling courts. As the old regime of absolute monarchy and aristocratic rule crumbled towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a new system of opera production came into shape. By the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the traditional method of compensation in kind was giving way to cash payment of fees and salaries for concerned personnel. Increasingly, one's standing in the opera industry was measured by one's salary, engendering a status divide between first-rank singers and composers and their middling and struggling counterparts.<sup>21</sup> Alongside the monetisation of opera industry was the rising profession of the impresario. Often with some degree of musical training, particularly in singing, the impresario oversaw the general management of opera houses and took charge of coordinating seasons and hiring singers and composers.<sup>22</sup> Some ambitious and entrepreneurial impresarios sought opportunities in the emerging markets overseas, especially in the Americas. Periodic economic slumps, political unrest, and wars in Europe led some musicians and impresarios of all ranks to seek opportunities abroad. Although wages of leading singers were on the rise in Italian opera houses in the 1820s and 1830s, when they were paid two to three times more than before, this trend came to a temporary halt in 1848 when revolution swept across much of Europe and triggered economic crises that lasted well into the 1850s and 1860s. In this time of economic difficulty, fees of opera singers were reduced by as much



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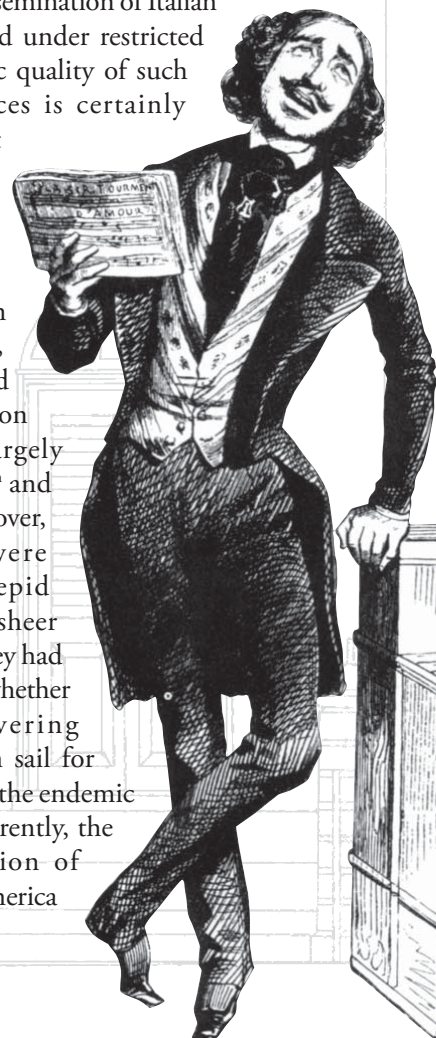
as a third, and increasing numbers of musicians of all ranks were looking for 'better terms', especially in the Americas.<sup>23</sup> Italy endured another bout of financial crisis in the 1870s in the immediate aftermath of the unification, when government subsidies for theatres were terminated and only accelerated the migration of musicians out of the country.<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile, the flourishing economies of the New World, fuelled by the Atlantic slave trade, industrialisation, agricultural advances and immigration, were growing to become the chief market for the export of Italian opera in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In a booming colonial economy, such as Havana, local elite invested their wealth from slave trade into the construction of a new theatre. Completed in 1838, the new venue was of comparable size as Milan's La Scala with the financial capacity to offer hefty fees for leading singers. Soon Havana became a crucial destination combined with New York, New Orleans, and such towns as St. Louis and Cincinnati along the Mississippi and Ohio rivers for travelling musicians and singers on the eastern side of North and Central America.<sup>25</sup> To the west, a separate circuit linking Mexico, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama, and San Francisco, especially after the gold rush of 1849, was coming into shape. The western circuit sometimes extended to Lima and Santiago with the nearby port towns of Callao and Valparaíso, respectively, serving as their gateways.<sup>26</sup>

Looking to the east side of South America, urban centres of the Iberian empires, such as Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires, were evolving into hubs of opera production and consumption. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Rio de Janeiro gained reputation as a cultural capital of the Portuguese colony in South America. With a new theatre, *casa da ópera* (house of opera) serving as a chief venue of drama and opera productions since its inception in the 1760s, Rio's cultural finesse was widely noted among visitors and dignitaries so much so that it helped elevate the city from the seat of viceroy to the capital of Portuguese America in 1802 and subsequently the capital of independent Brazil in 1822.<sup>27</sup> Buenos Aires offers another contemporary example of the vibrant music scene in South America. A new theatre also known as *casa de ópera* was founded in 1757 and housed its own orchestra in residence whose repertory ranged from instrumental to theatrical pieces.<sup>28</sup> By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Buenos Aires was home to some of the most spacious theatres of the time.

This was in marked contrast to colonial theatres in Rio, which tended to be of modest size with around 300 to 600 seats.<sup>29</sup> The first Teatro Colón<sup>30</sup> built in 1857 could hold about 2,000 people, and the Teatro de la Ópera completed in 1872, held about 1,500 people. These new theatres, together with the Solís (1856) in Montevideo, were centres of opera production especially from May to September during the summer and off season in continental Europe and North America, and the temperate 'winter' in the southern hemisphere.<sup>31</sup> Irrespective of the size of the venue, theatres in Rio, Buenos Aires, and Montevideo, as well as coastal towns in Brazil and riverine cities along the River Plate such as Rosario, collectively formed the Austral-American circuit for touring singers and musicians.<sup>32</sup>

The multiplying venues and expanding circuits undoubtedly gave a boost to the export of Italian opera to the Americas so much so that opera export had grown into 'a fast-growing business' by the 1840s.<sup>33</sup> In particular, the booming productions of modest scale in the first few decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were instrumental to the dissemination of Italian opera. Often produced under restricted conditions, the artistic quality of such low-end performances is certainly questionable. Yet it was the struggling small companies that helped cultivate the taste for Italian opera at the grass roots in American outposts, as they often travelled with an eclectic selection of several operas, largely Italian, from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, these musicians were in every sense intrepid 'pioneers' given the sheer logistical challenges they had overcome on the way, whether that meant persevering with arduous trips on sail for months or weathering the endemic yellow fever.<sup>35</sup> Concurrently, the sustained immigration of Italians into Austral America



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in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many of whom were music teachers or with a degree of musical training, spurred the popular interest in Italian opera, and those cities with sizable Italian communities, such as Rosario and Buenos Aires, effectively developed into the regional centres of opera industry.<sup>36</sup>

The demographics of opera export began to diversify in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as more lead singers in their prime were arriving in the New World.<sup>37</sup> The improved transport, especially the advent of fast steamboats and the construction of railways, greatly eased the logistics of travel and reduced health risks of touring in tropics.<sup>38</sup> Spurred by the economic boom, the fees in American theatres in such leading cities as New York, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, and San Francisco rose sharply and attracted star singers to undertake engagements in the New World.<sup>39</sup> By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American theatres were firmly incorporated into the regular engagements of the best singers of the time as witnessed in the appearances of international stars, such as Enrico Caruso (1873-1921) and Titta Ruffo (1877-1953), in New York and Buenos Aires.<sup>40</sup> Also at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, cases of 'reserve' migration of operatic talents, from the Americas to Europe, developed as increasing numbers of Italo-American singers sought their careers in Europe.<sup>41</sup> By this time, the age of operatic pioneers, once the engine of opera exports, was over.

## 'OPERATIC CIRCUMNAVIGATORS' OF 1833

'We hear that the adventurous *corps* of Operatic circumnavigators who have enlivened the summer at Macao by the hitherto unheard of pleasure of regular Italian Operas acted weekly, are shortly about to take their departure for Calcutta ... The *corps* consists of two ladies, Signoras Schieron, and Caravaglia, both contraltos, the latter of whom invariably enacts gentleman's parts; and three male performers, Signori Pizzoni, Bettali, and Mayorga. The maestro and leader of the orchestra, Monsieur Planel, and a Spanish American who leads the choruses, and is a useful actor of all work, constitute the *Corps d'Opera ambulant* who are now going to try their fortune in the great metropolis of the East ... During the six months they have remained at Macao, no less than eleven separate Operas have been produced; offering a variety in number greater than almost any Theatre on the continent; and, in point

of selection, comprising some of the choicest works of the best composers. We submit the list in the order in which they were acted. *Agnése, L'Italiana in Algieri* [Algeri], *Il Tancredi*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* [Siviglia], *Eduardo e Christina* [Cristina], *Portantini*, *I Bacchanali* [Baccanali] di Roma, *Inganno Felice*, *La Gazza Ladra*, *Otello*, *Elisa e Claudio*.'<sup>42</sup>

Entitled 'Italian Opera at Macao', the anonymous correspondent of *Canton Register* reported on 24 October 1833 about the rather unusual highlights of the summer that witnessed possibly the first ever regular performances of Italian opera in Macao, then the Portuguese colony in the south-eastern corner of China. The exclusively Italian and predominantly Rossinian selections, with the exceptions of *Agnése* by Ferdinando Paer (1771-1839), *I Bacchanali di Roma* by Giuseppe Nicolini (1762-1842), *Elisa e Claudio* by Saverio Mercadante (1795-1870) and *Portantini* by an unspecified composer, speak well for the global reach of Italian opera, which found its way to the far-eastern outpost. Some of the expressions in the report, such as 'the choicest works' and 'the best composers', suggest the author was possibly a seasoned music observer with some knowledge of current trends in opera industry.

Aside from the brief sketch of the musicians and programs, we learn surprisingly little about Macao's reportedly first season of Italian opera from the previously mentioned review article. For example, it is impossible to independently verify whether the '*Corps d'Opera ambulant*' was the first opera company ever to perform Italian operas in Macao.<sup>43</sup> Neither can we independently verify the exact venue nor the complete schedule of the season.<sup>44</sup>

Although the coverage of the company's activity in the local press maybe limited, other sources reveal that the six members of the troupe were sighted in several cities in South America in 1829-1830 before leaving for Asia. Harriett Low, for example, is one contemporary observer who noted in her diary on 7 March 1833 that: 'a company of Italian singers has just landed here, four gentlemen and two ladies. It seems they have been driven from South America'.<sup>45</sup> John Rosselli's extensive research on Italian opera business and singers offers further details on the company's footprints in South America. By 1829, 'Teresa Schieron, Margherita Garavaglia and their companions' appeared in Buenos Aires with 'three local male singers', who were possibly the previously

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mentioned Pizzoni, Bettali, and Mayorga.<sup>46</sup> In Buenos Aires, the five singers were joined by Federico Planel, the Uruguayan violinist, music director, and conductor. Together, the company of six embarked on the next leg of their American tour in the two Chilean cities, Valparaíso and Santiago, then in Lima, all of which took place in 1830-1831, and resurfaced in Macao two years later.<sup>47</sup>

Of the five singers, the best documented is the contralto, Teresa Schieronì, whom Harriet Low described as 'the better of the two [female singers]'.<sup>48</sup> Prior to her undertakings in South America, Schieronì had appeared in some comic opera in such northern Italian cities as Piacenza and Reggio Emilia and had sung a supporting role in Rossini's *Elisabetta, regina d'Inghilterra* in Modena. We know far less about the second contralto, Margherita Garavaglia, who also took the breeches roles in Macao and was believed to have previously sung in 'minor Italian theatres'.<sup>49</sup> The careers of the three male singers, Pizzoni, Bettali, and Mayorga, prior to their appearances in Macao are virtually unknown.<sup>50</sup> What we do know is all three singers were either baritone or bass in training because the company lacked both tenor and soprano. All in all, the five singers had proven themselves to be competent singers and actors of 'comic opera' and their singing and acting on most occasions was praised in the local press as 'powerful' and 'impressive'.<sup>51</sup>

Slightly more information is available about the leader of the company, Federico Planel, who directed the productions from pianoforte because the company was without an orchestra or a chorus. His piano performances, nonetheless, received tough criticism and were singled out as the source of 'defects' of the company.<sup>52</sup> Planel was in fact a violinist in training and received lessons from his brother-in-law and the Italian violinist, Giacomo Massoni, who himself was a pupil of the celebrated violin virtuoso and composer, Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840).<sup>53</sup> Planel's family connection, especially with his brother-in-law, played out in the company's decision to head to Calcutta, where Massoni himself had successfully completed his musical engagements two years earlier.<sup>54</sup>

The exact itineraries of Planel and his musicians to and from Macao may never be known because of the inconclusive nature of surviving sources. Yet it is still possible to gain some insight into their journey by weaving together the contemporaneous shipping

information and travel accounts. Following their documented appearances in Valparaíso, Santiago, and Lima in 1831, the company was next seen in Macao in March 1833.<sup>55</sup> Harriett Low was one of the early observers in Macao who noted in her diary of 7 March 1833 that the company travelled from South America without specifying the port of origin.<sup>56</sup> If the company were to travel from 'South America', they could have easily opted to take a trans-Pacific route. Valparaíso and Lima, for example, were located along vital waterways for a trans-Pacific journey and were leading ports in the galleon trade (1565-1815) that connected South America and Manila, the Asian headquarters of the Spanish empire.<sup>57</sup>

The whereabouts of Planel and his musicians following their extended stay in Macao through October 1833 are rather sketchy. The local shipping intelligence chronicled at least three ships, all British, that reportedly left Canton for Calcutta on 4, 5, and 8 November, respectively, thus making these freights likely options for the company's journey to Calcutta.<sup>58</sup> We are left with conflicting records as to whether the company landed in Calcutta. One account suggests they were lost in the sea, while others link Planel to a certain 'Planel French Opera Company' who took his company from Mexico to San Francisco in 1853.<sup>59</sup> If the latter account proves accurate, Planel (and possibly his musicians) returned to the Americas at some point, making him a bona fide circumnavigator of the operatic world.

TOURING ALONG AN ASIAN CIRCUIT  
IN 1865

The next documented operatic pioneers to set foot in Macao were a certain 'French company' ('*companhia franceza*') that gave weekly performances of Italian and French operas between 21 May and 5 July 1865 at the newly refurbished Dom Pedro V Theatre.<sup>60</sup> The programs were primarily Italian and included Donizetti's *La fille du régiment*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La favorite*, and *Don Pasquale*, Rossini's *Il barbiere*, and Verdi's *Il trovatore*. A few French comic operas were also performed.<sup>61</sup> The company consisted of at least four core members whose names appeared consistently in the local press: the multi-tasking Mr Maugard, who served as director, conductor, and an occasional tenor; two female singers, Mrs Maugard and Mrs Tholer; and



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a baritone, Mr Merglet.<sup>62</sup> Also mentioned in passing was another singer named Mr Bernadae, who appeared in an unspecified French comic opera.<sup>63</sup> Although the company was without its own orchestra, the singers were accompanied by at least two musicians, Mrs De-Liagre, a piano and violin player, and Mr Emmanuel, another violin player and a teacher.<sup>64</sup> The absence of a tenor was later resolved by the addition of Mr Viard, who arrived in Macao on a French steamer, *Tiger* ('*vapor francez Tigre*'), from Marseille on 28 June 1865, just in time for the last two productions, *Il barbiere* and *Il trovatore*.<sup>65</sup>

The local media keenly reported the visit of the Maugard opera company as it presented local music lovers a rare opportunity to enjoy opera. Though some shortcomings were noted, the company received overwhelmingly positive reviews and accolades for their singing and acting.<sup>66</sup> Also forthcoming in the local reviews was the overall popularity of Italian opera *vis-à-vis* French opera among local audiences. One reviewer was particularly vocal about his or her preference for the former: 'The French operas are not so beautiful ... and so complete as the Italian operas.'<sup>67</sup> The same commentator further observed that the presentation of Donizetti's *La favorite* on 4 June attracted 'more numerous theatre audiences' than had an unspecified French comic opera performed the previous day.<sup>68</sup> The public thirst for Italian opera was likely satisfied by the two successive opera seasons that followed. The same Maugard Opera Company returned to Macao in 1866 and gave presentations of Bellini's *Norma* and two other operas.<sup>69</sup> In 1867, another opera company, this time Italian, toured for the first time in Macao from April to July and performed the following: Rossini's *Il barbiere*; Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La favorite*, and *Don Pasquale*; Verdi's *Il trovatore*, *La traviata*, and *Les Vêpres siciliennes*; and Bellini's *La sonnambula*.<sup>70</sup>

Italian opera was gaining an even wider support outside the theatre and was being incorporated into a broader mosaic of Macao's musical life at around the time the Maugard Opera Company toured in Macao in 1865. The interim period between the two opera seasons in 1833 and 1865 was a time when local outlets for music were multiplying and serving as alternative venues for playing operatic tunes. These decades coincided with the formative years of Macao's musical bands of brass and wind instruments. Military bands were founded around 1820 and remained central to

Macao's musical life until their disbandment in 1912 through regular street performances and appearances at official ceremonies. Band music kept its momentum well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the formation of municipal bands in 1912 and their resurgence in 1928 following an interim period of 1920-1928.<sup>71</sup> Reflecting the global appeal of Italian opera, the military bands 'preferred Italian music, particularly opera, over any other genres' in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>72</sup> The municipal bands were no exception when it came to their aptitude for developing operatic repertoires and played works by Pietro Mascagni, Giacomo Puccini, and Richard Wagner.<sup>73</sup> Opera remained integral to band music traditions until public taste began to shift towards incoming Anglo-American music, most notably jazz, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>74</sup>

Besides the occasional opera seasons and the blossoming band music, operatic tunes were circulating at alternative venues, such as local seminaries. The advent of foreign steamers in the South China Sea meant more foreigners, some of whom were trained musicians, were arriving and residing in Macao in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>75</sup> For example, Luigi Antinori (1816-1873) studied at the prestigious Academy of St. Cecilia in Rome and arrived in Macao around 1864 at the invitation of a resident Catholic priest at St. Joseph's Seminary.<sup>76</sup> While in Macao, Antinori gave private lessons and occasionally oversaw ceremonies held at St. Joseph's. For example, at a prize-awarding ceremony held on 26 December 1864, Antinori conducted a choir and an orchestra composed of musicians from the battalion band and played two of his own compositions and excerpts from Verdi's *Nabucco*. On another occasion in 1872, he played overture to Rossini's *Semiramide* on the piano together with a fellow musician at an official reception marking the visit of the Cambodian king to Macao.<sup>77</sup>

The lively musical landscape was reflected in the growing voice of music connoisseurs who endorsed operatic activity. The local print media was one main outlet for discussion about music and other artistic activities, and published performance reviews, concert programs, and featured reports.<sup>78</sup> Another highlight of the maturing music community in Macao came in 1857, when a group of residents formed a committee and presented to the local government a petition to build a new theatre dedicated specifically to artistic

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and musical activities. This movement culminated in the opening of Dom Pedro V Theatre, which was completed initially by the end of 1858 and reopened in 1873 with a new façade.<sup>79</sup> Since its inception, the theatre has played host to countless endeavours of all forms, ranging from vocal and instrumental recitals, balls, to opera productions.

Although much of the journey of the Maugard Opera Company remains unknown the available records of their itineraries speak for their sustained presence in the Asia-Pacific region. Described in the local media as a company that 'performs only in Asia and Oceania', the Maugard musicians left for Hong Kong on Tuesday, 22 May, upon completion of their first two performances in Macao, which took place on 21 and 22 May, respectively, and reportedly returned to Macao on 27 May.<sup>80</sup> Following the conclusion of their Macao tour on 5 July, the company left for Manila, where they first sought a performing contract with the city's main theatre, Principe Alfonso, but was unable to do so because of lack of agreement with the theatre's entrepreneur. Then the company opted for a lower-end and signed a contract with 'some other smaller [theatre] in Quiapo' (*'outro mais pequeno em Quiapo'*) near Manila, where they were set to begin their engagements on 23 July with Donizetti's *Lucia*.<sup>81</sup> Although further details on their touring itineraries in Manila (and beyond) remain unknown, the Maugard Opera Company possibly stayed in the Asia-Pacific region at least until their reappearance in Macao in June 1866.<sup>82</sup> Such extensive sojourn in Asia even alludes to the possibility that the company might have travelled along some form of a touring circuit that encompassed at least Macao, Hong Kong, and Manila.

## FINAL NOTES

This article set out to examine the so-far little documented opera seasons in an Asian outpost of Macao. The two seemingly incidental opera seasons in 1833 and 1865 as well as other sporadic cases of operatic activities, when read together, present a convincing case of 'opera explosion' that mirrors the experience of Europe and the Americas.<sup>83</sup> Macao's opera seasons further illuminated the popularity of Italian



operas and came at a time when the local venues for musical activities were multiplying and when public discourse about opera and music in general was blossoming, especially among members of European community.

In a global history of opera, the early mid-19<sup>th</sup> century was the age of 'pioneers', when intrepid touring companies of modest standing persevered on difficult journeys and made their way into operatic frontiers. In parallel to the Americas, the maritime movement of struggling musicians, often travelling with versatile selections of operatic works, was a force behind the ever-expanding reach of opera in Asian outposts, such as Macao. The members of the Planel and Maugard opera companies, both small-sized with limited human power, were in every sense 'pioneers' who tried their luck and sought opportunities in Asia as well as in South America, in the case of the former.

Moreover, the journeys of the two companies, one taking the trans-Pacific route from South America and the other coming from continental Europe, further illuminate the position of Macao as a crossroads of maritime traffic that carried operatic circumnavigators. In both cases, Macao was by no means the only destination but rather was one of the several stopovers alongside Calcutta, Hong Kong, Manila, and possibly others. These findings showcase a possibility that some form of an Asian touring circuit was already in place or at least was in the making in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, an experience similar to the contemporaneous development of regional circuits across the Americas.



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Although this article focuses primarily on Macao, it paves the way for future research that will further document the interconnections between maritime traffic along Asian port cities and the movement of musicians and musical ideas.

Some of the findings of this article, though still preliminary, are suggestive of vital links between the movement of opera singers and transport technology. Given the growing presence of foreign steamers in maritime traffic, it was no coincidence that the tenor of the Maugard opera company arrived in Macao

on a French steamer. In the Americas, the easing of travelling conditions with the advent of steamships and the opening of railways in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century opened a new era in the history of opera export with the increasing arrivals of the world-class singers. It remains to be seen whether and to what extent the changing mode of maritime transport influenced the dynamics of musical exchange in Asia. An answer may lie somewhere in the cross-fertilisation of music history, maritime history, and the study of Asian port cities. **RC**

## NOTES

- 1 This article understands 'opera' as a genre in Western classical music. I am grateful for the support I have received from the University of Macau's Multi-Year Research Grant and Students Research Programme by Honours College.
- 2 Harriet Low Hillard and Katharine Hillard, *My Mother's Journal: A Young Lady's Diary of Five Years Spent in Manila, Macao, and the Cape of Good Hope from 1829-1834*, pp. 205-207. Low accompanied her uncle, William Henry Low, who had a new business in opium and tea trading in Canton, and his wife, Abigail Knapp Low, and lived with the latter as her companion in Macao between 1829 and 1834. For a fuller account of Low's life, see Hillard and Hillard, *My Mother's Journal*, pp. 1-17.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 204-205.
- 4 'Italian Opera at Macao', *Canton Register*, 24 Oct. 1833. The italics are in the original.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid. The italics are in the original.
- 7 Roger Parker, 'The Opera Industry'. In *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, edited by Jim Samson, pp. 89-91.
- 8 On social life of European community, see, for example, Oswaldo da Veiga Jardim Neto, 'The Role of the Military and Municipal Bands in Shaping the Musical Life of Macao, ca. 1820-1935', pp. 80-82. For a brief history of western classical music in Macao, see, for example, Tang Kaijian 汤开建, 'Shiliu shiji zhongye zhi shijiu shiji zhongye xiyang yinyue zai Aomen de chuanbo yu fazhan' 16 世纪中叶至19世纪中叶西洋音乐在澳门的传播与发展 (Western Music in Macao from the Mid-16<sup>th</sup> Century to the Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century), pp. 49-54. For a general survey of music history in Macao, see, for example, Li Yan 李岩, *Bin fen miao xiang: Aomen yinyue 缤纷妙响在澳门音乐* (Music of Macao). For a comprehensive survey of Macao's history, see, for example, Beatriz Basto da Silva, *Cronologia da História de Macau*. For Chinese translation on 19<sup>th</sup>-century Macao, see Beatriz Basto da Silva, *Aomen bian nian shi: shi jiu shi ji 澳门编年史：十九世纪*.
- 9 Li Yan, *Bin fen miao xiang: Aomen yinyue*, pp. 60-71; Neto, 'The Role of the Military and Municipal Bands'; Neto, 'The Tradition of "Bandas de Música"', *Revista de Cultural Review of Culture* 16 (2005), pp. 7-43. A longstanding centre of Christian missions in East Asia, Church music had established its foothold in Macao since around the 16<sup>th</sup> century. For concise surveys of the history of church music in Macao, see, for example, Li Yan, *Bin fen miao xiang*, pp. 18-43; Manuel Carlos de Brito and Luísa Cymbron, *História da Música Portuguesa*, pp. 61-80.
- 10 Neto, 'The Role of the Military and Municipal Bands', pp. 36-37, 90-91, 104-106, 109, 123-124, 151-160, 163-169; Li Yan, *Bin fen miao xiang*, pp. 72-74; Tang Kaijian, 'Shiliu shiji zhongye', p. 52.
- 11 See Simon P. Keefe (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, especially, 'Part II Music for the Theatre', chs. 8-12.
- 12 Parker, 'The Opera Industry', p. 89.
- 13 Ibid., pp. 90-91; Rosselli, 'Opera Production, 1780-1880', p. 99.
- 14 Parker, 'The Opera Industry', p. 89; Rosselli, 'Opera Production', pp. 99, 103.
- 15 William Weaver persuasively called the years between 1816 and 1926 'the golden century' of Italian opera marked by the succession of the luminaries from Rossini to Puccini. Weaver, *The Golden Century of Italian Opera from Rossini to Puccini*. It must be noted Italian opera was by no means the only prevailing genre of opera. For a concise overview of major works and composers of Italian, French, and German operas, see Parker, 'The Opera Industry', pp. 92-116.
- 16 Ibid., pp. 89-91.
- 17 Ibid., pp. 89-90.
- 18 Ibid., p. 87.
- 19 Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera. The History of a Profession*, p. 135; Parker, 'The Opera Industry', p. 87.
- 20 Rosselli, 'The Opera Business and the Italian Immigrant Community in Latin America 1820-1930: The Example of Buenos Aires', p. 162.
- 21 Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi: The Role of the Impresario*, p. 122.
- 22 Parker, 'The Opera Industry', p. 92.
- 23 Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera*, p. 135.
- 24 On a period of cultural and financial downturn in the immediate years after Italian unification, see Fiamma Nicolodi, 'Opera Production from Italian Unification to the Present', in L. Bianconi and G. Pestelli (eds.), *Opera Production and Its Resources* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 165-177.
- 25 Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera*, p. 186; Rosselli, 'The Opera Business', p. 166.
- 26 Rosselli, 'The Opera Business', p. 166.
- 27 Rogério Budasz, 'Music, Authority and Civilization in Rio de Janeiro, 1763-1790', in Geoffrey Baker (ed.), *Music and Urban Society in Colonial Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 156, 162-163, 169.
- 28 Bernardo Illari, 'The Slave's Progress: Music as Profession in Criollo Buenos Aires', *ibid.*, p. 199.
- 29 Budasz, 'Music, Authority and Civilization', p. 164.
- 30 The second Teatro Colón opened in 1908.

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- 31 Rosselli, 'The Opera Business', pp. 167-169.
- 32 Ibid., p. 165.
- 33 Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy*, p. 78; Nicolodi, 'Opera Production', p. 170.
- 34 Rosselli, 'The Opera Business', p. 168.
- 35 Ibid., p. 161.
- 36 Ibid., pp. 159-160.
- 37 Ibid., p. 167.
- 38 Ibid., pp. 160-161, 165.
- 39 Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy*, p. 77-78; Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera*, p. 144-145.
- 40 Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy*, pp. 155-156.
- 41 Ibid., p. 165.
- 42 'Italian Opera at Macao', *Canton Register*, 24 Oct. 1833. The italics are in the original.
- 43 It is possible that Italian opera had already been performed, if not in its entirety, prior to the visit of the 'Corps d'Opera ambulant' in 1833. For example, Harriett Low mentions her encounter with Rossini's *La cenerentola* on 18 October 1832, which was presented in Spanish by 'the chiefly Portuguese' company under the direction of 'Mr Pavia'. Low, *Lights and Shadows of a Macao Life: The Journal of Harriett Low, Travelling Spinster*, ii, p. 450.
- 44 Harriett Low's diaries identify performance schedule as follows: an Italian opera, '*The Father and Daughter*', by an unspecified composer on 26 April; *L'Italiana in Algeri* on 18 May; *Tancredi* on 1 June; *Il barbiere di Siviglia* on 5 and 7 June; *Eduardo e Cristina* on 22 June; an unspecified program on 24 June; *Agnese* on 16 July; *Il Baccanali di Roma* on 23 July; an unspecified program on 6 August; an unspecified program on 11 August; an unspecified program on 20 August; *Otello* on 3 September. See Hillard and Hillard, *My Mother's Journal*, pp. 145-146, 197-198, 200-201, 203-210, 219-220, 222-223, and Low, *Lights and Shadows*, pp. 450, 553-554, 560, 564, 569, 586, 591, 623.
- 45 Hillard and Hillard, *My Mother's Journal*, p. 183.
- 46 See, for example, Rosselli, 'The Opera Business', pp. 162-163.
- 47 Ibid., pp. 162-163, 166.
- 48 Hillard and Hillard, *My Mother's Journal*, pp. 197-198. John Rosselli, on the other hand, describes her as 'a prima donna of... limited vocal attainments', in Rosselli, 'The Opera Business', p. 162.
- 49 Rosselli, 'The Opera Business', p. 162; Hillard and Hillard, *My Mother's Journal*, pp. 197-198.
- 50 Harriett Low describes Mr Pizzoni as '[T]he tallest man ... nearly touches the ceiling'. Cited in Hillard and Hillard, *My Mother's Journal*, p. 204.
- 51 'Italian Opera at Macao', *Canton Register*, 24 Oct. 1833.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Rosselli, 'The Opera Business', p. 163.
- 54 'Italian Opera at Macao', *Canton Register*, 24 Oct. 1833. From Calcutta, Giacomo Massoni went to Cape Town and then to London (Rosselli, 'The Opera Business', p. 163).
- 55 Rosselli, 'The Opera Business', pp. 162-163.
- 56 Hillard and Hillard, *My Mother's Journal*, p. 183.
- 57 See, for example, Shirley Fish, *The Manila-Acapulco Galleons: The Treasure Ships of the Pacific with an Annotated List of the Transpacific Galleons 1565-1815*, pp. 47-49.
- 58 *Canton Register*, 14 Nov. 1833.
- 59 Rosselli, 'The Opera Business', pp. 162-163; Works Progress Administration, *The History of Opera in San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1938), pp. 12-13.
- 60 *Ta-Ssi-Yang-Kuo: Arquivos e Anais do Extremo-Oriente Português, 1863-1866*, pp. 365, 374-375, 377, 382, 386, 390. I am thankful for Patrick Connolly and Shiping Shen for providing English translations of the aforementioned Portuguese reports in TSYK.
- 61 Ibid., p. 365.
- 62 Ibid., pp. 365, 374-375.
- 63 Ibid., p. 386.
- 64 Ibid., pp. 365, 386.
- 65 Ibid., pp. 386, 390. The italics are in the original. See also Li Yan, *Bin fen miao xiang*, p. 73. I am thankful for Ho Si Meng for her assistance in verifying my reading of Chinese sources.
- 66 For example, in one review, Mrs Maugard was described as 'not being an excellent singer' and Mr Viard being 'a singer of poor standard' (*Ta-Ssi-Yang-Kuo, 1863-1866*, p. 390).
- 67 Ibid., pp. 374-375.
- 68 Ibid., pp. 374-375.
- 69 Li Yan, *Bin fen miao xiang*, p. 73; Tang Kaijian, 'Shiliu shiji zhongye', p. 52.
- 70 The company was led by a certain Pompel, and the singers on tour included two 'famous' female singers, Benchi and Marietta Veradi, a tenor named Pizzioli, a baritone named Reima, a bass named Columbo, and others. Li Yan, *Bin fen miao xiang*, p. 74.
- 71 Neto, 'The Role of the Military and Municipal Bands', p. 6.
- 72 Ibid., p. 151.
- 73 Beatriz Basto da Silva, 'Macau, Army and Culture', *Review of Culture* 15 (1988), p. 92.
- 74 Neto, 'The Role of the Military and Municipal Bands', p. 164.
- 75 During the first opium war of 1839-1842, which engulfed Canton, Macao became a refuge for expelled foreigners in Canton and likely accelerated the influx of foreigners into the city. Neto, 'The Role of the Military and Municipal Bands', p. 33.
- 76 Ibid., pp. 82-83.
- 77 Ibid., pp. 82-83. On other resident musicians, see *ibid.*, pp. 105-106.
- 78 Silva, 'Macau, Army and Culture', p. 90; Neto, 'The Role of the Military and Municipal Bands', p. 130.
- 79 Neto, 'The Role of the Military and Municipal Bands', pp. 36-37. For further details on the history of the theatre, see Manuel Teixeira, *O Teatro D. Pedro V.*
- 80 *Ta-Ssi-Yang-Kuo, 1863-1866*, p. 365.
- 81 Ibid., pp. 390, 414. This brief account hints at the presence of a Manila-based agent who might have acted in the capacity comparable to that of impresario.
- 82 Li Yan, *Bin fen miao xiang*, p. 73; Tang Kaijian, 'Shiliu shiji zhongye', p. 52.
- 83 The phrase is taken from Parker, 'The Opera Industry', p. 89.



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