MARETZK, VERDI, AND THE ADORING PUBLIC: RECEPTION HISTORY AND PRODUCTION OF ITALIAN OPERA IN AMERICA, 1849-1878

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ABSTRACT

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Moravian-born impresario Max Maretzek was one of the leading opera managers in nineteenth-century America, specializing in Italian opera. During his career, Maretzek highlighted three cities as being "musical centers" in America: New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. While he noted that these cities were the most important for opera, he did not treat each one the same. Indeed, each of these cities had a heritage that affected their responses to opera. For example, the Puritanical heritage of Boston caused Maretzek to cancel his production of Verdi’s *Rigoletto* in 1861, because citizens were revolted by the opera’s immoral plot. In this project, I will explore, discuss, and analyze reception of Maretzek’s Italian operas, and how this reception affected how he produced opera.

Using Jauss’s ideas on reception theory, specifically the "horizon of expectations," I will explore the historical and cultural contexts of Maretzek’s three musical centers, coupled with research on opera in nineteenth-century America by Katherine Preston, John Dizikes, and June Ottenberg. Since Maretzek was an early proponent of Verdi’s operas, I will discuss the reception of Maretzek’s productions of Italian opera, with emphasis on Verdi and the various controversies his operas engendered. I will show that Maretzek responded to criticism differently in each of the three cities: his productions were more adventurous in his home base of New York, and more conservative in Boston and Philadelphia. Finally, I will situate Maretzek and his work in the overarching cultural context of Italian opera in nineteenth-century America, drawing on the work of Lawrence Levine and Kristen Turner. While Italian opera is commonly discussed as representing the interests of the wealthy upper class in America during this time, I will argue that discussions of Maretzek in this context require a more nuanced discussion. While there were
efforts by wealthy citizens to claim Italian opera as their own, Maretzek marketed his productions to all citizens throughout his career, first and foremost for financial necessity, but also for ideological reasons, according to his memoirs. While this self-proclaimed altruism should be taken with a grain of salt, the fact remains that Maretzek, despite efforts to the opposite, produced Italian opera for everyone.
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CHAPTER I. ITALIAN OPERA IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

Today, opera in the United States is delivered predominantly through established, repertory opera companies that reside in various cities. This was not, however, the prominent mode of presentation in the middle of the nineteenth century. Repertory opera companies that stayed in one city were not firmly established until the founding of the Metropolitan Opera in New York City in 1883, aside from New Orleans, whose French heritage allowed for the success of resident companies specializing in French opera.¹ Rather, opera was presented by traveling opera companies that would go from city to city and present operas for lengths of time spanning from a few days to a few weeks. These opera troupes specialized in various forms of opera, and the types of opera troupes that traveled changed as the century wore on, shifting from small, English-language troupes at the beginning of the century, to the rise of foreign-language opera troupes in the 1840s and 1850s and opera/operetta troupes in the 1870s.²

For the purposes of my thesis, I will be focusing on companies specializing in Italian opera, specifically those managed by Max Maretzek, as his career provides insight into the cultural development of Italian-language opera in the United States. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Maretzek was one of the most prominent managers of Italian opera, during a time when Italian opera was reaching new heights of popularity. There were around seventy companies specializing in Italian opera in the entire country between 1847 and 1860, and Maretzek was at the forefront of this boom. The middle of the century is also when Verdi was emerging as the premier composer of Italian opera, and Maretzek was a clear proponent of producing his operas. Before discussing Maretzek’s productions of Verdi’s operas (specifically I

² Ibid., 40.
Lombardi, Rigoletto, and La traviata), I will first provide the context in which Maretzek worked and lived. Important to this context is the emergence of Italian-language opera in America and the impresarios that came before Maretzek.

Katherine K. Preston has contributed substantially to the scholarship on opera in nineteenth-century America. These contributions include her book Opera on the Road: Traveling Opera Troupes in the United States, 1825–60, which is rich with information on both Italian and English itinerant opera companies during this time, and provides context to understand the climate in which Maretzek began his career.3 Her article “To the Opera House? The Trials and Tribulations of the Operatic Production in the Nineteenth Century America” also offers significant insight into the nature of operatic productions in the United States.4 In addition to Preston’s research, chronicles of opera in America by John Dizikes5 and June C. Ottenberg6 inform my discussions of operatic activity in the United States. My contribution to this research lies on my focus, which is squarely on the career of Maretzek. While the Moravian impresario features prominently in Preston’s research, her book ends halfway through Maretzek’s career. There is not much scholarship on the last half of Maretzek’s career, save for a short commentary on his third book of memoirs by Ruth Henderson. Maretzek wrote three books of memoirs throughout his life. Crochets and Quavers was published in 1855 and covers the beginning of his career in America through his correspondence with various artists and friends, including Hector

Berlioz. *Sharps and Flats* was not published until much later, in 1890, and chronicles Maretzek’s career up until 1862. The third and unfinished book of memoirs continues this narrative to 1867. These memoirs provide a unique glimpse into Maretzek’s own thoughts as an impresario, although these sources must be read knowing that Maretzek had a penchant for exaggeration, as we will see in later chapters.

Opera in America during this time was closely intertwined with the broader historical and cultural context, especially class concerns. To address these concerns, I consult Lawrence Levine’s *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* and Kristen Turner’s dissertation entitled “Opera in English: Class and Culture in America, 1878-1910.”

The body of research on the relationship between Italian opera and class hierarchy in America tends to focus on the appropriation of Italian opera by the upper class, contrasting with English-language opera being associated with the middle and lower classes. These associations can be traced back to the first productions of Italian-language opera in America by Manuel García in 1825, and in my research, I will add further nuance to this discussion in the context of Maretzek’s career. Despite efforts by the upper class to claim Italian opera for themselves, Maretzek produced Italian opera with the entire public in mind, not just for the wealthy, for financial and ideological reasons that I will discuss further in later chapters.

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Class distinction was not the only aspect of culture that influenced the production of Italian opera. Issues of gender also influenced operatic production, and these issues changed as the century progressed. Women musicians contributed significantly to music-making in nineteenth-century America, but this activity was limited primarily to the home. This domestic music-making could take on different facets, such as practicing piano skills to help make a young woman more marriageable, or a mother educating her family about music. Many women had to attend evening events, such as opera, with an escort for the physical and social protection. All of these cultural conceptions began to break down as the century progressed, and as noted by Adrienne Fried Block, women gained more access to public musical life. In fact, Maretzek noticed this trend during his career, commenting that opera audiences were made up primarily of women. His choice of productions reflects that insight, specifically in his presentations of La traviata, which I will discuss in Chapter 4.

For my discussion of Verdi’s operas, I will consult Ottenberg’s and Dizikes’s works on opera in America, and especially Dizikes’s work on the relationship between Maretzek and Verdi. I will also draw on Verdi biographies by Mary Jane Phillips-Matz and Julian Budden to understand the context in which Verdi wrote his operas and how this context affected how American audiences received his works. For Verdi’s impact in America, the primary source is George W. Martin’s book Verdi in America. In this study, I will expand on issues of reception Martin has just touched on in his work, such as La traviata’s brief banning in Brooklyn, The

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source material I will consult for my study into reception history includes a collection of nineteenth-century journals, newspapers, and other periodicals, and I will use these sources to discover deeper insights and nuances in Maretzek’s treatment of Verdi’s operas. Unfortunately, he does not go into specifics on his responses to critical reception during his career in his memoirs, so I will be using these contemporaneous periodicals as indirect evidence to draw general conclusions about Maretzek’s methods of opera production. While he rarely addresses issues of reception directly, it is clear that Maretzek was familiar with the intricacies of the news and critical reception. In *Crochets and Quavers*, he noted the influence that periodicals such as the *New York Herald* have on American musical taste, and he criticized the previous impresario at the Astor Place Opera House for not properly utilizing the media for his operatic activities.\(^{15}\) A complete list of these periodicals can be found in Appendix B.

I will also add to the body of scholarship on Maretzek through my application of reception history and reception theory to these contemporaneous sources, in order to gain a deeper understanding of why audiences and critics responded to Verdi’s operas in a certain way and how this reception changed over time. The term “reception history,” especially as used in music, refers commonly to the performance of a work and its relationship to critical reception (usually written criticism) and public reception.\(^ {16}\) Other theories of reception can provide deeper insight, and these theories are rooted in literary criticism, especially in the work of Hans Robert Jauss. For Jauss, literary history was vital to understanding the reception history of a work. This history is made up of a multitude of viewpoints which are colored ultimately by the recipient’s historical and cultural context. This means that a completely objective, historical understanding

\(^{15}\) Maretzek, *Revelations of an Opera Manager in 19th-Century America*, 23.

\(^{16}\) Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist, *Rethinking Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 379.
of a work is impossible. Jauss described the biases a recipient holds as a “horizon of expectations,” first outlined in his 1967 essay entitled “Literary History as a Challenge to Literacy Theory.” A person’s horizon of expectations limits what he or she understands about a text, but this horizon can shift as time passes and the recipient learns new information. A text can also have a horizon of expectations, created by its genre, allusions to other texts, or the text’s history.

Although Jauss deemphasized his concept of the horizon of expectations in his later works, instead favoring concepts such as his tripartite model of poiesis, aisthesis, and catharsis, Mark Everist identifies the horizon of expectations as a fundamental point of contact between reception theory and music history. These horizons embody the two elements of reception, outlined by Robert Holub: \textit{Wirkung} (effect) and \textit{Rezeption} (reception). \textit{Wirkung} deals with aspects of the work itself, such as the version or performance practice of a work. \textit{Rezeption} includes the reactions to the work, such as critical response. For example, in the case of Mozart’s \textit{Don Giovanni}, \textit{Rezeption} would encompass criticism of the work by Berlioz, Beethoven, or E.T.A. Hoffmann, while \textit{Wirkung} would address if these listeners heard the Vienna or Prague version of the opera. Alan Lessem utilizes horizons of expectations in his scholarship on the reception histories of Bach and Haydn, showing how their work does not have one single, objective interpretation, but that evaluations of their works changed based on the perspectives of

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{17} Cook and Everist, \textit{Rethinking Music}, 382.
\bibitem{18} Matthew A. Newcomb, “Situating the Author by Way of the Reader in Literature and History: A Study and Critique of the Reception Theories of Wolfgang Iser and Hans-Robert Jauss” (MA thesis, Gonzaga University, 2000), 61.
\bibitem{20} Cook and Everist, \textit{Rethinking Music}, 382.
\bibitem{21} Holub, \textit{Reception Theory}, xi-xii.
\bibitem{22} Cook and Everist, \textit{Rethinking Music}, 380.
\end{thebibliography}
the scholars, musicians, and listeners of their own time.\textsuperscript{23} Not only can the horizon of expectations for a work change over the long term, but as I will show with Verdi’s operas, the horizon of expectations for some of these works changed within Maretzek’s career.

Beginnings of Italian Opera in America

When Maretzek began his career as an impresario in 1849, Italian opera was just emerging as a prominent operatic genre. The first Italian opera company to produce opera in the United States was a troupe led by the famous Manuel García in 1825.\textsuperscript{24} García was heralded most for his singing career as a flexible and powerful tenor, but was also a successful composer and teacher who travelled all across Europe before coming to America. In fact, García was in London when he was asked to come to the United States, where he had a profound influence through his singing academy and publications on vocal pedagogy.\textsuperscript{25} His company was not like the companies of the 1840s and 1850s, who toured all around the United States. Rather, García traveled to the United States from London, performed in New York City only, and then left for Mexico.\textsuperscript{26} He was enticed to come to America for several reasons, first and foremost being the request of wealthy New York wine merchant Dominic Lynch. García had also just suffered a lackluster season in London, and American audiences, who were not accustomed to the level of talent available in Europe, had lower standards for opera that would provide García with more

\textsuperscript{26} Preston, \textit{Opera on the Road}, 101.
success.\textsuperscript{27} His company consisted of eight principal singers, including his wife, Maria Joaquina Stiches, his son, Manuel García, Jr., and his daughter, Maria Felicitas (who would later be the famous Maria Malibran). García’s troupe was well-received initially by the New York public, by both the wealthy upper class and average citizens.\textsuperscript{28} The company’s repertory was limited to nine operas: five by Rossini (\textit{Il barbiere di Siviglia}, \textit{La Cenerentola}, \textit{Tancredi}, \textit{Il Turco in Italia}, and \textit{Otello}), Mozart’s \textit{Don Giovanni}, Niccolò Zingarelli’s \textit{Giulietta e Romeo}, and two of García’s operas, \textit{L’amato astuto} and \textit{La figlia dell’aria}.\textsuperscript{29} The success of the company was short-lived and after the novelty of the company wore off in two months, García soon found it difficult to turn a profit.\textsuperscript{30} Despite the efforts of Lynch and other wealthy benefactors to sustain their support for García’s company, the public’s enthusiasm continued to fluctuate, and García left New York after eleven months.\textsuperscript{31}

Although García was unable to maintain his success, the seeds of Italian opera had been sown, as contemporaneous sources indicate. García had started a “musical revolution,” according to a writer from the \textit{New York Mirror} stated in an 1829 article.\textsuperscript{32} Similarly, a writer from \textit{The American Monthly Magazine} described the excitement of having a permanent Italian opera house, and while they acknowledged that this would likely not be possible, they believed that the major cities in America should support an itinerate company.\textsuperscript{33} After García produced opera in Italian for the first time, such companies began appearing in the 1830s and early 1840. The first

\textsuperscript{27} Preston, \textit{Opera on the Road}, 102.  
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 103-4.  
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 103.  
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 105.  
\textsuperscript{33} “Italian Opera,” \textit{American Monthly Magazine}, April 1835, 5, 2.
company to mount a traditional operatic season was the Montresor Company in 1832. Like García, Giacomo Montresor assembled his main singers from Europe, and he produced eight operas, again heavily featuring Rossini, also including *Il pirata* by Bellini and *Elisa e Claudio* by Mercadante.\(^34\) While the performances were well-received by critics and the public, the company was also unable to remain profitable—it gave only three short seasons in New York and Philadelphia and disbanded after a year.\(^35\) A similar fate was shared by the company founded by Vincenzo Rivafinoli, which survived for only a year.\(^36\) By the 1840s, however, Italian-language opera companies had become more and more widespread, and by 1847, Italian opera was established as a primary form of entertainment in the United States.

What caused American audiences in the middle of the nineteenth century to become enraptured with productions of Italian opera? First of all, Americans were already familiar with the *bel canto* repertory, especially Rossini operas (which was a main reason García chose to open with *Il barbiere di Siviglia*) through English-language presentations by the most prominent vocal stars of the time, such as Elizabeth Austin and Mary Ann Paton Wood.\(^37\) Publishers disseminated Italian melodies through sheet music containing the most popular arias from these operas. These included not only piano and vocal transcriptions, but also arrangements in variations for piano, arrangements for dancing, and versions for brass bands, among others.\(^38\) In other words, *bel canto* opera was not being popularized solely as vocal music, but in various forms consumed by the American public. Another big draw for American audiences was the appearance of famous

\(^{34}\) Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 108.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 108. In this context, “season” can refer to groups of operatic productions of varying lengths, ranging from a few weeks to a few months.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 110.

\(^{37}\) Preston, “To the Opera House?” 42.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 43.
singers, especially by the 1840s. For productions of Italian opera, the majority of singers—especially the stars—came from Europe, since García and Montresor assembled their troupes in Europe and sailed to America together. European singers were enticed to travel to America with large salaries, while also escaping the political turbulence present in much of Europe during the middle of the nineteenth century. Sheet music reflected the marketing power of these stars, as such music often included the names of the singers who popularized the given aria. For example, an English translation of the aria “Ah! Non giunge” from La sonnambula was printed as being sung by “Madame Malibran and Mrs. Wood.”

Italian opera grew by leaps and bounds during the 1850s, and the most prominent companies were led by European-born impresarios Bernard Ullman, Max Maretzek, and Maurice and Max Strakosch. This development was caused not only to the growth of interest in Italian opera by the general public, but also by the growing number of vocalists available in the United States. Rather than having to assemble a troupe of singers from Europe to ship over to America, impresarios would hire a few famous European stars and fill out the rest of the cast with American singers. Many singers from the original European troupes also stayed behind once their troupes left America, further growing the pool of available talent. American audiences still expected the brightest stars to perform in the best opera companies, so impresarios had to deal with expensive salaries in order to woo the most famous singers to their companies. Paying these salaries required impresarios to consistently fill houses in order to make any kind of profit, and put immense pressure on them to stage popular operas to ensure that tickets got sold.

39 Preston, Opera on the Road, 107.
40 Preston, “To the Opera House?” 43.
41 Ibid., 47.
42 Ibid., 48.
Because of the nature of itinerant opera companies, productions of opera had to be worked into a theater’s schedule, which often also included plays, blackface minstrelsy, and ballet, among other forms of entertainment. Thus, opera was a part of American musical theater life in the nineteenth century. Theaters that were devoted to the production of opera were not firmly established until the founding of the Metropolitan Opera, and even then, this company still travelled a fair amount.43 The inability to create a resident opera company was not for lack of trying, however; efforts were made to establish opera companies in major American cities as early as Lynch’s attempts to establish García’s troupe in New York in 1825. The lack of resident opera companies was bemoaned in contemporaneous sources in New York and other musical centers such as Boston and Philadelphia. A writer for the periodical Spirit of the Times did just this, complaining that efforts to establish consistent operatic productions have all failed.

In the other cities of the Union there exists no such initiative principle for the establishment of opera, as a permanent thing. It has been tried repeatedly under the most favorable circumstances possible. All that influence, enterprise, fashion, taste and money could do, has been attempted, but so far in vain. But at this moment there are erecting in three of our sister cities, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, expensive and extensive opera houses, in view of another and still more elaborate given with various degrees of success and no success, at intervals “few and far between.”44

The sources of income for opera houses was fundamentally different in America from those in Europe, and this was the reason that resident opera companies had difficulties being established. In Europe, opera houses had the support of government or aristocratic subsidies. This was not the case in the United States. Opera companies had to survive solely on their box office sales, and the wealthy upper class was not large enough to support any one opera company

43 Preston, “To the Opera House?” 41.
for a long period of time for the majority of the nineteenth century. One such valiant attempt includes the Astor Place Opera House, which was established in New York in 1847 by 150 wealthy citizens of New York, many of whom helped García and his troupe come to America in 1825. Astor Place presented seasons of Italian opera until 1851. This opera house is where Max Maretzek, the subject of my study, began his career in the United States as an impresario of Italian opera.

Max Maretzek

Born in Brünn, Moravia (present-day Brno in the Czech Republic) on June 28, 1821, Maretzek first studied music at the age of six, in the form of piano lessons. When he went to the University of Vienna, however, he abandoned music in favor of medical studies, and then law school, in order to please his parents. These stints in other disciplines lasted only a short time, and he resumed his music studies with composition lessons under Ignaz Xaver Ritter von Seyfried (1776–1841), the composer who had also conducted the premiere of Beethoven’s \textit{Fidelio} in 1805. After completing his studies, Maretzek began making a name for himself as a conductor—in 1842 he worked in Paris conducting operas and ballets. In 1848, Maretzek moved to the United States to be the conductor under manager Edward Fry at the Astor Place Opera House. Settling in America was ideal for Maretzek for a number of reasons. He would have the opportunity to be successful in a new place, and (given his Jewish descent) escape the

\footnotesize

45 Preston, “To the Opera House? The Trials and Tribulations of Operatic Production in Nineteenth-Century America,” 41.
46 Preston, \textit{Opera on the Road}, 134.
48 Preston, \textit{Opera on the Road}, 149.
increasing discrimination he faced in Austria. Additionally, increasing political unrest and the 1848 revolutions throughout Europe made the move to America seem even more attractive.\textsuperscript{49}

Maretzek’s first year with the Astor Place was quite turbulent, as Fry was unable to produce a successful operatic season. Maretzek noted Fry’s inexperience as his main downfall, asserting that he “knew nothing whatever of the business he had entered upon.”\textsuperscript{50} In his first book of memoirs, \textit{Crochets and Quavers}, Maretzek recounts the troupe’s first performance in Philadelphia. Performing \textit{Norma}, the prima donna Teresa Truffi fainted while singing her first aria, thus halting the opera. Maretzek noted wryly:

\begin{quote}
But there are some few impossibilities in this world, which cannot be overcome. Amongst these, may be reckoned the attempt to make an elephant execute a \textit{pas seul} upon the tight-rope; the endeavor to make a vessel sail in the teeth of a sharp northeaster…or the idea of stopping a cannon-ball when once discharged from the tube that held it…with a sheet of blotting paper. All of these are simple impossibilities. But, there is one which is more impossible still. This is the belief that you can make a prima donna sing, when her mind is made up not to do so.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

The theater had to refund money to the entire audience, and Fry left the company after it was a financial failure the following spring.

Fry’s departure, however, did not make Maretzek’s tenure at Astor Place any less tumultuous. After finishing his time as the temporary manager, his first day as the permanent manager was the night after a terrible riot at the opera in which twenty-three people were killed.\textsuperscript{52} The riot was caused by fans of the British actor William Macready and American actor

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{50} Max Maretzek, \textit{Revelations of an Opera Manager in 19th-Century America}, 21.
\textsuperscript{52} Maretzek, \textit{Further Revelations of an Opera Manager in 19th-Century America}, 14.
\end{flushleft}
Edwin Forrest, and the disturbance was an explosion of not only a long feud between the two factions of fans, but also between working class and wealthy citizens (I will explore this incident further in Chapter 2). Macready was set to appear in a performance of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* at Astor Place, and a disturbance inside the theater led to arrests that quickly escalated to a full-scale riot outside, involving thousands of people. At any rate, the riot made singers residing in the United States unwilling to perform at the theater, requiring Maretzek to look to Europe to find singers for his newly acquired company. Maretzek assembled a troupe of Italian singers, composed mostly of sopranos, including Truffi and Apollonia Bertucci, Maretzek’s future wife. He opened Astor Place’s 1849–50 season with Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*, which received good reviews and set up Maretzek for a successful season. This season also revealed several situations that showed how Maretzek’s sharp business acumen contributed to his success as an impresario. For example, he had only one of his star singers perform each night, which not only built interest but covered the fact that not all of his singers had arrived from Europe yet. He also had to replace almost his entire orchestra in one night, when several musicians quit after being offended by Maretzek, but he successfully did so and performances were not even delayed.53

Bolstered by the security of a successful operatic season, Maretzek sent for more of his family to join him in America. His family also helped him in his business endeavors. His brothers Albert and Raphael assisted him with the business aspects of opera management, and he also brought over his parents and two sisters.54 In 1851 he married Apollonia Bertucci, and she continued to sing in his company.

53 Maretzek, *Further Revelations of an Opera Manager in 19th-Century America*, 16.
54 Ibid.
Maretzek’s prosperity was in jeopardy during the 1850–51 season, as competition from two different fronts, the Havana Opera Company and superstar Jenny Lind, threatened to overshadow Astor Place.55 Both Maretzek himself and the New York press acknowledged the high quality of both. The Italian stars of the Havana Company (especially tenor Lorenzo Salvi and bass Ignazio Marini) were better singers than the stars of Maretzek’s troupe.56 New York audiences expected Maretzek to produce the same quality as Havana and he found it necessary to try and attract a superstar to his company in an effort to compete.57 Even though the Havana Opera Company had left town to return to Cuba by the time Maretzek opened his season, the performances by that company’s superstars were fresh in the public’s mind, and Maretzek had to find a way to create productions of a similar quality to keep people coming back to the opera house—this meant finding superstars comparable to the singers of the Havana troupe and Jenny Lind. He again had to use his shrewd business acumen to keep his company afloat, borrowing a strategy from famed impresario P.T. Barnum. As Jenny Lind’s manager, Barnum was aggressive in promoting her and giving her an esteemed reputation, to the point of making stories up. For example, Barnum had this letter printed in the New York papers on February 22, 1850:

Perhaps I may not make any money by this enterprise; but I assure you that if I knew I should not make a farthing profit, I would ratify the engagement, so anxious am I that the

55 Vera Brodsky Lawrence, Strong on Music: The New York Music Scene in the Days of George Templeton Strong, 1836-1875 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 434. Travelling from Cuba, the Havana Opera Company first appeared in the United States in 1837 in New Orleans, and toured in the Midwest (Cincinnati) and the East Coast throughout the 1840s and 1850s. Don Francisco Marti y Torrens was the impresario, a wealthy Cuban businessman who amassed a fortune through the slave trade and had a monopoly on the Havana fish market. Marti built an opera house in Havana called the Gran Teatro de Tacon and hired the best singers from Italy for his productions. After Havana’s polite society refused to support his performances because of his business interests in the slave trade and monopolization of the fish market, Marti closed his theater to the public. The Cuban aristocracy heard rumors about his amazing performances and enticed Marti to open his doors with large subscription fees.

56 Preston, Opera on the Road, 154.
57 Ibid., 160.
United States should be visited by a lady whose vocal powers have never been approached by any other human being, and whose character is charity, simplicity, and goodness personified.

Miss Lind has numerous better offers than the one she has accepted from me; but she has great anxiety to visit America. She speaks of this country and its institutions in the highest terms of praise, and as money is by no means the greatest inducement that can be laid before her, she is determined to visit us. In her engagement with me, (which includes Havana,) she expressly reserves the right to give charitable concerts whenever she thinks proper.

Since her debut in England, she has given to the poor from her own private purse more than the whole amount which I have engaged to pay her, and the proceeds of concerts for charitable purposes in Great Britain, where she has sung gratuitously, have realized more than ten times that amount.58

While Maretzek decried this practice, he realized that the only way he could compete with Lind and Barnum was to act similarly.59 Maretzek hired Teresa Parodi, an Italian singer who studied with the famed Giuditta Pasta and was enjoying a successful singing career in Europe.60 He began creating fake letters, articles, and even gossip about relationships (such as a rumor that Parodi was involved with the Duke of Devonshire) to bolster interest in her.61 This devious marketing strategy turned out to be a success, and Parodi drew full houses night after night. In order to counter the Havana Company’s return at the start of 1851, Maretzek attempted to lure singers away from them, and he was moderately successful in enticing several singers to join him. Maretzek enjoyed a successful season that ended in May of 1851, but this was immediately followed by a disastrous summer season, in which he lost around $22,000. By the end of 1851, the Astor Place Opera was no more.

Maretzek continued to be one of the leading impresarios of Italian opera, which was no small feat. Between 1847 and 1860, around seventy opera companies were established all around

59 Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 160.
60 Maretzek, *Revelations of an Opera Manager in 19th-Century America: Crochets and Quavers & Sharps and Flats*, 123.
61 Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 163.
the country. Most companies existed for around one season, after which they disbanded or restructured, sometimes with new management.\textsuperscript{62} Italian operatic activity was centered primarily on the East Coast, especially New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, but the ever-expanding railway system allowed companies to travel farther, growing towards the Southeast and eventually to the West Coast. Impresarios were not limited to people who specialized in opera management, like Maretzek, but could also include singers, instrumentalists, or conductors. After the Astor Place Opera Company disbanded, Maretzek started his own troupe, called the Maretzek Opera Company. He also worked with some troupes based in Philadelphia, such as those managed and headlined by singers Marietta Alboni and Henriette Sontag.\textsuperscript{63} In addition to producing opera in the United States, Maretzek also toured extensively in Mexico and Cuba. In the United States, he centered his productions in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, cities he considered the “musical capitals” of the country, although he also traveled across the East Coast to such places as Charleston and Augusta.\textsuperscript{64} He continued to manage various opera companies until he retired in 1878.

Because of the large number of Italian opera companies in the United States, Maretzek often crossed paths with other impresarios. Other prominent impresarios of New York-based travelling opera companies during Maretzek’s time were Bernard Ullman, Maurice Strakosch, and Jacob Grau. While some of Maretzek’s relationships with his fellow impresarios were marked with rivalry and animosity, such as in his dealings with Ullman, others were good

\textsuperscript{62} Preston, \textit{Opera on the Road}, 147.
\textsuperscript{63} Maretzek, \textit{Further Revelations of an Opera Manager in 19\textsuperscript{th}-Century America}, 28. Sontag is most famous for performing as the soprano soloist in the premiere of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony and the \textit{Missa solemnis}.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 8.
working relationships that even occasionally included collaboration.65 This is especially evident in Maretzek’s relationship with Strakosch, who would sometimes work for Maretzek’s company and vice versa. Their families were also personal friends.66 His relationship with Grau, who became an impresario later than him and Strakosch (and was likely influenced by the two), was marked with more rivalry, but the two still had a cordial working relationship that included some collaboration.67 Maretzek’s friendlier relations with Strakosch and Grau were likely due to the fact that they both also came from Brünn and were also of Jewish decent. The fact that three Moravian-born men of Jewish descent from the same town would settle in America and all work as impresarios seems like a curious coincidence, and Ruth Henderson offers an insightful discussion on this situation. She argues that their Jewish heritage gave them a familiarity with the world of commerce. Coupled with the fact that all three had experience or interest in music and theater, it is natural that they would all tend towards a career in opera management.68 Did these similarities in heritage translate into similar business practices? Considering that Henderson described the Maretzek family and Strakosch family as “branches of the same family,” it is logical that the two would share and learn from each other, and Maretzek’s collaboration with Grau would suggest this as well. Of this group of Moravian impresarios, however, Maretzek had

65 Maretzek, *Further Revelations of an Opera Manager in 19th-Century America*, 42. Maretzek and Ullman clashed throughout their careers in competition to create the best companies, often presenting operas at the same time and fighting for the best singers. For example, in 1859, Maretzek and Ullman had a “fiercely public battle” after Ullman hired Italian soprano Erminia Frezzolini, whom both men were seeking to engage for their respective companies.
67 Ibid., 246.
68 Ibid., 244.
arguably the largest influence: he worked as an impresario longer, and he played a leading role in helping establish Verdi in the operatic repertory during the nineteenth century.69

Verdi’s Place in the Operatic Repertory

While Giuseppe Verdi has a prominent place in the operatic repertory of today, the story was a bit different when Italian opera was first taking hold in nineteenth-century America. Naturally, when Italian opera was first being produced in America in the 1820s and 1830s, operas of the bel canto tradition dominated the repertory, including works by Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti. In fact, one of the main draws of García’s troupe was the fact that he had sung the role of Almaviva in the premiere of *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in 1816, a role that Rossini wrote specifically for García’s voice70. This was attractive to the American public in 1825 because the English version of the opera had been performed in New York every year since 1819, as well as in other cities across the country.71 Indeed, bel canto operas were already familiar to the American public through their English versions, a practice common in English-speaking countries. True to their nature, bel canto operas showcased star singers, and as an author in the *Musical World* wrote, “Nobody goes [to the theater] to hear an opera. They go to hear the prima donna.”72

Bel canto operas continued to make up the majority of the operatic repertory through the middle of the nineteenth century. Rossini was especially popular, with a writer at *The Albion* calling him one of the two “eminent composers,” along with Beethoven.73 By the 1850s, Verdi

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70 Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 102–3.
71 Ibid., 103.
72 Ibid., 166.
had risen to the status of the premier Italian opera composer in Europe. This prominence allowed his operas to be produced in America as well. Many of his operas spurred mixed reactions when they premiered, as a closer examination in the following chapters will show. Criticisms of Verdi’s operas included judgments on his music, and also the plots that he chose to depict. The inclusion of Verdi’s operas, however, added variety to what many contemporaneous sources viewed as a stagnant repertory, although some of his operas began to be perceived as being overdone, especially in critical reception. An example of this exasperation can be seen in the reception of his most popular opera in nineteenth-century America, *Il trovatore*. I will explore this idea in more depth in Chapter 3.

While Verdi’s operas were not immediately received by the American audiences with whole-hearted approval, the fact that many of his operas were quickly produced in America soon after their premieres in Europe was remarkable. Operas such as *Ernani* (1847), *I Lombardi* (1843), *Nabucco* (1842), and *Macbeth* (1847) were all produced in the United States by 1850, though only *Ernani* found a place in the American repertory. Verdi’s operas premiered quickly in the United States because of Verdi’s prominence as the sole leading composer of Italian opera at the time. These quick premieres were also aided by advocates of his music in the United States. One of these advocates was none other than Max Maretzek himself, who produced all but three of the American premieres of Verdi’s operas written after 1845. Maretzek was willing to stage Verdi’s operas, even amid harsh criticism of the operas by critics from a musical and moralist standpoint. While critical reception of Verdi was often lukewarm, especially in the composer’s early days, Maretzek believed in the popular appeal of his operas to the general

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74 Dizikes, *Opera in America*, 171.
The impresario noted that Verdi’s operas were “hailed with enthusiasm in New York whenever produced.”

This disparity between critical reception and public reception will be a central theme that I explore in this study. He also had respect for Verdi and his music, seeking to, in his words, “worthily produce [Verdi’s] operas in America.” These efforts did not go unnoticed by the Italian composer. According to Maretzek’s memoirs, Verdi appreciated the impresario’s efforts to promote his music in America, and when Maretzek visited Verdi in Europe, he was able to secure a copy of Verdi’s new opera La forza del destino soon after its world premiere in St. Petersburg. He premiered the opera in the United States in 1865, well before the 1868 premiere at La Scala. In short, Maretzek’s insistence on producing Verdi’s operas helped establish the composer in the repertory of Italian opera companies operating in America.

Although Maretzek was an advocate for Verdi’s music, the impresario’s personal preferences were not the sole criteria determining which operas he would produce in America. Rather, as previously mentioned, the reliance of Italian-language opera companies on ticket sales required Maretzek to choose operas that would be received well by public and critics alike. The following chapters will examine and analyze how reception of Italian opera varied across the three cities Maretzek considered the “musical capitals” of the United States (New York, Boston, and Philadelphia), and how this reception affected Maretzek’s production of Italian opera.

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77 Maretzek, *Further Revelations of an Opera Manager in 19th-Century America*, 79.
CHAPTER II. NEW YORK: MARETZKE’S HOME BASE

Opera Audiences in New York

When considering Maretzek's career as an impresario, the most natural starting place is New York City. Maretzek started his career at New York's Astor Place Opera House, and the city served as his home base for his entire career. In this chapter, I will begin by discussing the history of Italian opera in New York before Maretzek in order to establish the context in which he conducted business. I will also provide a short chronicle of Maretzek's career in the city to show how he fit into this context, especially how his career diverged from the emerging cultural associations of elitism with Italian opera. With this backdrop of information, I will look at the reception to his productions of three Verdi operas, namely *I Lombardi*, *Rigoletto*, and *La traviata*. I chose these operas to highlight Maretzek's response to two different types of reception—specifically, his reaction to the reception of a work's music compared to the reception of a work's plot.

During the middle of the nineteenth-century, opera was a vital part of the musical life of New York. When Maretzek came to the United States in 1848, Italian opera was gaining a bigger and bigger role. After an absence of Italian opera that lasted five years, Italian opera troupes reemerged in New York in 1843, beginning with Marti’s Havana Opera Company. The company performed at a venue called Niblo’s Garden, one of the most popular pleasure gardens in the city. Beginning as a horse track and circus grounds in 1822, William Niblo made improvements continually to expand his business and patronage, eventually having a saloon, the amenities of a first-class hotel, a ballroom, and an indoor theater capable of seating around three thousand.1 As such, it was an important venue for shaping the tastes of the public. Niblo’s Garden had this kind

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1 “Niblo’s Garden,” *Gleason’s Pictoral Drawing – Room Companion*, March 6, 1852, 2, 10.
of influence because it drew a wide variety of patrons, thanks to the low admission charge. According to the periodical *Musical Review*, “Thousands go there who would not go to the theater, and thousands of others go there because the admission is but fifty cents.” The quality of productions also attracted regular theatergoers such as Thomas Chamberlain. ² Critical reception for the troupe was initially unfavorable, but it was rehired once their first engagement was done, indicating positive public reception. What caused the patrons to enjoy opera in a language they likely did not understand? According to the *Spirit of the Times*, “Although a large portion of the audience were unable to understand the language, still the frequent introduction of bits of most agreeable music amply repaid them and drew forth their applause.”³ As stated in Chapter 1, the music of Italian opera was so well-known and appreciated that audience members enjoyed hearing it even if they could not understand it. Indeed, the *New York Mirror* noted that, “Now the very sweep-boys whistle Rossini, as they tramp along the streets and correctly, too.”⁴

After this taste of Italian opera by the Havana Opera Company, Italian operatic activity in New York began to flurry once more after 1844, with the help of the opera company led by Ferdinando Palmo.⁵ Palmo refurbished a former bathhouse into a theater to present Italian opera, which, like the operas presented at Niblo’s Garden, made an effort to appeal to people beyond the upper class through a reasonable one dollar admission price for all attendees.⁶ Also like the Havana Company, Palmo hired several “second-rate” singers, many of whom actually performed with the Havana Company and were already familiar to New York audiences. Reception of the

² Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 120.
⁵ Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 122.
⁶ Ibid., 123.
troupe was lukewarm, but critics and public alike recognized that having mediocre Italian opera was better than having no Italian opera.\(^7\) It also provided an alternative to salons, featuring a different style of music but creating a similar social environment.\(^8\) Despite the relative success of the company, Palmo’s troupe did not survive past 1845, due to his inadequate business acumen and other problems endemic to Italian opera troupes during the 1840s and 1850s. These problems included star singers refusing to perform, disputes between singers and/or their fans, and other quarrelling and gossip that overshadowed the music. Italian opera took another brief hiatus at this point, from the rest of 1845 through 1846, but it reentered New York in a big way in 1847.

In 1847, a new opera company moved into the theater built by Palmo, led by impresario and buffo singer Antonio Sanquirico. The troupe had a successful first season, bolstered by the presence of two major stars, prima donna soprano Clotilda Barili and tenor Sesto Benedetti.\(^9\) The company’s second season did not find as much favor for several reasons. Many of the star singers became ill, and star power was necessary to draw a big crowd. Also, for the first time in the history of the United States, a second Italian opera company came into New York to operate in direct competition with Sanquirico’s company. This company was another iteration of the Havana Opera Company, this time with Francisco Marti at the helm. The Havana Company was a much more formidable troupe than they were during their trip to New York in 1843, and their opera productions surpassed any of the previous Italian opera companies. Even though they were

\(^8\) Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 126.
\(^9\) Ibid., 130.
only in New York for a few days, the Havana Company completely eroded any support the Sanquirico troupe had.¹⁰

At this point, members of the wealthy upper class in New York built the Astor Place Opera House. With the impresarios Sanquirico and Salvatore Patti organizing the troupe to open the theater, the inaugural season was largely successful. The wealthy class financing Astor Place, unlike the efforts at Niblo’s and Palmo’s, wanted this company to present Italian opera for the upper class only. This was evidenced by their creation of a theater that presented only opera, and the delineated sections of seating based on ticket prices, including boxes for subscribers. The lowest price for a ticket was fifty cents, which allowed a patron access to the old upper gallery, where the view of the stage was blocked by a large chandelier.¹¹ Reception of the opening performances requires a close look. While some critics (specifically those who favored the appropriation of Italian opera by the upper class) claimed that the audience was filled only with wealthy New Yorkers, others point out that the fifty-cent upper tier of seating was completely full.¹² The coverage of the Astor Place opening provides a good example of the efforts by the upper class to claim Italian opera as their own.

Despite the early success of this first Astor Place troupe, their victory was short-lived. Sanquirico’s company fell victim to the same woes he faced with his earlier company, including financial trouble, excessive demands of singers, and quarrels between singers. Critical reception of the troupe also contributed to its demise. New York critics, wanting to prove themselves as musically sophisticated, picked apart the troupe and often made unflattering comparisons to the

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¹⁰ Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 134.
¹¹ Ibid., 134
¹² Ibid., 135.
Havana Opera Company.\textsuperscript{13} The general public also caught on to the discriminating nature of the opera house, and they quickly turned against it and, to some extent, Italian opera in general. This unrest culminated in the Astor Place riot mentioned in Chapter 1, which centered on the two actors outwardly but was a class conflict at its core.\textsuperscript{14} This theme continued in Italian opera in New York throughout the nineteenth-century—the desire of the wealthy upper class to claim Italian opera for itself, coupled with the necessity for the support of the general public for an Italian opera company to be successful.

Italian opera continued to be presented in New York, without any of the long breaks that characterized Italian opera production previously. After the eventual failure of the Astor Place Opera House in 1851, Italian opera was still produced by itinerant companies at various venues throughout the city. The next important venue was the Academy of Music, opened in 1854. Although this theater proved to be the most prominent venue for opera production for the next thirty years, no one opera company or impresario stayed at the theater for very long. John Dizikes notes that, “Inevitably, after its opening with Mario and Grisi in October 1854, the Academy suffered through a succession of failed impresarios.”\textsuperscript{15} This was due to the exorbitant rent charged by the stockholders, and the stockholders’ seats were unable to be sold for any performance, even if they were not going to use them.

By the 1860s, opera was firmly interwoven in New York musical life. Italian opera continued to play a major part, with operas by Donizetti and Verdi dominating the list of works

\textsuperscript{13} Preston, \textit{Opera on the Road}, 136. Although Astor Place was opened as an opera house, stockholders rented the space for other forms of theatrical entertainment in order to keep Astor Place financially stable.

\textsuperscript{14} Ottenberg, \textit{Opera Odyssey}, 90.

\textsuperscript{15} Dizikes, \textit{Opera in America}, 167.
seen by New Yorkers during this time.\textsuperscript{16} So important was opera during at the time that in December 1865 a critic from the \textit{New York Times} complained that there would be no opera presented in the city until February.\textsuperscript{17} By this time, Maretzek had emerged as the premier opera impresario; between his close connections in Europe, which allowed him to acquire the best singing stars for his troupes, and his sharp business sense, he earned the nickname “Maretzek the Magnificent,” and the \textit{Times} recognized him as “first in the field” among the New York opera managers.\textsuperscript{18} He understood that in order to create a successful production, he had to appeal to a mix of classes and peoples, not just the subscription list, in order to fill the entire house.\textsuperscript{19} Maretzek still specialized in Italian opera at this time, but he also started to include some grand operas in his seasons, especially those by Meyerbeer. These operas received lukewarm reception from audiences initially, due to the overwhelming nature of the productions, but gained favor after multiple performances.\textsuperscript{20}

Although Maretzek was the impresario to be reckoned with in New York, he was not without competition. In 1862, Carl Anschütz formed a German opera company, noting the growing German population in the city. He focused on German opera repertory from the 1820s and 1830s, as well as Mozart’s Singspiele and German translations of French and Italian works.\textsuperscript{21} Critics noted Anschütz’s company not only for its high quality, but as a comparable alternative to the Italian opera seasons commonly produced by most opera managers. \textit{Opéra}

\textsuperscript{17} “Amusements,” \textit{The New York Times}, December 11, 1865.
\textsuperscript{19} Graziano, “An Opera for Every Taste,” 255.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 256.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 257. Operas included \textit{Die Entführung aus dem Serail}, \textit{Die Zauberflöte}, \textit{Der Freischütz}, as well as French opera in German translation, such as Auber’s \textit{Fra Diavolo}. 
bouffe also gained prominence in New York during this time, led by manager H.T. Bateman. Works by Jacques Offenbach topped the list of operas performed in the city in the 1860s. The public reception to these operas was warm, and critical reception for Bateman’s first production of La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein (1867) had a positive tone, praising the performance and Offenbach’s musical style.⁲² Noting the success of La Grande-Duchesse, Bateman and other impresarios (including Jacob Grau) began presenting more of Offenbach’s works in French. These operas continued to be wildly popular, especially when superstar Lucille Tostée performed, but critical reception became mixed. Critics mostly began noting the immorality of the plots, and some warned Americans of the “French” libretti. For example, of Offenbach’s Orphée aux enfers, the New York Post said, “the immorality of this class of operas is too manifest to require demonstration…We simply report, and leave to those whose function it is to educate public morality.”⁲³ Offenbach’s work La vie parisienne was thought of as “ludicrous, lascivious, and scandalous” because of its depiction of an old Baron marrying a young girl. This was not the first time critics objected to the moral content of an opera, and it would certainly not be the last.

_**I Lombardi:** Critical Reception of the Music_

The case of Verdi’s _I Lombardi alla prima crociata_ (The Lombards of the First Crusades) provides insight into Maretzek’s reaction to critical and public reception during his early years in New York. The opera premiered at La Scala in 1843, and opened to decided public success. _I Lombardi_ made its way to the United States just four years later, premiering in New York on March 3, 1847. It was only Verdi’s fourth opera in order of composition, and it was the first of

⁲³ Ibid., 262.
his operas to be produced in the United States. Music from the opera had appeared in the
United States even before this premiere, however, including Giselda’s aria “Non fu sogno!” and
the “conversion trio” of act three for soprano, tenor, and bass. The reception of these pieces,
especially Giselda’s aria, became a microcosm for the later reception of the entire work. When
Rosina Pico sang the aria at a concert of the New York Philharmonic, reports asserted that the
aria was “gloriously sung” and had merited an encore, while George Templeton Strong brushed
the aria off as “tolerabiles ineptia,” or a “bearable absurdity.” This mixed reception would
characterize I Lombardi throughout its presentations in the nineteenth century.

The 1847 premiere of the opera occurred at Palmo’s Opera House, staged by Sanquirico
and his troupe. Critical reception, again, was mixed. A balanced account came from the critic of
the Albion. He praised the music in general, especially the third act, but raised several points in
which Verdi’s music was inferior to the bel canto composers of the previous generation. In
particular, he mentioned Verdi’s melodies, which he viewed as more restrained in character and
not catchy or popular as those of Bellini or Donizetti. He also noted that the melodies were
“constantly turned aside to avoid similarities, which imparts to such melodies a strained and
unsatisfactory character.” Despite these deficiencies, the critic praised the work and
encouraged people to go out and see it. The critic for the New York Tribune also praised it, and
noted the full house and public approval for I Lombardi.

24 George W. Martin, Verdi in America: Oberto through Rigoletto (Rochester, NY: University of
Rochester Press), 30.
25 Martin, Verdi in America, 30.
26 “The Italian Opera House,” Albion: A Journal of News, Politics, and Literature, March 6,
1847, 6, 10.
27 Martin, Verdi in America, 34.
Negative reception was also present, exemplified by the criticism in the *Morning Courier* and *New-York Enquirer*. This review praised the stage and the visual effects of the opera, but lambasted the plot and music. The critic described the melodic element in general as “unpalatable,” with nothing that touches the heart or emotions, but instead tries to “astonish.”

*The Literary World* also disapproved of the opera:

Verdi’s opera of *I Lombardi* has been produced at this house with all the resources of spectacle to which it is the custom for those musicians to resort, who are conscious of their inability to charm, by the insipidity of their music. By the aid of gorgeous scenery, dresses, and decorations, and a perplexing libretto, they vainly strive to cheat the senses into a confused idea that the compound is a Lyric Drama: but, despite of tinsel, stage moonshine, the noise of ophicleides, trombones, and drums, the wearied auditor, sick of the din and confusion, turns from the stage, and sighs for one strain of genuine melody, such as may be invariably heard in the works of Mozart, Cimarosa, Rossini and Bellini.

This quotation agrees with the sentiments described in the *Enquirer* and provides insight into the reception of Verdi during the late 1840s and early 1850s. American musical taste in Italian opera favored the lyrical, singing melodies of Mozart and the *bel canto* composers, and Verdi’s melodies were criticized, especially in *I Lombardi*, for not having the same quality. The instrumentation of the opera is also highlighted—Verdi’s expanded instrumentation, including even the ophicleide, notorious for its harsh and unruly sound, was interpreted as creating a spectacle rather than focusing on the music. As I will demonstrate later in the chapter, the critical reception for *I Lombardi* did not get any better.

Although the critical reception was mixed, the general public reception to the opera was favorable, based on the full houses that the initial run drew. *I Lombardi*, however, quickly fell out of favor in the United States. A major contributor was likely the libretto, which was based on an Italian source—a heroic epic with the same name, telling the story of the First Crusade against

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28 Martin, *Verdi in America*, 34.
the Lombards. The opera encountered controversy in Italy, as censors took issue with the use of overt Catholic religious elements, such as processions and a baptism, outside of their liturgical context. The censors were also likely worried about the patriotic and revolutionary undertones in the opera, considering the political unrest in Italy and in all of Europe at the time. The original epic poem consisted of fifteen scenes, but Verdi and the librettist Temistocle Solera used only eleven of the scenes, which was not sufficient to fill the entire plot. American audiences unfamiliar with the source material naturally found the plot to be confusing, and the overt Catholic imagery and militaristic nature of the plot likely unsettled the large number of Protestant citizens in a country nearing a civil war, coloring their horizons of expectation.

George Martin cites the confusing plot and comparison to Verdi’s \textit{Ernani} as the main reasons that \textit{I Lombardi} ended up failing in America. In the late 1840s, however, the opera continued being staged, and the reviews of these later performances criticized the music as much as the plot. In 1848, the opera was staged at the Astor Place Opera House, under the management of Edward Fry and with Maretzek as the conductor. The review in the \textit{Albion} stated:

Verdi’s opera of \textit{I Lombardi} was produced at this establishment on Monday evening last, to a very full and fashionable house. Novelties always attract at the Opera House for the first night, but were sterling and favourite works brought forward, the attraction would go on increasing with each successive representation.

We are condemned to speak of the music, and we regret it, for we can scarcely utter one word in its praise.

The first act is worthless beyond belief; and we will say no more about it. The second act is a trifle better, containing one moderately good aria for the tenor. In the third, and the rest of the opera, we only find two pieces worth remembering, viz: the duett [sic] for soprano and tenor, and the well know[n] trio for soprano, tenor, and bass.

The choruses are caricatures without power, and the instrumentation is stunning, overwhelming, thundering, in drums, trumpets, trombones, and every description of musical uproar. We will not attempt to describe the plot, for the opera literally has no plot. Nor was it well performed. The music does not suit Truffi; and it seemed to cause

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31 Martin, \textit{Verdi in America}, 34.
32 Ibid., 36.
her much labour and physical exertion. It tasks the powers of the singers most fearfully; and after they are all exhausted, the effect is nothing. There is neither beauty of melody to attract the ear, nor brilliancy of execution to dazzle the understanding. It is simply screaming without end or aim.33

Nearly the entire review is devoted to criticizing the music, and not just the performance of the music or the music in relation to the plot, but the music itself. As in the reviews of the premiere, the critic here notes a lack of melodic beauty, in addition to blaming the music as being nothing but a vehicle for creating a spectacle. These elements, as well as an expanded use of brass instrumentation and prominent use of chorus, position the opera in contrast to the bel canto tradition, and the bel canto tradition was simply held in higher regard during this time. In other words, to use terminology from reception theory, critics’ horizon of expectations was influenced by the prominent bel canto repertory. This review also stresses that the public reception to the work was also diminished, suggesting that after the full house on opening night, crowds weakened on successive nights. The Literary World provided a similar critique, demeaning the music and plot, and noted the “cold” reception by the audience.34 These negative reactions to the music could have been caused by comparisons to Ernani, which was firmly established in the United States by this point. The Verdi favorite was introduced by the Havana Opera Company later in 1847, and it could possibly be one of the “sterling and favourite works” mentioned in the Albion review. Because of all of these elements, negative critical reception of the music and the plot has always been a thread in the reception history of I Lombardi in mid-nineteenth-century America.

How did Maretzek respond to the criticism of I Lombardi? He was the conductor of the 1848 production at Astor Place, so he would have certainly been aware of the negative reception

of this production. Described by George Martin as “enterprising but financially insecure,”
Maretzek did not produce the opera again during his tenure at Astor Place, likely because the
high cost of renting the theater demanded drawing a full house.\(^{35}\) Maretzek attempted a revival
of *I Lombardi* in 1853 at Niblo’s Garden, which is logical when considering Maretzek’s
commitment to producing Verdi’s operas and the work’s initial positive reception. This
production, however, was also a failure. The *Albion* again provided a critique, noting the same
problems with the work and, mainly, the music. For this particular production, the critic wrote:

> Of the performance of “Lombardi” we have but little to say. The Opera gives an
opportunity for considerable display of scenery and costumes, and Mr. Maretzek we
presume did the best he could in that way, under the circumstances. The costuming was
good; the scenery, however, old and indifferent. Some of the chorusses [sic] were sung
with considerable power and precision; and the Orchestra was a trifle better kept together
than on some other recent occasions.\(^{36}\)

Critics noted that Maretzek put on a good show, making cuts in the music to assist in creating a
good production.\(^{37}\) This was not enough, however, to create a successful production; the
audience’s horizon of expectations had not changed from the 1848 productions. Because of this
second failure of the opera, Maretzek never produced the opera again, according to the records
available to us today. The failure of *I Lombardi* to enter the American repertory was also due to
the popularity of Verdi’s later operas, such as *Il trovatore* initially, and *La traviata* and *Rigoletto*
later. This popularity, however, did not always come easily, as will be seen in my discussion.

**Morality Battles: Rigoletto and La traviata**

Maretzek refrained from producing *I Lombardi* because of criticism ranging from harsh
melodies to a confusing plot. That was not the only criticism, however, that could be leveled

\(^{35}\) Martin, *Verdi in America*, 202.
\(^{37}\) Ibid.
against an opera. Another common complaint during this time involved accusations of objectionable moral content in an opera plot. Such criticism surrounds the productions of two of Verdi’s most famous operas, *Rigoletto* and *Traviata*.

*Rigoletto* was first performed in New York on February 19, 1855, by none other than Max Maretzek, and the opera’s reputation preceded its premiere. Verdi encountered many censorship woes with the work in Italy, ultimately requiring him to completely change the setting of the plot. The Venetian censors also took issue with the immoral nature of some of the plot elements, but many of these elements remained in the final version of the opera. Rumors of the plot’s immorality spread to the United States, as noted by the *Albion*, and these rumors caused some operagoers to wait for the press to issue a verdict on *Rigoletto*’s appropriateness before attending the opera.38 The fact that the *Albion* made a point of mentioning the rumors surrounding *Rigoletto* and their effect on the opera-going public suggests that this was an uncommon occurrence. The *Albion* also printed a synopsis of the plot two days before the premiere, painting the opera in a good light and noting encouragingly, “Let us hope for a crowded house.”39 In this case, the recipients’ horizon of expectations was colored by direct statements about *Rigoletto* before even seeing the work.

The press, however, did not issue a clear verdict. Several sources indicated that, in their view, *Rigoletto* fell short of Verdi’s best work to date. The *Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer* stated that “*Rigoletto* should be withdrawn at once.”40 *Rigoletto* also received positive reception, described by the *Albion* as “too good an Opera to be shelved so soon.”41 The critic for

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40 Martin, *Verdi in America*, 201.
the *Times* also thought that the opera should be repeated.\textsuperscript{42} While reacting positively to the music, critics also noted that the plot was revolting because the womanizing Duke of Mantua is never brought to justice, while the innocent Gilda was murdered.\textsuperscript{43} I will explore these ideas further in Chapter 3.

In New York, the opera gained favor slowly, but surely. In March of 1855, *The Spirit of the Times* described this sentiment thus:

> The opera of ‘Rigoletto’ is gradually gaining on the public ear, and we predict ultimate success, if the management only possesses the courage to persevere in its presentation in the teeth of such unsatisfactory audiences (in point of numbers) as have as yet attended on its performance. The getting up of the piece does credit to the taste and liberality of the management, and the entire performance elicits nightly a satisfaction most palpably demonstrated by the usual signs.\textsuperscript{44}

Indeed, much of the music of *Rigoletto* was popular almost immediately, especially the Duke’s third-act aria “La donna è mobile,” Gilda’s “Caro nome,” and the final act’s quartet.\textsuperscript{45} In fact, the majority of the complaints about the music during the opera’s premiere could be traced to Maretzek’s decision to vamp up the musical parts from a piano-vocal score, rather than rent Verdi’s original parts. This caused problems with balance between the brass and strings, especially in the opera’s opening scene and the final quartet. The *Albion* noted that, “The loud, blatant, and obtrusive trombones in the last Quartette [sic] are decidedly objectionable, and lead to the suspicion that that portion of the scoring is not Verdi’s; if it be, it is very, very bad for him.”\textsuperscript{46} The popularity of the music was further evidenced by its performance in concertized settings, and some critical reception advocated for the opera, showing that some writers

\textsuperscript{45} Martin, *Verdi in America*, 204.
attempted to influence (or at least challenge) public taste. *The Spirit of the Times* lauded the work; in an 1858 review *Rigoletto* was described as “a triumph from beginning to end.”47

In response to this reception (aversion to the plot, but loving the music), Maretzek continued to produce *Rigoletto* throughout the 1850s and 1860s. The sentiment described in *The Spirit of the Times*, however, did not exactly come to pass. A review of a production of the opera in 1865 yielded this response from the *Tribune*:

Verdi’s very beautiful opera *Rigoletto* was given last night...to a very fashionable, but to a not very full house. *Rigoletto* contains some of the most exquisite music that Verdi has ever penned—music, beautiful not only for the intense passion which it breathes out, and its marked characteristics, but for it is masterly conception and writing. And yet this fine music, combined with a drama of deep interest, rarely, if ever, attracts a large audience, however excellent the cast may be. The reason is, we believe, that the plot is too revolting in the catastrophe.48

This review suggests that *Rigoletto* still had problems drawing crowds, despite immense praise for its music. Even ten years after the opera first hit American shores, operagoers still found it reprehensible that immoral characters such as the Duke, the assassin Sparafucile, and even the harsh and mocking Rigoletto, went unpunished in the opera. Audiences’ horizons of expectations had not changed concerning the opera, and these horizons kept them from attending the opera. Why, then, would Maretzek continue to produce the opera? As I discussed in Chapter 1, impresarios were under immense pressure to draw full houses in order to pay for all of their expenses. Unlike *I Lombardi*, the music of *Rigoletto* was always held in high esteem, and in general, the opera enjoyed much more positive criticism than *I Lombardi*. Maretzek was also firmly established in New York as the preeminent opera manager by this time, with his own

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name carrying significance in American opera life, allowing him to take more risks than when he first arrived in America. Maretzek saw much more potential in *Rigoletto* than in *I Lombardi*, and thus was much more willing to produce the former, even if the opera did not always draw a full house.

*La traviata* presents a similar case. Premiered by Maretzek in New York at the Academy of Music in 1856, it followed a similar pattern of reception to that of *Rigoletto*. Much of the public was privy to the salacious nature of the plot, and critical reception of the premiere noted both the incredible appeal of the music and the immoral dramatic action. The *Times* wrote:

> The dreadful event took place last night—Verdi’s improper Opera ‘*La traviata*’ was produced for the first time with complete and humiliating success. A moralist viewing the spectacle of keen enjoyment perceptible in the house could have none but the saddest apprehensions for the future prosperity of the audience. The thousands who were assembled, in spite of all warnings that have been uttered, seemed to enter into the wicked spirit of the play with the greatest possible delight, and to sympathize with the heroine as if she were a most estimable and praiseworthy young person.

> Concerning the morality of the ultra school of French dramatists there can be but one opinion. Pieces like ‘Camille’ or ‘Diana’ *can* do no good, and may easily do harm. But they are written with consummate tact; are exciting and interesting, and will always please a mixed audience.49

The critic, while acknowledging the literary value of the plot, had the clear view that this plot would be detrimental to the public’s general morality. He also recognized the musical prowess of the work, heralding the first act as the strongest, but noting high points in each act. Assessing the opera in its entirety, the critic continued:

> Judged as a whole, the ‘Traviata’ will not perhaps add to Verdi’s reputation, for the simple reason that it does not exceed his previous works. But on the other hand it is respectable, and maintains his preeminence over all other composers, in melody, in dramatic force, and in exact perception of the best effects for the best places. In a word, it is a charming little serious opera, produced without labor, listened to without labor, and returned without labor. We are greatly mistaken if it will not have a great success. The

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music is of a kind which takes the melodies are ringing and clear, and the plot and libretto are equally excellent.50

Not all critics shared the view that the public should be protected from the immorality of La traviata. The Albion printed a counterpoint written by Benjamin Lumley, an English impresario who faced similar opposition to the opera in London. Lumley wrote: “Grant me this indulgence, and I hope to satisfy you that, however just your strictures may be, as applied to the Dame aux Camellias, the opera of Traviata, both in scope and detail, is not only undeserving of censure, but is of a strictly moral tendency.”51 He continued to raise redeemable qualities of the plot, especially the self-sacrificing nature of Violetta. He also pointed out other classic tales that were just as immoral, but not subjected to criticism, such as Don Giovanni.

As he did with Rigoletto, Maretzek continued to present La traviata, despite concerns about the plot. Some of these concerns resulted in the banning of the opera in Brooklyn for a short time, but critical and public reception of the work slowly improved. The opera was especially adept at drawing a female crowd, a fact noted and exploited by Maretzek. Unlike Rigoletto, Traviata had fewer troubles drawing a large crowd in the 1860s, as the public abhorred its plot less than that of Rigoletto, showing that, in their horizons of expectation, some immoral actions were worse than others. In this case, the promiscuous Violetta was found to be more acceptable than the lecherous Duke of Mantua and the injustices done to Gilda. Reviews indicate that even in the face of inclement weather, productions of La traviata were given to large houses.

51 “Mr. Lumley’s Vindication of La Traviata: To the Editor of the Times,” Albion: A Journal of News, Politics, and Literature (New York), September 13, 1856, 15, 37.
Both of these case studies highlight issues of morality in operatic plots in nineteenth-century America: specifically, how these issues affect the horizon of expectations a recipient brings with him or her when they view an opera. Critics, the public, and Maretzek himself reacted to these issues in a variety of ways. In both cases, Maretzek continued to produce the operas in New York (although this would not always be the case, as I will show in later chapters), despite negative critical or public reception of the plot. Both of the operas, however, had redeeming qualities in the eyes of nineteenth-century audiences. For *Rigoletto*, several sources praised the opera as a whole, and both critics and public alike lauded the music. For *La traviata*, the negative reception was mainly by critics, with the public flocking to the opera house to see it, unlike *Rigoletto*. These elements of positive reception would have shown the opera’s potential to Maretzek, unlike *I Lombardi*, where the vast majority of criticism was negative. New York was also where Maretzek was based and established, giving him more confidence to produce operas that might have been a bit riskier than other works in the repertory. Maretzek’s productions also went against the prevailing cultural associations of Italian opera: he marketed productions to people of all classes despite attempts by the upper class to appropriate the genre. Overall, in New York, Maretzek did not let negative reception of an opera’s plot stop him from producing that opera. As we will see in the following chapter, this was not always the case.
CHAPTER III. BOSTON: THE SUPPRESSION OF VICE

Opera Audiences in Boston

The next of Maretzek's musical centers is the city of Boston. Although the reception of operas in Boston shared many similarities with New York, I will show in this chapter how a city's heritage affected how certain operas were received, and how this reception affected what operas Maretzek chose to produce. As a point of reference, I will look at the reception of Rigoletto to highlight the similarities and differences between Boston and New York. I will also look at Ernani and Il trovatore, two of Verdi’s most popular works in nineteenth-century America, and use their reception in Boston to discuss why these works were so popular. I will also discuss the difference between critical reception and public reception, and in the case of Il trovatore, show that Maretzek, in general, valued public reception over critical reception.

While opera audiences in Boston were similar to those in New York, the city’s heritage and musical values created some unique differences in Bostonians’ horizons of expectation. When considering opera in Boston, the city’s Puritanical heritage is often cited as impeding operatic success, which manifested itself in two ways. First, and perhaps most obviously, citizens of Boston were often averse to operatic plots of an immoral character. Theater in general could advocate unrestrained displays of emotion, which many Bostonians did not appreciate.¹ Puritans also valued words over music, which also caused them to view opera with disfavor.

Boston’s tempestuous relationship with the theater can be traced as far back as the eighteenth century. A colonial prohibition of the theater was instituted in 1750, commonly thought to be inspired by a riot at a coffeehouse where Thomas Otway’s The Orphan was being

¹ Dizikes, Opera in America, 149.
staged.² This ban was revoked in 1793, and the Federal Theater was built the following year. It burned down five years later, however, and had to be rebuilt. The Federal Theater had strict regulations, ranging from preventing the crowd from requesting encores or tunes that would disrupt the previously planned program to requiring women to remover their hats, all enforced by the theater manager.³ Concerns with having a well-organized and morally upstanding theater were present in Boston from the very beginning, and would continue well into the twentieth century. After the colonial ban on theaters was lifted, incidents involving theatrical censorship were few and far between. Another riot, known as the Kean Riot, occurred in 1828, which caused Boston’s Board of Aldermen to impart power to themselves and the mayor to censor or shut down a performance that disrupted the safety and “peace and quiet” of the city.⁴ While theaters had to abide by strict rules, such as Saturday evening performances ending by eleven o’clock, active censorship was not prevalent in the city during Maretzek’s time as an opera impresario.⁵ This changed, however, in 1878, when the organization called The New England Society for the Suppression of Vice was formed. The group was later named The New England Watch and Ward Society in 1891, and was responsible for much theatrical censorship in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, through its influence in the passage of laws that placed theatrical productions under strict censorial codes.

Whereas debated the negative impact of a theater, the positive impact was described in a pamphlet written by William Haliburton in 1792 entitled Effects of the stage on the manners of a people, and the propriety of encouraging and establishing a virtuous theater. He described an

³ Dizikes, Opera in America, 150.
⁴ Reardon, “Banned in Boston,” 45.
⁵ Ibid., 53.
ideal theater, large enough to seat a quarter of the city, which would be a central community institution. For Haliburton, music would play a significant role in the life of the theater, assisting in teaching the community proper values. Opera, however, would not fulfill this role, as it fell into the category of music Haliburton did not want. This music included “all unintelligible Italian airs, trills, affected squeaks and quavers.”

Indeed, Italian music would have problems consistently with being fully appreciated in Boston, as the music from the German tradition was beloved in the city and shaped the city’s musical taste, as well as their horizon of expectations. Many German musicians settled in Boston, such as the 25 German musicians of the Germania Musical Society. Formed in 1849, it specialized in the music of Mendelssohn and other German composers. The main musical institution in Boston during the beginning of the nineteenth century was the Handel and Haydn Society, created to promote these German composers’ sacred music, with German music and sacred music being the distinguishing characteristics of musical taste in the city. This is not to say that Boston did not appreciate Italian opera, as will be evidenced in my discussion later. Italian music, however, was judged based on ideals and criteria shaped by German music. John Sullivan Dwight, founder and editor of Dwight’s Music Journal, one of the most prominent music criticism journals in Boston and New England, summed Italian music this way, “In Germany, songs grow. Italian opera airs are full of melody and sweetness, but one is too much like another; it is an endless regalvanizing into life of a vein of sentiment and melody long since

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6 Dizikes, *Opera in America*, 150.
8 Dizikes, *Opera in America*, 150.
9 Ibid., 153. For Dwight specifically, Schubert was the ideal for vocal music. “We cannot possess too many, and yet one of them is more than we can exhaust in a lifetime.”
exhausted.”\textsuperscript{10} The concept of the theater influencing feelings and values continued in Dwight’s thought. He assessed different Italian composers and noted what effect their music had on the listener. For example, Bellini wrote good melodies, but they were also “sweet and sickly,” causing the listener to become sad and passive. He held Rossini in high esteem because of his efforts to popularize music and “educate the ear.” The dramatic power of Rossini’s music, however, stimulated emotions rather provoking deeper thought, which Dwight termed as a dangerous school of music. As far as public reception in the “cold city of Puritans,” Dwight summed up the public’s position in an 1851 article from the \textit{Sartain’s Union Magazine of Literature and Art} thus:

\begin{quote}
Even the Italian Opera, for such short time as Maretzek and his famed tragic star, Parodi, were vouchsafed to Boston, has been less eagerly resorted to than oratorios on Saturday and Sunday evenings. And among the operas available, Mozart’s \textit{Don Giovanni} seems to have weighed more than the whole list of “Ernanis,” “Normas” “Gemma di Vergys,” and Italian “Favoritas,” in producing a subscription towards a recall of Maretzek and his troupe in May.\textsuperscript{11}
\end{quote}

While the Boston public still attended and appreciated Italian opera, they favored works by Mozart over Verdi and the \textit{bel canto} school. This article also ends by discussing prominent musical groups and societies in Boston. None of these groups promoted Italian music as their focus.

Maretzek’s Trips to Boston

Maretzek first produced opera in Boston with his Astor Place troupe in 1851—they travelled to the city to give eleven performances over six days. In addition to some concert performances, Maretzek produced \textit{bel canto} operas, and \textit{Ernani} was the only Verdi opera that

\textsuperscript{10} Dizikes, \textit{Opera in America}, 153.
\textsuperscript{11} John S. Dwight, “Music in Boston,” \textit{Sartain’s Union Magazine of Literature and Art} (New York), June 1851. Dwight referred to Parodi as Maretzek’s “tragic star” because she was most famous for her portrayals of the title roles in \textit{Norma} and Donizetti’s \textit{Lucrezia Borgia}. 
made the cut. In preparation for these performances, a lot of preemptive work had to be done. To start, the Federal Street Theater was in shambles before Maretzek’s troupe got there, as it was used by a variety of other performers, such as pantomime companies and even equestrian groups. Maretzek’s business manager, Edward Walker went ahead of the group and made sure the theater was refurbished to an acceptable level, as operagoers would not acquiesce to attending an opera at a rundown theater. This fact was recognized by both Maretzek and a writer from the *Boston Evening Transcript,* who reported when Walker had restored the theater to a “comfortable condition.”

In order to create interest for the Boston audiences, Maretzek continued to use his prima donna, Teresa Parodi, as his answer to Jenny Lind. Advertising materials stressed that this would “positively be her last and only appearance in opera in America.” Other “puffing” material for Parodi included stories on her origin in Genoa, studies with Giuditta Pasta, her sympathies with the revolutionaries in Italy, and, much like Lind, her generous and selfless nature, evidenced by her supporting her entire family back in Italy. This last point was important to combat stereotypes that Italian performers were selfish and feigned illness to get out of performing, although Parodi herself contributed to this stereotype.

Reception to Maretzek’s productions was generally positive. Audiences seemed to appreciate the opportunity to see an operatic production, as a critic from the Boston Courier lamented when Maretzek and his troupe left. Concerning Parodi in particular, Dwight recognized her merits as a singer but compared her unfavorably to Lind:

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12 Preston, *Opera on the Road,* 195.
13 Ibid., 193
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., 197.
It was somewhat significant, too, that Parodi, who had borne the name of “peerless” in New York, and whom many proclaimed so much greater, in the essentials, than Jenny Lind, was only measurably admired in Boston. Indeed, the enthusiasm which welcomed her first advance to the foot-lights, ere she had sung a note, left a tide-mark high and dry above the upmost ebullition of any feeling that succeeded. She was admired for her rich, sweet, and expressive voice, her smooth and skilful execution, and a certain tragic energy of passion. But the passion was not felt to be of the deepest; it was a physical and savage kind of energy; it often over-acted itself; it was thought to lack that quiet, pervading sentiment of art, which called forth a heartier unanimity of enthusiasm even in the weaker voice and much more unpretending action of the unfailing favorite, Truffi-Benedetti. In Jenny Lind we felt imagination, *genius*; in Parodi, only talent and strong impulse, which is not passion in the deepest sense. Such at least, was the impression which soon settled down upon the majority of music-lovers in Boston.¹⁶

Even though Dwight had some reservations about Parodi, the Boston public accepted Parodi with open arms. The *Evening Transcript* claimed that, on the opening performance of *Norma*, the singer was “applauded to an extent rarely seen in Boston.” This positive reception continued as the following night brought another sold-out crowd.¹⁷

Between the positive reception and the profits from ticket sales, Maretzek elected to make a return to Boston in 1851 after short tours in Charleston and Augusta, North Carolina. The hunger of Boston audiences for opera was apparent—a large number of people purchased subscriptions in advance, which is what ultimately enticed Maretzek to return.¹⁸ This second engagement was scheduled for three weeks, but Maretzek’s company was so successful that he stretched their stay to five weeks. In terms of repertory, Maretzek did not change a winning formula—he produced the same operas from his first Boston trip, with the inclusion of Mercadante’s *Il Giuramento*.¹⁹ While the public was eager to see opera again, Maretzek was without his star Parodi, so he needed to make some concessions to keep attendance up. For

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¹⁷ Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 194.
¹⁸ Ibid., 208.
¹⁹ Ibid., 195-6
instance, he lowered ticket prices for the parquet seats from $2 to $1, but this lowering in price was defrayed by the subscription list. Again, Maretzek’s troupe was received favorably by the public, evidenced not only by the extension of their stay from three weeks to five, but also by the consistently well-attended performances. Critical reception was also good—as the critic from the *Evening Transcript* proclaimed at the end of the season, “Last night saw the brilliant termination of the most brilliant operatic season we have ever had in Boston.”

Maretzek would continue to travel to Boston throughout his career as an impresario. He enjoyed the same esteem as an opera manager in Boston as in New York, being described by a Bostonian writer for the *Spirit of the Times* as, “accomplished and popular.” This esteem extended to his conducting abilities as well as his opera companies, as an issue of *Dwight’s Journal of Music* revealed on November 19, 1870. Dwight reviewed concert performances of overtures from such works as *Fra Diavolo* and *Guillaume Tell* under Maretzek’s baton, noting the impresario’s “experienced conductorship.” Despite the respect he gained from the Boston public for his musical prowess, he was not able to produce operas as freely as he was in New York, as we will see in the following case studies.

**Verdi’s Early Operas: *Ernani* and *I Lombardi***

*Ernani* proved to be one of Verdi’s most successful operas in Boston. During his first trip to the city, Maretzek produced *Ernani* once. He noted the opera’s popularity and produced it three more times during his second trip.

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went to Boston in 1851. The opera was first performed in 1847 by the Havana Opera Company, and a critic from the *Boston Evening Gazette* had this to say about the premiere:

It was on this occasion that Boston first recognized genuine Italian Opera. [...] A superb orchestra led by Arditi and the superlative contrabassist Bottesini, with a good chorus and principals of extraordinary merit, presented Verdi’s best opera in a style that absolutely electrified the audience. All the recollections of English opera [Italian opera in English] were effaced by this life-breathing, passionate, and effective performance, and from that hour a new ideal of excellence in operatic affairs became fixed and irrevocable. Such a combination of brilliancy, effect, and vigor with the sentimental and tender, had never before revealed itself upon the Boston lyric stage, and the excitement produced by this new sensation was commensurate with marvels that produced it. The opera itself was interesting from a wild and romantic plot worked up in a good libretto, and that innate beauty had been most effectively treated by the composer. So masterly was the orchestration and the introduction of novel yet most pleasing combinations, modulations, and octaves, with an exquisite skill in use of solo talent in aid of a masterly conceived partition, that, strong as prejudice had been against its composer, this opera instantly commanded admiration, disarmed prejudice, and gave Verdi universal popularity.24

In an 1847 article from the *Harbinger, Devoted to Social and Political Progress*, a reviewer had this to say about the opera:

‘Ernani’ was performed a fourth time by request, and again delighted a most crowded audience. Then came two nights of Verdi’s ‘I Lombardi.’ This wants the unity, the wholeness of effect of ‘Ernani;’ the plot is unintelligible and confused without considerable study; yet the music seemed to us entirely equal to the other, and so essentially like it, without any wearisome monotony, that we could not possibly condemn one without condemning both. Open at any part of it, cut in any where [sic] and you find a depth and wealth of harmony, melody more strong and more original than in any modern Italian, short of Rossini, and that same admirable treatment, which gives to every thing [sic] its due proportion and effect.25

According to these reviews, *Ernani* received both critical and public acceptance, and it became the first of Verdi's operas to enter the repertory of Italian opera in nineteenth-century America. This second review, however, provides an interesting insight into the reception of *I Lombardi* in Boston as well. The reviewer seemed to only take issue with the plot of the opera, but thought

24 Martin, *Verdi in America*, 34.
the music was equal to that of *Ernani*. This is a significant difference between reception of *I Lombardi* in New York, where the opera was regarded as lacking in both plot and music. This acceptance of the music of *I Lombardi* was, however, not enough to convince Maretzek to produce the opera in Boston. He never staged *I Lombardi* in the city.

What made *Ernani* so popular in Boston and the rest of the United States? Set in Spain in 1519, the plot centers around three men vying for the hand of the same woman, Elvira. The first of these men is Elvira’s uncle and guardian, a Spanish aristocrat named Don Ruy Gomez de Silva. Don Carlo, the king of Spain, also seeks Elvira’s hand, as well as Don Juan of Aragon, who has been proscribed by the king and is living as a bandit named Ernani. Elvira is in love with Ernani from the beginning of the opera, but she is betrothed to Silva. Throughout the opera, the three men clash with one another in trying to secure Elvira’s hand in marriage until the third act, when Don Carlo is named the Holy Roman Emperor. After reflecting on his past mistakes and in an effort to emulate Charlemagne, Carlo restored Ernani’s titles and lands and allowed him to marry Elvira; both are overjoyed, as Elvira wanted to marry Ernani from the beginning. This happiness soon turns to tragedy in act four, as Silva recalls a deal he made with Ernani on his and Elvira’s wedding day. Ernani promised his life to Silva in act two, proclaiming that he would kill himself if Silva ever demanded it, in exchange for Silva’s aid in getting revenge on the king. Silva invokes this deal, and Ernani, bound by aristocratic honor, has to abide by it. The opera ends with Ernani killing himself and Elvira collapsing with grief. They were unable to overcome the aristocratic obstacles that they struggled with from the beginning of the opera, and those obstacles ruined their lives.

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26 Martin, *Verdi in America*, 56.
Why would such a plot appeal to nineteenth-century Americans? George Martin summarizes the point nicely in his book *Verdi in America*:

The message is clear: all the prating about Spanish honor is misplaced loyalty to a feudal aristocratic code long out of date, and which, for three of the story’s characters, destroys their lives. The only one of the four to achieve a useful, happy life is Don Carlo who, as the modern man, transcends those values. Thus, the story allows its audience to revel in nostalgia for the values of days gone by, so colorful and rhetorical, even while dismissing them as oh, so foolish, a message sure to appeal to the young everywhere, and very much to Americans establishing a new egalitarian society.27

Indeed, reviewers who mentioned the plot largely did so in a positive light. The aforementioned *Boston Evening Gazette* critic called the plot “wild and romantic.”28 A different review from the *Harbinger* calls the plot “absurd enough,” but notes that the story has an acceptable “range of passion.”29 Musically, *Ernani* stood out in the eyes of the American public as well. On hearing Elvira’s cavatina during an 1846 concert given by the Havana Company, audiences and critics marveled at the drama inherent in Verdi’s music, especially the use of the extremes of the singer’s range.30 The evenhanded presentation of the four main characters also made the opera popular.31

**Boston Censorship: Rigoletto**

Although Boston’s censorship laws were lax during Maretzek’s time as impresario, his treatment of *Rigoletto* reveals that the Puritanical heritage of the city still had a profound impact on the operas he chose to produce. After the relatively unsuccessful premiere in New York, Maretzek took his troupe to Boston for a short season, and produced *Rigoletto* only once in 1855.

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27 Martin, *Verdi in America*, 57.
28 Ibid., 56.
30 Martin, *Verdi in America*, 58.
31 Ibid.
Considering the large amount of negative reception in New York along with the musical taste and heritage of the city, he decided to cut the final scene, in which *Rigoletto* realizes that it is not the libertine Duke of Mantua who has been assassinated, but his beloved daughter Gilda. Gilda sings a final duet with *Rigoletto* until she expires, and the opera ends with *Rigoletto* screaming in anguish, recalling the curse laid on him at the beginning of the opera. This final scene was called “absurd” by *Dwight’s Journal of Music*, the Boston-based publication that, as we have seen, was one of the most prominent music periodicals at the time. Dwight praised Maretzek for cutting this final scene.  

The performance was well-attended, thanks to Maretzek’s immense popularity in the city. This sentiment was described in the *Spirit of the Times* thus: “On Friday evening Verdi’s opera of ‘*Rigoletto*’ was produced for the benefit of Max Maretzek, whose name alone, in our city, is sufficient guarantee for a crowded and brilliant assemblage of the representatives of the taste and fashion of our metropolis.” Maretzek’s popularity, however, was not enough to convince the Boston audience to appreciate *Rigoletto*. Between the plot and the musical issues that also plagued the New York premiere, the *Boston Evening Transcript* pronounced that “this opera, as a whole, gave the least satisfaction of any that this troupe [Maretzek’s] has played.”

At this point, one has to wonder what about *Rigoletto*’s plot made Bostonians so averse to it. Plots of earlier operas had certainly not been without libertine men, illicit love, and murder. In fact, *Don Giovanni*, one of the favored operas among the Boston public, features all three of these. The main difference between these two operas, however, is the treatment of the libertine villain. Unlike *Don Giovanni*, who is ultimately dragged to hell as punishment for all of his

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crimes, there is no justice for any villain in Rigoletto. The Duke of Mantua, a carefree womanizer who stole the virtue of the innocent Gilda, finishes the opera singing his lighthearted tune about how fickle women are, and he is not punished in any way for his misdeeds. In addition, Gilda, the only character in the opera without a major fault, is the character that is punished the most. To add insult to injury, this happens to Gilda because she loves the Duke and sacrifices herself for him, and the Duke, unaware that any of this has even happened, shows no sign of reciprocating her feelings. All in all, the lack of justice was what many Americans found reprehensible, as a writer for the Times aptly summed it up: “where is no justice, poetic or otherwise; nothing but horrors, horrors.”

Although New York shared the same negative critical and public reception found in Boston, a few years later the opera gradually became accepted, first through critical acclaim, and eventually public reception. This same trend did not occur in Boston—rather, the opposite is true. During his 1861 season, Maretzek produced Rigoletto to reasonable success, with American singer Clara Louise Kellogg gaining much acclaim for her portrayal of Gilda. Kellogg notes in her memoirs that when they went on tour, Boston “would not have Rigoletto. It was considered objectionable, particularly the ending. For some inexplicable reason Linda di Chamounix was expected to be more acceptable to the Boston public.” While it does not appear that Rigoletto was officially censored by the Boston government, Maretzek felt that the musical climate in Boston was still not conducive for Rigoletto to be produced successfully. Indeed, Dwight had this to say about the Boston public’s reaction to opera plots in an 1855 article:

The wish has often been expressed by the graver classes of our music-loving Americans, that operas might be presented to them in public performance musically only—the

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35 Martin, Verdi in America, 202.
dramatic action being omitted. They wish to hear the music, but do not care for or approve of the rest of it. We find this a very natural and reasonable idea on their part.\textsuperscript{37}

This sentiment coalesces with the history of Boston’s treatment of the theater—one major concern that the public had with staged works was the effect on the public’s education and well-being. Seeing the action played out on a stage had a striking effect on the audience, much more so than simply hearing the music, and it seems that this effect was amplified when shared with a large group of people. Since the action is represented visually, audience members do not have to understand the language to be impacted by an opera, which is highly relevant in the case of Italian opera in America. This strong, visceral effect of the theater on the audience was not only feared by political and religious leaders in Boston, but also across the world, especially in Europe. Verdi’s career is characterized by struggles with censors in Italy, who feared the political unrest that his operas could incite. While leaders in Boston were more concerned with public morality than revolution, they acknowledged the power that the theater could hold. This sentiment was not a fleeting idea in the Boston public. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, theatrical censorship got worse after Maretzek ended his career, and the Watch and Ward Society that was formed by the end of the century banned works that endanger the public morality. All of these elements shaped the horizon of expectations of Bostonians into a perspective that caused a negative reception for \textit{Rigoletto}.

As Dwight expressed in the above quote, the music from \textit{Rigoletto} quickly became popular, and was often performed in everyday life with different lyrics. For example, “La donna è mobile” became known as a popular tune entitled “Over the summer sea.”\textsuperscript{38} This love of the music, however, did not overcome the abhorrence of the plot. For this reason, Maretzek did not

\textsuperscript{37} Martin, \textit{Verdi in America}, 206.

attempt to produce *Rigoletto* in Boston again. Instead, he produced the traditional Mozart and *bel canto* favorites, as well as some grand operas toward the end of his career.\(^{39}\) In the case of *Rigoletto*, public reception had a direct effect on Maretzek’s opera production in Boston.

**“Trovatopera”: *Il trovatore***

While *Ernani* was one of Verdi’s most popular operas at the beginning of Maretzek’s career, *Il trovatore* was easily the most popular by the end of his career. During his 1863–1867 seasons, Maretzek produced the opera 26 times in New York alone, the most of any Verdi opera.\(^{40}\) While the public adored *Trovatore*, critics took a different stance. When the opera premiered in 1855, critical reception was fairly positive. The *Albion* called it a “decided hit,” indicating the public’s enthusiastic reception of the opera, and the critic praised the splendor and visual effects of the performance.”\(^{41}\) The music and plot, however, received more of a mixed review. The critic noted the plot for its “horrors,” comparing it to *Rigoletto* in this regard, and for the music, he remarked that Verdi’s loud, bombastic music “ruins voices.”

Verdi is the composer of the day—the interpreter of Young Italy’s music—simply for want of a better. Mercadante is too elaborate and artistic; Ricci has no striking effects, and consequently no popularity; Verdi is the man for the people. He ruins voices for highly strained points; and in a narration of murder and infanticide he adapts such a recital of a fearful deed at this: ‘when I think of my mother whom they burnt, and my child whom I burnt, when I see the flame sparkling and hear the flesh frying...’ to a melody and movement, which we shall soon hear in ball-rooms and on military parades!—We do not hold the ‘Trovatore’ equal to ‘Rigoletto’ despite the much-abused ‘home-scoring’ of the latter. In horrors of plot, in night-mare improbabilities, in murders, duels, throat cuttings, tortures, blasphemies, and horrors generally. It beats *Rigoletto*, notwithstanding the great sack-scene of the latter. With (we think) only one exception, the scenes are all at night, and after various degrees of moonlight and comparative darkness, the fourth act, by way of change, opens with *Notte oscurissima*. Had the performance taken place one evening sooner, the eclipse of Tuesday night might have been brought in with good effect.

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\(^{39}\) Dizikes, *Opera in America*, 175.

\(^{40}\) Maretzek, *Further Revelations of an Opera Manager in 19th-Century America*, 139.

With all this, however, the Opera contains some clever and original writing. The first scene, in which Ferrando (Rocco) [parentheses indicate the singer of the role] relates to the story which is the motive of the plot (such as it is), is well written and was well rendered. It is nearly all that Rocco has to do of importance in the Opera, and he acquitted himself better than ever before. The trio finale of this act between the count di Luna (Signor Amodio), Lenora (Stefanone), and Marurieo, the Troubadour (Brignioni) is brilliant and effective, and was admirably given. It is however, in form and construction, simply a repetition of what the composer had previously done in Ernani.42

The review continues through the rest of the acts, noting that the third was the weakest, describing the soldier’s chorus as “commonplace and vulgar.” The fourth was heralded as the strongest, noting that Verdi’s musical construction of the Miserere, interspersed with romanzas, sighing, and tolling bells, was good enough to “redeem any Opera.”43 While he noted the strong points of the opera, his mixed review did not match the public fervor that would come for this opera. The most significant element of Trovatore’s appeal, however, was the intensity and spectacle created in the opera, which dazzled the public but was taken to task by some critics. Writing for the Spirit, Harriette Fanning Read noted the immense popularity of the “Anvil Chorus,” praising it for the intensity of the scene despite the “inelegance” of the sound.44 She also described the audience, noting that, “From the crowded state of the house, the eagerness and enthusiasm, one might have imagined that the musical world of New York had gathered to take its last look at Italian Opera.”45

Through the rest of the 1850s and into the 1860s, critics continued to notice the popular appeal of this opera, The Spirit called it “never failing” in 1857, but began to bemoan managers

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43 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
relying on its success.\textsuperscript{46} One of the most vocal critics in this regard was Boston’s own John S. Dwight. Terming the phenomenon “Trovatopera” in the title, he lamented the opera’s constant production in an 1858 article:

Opera we have not; but we have \textit{Trovatore} companies, plentiful as mosquitoes, and (literally) piping hot. \textit{Trovatore} is almost the only opera; it stands for all. To that pitch all the opera companies are screwed up, as if they were so many barrel organs. There are just one or two modulations into closely related keys, called \textit{Traviata} and \textit{Rigoletto}, with cheap and common \textit{replissage} for the intervening or “off” night, by way of relief, or foil, of two or three of the most familiar and hacknied works of Donizetti or Bellini, This is all that is now meant when we see an Italian opera announced. At least, this is all that Boston gets of it.\textsuperscript{47}

Dwight’s disgust is palpable in this quote, even casting off \textit{bel canto} favorites Donizetti and Bellini as “replissage” used to fill up space between nights. This attitude reflects the Bostonian musical taste described at the beginning of the chapter—the elevation of German music above Italian music for the latter’s lack of genius and substance. This sentiment continues later in the article:

It is therefore not strange that the general impression of the \textit{Trovatore}, as a musical whole, is distracting and unedifying. This music lacks the sovereign quality of \textit{geniality}; it is mechanical; it relies upon dynamic means, and knows not the true secret, the true key to open human hears. Its appeal is really to something else than heart or soul; to those who seek excitement, recklessly, for mere excitement’s sake, and not to those who live sincerely and in earnest. Plot and music, all together, make up a tiresome glaring picture of a strangely monotonous, burnt-out, brick-dust hue. No, this is tragedy to fierce to be tragic; this is passion too demonstrative to be genuine; this music too effective to be genial or expressive. And yet the \textit{Trovatore} is popular!\textsuperscript{48}

As shown by the number of productions in the 1860s and continued accounts of the opera’s popularity, this sentiment did little to slow down productions of the work. A writer for

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 117-18.
\end{itemize}
the *Knickerbocker Monthly* described the audience for Maretzek’s production of the opera in 1863 as “the densest and most brilliant that had ever graced the building.” The *Albion* discussed *Il trovatore* as a significant part of a “flourishing” of Italian opera in 1864. In the case of *Il trovatore*, the horizon of expectations differed between critics and the public. Maretzek valued public demand over critical reception, and he continued to produce and profit on *Trovatore* in Boston and across the country throughout his career as an opera manager. In 1866, Maretzek brought his troupe to Boston, and Dwight wrote about the impressive variety that the impresario featured in his productions, as that included works by Verdi, Bellini, Donizetti, Gounod, and Meyerbeer. By this time, Dwight considered *Trovatore* an “old favorite,” on the same level as *La sonnambula* and *Lucrezia Borgia*, two *bel canto* standards that were beloved and in the repertory since Italian opera first gained prominence in America. *Trovatore* was Verdi’s biggest hit in nineteenth-century America, and Maretzek capitalized this popular appeal by making it one of the staples of his operatic seasons.

While Boston was one of the primary musical centers in nineteenth-century America, the city’s heritage gave the Boston public a musical taste distinct from other cities. As I have shown in this chapter, their musical taste was not always conducive to Italian opera, and Maretzek accounted for this when he brought his company to Boston. As the century wore on, Boston audiences warmed up more and more to Italian opera, and *Ernani* and *Trovatore* became fast favorites. As we will see in Chapter 4, other cities also cultivated their own musical sensibilities, which in turn affected what operas would be most successful.

CHAPTER IV. PHILADELPHIA: REPRESENTING THE NATION

Opera Audiences in Philadelphia

My penultimate chapter will cover Maretzek's reception and opera production in Philadelphia, the last of his three musical centers. In this chapter, I will use reception in Philadelphia to highlight similarities in opera production and reception across the entire nation. This does not mean that Philadelphia does not have its own nuances in operatic reception; on the contrary, I will also discuss the city's operatic heritage, and how this heritage affected both their reception of opera and how Maretzek produced opera for the city. I will also use case studies in Philadelphia, specifically of *Traviata*, to discuss the role of women in determining public taste in operatic production and how Maretzek reacted to this fact. Finally, I will use *Rigoletto* once more to note similarities and differences in reception, as well as to highlight Maretzek's more conservative approach to opera in the city, as compared to his home base of New York.

Philadelphia, the last of Maretzek’s American musical centers, has a rich history of operatic activity that is often overshadowed by New York and Boston. While the New York scene was much larger and more prominent than Philadelphia’s during Maretzek’s career, the history of opera productions reaches back just as far in that city. Its unique history and population also influenced its tastes in opera, with its history of promoting English opera and heritage of eclectic operatic seasons making it more challenging for Italian opera to take hold.

Much like Boston, musical life in Philadelphia was influenced by the heritage of its citizens. In the eighteenth century, musical performances were not as common, since the prominent Quakers and similar Protestant religions did not feature music in their worship experience. As the century wore on, groups with a larger emphasis on music as part of their worship (including Roman Catholics and Lutherans) began moving to Philadelphia, and music
gained a larger role in the city as a result.\textsuperscript{1} Whereas Boston’s musical life was centered on German composers, Philadelphia embraced English and American music. Ballad operas and pastiches were popular—for example, Samuel Arnold’s pastiche \textit{The Castle of Andalusia} (premiered in London in 1782) was performed at the opening of the New Theater in 1792. In fact, the city became a prolific center of American opera in the late eighteenth century. Alexander Reinagle (1756–1809) a pianist who gave concerts of Haydn, Bach, and Mozart in Philadelphia, composed several operas for the city, including \textit{Robin Hood} (1794) and \textit{The Volunteers} (1795). Benjamin Carr (1765–1831) and Raynor Taylor (1747–1825) also composed several operas in English, and together with other composers who settled in Philadelphia, helped make the city a center of English opera during this time.\textsuperscript{2}

This proclivity for opera in English characterized the musical life of Philadelphia at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The reason American and English opera was so beloved in the city can again be found in the heritage of its citizens. While people from Germany tended to settle in other cities (such as Boston), the majority of the population in Philadelphia was of English descent. Citizens also preferred the simple, expressive style of English singing over the ornate Italian style. While this gave the citizens of Philadelphia a greater acceptance and appreciation of theatrical works than in other cities, it also made it more difficult for Italian opera to take hold. This fact was lamented by none other than Lorenzo da Ponte himself, who lived in Philadelphia from 1811 to 1818.\textsuperscript{3} Indeed, of the 55 operas performed at the Chestnut Street

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{1}] Dizikes, \textit{Opera in America}, 46.
\item[\textsuperscript{2}] Ibid., 46-7.
\end{itemize}
Theater between 1810 and 1835, the most popular were English operas, ranging from *The Castle of Andalusia* to Stephen Storace’s *The Haunted Tower*.4

By the 1820s, the prominence of English opera began to give way as more and more Europeans, many of them fleeing the tumultuous political situations prevalent at the time, began to settle in Philadelphia. In 1827, a French opera company from New Orleans traveled to the city and produced a season of operas in French. I use the term “operas in French,” because the company produced operas by French, Italian, and German composers, but they were all performed in French. For example, Philadelphians experienced Weber’s *Der Freischütz* for the first time under its French title, *Robin des bois*.5 This was common practice in New Orleans, where opera in French was widely popular thanks to the city’s heritage. In fact, New Orleans was able to support three opera houses for French-language opera in the nineteenth century, and the practice of performing operas translated into French can be traced back to Paris itself. This performance of a German opera with French words more or less encapsulates the state of operatic production in Philadelphia from the 1820s to the 1840s—an eclectic mix of opera from many national traditions.

The stranglehold of English opera gave way to a nebulous period in which no one operatic style or genre gained prominence; Italian operas, French operas, ballad operas, and other types were all produced in the city, in whatever language the singers could sing. It was common for operas of contrasting genres, such as Beethoven’s *Fidelio* and the ballad opera *The


John Dizikes claims that, during this time, Philadelphia represented the nation as a whole: “Whatever kind of operatic audience was being formed, it would reflect the characteristics of the larger theatergoing audience, members of which brought assumptions, values, and prejudices with them which observers, and especially foreign travelers, had long commented on. In this respect Philadelphia represented the nation.”

While exhibiting such a variety of opera had its merits, the reception to this eclecticism was not all positive. In 1829, The Philadelphia Monthly Magazine asserted that it is improper to sing English words with Italian music, suggesting that this was as ridiculous as performing Richard III in French in front of an English audience. While the author does not say explicitly why he holds this opinion, this sentiment is consistent with upper class ideas concerning Italian opera, specifically that the upper class sought to claim Italian-language opera as their own (these ideas were explored in more depth in Chapter 2). The original editor of this magazine was Isaac Clarkson Snowden, a doctor, and articles from this publication have the goal of engendering “good taste” in America.

How did Italian opera fare in the context of this eclectic period of opera? As in the rest of the country, Italian opera steadily gained favor. In the same article published in The Philadelphia Monthly Magazine, the writer claimed that Italian opera had created a change for the better in American musical taste, and that preference should be given to this style of music. This sentiment continued into mid-century, shown in an article for Graham’s American Monthly Magazine. The writer lamented that Philadelphia could not support an opera house, and longed

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6 Dizikes, Opera in America, 50.
7 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
for a person like Maretzek to attempt to open a permanent opera house. This opera house could specialize in either the French or Italian schools of opera, but the writer noted that there was a greater preference for the Italian school in Philadelphia.10

European settlers noticed many differences between European and American opera audiences. Women were freer to sit wherever they wished, including box seats and the pit (the area immediately in front of the orchestra). Seeing women sit in the pit was especially surprising, because this area was commonly viewed as a masculine preserve.11 There was not a coherent style of dress or behavior, and audiences were more prudish, materialistic, and undiscriminating. These judgements could be explained by a variety of reasons. One could be the European idea that the New World was uncivilized—we have already seen how García believed, that he would be successful in America because Americans had not been exposed to European musical talent. Another could be the fear of democracy’s equalizing effects, with the American system of government being unfamiliar to many Europeans. This is amplified considering the political unrest shaking Europe.12

One of the most striking differences Europeans observed was the government’s treatment of art. Since the government stayed out of artistic production, artists, playwrights, composers, and the like could do whatever they wanted “as long as order, decency, observance of the laws, and the peace are preserved.”13 While this turned out to be rather restrictive in Boston, Philadelphia was much less so. This freedom came at a price, however; without strong institutional support from the government, operatic production could only survive with the

11 Dizikes, *Opera in America*, 51.
12 Ibid., 54.
13 Ibid., 56.
support of the public, and the Philadelphian public was more likely to invest their support in functional and practical endeavors over artistic expression.\(^\text{14}\) In this sense, Philadelphia also represents the nation, as the public support necessary for successful operatic seasons throughout the young country was often hard to come by. In Maretzek’s case, this can be seen in the number of performances he staged in Philadelphia, which pales in comparison to the number of performances in New York. As we will see in the following section, Maretzek had to struggle to gain this public support in the city in order for his opera companies to be successful.

Maretzek in Philadelphia

Maretzek’s first trip to Philadelphia as an opera manager happened in 1850, while he was managing the Astor Place Opera House company in New York. He did not take his entire company from New York to Philadelphia, however. Rather, he produced Italian opera in both cities simultaneously. He accomplished this by shuttling his star singers back and forth between the two cities, and supplementing his cast with additional singers for the Philadelphia engagements. Indeed, the troupe was not split up into two separate companies, but instead Maretzek would bring some of his stars from New York to Philadelphia to perform, then send them back. The logistics of traveling singers affected how Maretzek scheduled his productions in both cities. In New York, he held performances typically on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday evenings, while Philadelphia performances were on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. For example, Maretzek had the singers G.F. Beneventanto, August Giubilei, and Amalia Patti perform in *Lucrezia Borgia* on a Wednesday in New York, followed by a performance of *Don Giovanni* on Friday in Philadelphia. This allowed the singers all of Thursday to travel and

\(^{14}\) Dizikes, *Opera in America*, 56.
recover for the Philadelphia performance. On Fridays and Saturdays, when there were performances in both cities, Maretzek would have tenor Sesto Benedetti direct in the city he was not in. Maretzek also used his traveling singers as a marketing tactic. During the first performances in Philadelphia, Maretzek had Teresa Truffi sing in Don Giovanni and Ernani, but released the information that Truffi would leave for New York following these performances for an extended period of time. Periodicals such as the Philadelphia Public Ledger would note this fact, and imply to their readers that if they wished to hear Truffi, these performances would be their only opportunity.

In addition to drawing crowds with the well-known Truffi, Maretzek chose to produce popular operas, including Lucia di Lammermoor, Don Giovanni, and Ernani. Public reception for these opening performances was good, attracting full houses, but Maretzek still had to fight unfavorable comparisons to the Havana Opera Company in critical reception. While the Havana Company did not perform in Philadelphia, writers heard the troupe while they were in New York. Enthusiasm for Maretzek’s troupe stalled after these opening performances, but Maretzek still had his superstar Parodi in his back pocket. He employed similar “puffing” techniques in Philadelphia, using anecdotes about her selfless support of her family back in Italy as well as adding lavish reports of her success in New York to increase public anticipation. Maretzek’s techniques worked, as Parodi drew large crowds and great critical acclaim throughout her engagement—her star power, however, began to wane as she gave consecutive performances. After hearing Parodi several times, the Philadelphia audiences began to crave something different. In response to this desire, Maretzek included a performance of the ballet Margarita and

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15 Preston, Opera on the Road, 179.
16 Ibid., 181.
17 Ibid., 182.
a Spanish dance called *La Manola*, featuring the dancers Caroline, Teresina, Adelaide, and Clementine Rousset, along with a production of Donizetti’s *Gemma di Vergy*. The addition of ballet worked as Maretzek intended, and he was able to draw another full house that night.

In addition to shuttling his singers back and forth between New York and Philadelphia, Maretzek also had to shuttle himself back and forth over the five week engagement. As the man in charge in Maretzek’s absence, Benedetti managed to be successful without the star power of Parodi or the esteem of Maretzek, featuring Truffi to great effect in productions of Donizetti’s *Lucia* and *La favorita*. Critics did note Maretzek’s absence from these performances, speaking to the considerable esteem the manager was building for himself. The engagement in Philadelphia drew to a close after five weeks, with Parodi leaving in the middle of the fourth week. To accommodate losing Parodi’s star power, Maretzek lowered ticket prices and offered a varied slate of operas, expanding the playbill with Donizetti’s *Parisina* and Bellini’s *La sonnambula*, as well as interspersing these performances with ballet performances by the Rousset sisters, the duo of Fitzjames and Carrese, and the Risley Ballet troupe. Ballet performances could range from small interjections to full ballets, such as *Catarina, Soire Dansant*, and *Terpsichore*. He did this to appeal to the eclectic tastes of Philadelphians, especially after losing his star singer Parodi. After the fifth week, Maretzek returned to New York, content with the success of the Philadelphia engagement.

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18 Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 183.
20 Preston, *Opera on the Road*, 184.
After his tenure at Astor Place in New York was complete in 1852, Maretzek would return to Philadelphia many times throughout his career. In 1853, he returned to collaborate with opera companies managed by Henriette Sontag and another renowned singer, Marietta Alboni. These collaborations, lasting only a few weeks each, were successful ventures.\textsuperscript{22} Maretzek’s trips to Philadelphia were also affected by his dealings with collaborators and rivals alike. For example, Maretzek actually gave up performing in Philadelphia and Boston in the spring and summer of 1859 to rivals Bernard Ullman and Maurice Strakosch, in exchange for a fall season at the Academy of Music in New York in 1858 without any competition. Maretzek made this deal so that he could prepare his troupe for an upcoming engagement in Havana, Cuba.\textsuperscript{23} Maretzek would continue to return to Philadelphia throughout the remainder of his career, produce Italian opera and introduce new prima donnas into the 1870s.\textsuperscript{24}

**Women and Opera: *La traviata***

At the beginning of this chapter, I noted several differences that Europeans noticed about American opera audiences. These differences were not lost on Maretzek, and as he worked in the city, he noticed another significant trend about opera audiences that would hold true for audiences in cities around the country: opera was an art consumed primarily by women. Maretzek had several thoughts on this uniquely American phenomenon, as he noted in his memoirs.

To this circumstance is it, that the Americans, as a people, are indebted for whatever has been done in this country for artistic cultivation and progress, or for the refinement of life. Hence it is, that up to this very day, the male portion of society visit only in such houses, and patronize such artists and productions as the ladies, in this respect very decidedly the better half of them, have thought proper to seal with their approbation and declare “fashionable.” It is little matter whether the gentlemanly section of New York

\textsuperscript{22} Maretzek, *Further Revelations of an Opera Manager in 19th-Century America*, 28-9.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 43.
\textsuperscript{24} Mignon, “Philadelphia,” *Church’s Musical Visitor*, October 1872, 2, 1.
society likes this or that artist, whether it appreciates at all, either music or pictures, or whether it thinks highly of this or that “lion.” Scarcely, even is it necessary that the aforesaid “lion” should have a mane or a tale [sic] or that this picture or the melody in question should be indisputably excellent. Sufficient it is, that Mrs. T or Misses B declare them to be worth attention. Some exceptions may occasionally be met with. There are gentlemen who have studied the world as thoroughly, as a man with means and time at his command can always do, but these do not govern taste. The ladies alone do this, at any rate, so far as my limited experience, controlled by my unfortunate modesty, has given me the means of judging on the subject.

Indeed, beyond the principal cities, it is the ladies alone that patronize and love the Arts. These, alone, know anything about them.25

While private music performance and education were highly valued for women during this time, women were not always free to attend operas whenever they wished—it was in the middle of the nineteenth century that women began forming a larger portion of theatrical audiences. At the beginning of the century, it was custom for women to be escorted by men to the theater, for both their physical protection and to protect their reputation. Scholar Adrienne Fried Block has shown in her research that women started to gain more independence to attend musical events on their own in the middle of the century, thanks to the proliferation of matinee performances.26 By the end of the century, women had much greater freedom to attend theatrical performances without fear of physical or social harm.

It is important to remember that critical reception and public reception are not the same thing and do not always coincide, as shown by my discussions of Rigoletto, Traviata, and Trovatore in Chapters 2 and 3. As writers for journals and periodicals would have been male during this time period, critical reception would naturally be dominated by the male perspective. Since opera audiences were largely women, the female perspective played a larger role in shaping public reception, and this is the point that Maretzek is emphasizing in the previous chapters.

25 Maretzek, Revelations of an Opera Manager in 19th-Century America, 71.
quote. This was also reflected in publications written specifically for women, and the Philadelphia-based *Godey’s Lady Book* became one of the foremost publications concerning art and literature. Maretzek attempted to explain this by discussing, in his words, the “womanly condition,” claiming that women sink themselves into art as a result of the concentrated and conflicting passions within them.27 While his analysis of the woman’s psyche is obviously problematic and shaped by his own experience and cultural context, it is obvious that these opinions shaped how Maretzek produced opera.

A good example is his treatment of *La traviata*. In Chapter 2, I noted that, despite questions on the opera’s morality, Maretzek did not hesitate to produce the opera in New York. This held true for all of the major cities, including Philadelphia. In 1857, Maretzek produced the opera nine times, including four consecutive performances in March of that year. He produced the opera because, despite concerns about the plot, women loved *Traviata* and flocked to the theater whenever it was put on. According to *Putnam’s Monthly Magazine*, this was because they related to Violetta “as if she were a most estimable and praiseworthy young person.”28 Not just the general public, but Philadelphia-based writers also argued for the good in Violetta. In an article about music in Philadelphia for the *Spirit of the Times*, the writer proclaims that, “What is there in ‘Traviata’ so very shocking? The heroine is a *lorette* [courtesan working near the Notre Dame de Lorette church in Paris], it is true, but she is a noble-minded girl for that, and her wicked acts are as you might wish to meet with.” The writer continues that if we are going to throw out *La traviata*, then we need to first throw out *Don Giovanni*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, and *La

27 Maretzek, *Revelations of an Opera Manager in 19th-Century America*, 70.
favorita, operas that the writer viewed as more morally objectionable than Verdi’s opera.29 Critics raised concerns that women would be adversely affected by the immoral nature of the plot, but these concerns did not deter people from attending.30 Being a savvy businessman, Maretzek used this acknowledgement to his advantage, making La traviata a staple in his seasons of Italian opera.

Acceptance of Rigoletto?

While Maretzek was able to find success in Philadelphia with La traviata despite morality concerns, Rigoletto presented a different case. Maretzek never produced Rigoletto in Philadelphia, and the opera only had ten complete performances between 1858 and 1889. These facts are somewhat surprising, considering the positive initial reception of the work. The critic for the Philadelphia North American and United States Gazette, responding to a performance in 1858 by a company led by Bernard Ullman, encouraged his readers to give the opera a fair chance:

We had been prepared for one of Verdi’s most ordinary, not to say unsuccessful efforts, by the tone of criticism with which Rigoletto has been greeted elsewhere. We do not agree with this judgment...He has followed the thread of the narrative with music thoroughly adapted to the expression of its situations...It is the especial merit of Rigoletto that its strains are of themselves sufficiently full of the progress of the drama, without any of the words of the text. In all respects it is a great lyric play...the exquisite tenor song in the last act “La donna è mobile”...Bignardi last evening stood twirling a chair on one leg as he sang it. Notwithstanding the remembrance of the street musicians, this solo was vehemently applauded. Other selections which, like this, had become familiar, through concerts, were received with equal applause, showing conclusively that I only requires familiarity to cause the whole opera to be popular...We may observe, however, that those who attempt to form a judgment respecting it, should see it at least thrice before doing so.31

30 Dizikes, Opera in America, 172.
31 Martin, Verdi in America, 204-5.
Similar to the rest of the country, the music of *Rigoletto* was quite popular, and Philadelphians were exposed to the music through street musicians and concert performances. This critical reception mirrors New York, highlighting the potential of the work rather than focusing on the immorality of the plot.

In light of this review, what prevented Maretzek from producing *Rigoletto* in Philadelphia? We know that Maretzek had difficulty drawing crowds with *Rigoletto* in New York, and he avoided producing the opera in Boston. Given the difficulties associated with this opera, it is reasonable to assert that Maretzek relied on established Verdi favorites, such as *Traviata, Ernani,* and *Il trovatore,* of which the latter received 113 performances in Philadelphia between 1858 and 1889, when he produced operas for that city. In his home base of New York, where he started his career and was heralded as the premier opera impresario, he was likely more willing to stage the riskier *Rigoletto.* While Maretzek was by no means unsuccessful in Philadelphia, he did not have the same level of prestige as he did in New York. He could not count on his own popularity to sell tickets, and thus had to rely on popular operas to do so. This point is also evidenced by the sheer number of performances he held in New York compared to Philadelphia, as can be seen in Appendix A. In any case, the volatile reception of *Rigoletto* affected Maretzek’s decisions to produce the opera in different cities, and in this case, reception in one city affected how he produced operas in a different city. Philadelphia would have to wait until after Maretzek’s career was over to see productions of *Rigoletto* consistently—the opera received four performances in the summer of 1890 alone. By this time, moral objections gave way to a desire to hear the beautiful music that many had grown up recognizing in its original

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32 Martin, *Verdi in America,* 205.
context.\textsuperscript{33} The box-office receipts were healthy enough to support \textit{Rigoletto}, but in Maretzek’s time, qualms with the opera’s plot were too difficult to overcome.

Philadelphia often represented the nation through its pragmatic view of opera and its eclectic musical taste, and the musical heritage of the city affected its horizon of expectations for opera. While it was difficult for Italian opera to break through Philadelphians’ preference for English opera, by the middle of the century, Italian opera gained the same popularity it enjoyed across the country. Despite this, Maretzek still had to be more conservative with the operas he chose to produce. He relied on crowd favorites, such as \textit{Traviata} and \textit{Trovatore}, as well as \textit{bel canto} classics, and he avoided pushing the envelope with riskier ventures such as \textit{Rigoletto}. He would have to save these operas for his home base of New York.

\textsuperscript{33} Martin, \textit{Verdi in America}, 209.
CHAPTER V. CONCLUSION

Critical and public reception played a significant role in Max Maretzek’s career and the way he produced operas. In New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, this reception—and Maretzek’s reactions to it—had similarities and differences. Perhaps the most obvious similarity is the importance of public reception. One of Maretzek’s primary goals as an impresario was to make a profit, which meant appealing to as many people as possible with operas that the general public enjoyed. This is reflected in the large number of times he produced *Trovatore*, which was, as discussed in Chapter 3, one of the most popular operas in nineteenth-century America. The concept of targeting Italian opera for everyone also ran counter to the ideas of many wealthy citizens who wanted to claim Italian opera for themselves. As a sharp businessman, Maretzek knew that he would need the support of everyone, not just the wealthy, in order to be successful. Considering the stigma of elitism that was gradually attributed to Italian opera throughout the century, Maretzek’s ability to market the genre to everyone and be successful is additionally impressive.

In his text *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, Lawrence Levine asserts that Italian opera came to be associated with “Old-World pretensions” and other elitist attitudes as early as the 1830s. Indeed, in 1835 Philip Hone noted that the private boxes at the opera house, which cost $6,000, created an “aristocratic distinction.”¹ This contrasted with views on English-language opera, which was often perceived as lower class than foreign-language opera.² While it is certainly true that Italian opera gained these associations in the nineteenth century, especially toward the end, this study reveals several nuances that must be considered when studying Italian opera in the nineteenth

¹ Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, 94.
century. New York was the main city in which the wealthy were trying to claim Italian opera as their own, as I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. From the large gaps in ticket prices for the Astor Place Opera House to newspapers such as the New York Herald instructing their readers that only the wealthy should attend Italian opera, it was clear that the upper classes of New York wanted to use Italian opera to separate themselves socially from the middle and working classes. The middle and working classes were not oblivious to these efforts by the upper class. These cultural associations with Italian opera were not shared across the entire country, however. For example, Philadelphians did not share this exclusionary idea of Italian opera. They recognized another crucial nuance to understanding the cultural context of Italian opera: the necessity of the support of the middle class and working classes to finance Italian opera. 3 This study reveals that Maretzek also understood this nuance, as he would make business decisions to draw the biggest crowd possible, not the wealthiest crowd possible. By cutting ticket prices and choosing the most popular operas for his productions, he responded more to public reception rather than critical reception. Even though the Albion did not always hold a high opinion of Verdi and despite John S. Dwight’s lamenting the prevalence of “Trovatopera” in Boston, Maretzek chose to listen to the public over the critics more often than not.

While public reception was an important factor for Maretzek in determining what operas to produce, critical reception also played an important role. Even though Rigoletto had a difficult time drawing a full house in New York, Maretzek still produced the opera. This fact was even noted by the New York Tribune, as it presented a fascinating contradiction—namely, that Maretzek would produce an opera that rarely drew a large crowd. I believe this can be explained

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by the positive critical reception of the work as well as the popularity of the music, which showed Maretzek the potential of the work to be successful. This contrasts with the negative critical reception of *I Lombardi*. With little support of the opera from either critics or the public, Maretzek no longer saw the potential of the opera and stopped producing it. This comparison also elucidates another key point: the importance of reception of the music compared to the reception of the plot. As shown in Chapter 2, while many Verdi scholars focus on the rejection of *I Lombardi*’s plot, this single element is not enough to explain why the opera failed to enter the repertory. If dismissal of the plot was enough to ensure an opera’s demise, then *Rigoletto* and *Traviata* should have also been discarded. My analysis of the reception of the work showed that critics also rejected the music of the opera. In contrast, while *Rigoletto* and *Traviata* were criticized about the moral content of their plots, they were beloved for their music. Maretzek, as we know, discarded *I Lombardi*, but was more willing to produce *Rigoletto* and *Traviata*, even though the latter two were even banned in some places for a time. I would posit that Maretzek favored producing an opera whose music was well received, irrespective of its plot, rather than an opera whose plot was attractive but the music did not impress the audiences. This coincides with how Italian opera in general was treated in nineteenth-century America. The biggest draw for an Italian opera was a superstar and a strong cast of singers, as the public was most interested in listening to the music sung by the best singers in the world and using the opera as a social event. People did not go to Italian opera for the plot, especially since the opera was in a language that many likely did not understand. These ideas formed the horizon of expectations for American audiences, and Maretzek understood and catered to these expectations.

While reception of Italian opera in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia shows many similarities, each city had its own character and heritage that affected how certain operas were
received. To these nuances, Maretzek responded accordingly. New York was the city where Maretzek could be the most adventurous. This was the city where he started his career and laid down his roots, and he enjoyed more esteem here than anywhere else. As seen in Appendix A, Maretzek produced many more operas in New York between 1863 and 1867 than in Philadelphia. New York also had the richest heritage of Italian opera, since it was first introduced there by García in 1825. Thus, Maretzek was a bit more risky in the operas he chose to produce, as evidenced by the fact that he was willing to stage operas (such as *Rigoletto*) that had trouble drawing a full house. Even though aspects of morality were noted in critical reception and could deter people from attending an opera, the case studies of *Rigoletto* and *Traviata* show that the morality of an operatic plot would not immediately cause an opera to be unperformable, as was the case in Boston. Despite this extra freedom, Maretzek still relied on popular favorites, which included adding grand operas performed in Italian to his repertory of *bel canto* favorites toward the end of his career.

Both Boston and Philadelphia had musical heritages that forced Maretzek to be a bit more conservative when choosing operas to produce. In Boston, musical taste was shaped by the city’s Puritanical heritage and the influence of German musicians, which led to music by German composers being valued above all. This musical taste made it more difficult for Italian opera to gain a foothold. Despite these obstacles, Maretzek found success in Boston, but he had to be more sensitive to the plots of the operas he produced. Maretzek’s treatment of *Rigoletto* exemplifies this approach, as he eliminated it from his 1861 season. Rather, Bostonians preferred Verdi operas such as *Ernani* and *Trovatore*, and in general, they accepted plots that featured moral and social justice. This conclusion is borne out of an apparent conundrum when considering Boston reception—specifically, why Bostonians would reject *Rigoletto* over other
operas. As discussed in Chapter 3, *Rigoletto* was rejected while *Don Giovanni* was beloved, because the villain in the latter is brought to justice, while in the former he is not punished in any way. The popularity of *Trovatore* in Boston also supports this idea. On the surface, it would seem that the “horrors” of the plot in *Trovatore* would offend the citizens’ sensibilities just as much as *Rigoletto*. As cited in Chapter 3, the *Albion* considered the plot to be more horrific than *Rigoletto*. At the end of *Trovatore*, however, the evil Count finds out that he has killed his own brother unknowingly. Unlike *Rigoletto*, *Trovatore* ends with justice, and thus was more palatable to the Boston public. The importance of justice fits in with the larger Puritanical heritage of Boston, and this concept of just can be seen in a poem by William Turnbill entitled, “The Nineteenth-Century Puritans.” The poem describes different situations in which God upheld justice, ending with, “His eye doth mark our burgher-world. His arm shall guard the right.” This concept of justice, and Puritanical beliefs as a whole, were a large influence on Bostonians’ horizons of expectation.

Philadelphia boasted a strong tradition of English opera in the beginning of the nineteenth century, which melded into an eclectic opera scene by the middle of the century. While Italian opera seemed to emerge victorious as the century progressed, Maretzek was still more conservative in the operas he chose to produce for this city. He relied on favorites such as *Trovatore* and *Traviata*, and there is no evidence of him ever producing *Rigoletto* in Philadelphia. Considering the relatively positive initial reaction from critics in Philadelphia, as well as their preference for Italian opera, I found Maretzek’s decision to not produce *Rigoletto* in Philadelphia surprising. I would assert that this is because he noted the lack of public support for

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this opera in New York, and thus opted for reliably successful operas when he took his singers outside the city. In terms of understanding Maretzek’s productions in a certain city, his treatment of Rigoletto reveals that the reception of the city he was in was not the only determining factor when choosing operas to produce. Rather, it is important to look at reception from other major cities to understand his managerial decisions. The horizon of expectations of one city’s audience was not the only determining factor—perspectives from other cities, especially cities Maretzek considered important musical centers, could also play a role.

It would not be long after Maretzek finished his career in 1878 that the first successful repertory opera company, the Metropolitan Opera, would be founded. The founding of the Met began the transition away from the itinerant opera companies that formed the basis of Maretzek’s career. As an impresario of itinerant companies, however, Maretzek needed to be aware of the reception of Italian opera in all the cities to which he travelled in order to determine which operas would be most successful. Indeed, in nineteenth-century America, there were few people better at this than Maretzek, and he played an important role in establishing and promoting Italian opera in America, a tradition that we still enjoy today. Between his efforts to produce opera for everyone and his promotion of Verdi and grand opera, his contribution to opera in America was extraordinary. He struggled constantly with prima donnas, harsh critics, and a demanding public, and his efforts did not always prove profitable. But as described by John Dizikes, “Max Maretzek, in the 1860s, wanted no one’s sympathy. He was too busy making music. He had come to America with the idea of making opera available to all, and he always remained loyal to that ideal.”

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6 Dizikes, Opera in America, 177.
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_____________. “Notes from (the Road to) the Stage.” *The Opera Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2007): 103–19.


APPENDIX A. SELECTED MARETZK OPERATIC SEASONS

New York

Astor Place Opera House - October 1850 – February 1851

Number of Performances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opera</th>
<th>Performances</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Lucrezia Borgia</em> (Donizetti)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Ernani</em> (Verdi)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Norma</em> (Bellini)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>La favorita</em> (Donizetti)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Parisina</em> (Donizetti)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Romeo e Giulietta</em> (Zingarelli)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Gemma di Vergy</em> (Donizetti)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Giovanna Prima di Napoli</em> (Strakosch)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Don Giovanni</em> (Mozart)</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Il Giuramento</em> (Mercadante)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Semiramide</em> (Rossini)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>La Sonnambula</em> (Bellini)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Itinerary

Oct. 28 – *Lucia di Lammermoor*  
Oct. 30 – *Ernani*  
Nov. 1 – *Ernani*  
Nov. 4 – *Norma*  
Nov. 6 – *Lucia*  
Nov. 7 – *Norma*  
Nov. 9 – *Norma*  
Nov. 11 – *Lucrezia Borgia*  
Nov. 13 – *Lucrezia*  
Nov. 15 – *Lucrezia*  
Nov. 18 – *Ernani*  
Nov. 20 – *Ernani*  
Nov. 22 – *Parisina*  
Nov. 23 – *Lucrezia*  
Nov. 25 – *Parisina*  
Nov. 26 – *Norma*  
Nov. 27 – *Lucrezia*  
Nov. 29 – *Don Giovanni*  
Nov. 30 – *Gemma di Vergy*  
Dec. 2 – *Gemma*  
Dec. 4 – *Gemma*  
Dec. 5 – *Lucia*  
Dec. 6 – *Don Giovanni*  
Dec. 7 – *Lucrezia*  
Dec. 9 – *Norma*  
Dec. 11 – *Lucrezia*  
Dec. 13 – *Ernani*  
Dec. 16 – *Gemma*  
Dec. 18 – *La sonnambula*  
Dec. 20 – *Parisina*  
Dec. 23 – *Lucia*  
Dec. 26 – *Il Giuramento*  
Dec. 27 – *Il Giuramento*  
Dec. 30 – *La favorita*  
Jan. 2 – *La favorita*  
Jan. 6 – *Giovanna Prima*  
Jan. 8 – *Giovanna Prima*  
Jan. 10 – *Giovanna Prima*  
Jan. 13 – *Norma*  
Jan. 15 – *Lucrezia*  
Jan. 17 – *Giovanna Prima*  
Jan. 20 – *Norma*  
Jan. 22 – *La favorita*  
Jan. 24 – *La favorita*  
Jan. 28 – *Romeo et Giulietta*  
Jan. 29 – *Romeo et Giulietta*  
Jan. 30 – *Romeo et Giulietta*  
Jan. 31 – *Romeo et Giulietta*  
Feb. 3 – *Il barbiere di Siviglia*  
Feb. 5 – *Il barbiere di Siviglia*  
Feb. 7 – *La favorite*  
Feb. 10 – *Lucrezia*  
Feb. 12 – *Semiramide*  
Feb. 14 – *Semiramide*  
Feb. 17 – *Ernani*  
Feb. 19 – *Parisina*

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Maretzek Opera Companies – 1863-1866

Number of Performances

- **Faust** (Gounod) – 55
- **Crispino e la comare** (Ricci) – 29
- **L’Africana** (Meyerbeer) – 28
- **Il trovatore** (Verdi) – 26
- **Norma** (Bellini) – 25
- **Jone** (Petrella) – 23
- **Fra Diavolo** (Auber) – 23
- **Don Giovanni** (Mozart) – 22
- **Don Sebastiano** (Donizetti) – 19
- **Ernani** (Verdi) – 19
- **Martha** (Flotow) – 18
- **Lucrezia Borgia** (Donizetti) – 16
- **Un ballo in maschera** (Verdi) – 13
- **La stella del Nord** (Meyerbeer) – 13
- **Poliuto** (Donizetti) – 13
- **Gli Ugonotti** (Meyerbeer) – 12
- **La traviata** (Verdi) – 11

- **Il barbiere di Siviglia** (Rossini) – 10
- **Roberto il diavolo** (Meyerbeer) – 9
- **I puritani** (Bellini) – 9
- **La favorita** (Donizetti) – 9
- **La forza del destino** (Verdi) – 8
- **Linda di Chamounix** (Donizetti) – 7
- **Rigoletto** (Verdi) – 7
- **Macbeth** (Verdi) – 4
- **Aroldo** (Verdi) – 4
- **Zampa** (Hérold) – 4
- **La figlia del reggimento** (Donizetti) – 4
- **Don Pasquale** (Donizetti) – 4
- **Roberto Devereux** (Donizetti) – 2
- **I due Foscari** (Verdi) – 2
- **Giuditta** (Peri) – 2
- **L’elisir d’amore** (Donizetti) – 2
- **Semiramide** (Rossini) – 1

Itinerary

1863

Spring

- March 6 – **Il trovatore**
- March 7 – **Il trovatore**
- March 9 – **Un ballo in maschera**
- March 11 – **Ernani**
- March 13 – **La traviata**
- March 14 – **Ernani**
- March 18 – **Un ballo**
- March 19 – **La traviata**
- March 20 – **La favorita**
- March 21 – **Un ballo**
- March 23 – **Norma**
- March 25 – **Linda di Chamounix**
- March 26 – **Un ballo**
- March 27 – **Norma**
- March 28 – **La traviata**
- March 30 – **Semiramis**
- March 31 – **Lucia**
- April 1 – **Norma**
- April 4 – **Jone**
- April 6 – **Jone**
- April 9 – **Fidelio**
- April 10 – **Jone**

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Compiled by Ruth Henderson
April 11 – Lucia
April 11 – Martha
April 13 – Jone
April 15 – I due Foscari
April 17 – Norma
April 18 – Il barbiere di Siviglia
April 20 – Un ballo
April 29 – Il trovatore

Summer

May 4 – Aroldo
May 6 – Aroldo
May 8 – Ernani
May 9 – Aroldo
May 11 – Il trovatore
May 13 – Jone
May 15 – Aroldo
May 16 – Jone
May 19 – Jone

Fall

Oct. 5 – Roberto Devereux
Oct. 7 – Roberto Devereux
Oct. 9 – Rigoletto
Oct. 10 – Norma
Oct. 12 – Norma
Oct. 14 – Jone
Oct. 15 – Rigoletto
Oct. 16 – La traviata
Oct. 17 – Rigoletto
Oct. 19 – Ernani
Oct. 21 – Macbeth
Oct. 22 – La traviata
Oct. 24 – Jone
Oct. 26 – Macbeth
Oct. 28 – Il trovatore
Oct. 29 – Martha
Oct. 30 – Jone
Oct. 31 – La traviata
Nov. 2 – Lucrezia
Nov. 4 – Lucrezia
Nov. 5 – Lucia
Nov. 6 – Martha
Nov. 7 – Lucia
Nov. 9 – Norma
Nov. 11 – Giuditta
Nov. 12 – Ernani
Nov. 13 – La sonnambula
Nov. 14 – Giuditta
Nov. 16 – Il trovatore
Nov. 17 – Martha (with selections from Semiramide)
Nov. 18 – Jone
Nov. 20 – Don Giovanni
Nov. 21 – Lucrezia
Nov. 23 – Don Giovanni
Nov. 25 – Faust
Nov. 26 – Macbeth
Nov. 27 – Faust
Nov. 28 – La sonnambula (with arias from Semiramide and Lucia)
Nov. 28 – Norma
Nov. 30 – Faust
Dec. 23 – Un ballo
Dec. 25 – Faust
Dec. 26 – Don Giovanni
Dec. 28 – Jone
Dec. 30 – Faust

1864

Winter

Feb. 1 – Il trovatore
Feb. 3 – Don Giovanni
Feb. 4 – Faust
Feb. 5 – I due Foscari
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**Spring**

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**Fall**

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Winter – Second Series

Nov. 14 – Poliuto
Nov. 15 – Linda di Chamounix
Nov. 16 – Don Giovanni
Nov. 18 – Faust
Nov. 19 – Rigoletto
Nov. 21 – Don Giovanni
Nov. 23 – Rigoletto
Nov. 25 – Don Sebastiano
Nov. 26 – Faust
Nov. 26 – Poliuto
Nov. 28 – Don Sebastiano
Nov. 29 – Don Sebastiano
Nov. 30 – Faust
Dec. 2 – Don Sebastiano
Dec. 3 – Don Sebastiano
Dec. 5 – La figlia del reggimento
Dec. 6 – Don Sebastiano
Dec. 7 – Poliuto

Dec. 8 – Faust
Dec. 9 – Don Sebastiano
Dec. 10 – La figlia
Dec. 12 – Il trovatore
Dec. 14 – Don Sebastiano
Dec. 15 – Don Giovanni
Dec. 16 – Faust
Dec. 17 – Don Sebastiano
Dec. 19 – Don Sebastiano
Dec. 21 – Fra Diavolo
Dec. 22 – Don Sebastiano
Dec. 23 – Fra Diavolo
Dec. 24 – Don Sebastiano
Dec. 26 – Fra Diavolo
Dec. 27 – Norma
Dec. 28 – Fra Diavolo
Dec. 29 – Fra Diavolo
Dec. 30 – Norma

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Spring

Feb. 2 – Don Sebastiano
Feb. 3 – Fra Diavolo
Feb. 4 – Poliuto
Feb. 6 – Il trovatore
Feb. 7 – Faust
Feb. 8 – Norma
Feb. 9 – Fra Diavolo
Feb. 10 – La traviata
Feb. 13 – Faust
Feb. 14 – Fra Diavolo
Feb. 15 – Lucia
Feb. 16 – Norma
Feb. 17 – Ernani
Feb. 18 – Lucia
Feb. 20 – Don Sebastiano
Feb. 21 – Martha
Feb. 23 – Martha
Feb. 24 – La forza del destino
Feb. 25 – Linda di Chamounix
Feb. 27 – Ernani
Feb. 28 – La forza

Mar. 1 – La sonnambula
Mar. 2 – La figlia
Mar. 3 – La forza
Mar. 4 – Martha
Mar. 6 – La forza
Mar. 7 – Faust
Mar. 8 – La forza
Mar. 9 – Faust
Mar. 10 – La forza
Mar. 11 – Ernani
Mar. 13 – Don Giovanni
Mar. 14 – La forza
Mar. 15 – Fra Diavolo
Mar. 16 – Norma
Mar. 17 – I puritani
Mar. 18 – La forza
Mar. 20 – La figlia
Mar. 21 – Don Sebastiano
Mar. 22 – Don Giovanni
Mar. 23 – Fra Diavolo
Apr. 10 – I puritani
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1866

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Feb. 7 – Faust
Feb. 8 – L’Africana
Feb. 9 – L’Africana
Feb. 10 – Crispino
Feb. 12 – Martha
Feb. 13 – Don Sebastiano
Feb. 14 – Don Sebastiano
Feb. 15 – Crispino
Feb. 16 – Fra Diavolo
Feb. 17 – Ernani
Feb. 19 – L’Africana
Feb. 20 – Crispino
Feb. 21 – Poliuto
Feb. 22 – La sonnambula
Feb. 23 – Don Sebastiano
Feb. 24 – Jone
Feb. 26 – La favorita
Feb. 27 – L’Africana
Feb. 28 – La sonnambula
Mar. 1 – Don Sebastiano
Mar. 2 – La favorita
Mar. 3 – Don Pasquale
Mar. 5 – Il trovatore
Mar. 6 – L’Africana
Mar. 7 – Don Pasquale
Mar. 8 – Il trovatore
Mar. 9 – La stella del Nord
Mar. 10 – La favorita
Mar. 12 – La stella
Mar. 13 – L’Africana
Mar. 14 – La stella
Mar. 15 – La stella
Mar. 16 – Un ballo
Mar. 17 – La stella
Mar. 17 – L’Africana
Mar. 19 – Jone
Mar. 20 – L’Africana
Mar. 21 – La stella
Mar. 22 – Don Giovanni
Mar. 24 – Don Giovanni
Mar. 26 – La stella
Mar. 31 – Faust
Mar. 31 – L’Africana
Apr. 2 – Gli Ugonotti
Apr. 3 – Gli Ugonotti
Apr. 4 – Crispino
Apr. 4 – Lucrezia
Apr. 6 – Fra Diavolo
Apr. 7 – Lucrezia
Apr. 7 – Gli Ugonotti
Apr. 9 – Gli Ugonotti
Apr. 10 – Martha
Apr. 11 – La favorita
Apr. 12 – Fra Diavolo
Apr. 13 – La stella
Apr. 14 – Gli Ugonotti

Fall

Oct. 10 – Crispino
Oct. 11 – Il trovatore
Oct. 12 – Fra Diavolo
Oct. 13 – La sonnambula
Nov. 5 – Faust
Nov. 6 – L’elisir d’amore
Nov. 26 – Crispino
Nov. 27 – Ernani
Nov. 28 – Fra Diavolo
Nov. 29 – L’elisir
Nov. 30 – La stella
Dec. 1 – Il trovatore
Dec. 3 – La stella
Dec. 5 – Gli Ugonotti
Dec. 6 – La stella
Dec. 7 – Faust
Dec. 8 – Lucrezia
Dec. 10 – Crispino
Dec. 12 – Il barbiere di Siviglia
Dec. 13 – Il barbiere di Siviglia
Dec. 14 – Il trovatore
Dec. 15 – Fra Diavolo
Dec. 17 – Zampa
Dec. 18 – Crispino
Dec. 19 – Zampa
Dec. 21 – La sonnambula
Dec. 22 – Faust
Dec. 24 – Crispino
Dec. 26 – Un ballo

Dec. 28 – Il barbiere

Boston

Astor Place Opera Company – 1851

Number of Performances

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<td><em>Lucia di Lammermoor</em> (Donizetti)</td>
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<td><em>Il barbiere di Siviglia</em> (Rossini)</td>
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<td><em>Romeo e Giuletta</em> (Zingarelli)</td>
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Itinerary

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Philadelphia

Astor Place Opera Company – 1850-1851

Number of Performances

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La sonnambula (Bellini) - 1

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Maretzek Opera Companies – 1851, 1863-66

Number of Performances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opera</th>
<th>Performances</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lucia di Lammermoor (Donizetti)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I puritani (Bellini)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernani (Verdi)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La favorita (Donizetti)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La sonnambula (Bellini)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucrezia Borgia (Donizetti)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norma (Bellini)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha (Flotow)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fra Diavolo (Auber)</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>L'Africana (Meyerbeer)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ernani (Verdi)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Otello (Rossini)</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>La forza del destino (Verdi)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don Giovanni (Mozart)</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faust (Gounod)</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poliuto (Donizetti)</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Il trovatore (Verdi)</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>La dame blanche (Boieldieu)</td>
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Itinerary

1851

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 22</td>
<td>Lucia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 24</td>
<td>I puritani</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 26</td>
<td>Ernani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 27</td>
<td>La sonnambula</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 30</td>
<td>La sonnambula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 4</td>
<td>Otello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 6</td>
<td>Lucrezia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 7</td>
<td>Norma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 8</td>
<td>La favorita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 10</td>
<td>Lucia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 13</td>
<td>La favorite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 13</td>
<td>I puritani</td>
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1863

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Opera</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 4</td>
<td>Norma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>Martha</td>
</tr>
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Dec. 18 – *Don Giovanni*  
Mar. 24 – *La forza*

Mar. 25 – *Fra Diavolo*

1865

Apr. 8 – *Ernani*

1866

Jan. 1 – *Faust*  
Jan. 2 – *L’Africana*  
Jan. 3 – *Poliuto*  
Jan. 4 – *Fra Diavolo*  
Jan. 5 – *Ernani*  
Jan. 6 – *L’Africana*  
Jan. 8 – *Martha*  
Jan. 9 – *Il trovatore*  
Jan. 10 – *La dame blanche*  
Jan. 11 – *I puritani*  
Jan. 12 – *Lucrezia*  
Jan. 13 – *Lucia*
APPENDIX B. LIST OF PERIODICALS CONSULTED

Albion: A Journal of News, Politics, and Literature
- Publication run – 1822-1876 by J.S. Bartlett (New York)
- Contained an eclectic mix of articles and subjects. Commonly reprinted articles from English sources.

Boston Evening Transcript
- Publication run – 1830-1941
- Covered news from Boston, Suffolk County, and Massachusetts in general

Church’s Musical Visitor
- Publication run – 1871-1883 by J. Church (Cincinnati)
- Devoted to music and the fine arts

Dwight’s Journal of Music
- Publication run – 1852-1881 by J.S. Dwight (Boston)
- One of the most prominent publications on music in the country during the nineteenth century

Godey’s Lady Book
- Publication run – 1840-1892 by Louis A. Godey (Philadelphia)
- Magazine intended to inform, entertain, and educate the women of America. Contained articles on music, fashion, health, and recipes, among others.

Graham’s American Monthly Magazine of Literature, Art, and Fashion
- Publication run – 1844-1858 by G.R. Graham (Philadelphia)
- Created chiefly as a literary magazine but included music, puzzles, and jokes. In its prime, published many famous authors, including Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Edgar Allan Poe, and Lydia H. Sigourney.

Harbinger, Devoted to Social and Political Progress
- Publication run – 1845-1849 (New York)
- Articles focused on literary and music criticism as well as social reform

The Knickerbocker Monthly; A National Magazine
- Publication run – 1833-1864
- Included articles on literature, travel, and some science and politics in the 1850s.

Literary World
- Publication run – 1847-1853 by Osgood (New York)
- Devoted chiefly to book reviews, with additional sections on music, drama, and the fine arts. Expanded in the 1850s to include travel, politics, and social issues.

**Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer**
- Publication run – 1829-1861
- Focused on issues and events in New York City and New York state

**Philadelphia Monthly Magazine: Devoted to General Literature and the Fine Arts**
- Publication run – 1827-1829
- Articles focused on literature and fine arts, edited by Isaac Clarkson Snowden and B.R. Evans

**Philadelphia North American and United States Gazette**
- Publication run – 1847-1876 by G.R. Graham
- Coverage of events and issues in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania as a whole

**Philadelphia Public Ledger**
- Publication run – 1836-1942
- First penny paper in Philadelphia

**Putnam’s Monthly Magazine**
- Publication run – 1853-1857 (New York)
- Articles focus on political and literary issues and content

**New York Herald**
- Publication run – 1840-1920
- Articles covering New York City and New York state

**New York Times**
- Publication run – 1851-present
- One of the most prominent newspapers in the nineteenth-century as well as the present, featuring general interest articles

**New York Tribune**
- Publication run – 1841-1924
- Contain content relating to politics, book reviews, and poetry. Articles were often colored by a moralistic flavor

**Sartain’s Union Magazine of Literature and Art**
- Publication run – 1849-1853 (New York, Philadelphia)
- Similar to Graham’s, it focused on literature, book reviews, music criticism, and art exhibitions
Spirit of the Times: A Chronicle of the Turf, Agriculture, Field Sports, Literature, and the Stage

- Publication run – 1835-1861 (New York)
- Eclectic magazine that claimed to be the first all-around sporting journal in the United States. Also covered literature, fashion, and theater, with special articles highlighting Boston and Philadelphia