University of Cincinnati

Date: 3/25/2014

I, Douglas   Easterling , hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music in Music History.

It is entitled:

Authorial Voice and Agency in the Operas of Richard Strauss: A Study of Self-Referentiality

Student's name: **Douglas Easterling**

This work and its defense approved by:

Committee chair: Jeongwon Joe, Ph.D.

Committee member: Kenneth Griffiths, M.M.

Committee member: bruce mcclung, Ph.D.

UNIVERSITY OF Cincinnati

10340

Authorial Voice and Agency in the Operas of Richard Strauss:
A Study of Self-Referentiality

A thesis submitted to

The Graduate School
of the University of Cincinnati

in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Music

in the Division of Composition, Musicology, and Theory
of the College-Conservatory of Music

2014

by

Douglas Easterling

B.M. Tennessee Technological University

2010

Committee Chair: Jeongwon Joe, PhD

Abstract

Self-referentiality plays an important, but often overlooked, role in the works of Richard Strauss. The broad category of self-reference includes works of metafiction, which literary critic Patricia Waugh has defined as fiction that "self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" and "explores the *theory* of writing fiction through the *practice* of writing fiction."[1] Additionally, Werner Wolf has conceptualized self-reference to include not only "intra-systemic relationship(s)," but also intertextual and intermedial references.[2] The relationships and references included in Wolf's conception of self-reference allow Strauss, his collaborators, and later interpreters to insert their own voices into operas and, arguably, even give themselves agency in the drama. This thesis examines this voice and agency in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of Strauss's aesthetics and those of his librettists and later interpreters with particular attention to three operas: *Ariadne auf Naxos* (the 1912 and 1916 versions), *Intermezzo* (1924), and *Capriccio* (1942). Additionally, I examine Christof Loy's 2011 production of *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (1919) as an example of complex layers self-reference added to a work by a later interpreter and as a suggestion for future avenues of research regarding operatic self-referentiality.

---

[1]Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Methuen & Company, 1984), 2.

[2] Werner Wolf, preface to *Self-Reference in Literature and Music*, ed. Walter Bernhart and Werner Wolf (Amsterdam: Rudopi, 2010), vii.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to several people without whom this paper would have been impossible. First, I want to thank Jason Weisinger for his help with my musical examples. I would also like to acknowledge my readers, Dr. bruce d. mcclung and professor Kenneth Griffiths. Dr. mcclung's constant encouragement and advice helped me begin to tackle writing my thesis, and his truly remarkable proofreading abilities have helped me to become a better writer. I am fortunate enough to study at College-Conservatory of Music, which has one of the greatest opera and voice programs in the country. I feel especially lucky to have known and taken classes from Ken Griffiths, whose years of experience coaching singers—often on the repertoire included in my thesis—consistently shed new light onto this project. From informal suggestions for further reading to careful consideration of my arguments and wording, his advice has helped me in my conceptualization of this paper from the beginning. His help with my translations proved especially valuable.

I would also like to sincerely thank my advisor, Dr. Jeongwon Joe, for her belief in and enthusiasm for my topic. Any insecurities that I had about my thesis were always met with compassionate understanding and enough excitement and inspiration to make me eager for the next chance to get to the library and keep writing. Furthermore, her experience as a scholar of opera and film helped change the way I think about opera and media.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, whose constant love and support encourages me to keep working hard even when I do not feel like it. I love you all from the bottom of my heart.

Table of Contents

List of Musical Examples

Introduction

Musical Self-Reference and Richard Strauss: Definitions and Scope

Igor Stravinsky once famously wrote that "music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all."[3] In a later interview with Robert Craft, Stravinsky clarified, saying that he only meant that music is "beyond verbal meanings and verbal expressions."[4] He loathed the idea that "exact sets of correlatives must exist between a composer's feelings and his notation" and revised his original statement to the simple dictum "music expresses itself."[5] This thesis does not deal directly with Stravinsky's music, but the philosophical view he espouses here represents a somewhat controversial view of music's semantic capabilities that points us toward musical reference, the possible ability of music to *mean* something.

The ability of one thing to stand for another constitutes *hetero-reference*, a sign or symbol referring to something else. Most words fall into this category: "chair," "cat," "jump," and "happy" all refer to something in the real world, outside of the semiotic system of language. Werner Wolf calls this the "normal quality of signs."[6] The opposite of this concept, *self-reference*, creates special recursive meanings. Some words can fall into this category as well, such as "pentasyllabic," "awkwardnessfull," and "recherché."[7]

---

[3] Igor Stravinsky, *An Autobiography* (1936; repr., London: Calder and Boyars, 1975), 53–54.

[4] Robert Craft and Igor Stravinsky, *Expositions and Developments* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), 101.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Werner Wolf, "Metafiction and Metamusic: Exploring the Limits of Metareference," in *Self-Reference in the Media*, ed. Winfried Nöth and Nina Bishara (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2007), 304.

[7] Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 20.

If Stravinsky's view of music is correct, then music can only ever display self-referentiality, which would make the topic of self-referentiality in music acutely unremarkable.

However, Stravinsky's remark merely dismisses the idea of purely *objective* meanings in music. People and cultures often subjectively attribute meaning to music; major-key pieces "sound" happy to Western listeners, and publishers and listeners have attached descriptive titles to pieces of non-programmatic music for centuries (e.g., Beethoven's publisher gave the name *Grande Sonate Pathétique* to his piano sonata, Op. 13). Even composers often attribute extramusical meaning to their music, as shown by Gustav Mahler's words "I have tried to capture you in a theme," addressed to his wife Alma.[8] Even if Mahler never actually said this—Alma recounts the story in her book, and her memory cannot always be trusted—the sentence amounts to the same thing. If Alma fabricated this story, then she believed that people would understand it; she knew that people make associations between music and the real world and created meaning, however subjective, through those connections.

Since we do create hetero-referentiality in music, self-referentiality is a noteworthy topic in musical analysis. Werner Wolf explores absolute music's limited ability to exhibit what he calls *intracompositional self-reference*.[9] In this, the strictest type of self-reference, an element within a work points to another element within the same piece. Any repetition or variation of a theme displays this intracompositional self-reference, but in a shallow, insignificant way. *Extracompositional self-reference* can

---

[8] Alma Mahler, *Gustav Mahler: Errinerungen und Briefe*, trans. Vernon and Jutta Wicker in Constantin Floros, *Gustav Mahler: The Symphonies* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1993), 163.

[9] Wolf, "Metafiction and Metamusic," 305.

occur when one piece quotes another, and this can prove to be slightly more noteworthy, depending on the context. This can be viewed as hetero-reference, but "if one regards the system within which self-reference operates as comprising music" as a whole instead of only the piece in question, then a quotation can constitute self-reference.[10] This line of thinking can further imply intermedial self-reference when a piece of music points to, say, a novel or a play.[11]

While those types of self-reference can occasionally prove useful, finding every instance of these rather broad conceptions of self-reference would take an exorbitant amount of time, just to discover many instances of quotation and allusion that provide no further information when examined in light of their self-referentiality. The examination of examples of a specific type of self-reference, namely *self-reflection*, often proves more useful than casting the net as wide as in the examples above. Self-reflection occurs when a self-referential event triggers contemplation of "the semiotic system under consideration, on other semiotic systems or on semiosis and the media in general" in the reader, listener, or audience member (hereafter, the "recipient"), often "by implying—if not by explicitly containing—self-referential *statements*."[12] Furthermore, when *any* self-referential event (self-reflexive or merely self-referential) creates an awareness of or comments on the medium of the work, the prefix "meta-" should be used.[13] This prefix, meaning "beyond, above, at a higher level," denotes a medial awareness, a medium

---

[10] Werner Wolf, preface to *Self-Reference in Literature and Music*, ed. Walter Bernhart and Werner Wolf (Amsterdam: Rudopi, 2010), vii.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Wolf, "Metafiction and Metamusic," 305–6.

[13] Ibid., 306.

commenting on itself from a higher level.[14] In this way, we come to "metamusic," music that comments on music itself, and "metalanguage," a higher order of language used to discuss language itself. Additionally, we can speak of the difference between the "meta-level" and the "object level," the former observing the latter from a higher level and commenting on it. To examine this meta-level, we would then create a meta-meta-level, and beyond.

This ability for self-reference to generate medial awareness brings us to the focus of this thesis. By creating self-referential pieces, artists can shape the meta-level of their works to signify whatever they want them to regarding the medium of their art itself, the object level. In this way, artists can insert their own voices into their work and, in the case of plot-centered media, give themselves agency in the scenario. By analyzing self-reference, we can better understand an artist's views of his art, the specific piece in question, and himself.

This method proves especially useful when considering the works of Richard Strauss, who left no large body of writings concerning music, unlike, for instance, Richard Wagner. But Strauss's extended operatic career presents music historians with intriguing questions regarding his compositional aesthetics and the reception of his music. How does Strauss's late style, commonly referred to as a neo-classical style, fit into the turbulent changes in musical style and thought that occurred in his lifetime? What influenced the trajectory of his career from a failed Wagnerite (*Guntram*, 1894) to an innovative, experimental dramatist (*Salome*, 1905 and *Elektra*, 1909) to a seasoned opera composer experiencing what James Zichowicz has called an "extended maturity" in

---

[14] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "meta-" http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/117150?rskey=bSy4Lk&result=4&isAdvanced=false#eid (accessed August 13, 2013).

his old age (*Arabella*, 1933, ff.)?[15] Strauss's "extended maturity," which stems from the early 1930s until his death in 1949, stands in marked contrast to the life of, for instance, Beethoven, who conducted undeniably bold musical experiments in the last years of his life. The last decades of Strauss's life, on the other hand, are marked more by a reaction against the musical experimentation that seems to dominate the musico-historical narrative of the first half of the twentieth century. Because self-referentiality allows artists to "explore the *theory* of writing…through the *practice* of writing," an examination of self-reference in Strauss's operas can elucidate his views and answer some of the questions raised by his extended maturity and compositional conservatism in most of his output after *Elektra*.[16]

It makes sense to look to music for clarity on this topic, especially with Strauss. While we can probably safely assume that most, though probably not all, composers tend to express themselves in their music, Strauss seems especially prone to communicating in music. Pauline de Ahna, Strauss's temperamental opera-singing wife, once asked Elisabeth Schumann, a singer in her own right who sang many of Strauss's soprano roles, "What does one do with a man who, when he begins to get sensual, starts composing?!"[17] Pauline likely exaggerated a bit in this comment, but it nonetheless probably contains a kernel of truth. If Strauss tended to compose his sensuality rather than acting on it (in whatever small way, accounting for Pauline's probable exaggeration), is it not likely that he similarly composed many of his other thoughts and views?

---

[15] James L. Zichowicz, "The Late Operas of Richard Strauss," in *The Richard Strauss Companion*, ed. Mark-Daniel Schmid (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 285.

[16] Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Methuen & Company, 1984), 2.

[17] Gerd Puritz, *Elisabeth Schumann: A Biography* (London: A. Deutsch, 1993), 142.

Strauss certainly would have disagreed with Stravinsky's philosophy of meaning in music. Strauss's comment to a conductor that you could tell one of the women had red hair in his tone poem *Don Juan* (1888) may have been an exaggeration, but nonetheless reveals his confidence in the possibility of evoking extramusical meaning in his compositions, even if with less specificity than this example.[18] In fact, Strauss admitted that one could not "compose everything," because "one always runs the risk of expecting music to do too much and of lapsing into sterile imitation of nature."[19] So he almost certainly exaggerated about the red-haired woman in *Don Juan*. But he also says that "if 'composing' be defined as the translation of sensual or emotional impression into the symbolic language of music," then a composer could "paint in sounds."[20] Whether Strauss successfully painted such extramusical content, even in broad strokes, within the "symbolic language of music" to the degree that listeners could actually perceive it matters little. Strauss's proneness toward communicating musically and his belief in the possibility of musically expressing extramusical content suggests that we should look *to* his music for his own thoughts *on* music. An examination of self-reference, with its special ability to allow authors to enter into their works and give themselves agency, can help elucidate Strauss's views in the medium he most likely expressed them.

Strauss's operas prove a good starting point for this examination. Opera perhaps represents the most intermedial musical form, combining music, poetry and/or prose, and theatrical media. The connections between these different artistic mediums can enhance,

---

[18] David Dubal, *The Essential Canon of Classical Music* (New York: North Point Press, 2001), 456.

[19] Richard Strauss, "On Composing and Conducting," in *Recollections and Reflections*, ed. Willi Schuh, trans. L. J. Lawrence (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1974), 39.

[20] Ibid.

clarify, or negate the meaning of one or more of the pieces of the intermedial whole: in other words, music can illuminate the libretto's meaning and vice versa. This intermediality allows for an easier examination of self-referential meaning; if we can better understand what a composer or librettist "meant" by a specific passage, we can better understand the implications of self-referentiality involving that passage. I will not consider the tone poems in any significant capacity, although the intermediality inherent in those pieces may suggest a secondary medium to examine in this light.

I will use a broad conception of self-reference, including intracompositional and extracompositional self-reference as well as self-reflection, meta-reference, and meta-reflection. These will prove important in my analysis of *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1912 and 1916) and *Capriccio* (1942). These two operas present the most obvious instances of self-reference in Strauss's operatic output. *Ariadne auf Naxos* presents overt metafictionality in that the opera within the opera points to its own status as an opera, but a less obvious instance occurs in the work's commenting on the nature of the operatic art form, particularly in the prologue, in which the characters receive the last-minute news that they must combine the comic and serious operas planned for the evening's entertainment into one piece.

Strauss's eighth opera, *Intermezzo* (1924), presents an intriguing type of self-reference in that the work points to its author by portraying an episode from Strauss's life. If it is true that Strauss "always asserted that his music was a self-portrait," then none of his works display this trait more so than *Intermezzo*.[21] This fictionalized, theatrical autobiography stands in sharp contrast to works that acknowledge their own fictiveness

---

[21] Kurt Wilhelm, preface to *Richard Strauss: An Intimate Portrait*, trans. Mary Whittall (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 8.

or status as a "work," instead explicitly referring to the "self" that created it, creating *enunciative self-reference* in which "the author, the narrator, the reader, or the spectator become the topic of the message."[22] This work presents a hyper-realistic operatic account of Strauss's marriage and allows the composer to comment on himself and his home life.

The intermediality inherent in opera produces important instances of intertextuality in many of Strauss's works, such as his last completed opera, *Capriccio*, which references other works, such as Salieri's opera *Prima la musica e poi le parole* and E. T. A. Hoffmann's essay "The Poet and the Composer." *Capriccio* represents perhaps the most famous example of a meta-opera (a metafictional opera) as a work in which the characters compose themselves into existence by writing an opera about themselves; this opera turns out to be *Capriccio* itself. *Capriccio*, by becoming an opera about itself, aligns with Patricia Waugh's description of metafiction as that which "self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact" and allows authors to "explore the *theory* of fiction through the *practice* of writing fiction."[23] This opera, the last one Strauss completed, in particular holds the potential for interpretation as a sort of aesthetic manifesto from the composer, a final word on what opera can and should be.

A final, unusual instance of self-reference in a production of one of Strauss's operas can be found in Christof Loy's 2011 production of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, in which the instructions of the libretto depicting a fairy tale are ignored and the stage is set

---

[22] Winfried Nöth, "Self-Reference in the Media: The Semiotic Framework," in *Self-Reference in the Media*, ed. Winfried Nöth and Nina Bishara (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2007), 20.

[23] Waugh, *Metafiction*, 2.

as a recording studio in Vienna in 1955.[24] Here the *event* of an operatic production

comments on the operatic *work*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten* itself. I call this type of imposed

self-referentiality "self-reference from without." In this production, Loy draws attention

to the opera's status as a work of musical fiction by recreating onstage the first studio

recording of the opera by Karl Böhm. By imposing self-reference onto *Die Frau ohne*

Schatten, Loy's reading of Strauss can shed light on this anomalous composer's works as

others have interpreted them. I include this most complex level of self-reference as my

final chapter not only as an example of self-referential readings of Strauss's work, but

also as a suggested avenue for future research into self-reference in operatic *productions*

as opposed to operatic *works*. The use of self-reference allows the authors and

interpreters of Strauss's operas to insert their own voices into the piece and, arguably,

even give themselves some agency in the drama.

---

[24] Christof Loy, stage director, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, opera in three acts by Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, conducted by Christian Thielemann (London: Opus Arte, 2011).

Chapter 1

Ariadne* on *Ariadne

Strauss's third collaboration with Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, may present the most blatant example of self-reference in Strauss's operatic output, although perhaps not the most profound one.[1] Both the 1912 and 1916 versions contain some sort of play within a play; in the original version, an opera within a play, and in the revised version, an opera within an opera. Any situation like this, in which one artifact lies in another, creates a self-referential awareness of the internal artifact's medium. This aligns with Winfried Nöth's definition of performative metareference, "a metasign which states, shows, or indicates that a semiotic act is being performed, that a speaker is speaking, a writer is writing, a painter is painting, a musician is performing a piece of music, etc."[2]

But beyond this *mise en abyme* (a French term describing an image within an image), the transition scene between the outer and inner works, which became the prologue of the 1916 version, contains statements about music, comedy, and drama of different degrees of explicitness that also draw the audience's attention to the mediality of the work. In fact, this scene as a whole can be taken as an introductory self-referential statement by exposing the backstage aspects of operatic production in a level of reality one step closer to real life than the opera that follows the intermission.

---

[1] Hofmannsthal wrote the play on which Strauss based *Elektra* independently. However, *Elektra* can still be considered a collaboration since the two did exchange letters about how to adapt the play into an operatic libretto, even if they seemed to have worked together in a stronger capacity in operas like *Ariadne auf Naxos*. See *The Correspondence between Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, trans. Hanns Hammelmann and Ewald Osers (London: William Collins Sons & Co., 1961), 2–22.

[2] Winfried Nöth, "Metareference from a Semiotic Perspective," in *Metareference across Media: Theory and Case Studies*, ed. Werner Wolf (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 89.

Because of this added level of self-reference, this discussion will focus on this linking scene, occasionally examining the other parts of the opera. The 1916 version of *Ariadne*, with this prologue sung instead of spoken, has almost completely overtaken the original version in performance, primarily for practical reasons. In the 1912 version, the first part of the work consists of Hofmannsthal's reworking of Molière's *comédie-ballet Le bourgeois gentilhomme* with incidental music by Strauss rather than by Lully. The opera, in a slightly different form than the better-known second part of the 1916 version, follows the play. The 1912 premiere owed its failure largely to its length. The entire evening lasted almost five hours between play (over two hours), the King of Würtemburg's fifty-minute long reception in the intermission, and finally the eighty-five minute opera.[3] By the time the audience saw the opera following the reception, much of their interest had waned. Following this failure, Strauss and Hofmannsthal decided to write a new version replacing the play with a through-composed, sung prologue eliminating practically all of Molière's original scenario, instead focusing on the command that the comic and serious operas planned for the evening's entertainment must be performed together. Companies now tend not to revive the original because of the difficulty and cost of collaborating with a spoken drama company, and the 1916 *Ariadne* remains the most well known version.[4]

In this version, the scenario begins backstage at the house of the richest man in Vienna. Two casts are preparing for their shows: an *opera seria* about the Ariadne legend

---

[3] Michael Kennedy, *Richard Strauss: Man, Musician, Enigma* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 181–82.

[4] There are two other derivative works worth noting for the sake of clarity: a 1917 reworking of Hofmannsthal's adaptation of the Molière, re-using Strauss's original incidental music and adding a Turkish ceremony in place of the opera, and a 1920 orchestral suite based on the original incidental music. The latter work enjoys greater success than the former.

followed by an improvised *commedia dell'arte* entertainment. The Music Master, whose pupil, the Composer, composed the *opera seria*, informs the Major-domo that the Composer will not want his serious piece to be followed by the comic entertainment. The composer meets Zerbinetta, the leading comic lady, who clashes with the Prima Donna, who is to sing the role of Ariadne. The Major-domo comes back to announce that because of time constraints, the serious and comic entertainments must now be performed simultaneously, causing panic and heartache for the Composer, who eventually decides to make the necessary cuts to his opera so that it will still be performed, even with the insertion of the comic players. When Zerbinetta learns the plot of the *opera seria*, she claims that instead of longing for death after having been abandoned by Theseus, Ariadne actually longs for a new lover. Zerbinetta views all women as inconstant and fickle, no matter what they say about themselves. Zerbinetta tells her comrades that they will play comic actors stranded on the same island as Ariadne by chance. The prologue ends with the Composer, now excited at the prospect of his opera's performance, praising music as supreme among the arts.

The opera proper begins with three nymphs outside of Ariadne's cave sympathizing with her fate. The comic players arrive and try unsuccessfully to brighten her spirits. Zerbinetta decides to speak with her woman-to-woman, telling Ariadne about all of her own lovers and how women want new lovers instead of just one forever. Ariadne reenters her cave. The nymphs return with the news of an approaching ship. The god Bacchus arrives for Ariadne, who believes him to be death at first, and then thinks he is Theseus come to retrieve her. After a love duet, Ariadne leaves with Bacchus while Zerbinetta sings, "When the new god approaches, we leave without a word," noting her

interpretation that Ariadne simply moves from one lover to another like any other woman.[5]

The plot of the original 1912 version differs only slightly from this more familiar version. The main change is the addition of Hofmannsthal's adaptation of Moliere's play *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* before the text at which the later revision begins. In this play, Monsieur Jourdain desires to rise above his middle-class social status. He hosts a party at which several entertainments are to be performed, and the audience sees Jourdain interacting with both his servants (including musicians and dancers) and his guests. The famous linking scene, which became the sung prologue in the 1916 revision, follows, and the opera proper follows, which has no significant differences in plot for our discussion (although there are some musical changes to the opera proper in the 1916 version).

Ariadne auf Naxos takes an important place in this discussion of self-reference because Strauss and Hofmannsthal themselves conceived of it as a self-referential work, acknowledging this aspect of their work in their correspondence (unlike, for instance, Strauss's writings about *Intermezzo*—see Chapter 2). The idea of "self-persiflage" in the linking scene excited Strauss, and he told Hofmannsthal to "drop in a few malicious remarks about the 'composer'" and to transform that character and the Dancing Master into more current, satirical figures.[6] The idea of self-mockery held his attention: ten months later he again excitedly encouraged Hofmannsthal to "let off rockets of malice

---

[5] Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1916 version), libretto, trans. Peggie Cochrane, in liner notes of *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Giusseppe Sinopoli, conductor (Deutsche Grammophon 289 471 323-2, CD, 2001), 92.

[6] Strauss to Hofmannsthal, Garmisch, July 24, 1911, in *The Correspondence between Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, ed. Franz and Alice Strauss, trans. Hanns Hammelmann and Ewald Osers (London: Collins, 1961), 100.

and satire and every kind of self-persiflage."[7] By reminding the audience of its creators in this way, the parodying of a work's authors reminds the audience of the piece's fictiveness, of its artificiality. Hofmannsthal went further, saying that the linking scene ought "to make fun of our own work, especially the present one."[8] *Ariadne*'s authors meant for their work to not only mock themselves, but also to mock *itself*.

Fidelity in Ariadne

　　Early in the letters between Strauss and Hofmannsthal concerning *Ariadne*, Hofmannsthal singled out what he named "fidelity" as an important theme of the work. Indeed, this theme may have been one of the primary attractions for Hofmannsthal to the *Ariadne* legend, since his earlier play *Elektra* dealt with similar issues. "What it [*Ariadne auf Naxos*] is about is one of the straightforward and stupendous problems of life: fidelity…. It is the fundamental theme of *Elektra*, the voice of Electra [*sic*] opposed to the voice of Chrysothemis…." Hofmannsthal explained.[9] Indeed, in the opera within an opera, Zerbinetta and Ariadne reveal their own opposing viewpoints on fidelity. Ariadne, abandoned on the island of Naxos by Theseus, awaits death, the only relief for her broken heart. As the 1916 *Ariadne* Composer explains, "she is one of those women who belong to one man only in their life and after that to no one else."[10] But Zerbinetta, coquettish, fickle, and earthy, recites a substantial list of lovers. The command that the comic and serious entertainments be performed together forces these two pictures of fidelity into

---

[7] Strauss to Hofmannsthal, Garmisch, April 19, 1912, in *Correspondence*, 123.

[8] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Rodaun, June 14, 1912, in *Correspondence*, 131.

[9] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Aussee, Obertressen, mid-July 1911, in *Correspondence*, 94.

[10] Hoffmannsthal, *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1916 version), libretto, trans. Cochrane, 56.

sharp contrast. But the last-minute requirement to perform the two entertainments simultaneously highlights another important type of fidelity in *Ariadne auf Naxos*: the performative issue of fidelity to text.[11] In other words, what licenses can performers make when mounting their own performances of another's works? How faithful must one be to the "text" of a work, and what concessions (if any) must the work's creators make in order to have their piece performed at all?

Both Hofmannsthal and Strauss valued this type of fidelity in regards to their own works. Regarding *Ariadne* itself, Hofmannsthal wrote that "the alteration of any syllable would be painful to me" while remembering small changes in his wording that had crept into the score of *Der Rosenkavalier* during the copying process, which "seriously disrupt the impression of dialect and diction, almost exactly as you [Strauss] might feel if in the course of copying your score individual notes were altered here and there."[12] Strauss felt particular animosity to unauthorized cuts in his operas. When Ernst von Schuch began taking cuts in *Der Rosenkavalier* at liberty, Strauss raged:

> I declare solemnly that the form in which you have performed *Rosenkavalier* for the last twenty-two times is a mutilation and bungled, and my objection to this is so strong that I tell you that if you do not put the matter right as I wish, then I will take legal action to ensure that you do.[13]

The panic-inducing command to the performers to combine the two works exists in both the 1912 and 1916 versions of *Ariadne*. This creates concern for textual correctness in both versions, so I will look at them both while noting that the 1916 version places a stronger emphasis on the moment of chaos caused by the ordered mixing

---

[11] Brian Soucek, "Giovanni auf Naxos," in *The Don Giovanni Moment: Essays on the Legacy of an Opera*, ed. Lydia Goehr and Daniel Herwitz (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 193–210.

[12] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Aussee, July 23, 1911, in *Correspondence*, 97.

[13] Michael Kennedy, *Richard Strauss*, Master Musicians Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 50.

of dramatic genres. In the prologue to this version (which was merely a spoken linking scene in the original), the Major-domo announces backstage that the tragedy *Ariadne auf Naxos* is to be performed simultaneously with the comedy *The Inconstant Zerbinetta*. This news causes great commotion backstage as the performers prepare to combine their works. The comic performers, those associated with the *Zerbinetta* performance, take the news in stride, accustomed as they are to improvisation (these characters are taken directly from the *commedia dell'arte* tradition). However, this news scandalizes all of the personnel involved in the *Ariadne* performance. The Prima Donna, who is to perform the role of *Ariadne*, insists that she must speak with the Count; the tenor, playing the role of Bacchus, asks if their patron is mad.

This news causes the most distress, however, to the Composer, whose concern for his opera initially prompts him to try to leave without his fee and then prompts suicidal thoughts in a comical overreaction: "I have nothing in common with this world. Why live in it?"[14] The composer here shows an anachronistic concern for the Romantic idea of "the work," initially refusing to make the necessary cuts to his beloved opera, wanting to remain faithful to his original vision of the work. The libretto does not specifically identify the temporal setting of *Ariadne*, but *Le bourgeoise gentilhomme*, the Molière play that Hofmannsthal adapted as the first part of the 1912 version of *Ariadne*, takes place in the late seventeenth century, and productions of *Ariadne* typically take that time period as a point of departure. Moreover, the presence of a troupe of *commedia dell'arte* players certainly suggests a pre-Romantic setting. Even as late as Mozart's time, opera and other musical works were treated much more flexibly than our modern sensibilities

---

[14] Hoffmannsthal, *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1916 version), trans. Cochrane, 53.

would permit, as Mozart's different versions of *Don Giovanni* attest. Seventeenth-century artists showed an even greater indifference toward the "original" form of a work than Mozart and his contemporaries, substituting, recycling, and deleting music in subsequent productions of the same opera.[15] So the Composer's horror at having to not only combine his work with another of a completely different genre but also of having to make substantial cuts to his opera shows a twentieth century "Urtext" view of the text of a musical work. This concern for textual fidelity certainly does not represent seventeenth-century values, but it plays an important role in the opera nonetheless, and, particularly in this 1916 version, creates a self-awareness on the part of the opera itself.

As often occurs in discussions of self-referentiality, the limits of language here force us to imbue upon *Ariadne auf Naxos* a sort of brain, soul, or volition of its own. The opera itself seems to ponder and declare its mediality. The Composer's concern highlights the fact that what we are about to see will be an altered, cut form of his original intentions sullied by a comic interpolation, and moreover highlights the fact that what we are about to see (the "opera" part of *Ariadne auf Naxos*) is a work of fiction. But since "it is in the recipient [the audience] that the essence of metareference, the eliciting of a medium awareness, takes place," this concern creates a further level of self-reference; the audience understands what the Composer does not, namely that he is a fictional character himself.[16]

Audience members cannot help but note that they are witnessing a fictional character fret over the fate of his fictional characters; by drawing attention to the

[15] Pierpaolo Polzonetti, "Opera as Process," in *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-century Opera*, ed. Anthony R. DelDonna and Pierpaolo Polzonetti (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3–23.

[16] Wolf, "Metafiction and Metamusic," 307.

fictiveness and medium of the opera he has composed, the Composer highlights his *own* mediality, and reminds the audience of his own status as an artifact, something created by man. The audience's awareness of the Composer's true artificial nature disrupts the normal suspension of disbelief that audiences tacitly assume while watching a play, opera, or movie. The status of the Composer as a pants role, an extremely artificial practice in opera, sharpens this resumption of disbelief. Even audience members unfamiliar with the tradition of cross dressing in opera will have noticed the masculine pronouns used for this female voice, which of course the singer will not attempt to masculinize, as the higher voice type is the whole point of *travesti* in opera; no matter how convincing the costume and gestures, everyone in the audience will realize that a woman is playing a man because of her voice. The Composer's anxiety over fidelity to his work therefore thrusts the audience, having accepted this peculiarity of operatic tradition, back into the real world, aware of their disbelief, the artificiality of the work they are attending, and the music taking the place of natural spoken dialogue.

The theme of fidelity to the text prompting a self-referential medial awareness in the audience is particularly appropriate for *Ariadne auf Naxos*, a work whose genesis, over and over again, brings up the same questions of interpretive fidelity that the opera asks of itself and of opera, music, and theater in general. Hofmannsthal first mentions *Ariadne auf Naxos* to Strauss in parenthetical comment in a 1911 letter:

> If we were to work together once more on something (and by this I mean something important, not the thirty minute opera for small chamber orchestra which is as good as complete in my head; it is called *Ariadne auf Naxos* and is made up of a combination of heroic mythological figures in 18th-century costume with hooped skirts and ostrich feathers and, interwoven in it, characters from the commedia dell'arte; harlequins and scaramouches representing the buffo element which is throughout interwoven with the heroic)….[17]

---

[17] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Rodaun, March 3, 1911, in *Correspondence*, 75–76.

So from the beginning, Hofmannsthal conceived of the opera portion of *Ariadne* (which is the only part mentioned in this letter) as mixing elements from different traditions, and he would later refer to this dramatic integration as "the intermingling with the other."[18] The mere insertion of *commedia dell'arte* characters, who in real life improvised around a given scenario rather than restricting themselves to memorized lines as they do in *Ariadne*, already foregrounds the issue of what we might call "authenticity," which is different from, but related to, the question of textual and interpretive fidelity. *Commedia dell'arte* characters performing exclusively memorized lines instead of improvising them raises issues of performance practice even though the actors who play the *commedia dell'arte* characters *act* as though they are improvising. This is, of course, not to say that the actors playing Zerbinetta and her comrades can or should be accused of inauthenticity by those who concern themselves with performance practice, nor that Hofmannsthal should. Rather, this "inauthentic" use of these characters, used in a capacity other than their original context, merely shows the first, most shallow instance of reworking and interpreting that pervades the entire genesis of *Ariadne auf Naxos*.

Indeed, examining the creation of *Ariadne auf Naxos* reveals that the opera arose out of readings of readings of readings, which, besides simulating the different "levels" that occur in the analysis of self-referentiality (object level, meta level, meta-meta level, etc.), foreground the issues of interpretive and textual fidelity that the opera concerns itself with in the composer's anxiety. First, Hofmannsthal based the "good as complete" original idea for *Ariadne auf Naxos* on a juxtaposition of the entire tradition of *commedia dell'arte* and the ancient Greek legend of Ariadne being abandoned on Naxos by

[18] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Rodaun, May 25, 1911, in *Correspondence*, 84.

Theseus, which appears in several ancient texts by Hesiod, Ovid, Homer, and Catullus. Two months after first mentioning the new thirty-minute chamber opera to Strauss, Hofmannsthal introduced a new idea about the project that gave the first version its final form: the insertion of *Ariadne* into a new adaptation of Molière's *Le bourgeoise gentilhomme*.

This adaptation further emphasizes *Ariadne auf Naxos* as a work based on readings of other works. Not only does the first part of the 1912 *Ariadne auf Naxos* come from Hofmannsthal condensing and adapting Molière's work, but Hofmannsthal worked from a mid-eighteenth-century translation of *Le bourgeoise gentilhomme* into German by Bierling. In the letter to Strauss initially explaining this amalgamation, Hofmannsthal included a projected playbill for the work as he envisioned it. The first part of the evening, the Molière adaptation, Hofmannsthal called "*Der Bürger als Edelmann*: A Comedy with Dances by Molière, arranged by Hugo von Hofmannsthal from the old translation of Bierling"; this translation played a big enough role in Hofmannsthal's adaptation that the latter author felt it necessary to give Bierling credit in his proposed playbill (although this credit did not appear in the actual playbill).[19] Furthermore, Hofmannsthal painstakingly inserted a spoken linking scene that eventually became the sung prologue in the 1916 version. This scene, which Hofmannsthal called a "hellish chess-problem," explains the mixing of genres in the opera proper as a last-minute command from the performers' patron in order to end the entertainment in time for a

---

[19] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Rodaun, May 15, 1911, in *Correspondence*, 79. The actual playbill is reprinted in Karen Forsyth, *"Ariadne auf Naxos" by Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss: Its Genesis and Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 280–81.

firework show.[20] So the 1912 version of *Ariadne auf Naxos* consists of an adaptation of a translation of a two-hundred-year-old play followed by a retelling of an ancient myth, which exists in several versions, interspersed with an entirely different plot derived from a defunct tradition of partially improvised comedy.

But this labyrinthine composite of one author reading several other works and traditions describes only *Ariadne*'s libretto. Strauss's music complicates this matter for two reasons. First, Strauss quotes himself and others in the 1912 version, including a *Das Rheingold* quotation during the first course (Rhine salmon) of the meal that Jourdain serves his guests. Strauss also quotes Verdi's "La donna è mobile" and his own morning bird music from the opening of *Der Rosenkavalier* during the third course (larks and thrushes). Moreover, much of the music Strauss composed for the first part of the 1912 *Ariadne* replaces music that Lully had composed for the premiere of *Le bourgeoise gentilhomme*, adding a further level of reading to the play.

Furthermore, Strauss's music exhibits an even more pervasive layer of reading that some previous studies of the Strauss-Hofmannsthal collaborations have ignored: Strauss's reading of Hofmannsthal. That this type of reading happens in almost all vocal and program music—the possible exceptions being wordless, non-programmatic music for voices (such as vocalizes) and vocal music composed to a text by the composer (such as many of Wagner's operas)—may explain why this aspect of reading does not initially appear significant. Operas prove especially prone to this type of reading, since the libretto almost always comes first, but the unusual working relationship between Strauss and Hofmannsthal makes this an important consideration here.

---

[20] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Rodaun, April 19, 1912, in *Correspondence*, 125.

Strauss's Hofmannsthal operas represent more balanced collaborations than operas in which a composer sets a pre-written text. The Strauss-Hofmannsthal collaborations reveal mutual influence between the composer and librettist—Strauss influenced the plot and Hofmannsthal influenced the music. Additionally, Strauss and Hofmannsthal had a highly intense working relationship—no fewer than six operas, two ballets, and a cantata for male voices in three decades—in spite of major artistic differences. Their correspondence discloses contradiction in their approaches to theater. The composer wanted the public to fully understand and enjoy his works. After Hofmannsthal explained the meaning behind *Ariadne* to Strauss, who did not understand its symbolism, the composer replied: "If even I couldn't see it, just think of the audience and—the critics. The way you describe it it's excellent. But in the piece itself it doesn't emerge quite so clearly and plainly."[21]

Hofmannsthal's reply may betray some arrogant pride on the part of the poet. Instead of and even considering making some of his symbolism more explicit as Strauss suggested, he focused on Strauss's loneliness and nervousness (his wife was away for weeks and he had just stopped smoking) as the cause of his lack of comprehension, not even entertaining the idea that Strauss may have had a point. Then he explained that poetic understanding emerges "only gradually…from a very few people who are in close touch with the world of poetry, and it takes decades to spread."[22] Hofmannsthal, much like the Composer in his libretto, valued his ideas more than immediate understanding or success, but Strauss did not think that this poetic obscurity would create a viable opera.

---

[21] Strauss to Hofmannsthal, Garmisch, July 19, 1911, in *Correspondence*, 95–96.

[22] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Aussee, July 23, 1911, in *Correspondence*, 98.

This demonstrates not that one or the other of them was right, but that their general approach to opera differed; they viewed the art form in fundamentally different ways. More to the point for this discussion, this shows that the creation of *Ariadne auf Naxos* in particular accentuated these differences. In fact, of all of their collaborations, it is *Ariadne* that prompted Michael Kennedy to observe, "Probably only in *Elektra*, *Arabella*, and Act I of *Der Rosenkavalier* were Strauss and Hofmannsthal composing the same opera."[23]

Hofmannsthal and Strauss recognized these differences, even if their generally polite letters only occasionally reveal this openly. The fact that Hofmannsthal never sent the most revealing and direct letter regarding his dissatisfaction does not make his sentiments therein any less genuine. In fact, if Hofmannsthal realized *during* his writing that it might be too harsh to send, as he certainly may have, this letter could represent the purest, most uncensored form of his feelings available to us. In any case, its not being sent does nothing to diminish its truth or value. The letter, written while Strauss was working on *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, survives and indicates that Hofmannsthal often felt that Strauss had misinterpreted his text:

> At that time [while they were writing *Der Rosenkavalier*] you wholly failed at certain points to enter into my ideas and treated quite a few things in the wrong style altogether—a fact that grieved me much at the time but which I always kept to myself. (For it is not only over Zerbinetta that we have been at cross purposes, but on many other occasions, and I am afraid there are some again even in the new opera; I am referring to the figure of the Nurse....)[24]

Later in the letter, after giving three examples of Strauss's offenses in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Hofmannsthal addressed Strauss's latest ideas for an operatic collaboration, "either an entirely modern, absolutely realistic domestic and character

---

[23] Kennedy, *Richard Strauss*, Master Musicians Series, 153.

[24] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Rodaun, June 11, 1916, (unsent) in *Correspondence*, 251.

comedy…or some amusing piece of love and intrigue."[25] Hofmannsthal had already

admitted to Strauss that these ideas made him laugh (see the chapter on *Intermezzo*), but

here, anxious not only because of Strauss's appalling (to him) ideas but also by events in

the War, Hofmannsthal explains that he feels that he does not have the talent to compose

a libretto on this subject matter. Furthermore, he wrote to Strauss, "…quite likely, you for

your part would lack the determination to carry through in a consistent and clear-cut

style" and cites the incidental music for *Le Bourgeoise Gentilhomme* as Strauss's one

thoroughly consistent and stylistically clear-cut work.[26]

Besides revealing that Hofmannsthal felt that Strauss's work almost always

lacked a stylistic continuity that he presumably saw in his own work, this comment

reveals, by omission, Hofmannsthal's true feelings about the rest of the *Ariadne* music.

By specifically citing the music for *Le bourgeoise gentilhomme*, written for the 1912

version of *Ariadne auf Naxos*, as Strauss's only consistent work, Hofmannsthal implies

that the other music written for *Ariadne*—which at the time of writing included the music

for the opera proper as well as for the 1916 prologue (having premiered the previous

month)—did not conform to his own ideas of what the work should have been. And even

though Hofmannsthal names specific offenses only from *Der Rosenkavalier*, the naming

of only one section of *Ariadne* as satisfactory implies a pointed aversion to music in close

relation to it (i.e., the rest of Strauss's *Ariadne* music). Hofmannsthal viewed *Ariadne auf

Naxos*, even in its original version, as "unfaithful" to itself because of Strauss's musical

emphasis on peripheral characters in the opera proper.

---

[25] Strauss to Hofmannsthal, Garmisch, May 25, 1916, in *Correspondence*, 248.

[26] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Rodaun, June 11, 1916, (unsent) in *Correspondence*, 252.

To this end, earlier letters detail the "cross purposes" over the character of Zerbinetta, which likely contributed the most to Hofmannsthal's feeling of being misinterpreted in the other music for *Ariadne*. Zerbinetta captured Strauss's imagination in a way that Ariadne never could, but Hofmannsthal viewed Ariadne as the focal point of his libretto. In his letter explaining *Ariadne*'s meaning to Strauss, he always mentions Zerbinetta and her companions in opposition to the tragic characters, never on their own; for Hofmannsthal, the comic characters exist primarily for irony and contrast.[27] When Strauss had read the first sketches of the Molière adaptation and the *Ariadne* scenario in 1911, he wrote to Hofmannsthal detailing what kind of set numbers he wanted, already showing a keen eagerness to write music for Zerbinetta. In his list of voice types for the different characters, he classifies Zerbinetta as a "star role" for "high coloratura soprano," suggesting top-notch singers such as Selma Kurz, Frieda Hempel, or Luisa Tetrazzini to premiere the role, all of whom were enjoying international careers at this time.[28] Among the descriptions of his requested set numbers, Strauss describes Zerbinetta's aria in the most detail:

> Great coloratura aria and *andante*, then rondo, theme with variations and all coloratura tricks (if possible with flute *obbligato*) for Zerbinetta, when she speaks of her unfaithful lover (*andante*) and then tries to console Ariadne: rondo with variations (two or three). A *pièce de résistance*.[29]

In his response to Strauss, Hofmannsthal did indeed write, "That you intended to place Zerbinetta so distinctly in the musical limelight surprised me at first, but finally

---

[27] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Aussee, mid-July 1911, in *Correspondence*, 93–95.

[28] Strauss to Hofmannsthal, Garmisch, May 22, 1911, in *Correspondence*, 82.

[29] Ibid.

quite convinced me."[30] However, only three days later, albeit while still agreeing to the

grand coloratura scene for Zerbinetta, Hofmannsthal spends most of a new letter trying to

focus Strauss's attention on what he viewed as the central subject of the opera:

> During the past few days…I have got through the hardest and most attractive part
> of the work; namely, to settle the psychological motives of the action…. The
> essence lies in this tracery of ideas, and all the rest…is mere trimming…. Now
> this essence of the relationship between Ariadne and Bacchus stands before my
> mind's eye so finely graded, so delicately animated, psychologically so
> convincing and at the same time so lyrical, that my execution would have to be
> wretched indeed if in the end it failed to arouse your interest as much as the lyrics
> of your songs, or the scenes between the Marschallin and Octavian…. That is how
> I feel about *Ariadne*—and about the trimmings, Zerbinetta, and so forth, we are in
> any case already entirely *d'accord*. But if my libretto, when you have it, does not
> attract you in this way, then by all means leave it alone; there will be no hard
> feelings. What matters is the central idea of the piece and though two men like us
> who know their job should not despise the flourishes, they can never be a
> substitute for the main thing.[31]

Hofmannsthal tellingly refers to Zerbinetta as "the trimmings," and while he

insists that he and his composer are in accord, his last sentence seems to betray

Hofmannsthal's worries that Strauss would be distracted by the earthy, comic characters.

It is almost as if Hofmannsthal is trying to keep Strauss on track and to make sure that

Zerbinetta does not become "a substitute for the main thing."[32] More significantly,

Hofmannsthal insists that if the libretto does not "attract [him] in this way," he should not

bother to compose it. The important point for Hofmannsthal is "the central idea," and if

Strauss becomes too obsessed with "the trimmings," he would prefer for Strauss to leave

---

[30] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Rodaun, May 25, 1911, in *Correspondence*, 83.

[31] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, May 28, 1911, in *Correspondence*, 86.

[32] Hofmannsthal exhibited this somewhat condescending attitude in other letters as well, e.g., p. 95
"I need not expound further to an artists such as you," referring to the psychological implications of
Ariadne's transformation, but he *did* just expound it. See Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Aussee, mid-July 1911,
in *Correspondence*, 95.

his libretto alone. One is reminded of the Composer, having been told to adapt his opera

for the evening: "Burn it rather!"[33]

Ironically, even the music written to the text that gives rise to this particular

instance of self-reference, dealing with textual and interpretive fidelity, contributes to the

layer of misreading added by Strauss's music. That is, the music of the Composer in the

1916 prologue represents another area in which Strauss's music creates incongruity with

Hofmannsthal's vision for the work. True, in his unsent letter Hofmannsthal would later

imply that Strauss's music for the prologue as a whole lacked fidelity to the librettist's

vision, but more specifically, Strauss and Hofmannsthal disagreed on the Composer's

vocal Fach. Strauss, whose female characters were his most convincing throughout his

career and who at any rate hated the tenor voice, wanted to create another Octavian in the

role of the composer. Hofmannsthal was horrified:

> I fear your opportunism in theatrical matters has in this case thoroughly led you
> up the garden path. In the first place the idea of giving the part of the young
> Composer to a female performer goes altogether against the grain. To prettify this
> particular character, which is to have an aura of "spirituality" and "greatness"
> about it, and so to turn him into a travesty of himself which inevitably smack a
> little of operetta, this strikes me as, forgive my plain speaking, odious. I can
> unfortunately only imagine that our conception of this character differs once again
> profoundly, as it did over Zerbinetta![34]

Later in the same letter, Hofmannsthal called the idea of the composer being a trouser

role "irrational."[35] Strauss, somewhat uncharacteristically, refused to yield in this matter

to his occasionally bossy collaborator, and the role in the 1916 version (having been a

spoken role in the 1912 *Ariadne*) became one of the most famous pants roles in opera.

---

[33] Hoffmannsthal, *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1916 version), trans. Cochrane, 54.

[34] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Rodaun, April 13, 1916, in *Correspondence*, 241–42.

[35] Ibid.

Because of this artistic discrepancy between librettist and composer, the Composer himself becomes subject to the concerns of fidelity that he agonizes over regarding his opera. Wolf points out that "it is in the recipient [the audience] that the essence of metareference, the eliciting of a medium awareness, takes place."[36] Anyone examining self-reference must always remember this; the audience must become a willing participant for any type of medial reflection or awareness to occur. For self-referential meaning to be created, an audience member must have some familiarity with *Ariadne*'s complex compositional history. Only then can the Composer's anxieties over his work (the inner opera of *Ariadne*) apply to *Ariadne* as a whole, including the Composer himself.

Most of Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* music contributes to the layers of interpreting and misinterpreting inherent in the work. Regardless of whether or not musical misinterpretation of a librettist's intentions by a composer proves significant in most vocal music, Hofmannsthal's feelings, shown in his sent and unsent letters, reveals that in this case, it does. Strauss's music misinterprets Hofmannsthal's libretto, which itself combines translations and conglomerations of other works and traditions.

The issue of fidelity becomes even more relevant when considering two additional derivative works that followed the 1916 *Ariadne auf Naxos*. In an effort to salvage Strauss's great incidental music for Hofmannsthal's adaptation of the Molière, the two artists created another version of *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, which replaced the *Ariadne* opera with a Turkish ceremony similar to the original *comédie-ballet*. In this 1917 version, called simply *Der Bürger als Edelmann*, Strauss replaced some of his

---

[36] Werner Wolf, "Metafiction and Metamusic," in *Self-Reference in the Media*, ed. Winfried Nöth and Nina Bishara (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2007), 307.

music with the original music by Lully. However, this also proved unsuccessful, and in 1920, Strauss premiered an orchestral suite arranged from the music from this 1917 version. It is in this last form that one is most likely to hear any of the incidental music Strauss had composed for this collaboration beginning in 1911. These two derivative works and the two versions of the opera exist as a part of a muddled complex of revisions. None of the pieces presents a complete picture of *Ariadne* or *Die Bürger als Edelmann*, and an informed opera-goer at a performance of either the 1912 or 1916 *Ariadne* may be reminded of this level of textual incompleteness as the Composer tries to make the necessary cuts to his opera while his singers voice their opinions about what should be cut, much as Strauss and Hofmannsthal would have to adapt their work. Although performance tradition has dictated a "standard" version of the piece (the 1916 version), this version will always be haunted by the unseen parts of the work, and even if a production mixes elements from more than one of these works, it will always be a victim of this incompleteness, presenting itself as an intact work while simultaneously drawing attention to its limited scope in the Composer's anxiety. All of these works and any possible pastiches of them are abridgements in that none of them present the entirety of this plexus of related works; there is always something missing.

This level of self-reference, concerning textual incompleteness, arose accidentally. Hofmannsthal and Strauss never intended to write so many versions of this "dramatic trifle" as the librettist called it.[37] But because of the practical necessity of revision to salvage their work for posterity (not to mention for profits), they submitted their work to the same issues of fidelity that the opera addresses in the prologue. Through all of this heavy adaptation, translation, and interpreting outlined in this section, *Ariadne*

---

[37] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Rodaun, May 25, 1911, in *Correspondence*, 84.

auf Naxos itself, all of its derivative works, and all of the works that contributed to its many forms become subject to the same questions of authenticity and textual fidelity that the Composer posits in his anxiety to preserve his work. No one version of *Ariadne* can be called complete or authentic.

Manipulation of the Fourth Wall: 1912 vs. 1916

The largest difference between the two versions of *Ariadne auf Naxos* lies in the treatment of the "outer" works; in the first version, Hofmannsthal's reworking of Molière's play leads to the opera proper via an invented transition scene. The 1916 revision, on the other hand, drops the Molière portion entirely, expanding the transition scene and adding music to it. The transition scene, having previously been entirely spoken, now becomes an opera unto itself, with most of the lines sung (a notable exception being the Major-domo, an entirely spoken role in both versions). This primary difference would suffice if one had to briefly summarize the difference between the two versions. After all, Hofmannsthal and Strauss revised the work because they wanted to separate the play and the opera, seeing the impracticality of this combination for most theaters (and audiences). But the inner work, the opera proper, underwent changes in this process as well.

In the 1912 *Ariadne*, Monsieur Jourdain, the "bourgeois gentleman" title character of Molière's work, views the opera proper along with his guests, occasionally commenting. An audience watching this version of *Ariadne auf Naxos* watches Jourdain watching the opera, bringing the *mise en abyme* effect of an opera within a play even more sharply into focus than in the revision. The French term *mise en abyme* describes an

30

image within an image. While the term can even describe the relationship between the inner and outer works of the 1916 version, the 1912 version presents both layers simultaneously. The audience cannot forget about the ontological level separating them from the opera proper if that level, Monsieur Jourdain's world, stays within their sight. Forgoing the use of novel staging devices (such as portraying Jourdain's commentary on projection screens in view of the audience and hiding him from view when he is not talking), any staging of this version has to place a smaller stage on the main stage and show both worlds simultaneously. This scenario creates two "fourth walls."

In the 1916 version, on the other hand, Hofmannsthal removed the character of Jourdain completely, with the Major-domo not even mentioning the name of the wealthy patron at whose house the opera is set, rather calling him simply "the richest man in Vienna."[38] Jourdain's interruptions therefore do not carry over into the revision, and the audience views the opera proper from the same position as Jourdain does in the 1912 version: directly in front of the stage, with no intermediate plane of existence. Strauss, who for practical reasons did not want the opera proper played too far upstage, had asked Hofmannsthal if it would be possible to make the *Ariadne* stage identical to the actual theater stage even before the premiere of the 1912 version.[39] Jourdain's commentary prevents this from happening in a production of the 1912 *Ariadne*, but this comment shows that Strauss's practical concerns have self-referential implications for the opera. In many productions of the 1916 *Ariadne auf Naxos*, "the *Ariadne* stage and the theatre

---

[38] Hoffmannsthal, *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1916 version), trans. Cochrane, 37.

[39] Strauss to Hofmannsthal, Garmisch, June 20, 1912, in *Correspondence*, 132.

stage proper are…identical" as Strauss had originally requested for the earlier version.[40]

In this sense, the diegetic realm of "the richest man in Vienna" expands beyond the stage

to envelop the audience.[41] The fourth wall does not break: it moves.

In the beginning of the collaboration on *Ariadne*, Strauss brings up another

consideration dealing with the division of diegetic space and sound by noting "Orchestra

on the stage impossible: for this kind of chamber-music piece I need first-class

people…and they wouldn't play-act."[42] Strauss—and probably Hofmannsthal if this letter

was in response to a (now lost) request from the composer—began considering issues

related to what we now call diegetic music, as applied to opera as an extension from film

music, very early in the process of writing. The desire to put the orchestra on stage stems

from the *mise en abyme* effect of the inner and outer works; the orchestra and conductor

exist in Monsieur Jourdain's diegetic realm, but not Ariadne's and Zerbinetta's. Jourdain

hears the orchestra and the singing even though the characters in the opera proper are

deaf to it in the same way Jourdain does not realize that the audience watches him. Even

in the 1916 version, lacking Jourdain's commentary, the orchestra on stage would have

created the same simultaneous display of the two levels of existence as does Jourdain's

---

[40] Strauss to Hofmannsthal, Garmisch, June 20, 1912, in *Correspondence*, 132.

[41] Some scholars object to the terms "diegetic" and "non-diegetic" to describe opera. Strictly speaking, the terms more accurately describe *film music* that is and is not heard as music by the characters, respectively, since Plato's *Republic* does not use the term for dramatic (mimetic) works. Carolyn Abbate uses the terms *phenomenal music* and *noumenal music* in place of *diegetic* and *non-diegetic*. For instance, in discussing the "Bell Song" from *Lakmé*, Abbate writes, "Implicit in all that has been said, of course, is the realization that the Bell song is a scene of performance on two levels: a narrative performance and a musical performance that the onstage audience can hear as music. The scene involves 'phenomenal' performance, which might be loosely defined as a musical or vocal performance that declares itself openly, singing that is heard by its singer, the auditors on stage, and understood as 'music that they (too) hear' by us, the theater audience." However, I will use "diegetic" to apply to opera for its familiarity and since it has become common parlance even in discussions of dramatic works. See Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 5, 119.

[42] Strauss to Hofmannsthal, Garmisch, May 22, 1911, in *Correspondence*, 82.

presence in the original version. But Strauss did *not* want an onstage orchestra for practical reasons. In this case, the orchestra still plays only diegetic music during the inner opera, even though, in the 1916 revision, the characters who are cognizant of the music are invisible. The audience becomes enveloped in the intermediary level and hears the music to which Ariadne and Zerbinetta are deaf.

That Jourdain's extra-opera commentary does not appear in the revised *Ariadne* only detracts from the humorous potential of the opera within an opera scenario. Jourdain's comments in the 1912 version provide a few opportunities for Strauss's desired self-persiflage. During Ariadne's opening monologue, "Wo war ich? Tot?," Jourdain whispers to Dorantes, sitting beside him, "It's a little monotonous, what she's singing, don't you think?"[43] Later in the same scene he describes Ariadne as follows: "She does nothing but complain. It's making people sad."[44] Tiring of the tragedy, he soon wishes out loud that it would get to the "entertaining part," the comedians' entrance.[45] Strauss and Hofmannsthal are able to make fun of the seriousness of their art, alluding to serious opera's reputation as a pretentious art form.

Zerbinetta and Descending Ontological Metalepsis

Zerbinetta, the only major character who enters the space of the opera proper as herself, presents special opportunities for meta-analysis. Hofmannsthal displays the special permission he gives to Zerbinetta to cross the boundary between diegetic realms

---

[43] "Es ist ein wenig eintönig, was sie singt, finden Sie nicht?" Translation mine.

[44] "Sie tut nichts als sich beklagen. Man wird traurig davon." Translation mine.

[45] "Ich wollte, es käme bald was Kurzweiligeres." "I wish it would get to the entertaining part soon." Translation mine.

in the naming of his characters: Zerbinetta retains her name when she walks out from backstage onto the Island of Naxos. Other singers in the opera as a whole perform in both the inner world, but their identities change when they cross into a new realm. For instance, the Prima Donna becomes Ariadne and the Tenor becomes Bacchus; these singers don another layer of pretense when they enter the realm of Naxos. [46]

Zerbinetta's dual citizenship allows for her categorization as a meteleptical character. Metalepsis, "the transgression of the boundaries of the fictional world," can occur in many different capacities.[47] Authors and narrators can trespass the boundaries into the worlds they create or describe and characters can enter or influence the level that created them, the level of their narrator or author. Ascending metalepsis describes an entity moving into a narrative level closer to reality.[48] When Zerbinetta trespasses into the myth world of Naxos, she performs descending metalepsis, retreating one degree further from reality while still retaining her outer work identity. We can further describe this metalepsis as ontological because Zerbinetta actually enters another realm instead of merely communicating with it (rhetorical metalepsis). Marie-Laure Ryan distinguishes ontological metalepsis as that in which a character physically enters another narrative level (such as Zerbinetta entering the world of Ariadne as herself), as opposed to

---

[46] In both versions of *Ariadne*, Zerbinetta's comical colleagues join her in this boundary crossing; in the 1912 version one of them, Scaramuccio, has a line in the outer realm and in the 1916 all four are mentioned by name in the stage directions. However, because these characters play such a minor role in comparison to Zerbinetta, I will focus here on her meteleptical journey.

[47] Karin Kukkonen, "Metalepsis in Popular Culture: An Introduction," in *Metalepsis in Popular Culture*, ed. Karin Kukkonen and Sonja Klimek (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 4.

[48] Ibid., 9.

rhetorical metalepsis, in which a character speaks to, acknowledges, or glances at another narrative level (such as any time a character makes an aside addressing the audience).[49]

Ryan affirms the impossibility of metalepsis occurring in an ontological level representing the physical laws of the real world (such as the outer backstage level in *Ariadne*):

> Since ontological transgressions cannot involve the ground level of reality, they cannot, by analogy, occur in a fictional world that claims to respect the logical and physical laws of the real world, unless they are confined to the private sphere of an insane individual who confuses the real and the imaginary, such as Don Quixote.[50]

However, Zerbinetta represents a special (maybe even unique) case set up by the unusual requirement that both the serious and comic entertainments be performed simultaneously and by the theatrical medium in which she exists. A character in a novel certainly cannot plausibly jump into the world of a book she is reading, but the circumstances here differ. The inner work's status as an opera, a theatrical medium, allows for Zerbinetta to physically step into the lower ontological level, and in her loosely improvised comedies, play herself. *Ariadne auf Naxos* may indeed represent the only case in which a fictional character in a realistic world successfully trespasses as herself into a lower fictional realm.

We find evidence of Zerbinetta's boundary crossing beyond the mere retention of her name in her consistent personality. Zerbinetta portrays her flirtatiousness both in Vienna and on Naxos. In her star scene in the inner opera, "Grossmächtige Prinzessin," she famously lists her previous lovers, each of whom she left for the next. When Harlekin, Scaramuccio, Brighella, and Truffaldin all try to woo her simultaneously, she

---

[49] Marie-Laure Ryan, "Metaleptic Machines," *Semiotica* 150, no. 1 (2004): 441–44.

[50] Ibid., 444.

exclaims, "Men! Dear God, if you really wanted us to resist them, then why did you create them all so different?"[51] Moreover, she leads on all four of them before choosing Harlekin as her next lover.

Zerbinetta displays similar coquetry in the outer level of the opera. When she hears the scenario of the opera in which she will now be improvising, Zerbinetta interprets Ariadne as another woman like herself, simply moving on to the next lover. The Composer objects strongly, insisting that Ariadne mistakes Bacchus for death and that this misunderstanding alone causes her to go with him. "That's what she'd have you think!" replies Zerbinetta.[52] She then skillfully flirts with the Composer, feigning a desire for monogamy, all while wearing her negligee, clearly seducing him. We can be certain of her insincerity not only because of Hofmannsthal's direction "apparently quite sincere, with extreme coquetry," but also because she leaves suddenly and without regret just as the Composer seems most under her spell.[53]

So Zerbinetta retains her name and identity, her personality, when she descends from her level of reality to Ariadne's. Her meteleptical mobility not only highlights the artificiality of the inner play, but also serves to connect Ariadne's concerns of relational fidelity to the textual and interpretive interests of the Composer, thereby underlining the theme of textual fidelity in the work as a whole. Zerbinetta misinterprets (or is unfaithful to) the Composer's grandiose interpretation of Ariadne's surrender to Bacchus, both in her final comment, "When the new god approaches, we surrender, without a word" and in her initial theory about Ariadne in the prologue. Because she remains herself on Naxos,

---

[51] Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1916 version), trans. Cochrane, 75.

[52] Ibid., 57.

[53] Ibid., 59.

Zerbinetta's final commentary—juxtaposing, as Hofmannsthal wrote, "these two spiritual worlds…ironically brought together in the only way in which they can be brought together: in non-comprehension"—immediately recalls her similar misinterpretation in the outer realm (Vienna) along with the Composer's outer-world yearning for appreciation of his opera as he intended it rather than as the audience just saw it.[54]

It seems both ironic and appropriate that *Ariadne auf Naxos*, a work troubled by conflicting versions of itself and thought of as a "dramatic trifle," deals so heavily with the theme of fidelity in two senses of the word; furthermore, one can argue that self-referential statements and gestures within the opera reinforce the link between the two types of fidelity in question. As Brian Soucek summarizes, "To [the Composer], the suffering of Ariadne, a victim of infidelity, is no different than that of *Ariadne*, a piece which is similarly victimized in its performance."[55] An informed audience member could further extrapolate Ariadne's fate and apply it not only to the Composer's opera (the inner opera), but also to *Ariadne auf Naxos* as a whole, given its complicated genesis and chronic incompleteness. From the initial germ that sparked the project, Hofmannsthal and Strauss kept modifying in an attempt to make a more performable piece that still satisfied them as artists, unwittingly subjecting their opera to the same fate as the Composer's opera. And while textual fidelity does prove an important theme of the work, *Ariadne* seems to raise more questions than it answers. Yes, the opera concerns itself with its own problems, but instead of suggesting answers, *Ariadne* seems to point out many different interpretive potentialities.

---

[54] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Aussee, mid-July 1911, in *Correspondence*, 94.

[55] Soucek, "Giovanni auf Naxos," 199.

Chapter 2

Autobiographical Self-Reference: *Intermezzo*

In 1927 Ludwig Misch explained the term *Neue Sachlichkeit* ("New Objectivity")

as "Es-musik" ("It-music") in contrast to the more subjective, personal style of earlier

German music, which he deemed "Ich-musik" ("I-music").[1] Bryan Gilliam has pointed

out that *Intermezzo* contains elements of both "Es-musik" and "Ich-musik" in its

juxtaposition of new theatrics and vocal declamation against the old music of the

symphonic interludes that frame the opera's thirteen scenes. Gilliam's discussion,

however, only passingly mentions this opera's literal aspects of "Ich-musik,"

Intermezzo's autobiographical plot, which will be the primary focus of my discussion.[2]

      This literal "Ich-musik" falls under the category of *enunciative* self-reference, in

which "the author, the narrator, the reader, or the spectator become the topic of the

message."[3] Examples of this type of self-reference occur frequently in films, such as in

M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village*, in which Shyamalan himself appears on screen,

playing the part of a guard sitting at a desk, stepping beyond the boundaries of his usual

roles as writer and director. Charlie Kaufman gives another recent example in his

Adaptation, which tells the story of its own creation, autobiographically showing

---

[1] Ludwig Misch, "Neue Sachlichkeit," *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* 54 (1927): 614. *Neue Sachlichkeit* constituted a large-scale aesthetic movement in Weimar Germany. In music, this manifested itself largely as a rejection of Romanticism's subjectivity (*Ich-musik*) in favor of a more objective, less sentimental musical language (*Es-musik*). Gilliam's study (see n. 2) focuses on the musical language of the opera exhibiting characteristics of both Ich- and Es- music, mentioning the literal Ich-ness of the autobiographical plot only as an aside.

[2] Bryan Gilliam, "Strauss's *Intermezzo*: Innovation and Tradition," in *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and His Work*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 281.

[3] Winfried Nöth, "Self-Reference in the Media: The Semiotic Framework," in *Self-Reference in the Media*, ed. Winfried Nöth and Nina Bishara (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2007), 20.

Kaufman's struggle to write the screenplay for *Adaptation* itself. Strauss uses this type of self-reference in his whimsical love letter to Pauline, *Intermezzo*, intimately inviting his audience into his private life. If *Ariadne auf Naxos* contains self-persiflage of his art, *Intermezzo* displays that of his home life.

Strauss presents the scenario in thirteen short scenes, occasionally punctuated by orchestral interludes. At the beginning of the opera, set in Grundlsee, we see Christine Storch bossing her servants around and helping her husband, Robert, pack for a journey. Robert is a conductor and is travelling to Vienna for a performance. This scene displays Christine's nastier side, as she makes snide comments to her servants and nags her husband. After Robert leaves, Christine goes bobsledding and runs into Baron Lummer, a young man visiting Grundlsee whose parents, the two discover, knew Christine's parents. They meet a few times, with Christine promising to assist him with his studies. She even finds accommodations for him at a room for rent in an acquaintance's house. The Baron begins pressing Christine for a loan to help him with his studies.

During one visit, Christine opens a letter addressed to her husband from a certain Mitzi Meier. The letter attempts to schedule a meeting in the bar after the opera with Storch and makes it clear that this scenario has happened before. Christine immediately suspects the worst and sends a telegram to her husband. Robert receives it in Vienna while at a card game with friends and colleagues. Shocked and confused, Robert does not understand, as he does not even know anyone named Mitzi Meier. Eventually, Robert discovers that his friend Stroh, also a conductor, knows Mitzi. The woman apparently looked up "Storch" instead of "Stroh" and sent the letter to the wrong person. Robert sends a telegram saying that Stroh will explain the mistake. The Baron confirms Robert's

story, having been sent to Vienna to do detective work for Christine. Robert then returns

and the opera ends with a beautiful duet of reconciliation.

The story of *Intermezzo*'s genesis demonstrates how important the

autobiographical aspect of this opera was for Strauss; enunciative self-reference (as this

autobiographic quality will be interpreted here) arises out of the composer's intentions

and proves integral to the work. The idea began in 1916 while Strauss was working on

both *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and the 1916 version of *Ariadne auf Naxos*. On May 25

Strauss wrote to Hofmannsthal regarding ideas for a new opera, "…either an entirely

modern, absolutely realistic domestic and character comedy…or some amusing piece of

love and intrigue."[4] Strauss predicted that these ideas would not be to Hofmannsthal's

taste, and indeed in the first sentence of Hofmannsthal's reply he admits that he "could

not help having a good laugh over [Strauss's] letter."[5] In spite of this jeering from

Hofmannsthal, who was always somewhat condescending toward Strauss, believing

himself above such trivial subjects, Strauss pressed on with his ideas for a modern opera.

Norman Del Mar proposes that the new style of recitative Strauss pioneered in the

Prelude of the 1916 *Ariadne* prompted the composer's obsession with a realistic,

"entirely modern" opera.[6] Indeed, in a letter responding to Hofmannsthal's laughter,

Strauss tries to convince his librettist that the prelude to the new *Ariadne*, which

Hofmannsthal had yet to hear, would convince him that this new path would be

---

[4] Strauss to Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Garmisch, May 25, 1916, in *The Correspondence between Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, trans. Hanns Hammelmann and Ewald Osers (London: William Collins Sons & Co., 1961), 248.

[5] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, May 30, 1916, in *Correspondence*, 249.

[6] Norman Del Mar, *Richard Strauss: A Critical Commentary on His Life and Works* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 2: 235–36.

successful: "When you've heard the new Vorspiel, you'll understand what I mean and will realize that I have a definite talent for operetta."[7] However, the first World War also inspired him to write something novel; in the same letter, he writes that his "tragic vein is more or less exhausted" and that "tragedy in the theater, after this war, strikes me at present as something rather idiotic and childish."[8] Both his new style of recitative and the war inspired Strauss to write opera about the mundane, everyday lives of people instead of elevated dramas about mythical characters.

Since Hofmannsthal could not warm up to this new idea, he suggested that Strauss collaborate with the playwright Hermann Bahr on the project. One of Bahr's most successful plays, *Das Konzert*, portrayed a musician's marriage troubles. Bahr understood these potential troubles well since he had married Anna von Mildenburg, a Wagnerian singer who had sung Klytämnestra in Strauss's own *Elektra*. This plot inspired Strauss to suggest basing the new opera on a misunderstanding from his own marriage; after all, what would make for a more "entirely modern, absolutely realistic domestic" comedy than a true story from his own life? However, after some attempts at drafting a libretto, it became clear that Bahr was not able to capture the scenario the way that Strauss intended.

Because Strauss wanted an absolutely brutally realistic portrait of his home life and Bahr's attempts did not suffice, Strauss sent him a long, revealing letter with intimate details regarding his and his wife's personalities:

> She thinks she is hard at work all day long because, in her very vivid imagination, she attributes to herself all the work done at her command by servants and others…. One of the favourite subjects the couple argue about is that she, because

---

[7] Strauss to Hofmannsthal, Garmisch, June 5, 1916, in *Correspondence*, 250.

[8] Ibid.

of her pedantry, can only ever see one way to reach a goal, whereas he will weigh all the possibilities and choose the most convenient and time-saving…. She has the habit often of not listening when people say things to her….[9]

These personal, revealing descriptions would have surely allowed Bahr to write something closer to Strauss's ideas. However, Bahr understandably became more and more uncomfortable with the idea of writing such an intimate libretto about a family he barely knew and eventually politely suggested that Strauss write the libretto himself.

Even after the condescending, surely disheartening laughter from Hofmannsthal as well as a failed attempt at collaborating with another poet, Strauss continued to believe in his idea and proceeded to write his own libretto. Strauss, always more at home writing about realistic, earthy people and events than allegorical characters or transcendent plots, wanted to write to his talents, as well as to write something more human and down to earth after the first World War. Strauss still took his inspiration from Bahr's play and began to write his autobiographical, extremely personal libretto.

The incident that inspired the scenario occurred in 1902 while Strauss was in England to conduct some of his own works. He received a telegram from his wife indicating that she wanted a divorce, having discovered Richard's romance with Mieze Mücke. Pauline had opened a letter addressed to her husband, in which Mücke had expressed her regret at having not met Strauss at the Union Bar the previous day. In the letter she also requested tickets to the opera for two days that week.[10] Strauss wrote back to his wife insisting that he had never been to the Union Bar and did not know anyone

---

[9] Kurt Wilhelm, *Richard Strauss: An Intimate Portrait* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), 177–78.

[10] Mieze Mücke to Richard Strauss, May 1902, in *Der Strom der Töne trug mich fort: Die Welt um Richard Strauss in Briefen*, ed. Franz Grasberger (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1967), 519.

named Mieze Mücke. Pauline, temperamental and stubborn, did not believe him until

Richard discovered the misunderstanding and was able to prove that Mücke had misheard

the name of a conductor she had met at the Union Bar, Josef Stransky. Wanting tickets

for the opera, she looked up the name "Strausky" and sent a letter to Strauss's house.[11]

Strauss intended that the autobiographical nature of the opera be very apparent to

his audiences, to the point that he coached the singers who played Robert and Christine

Storch (representing Richard and Pauline Strauss) to ensure that their portrayals would be

as true to life as possible. Lotte Lehmann, the first Christine, said that Strauss would stop

her during staging rehearsals saying, "No, my wife wouldn't do that."[12]

Strauss's libretto seems to draw almost exclusively from real-life events, painting

a hyperrealistic portrait of the composer and his wife. Many events from the opera, aside

from the obviously autobiographical central problem of the affair, stem from actual

events echoed in memoirs about Strauss and his wife. This seems true even for small,

insignificant events in the opera. For instance, during the fourth scene, in which Christine

makes boarding arrangements for her young companion, Baron Lummer, Christine

requests that the drawers in the room be cleaned. She even insists after the notary's wife

assures her that the drawers are already clean.

---

[11] Michael Kennedy, *Richard Strauss: Man, Musician, Enigma*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 94–96.

[12] Lotte Lehmann, *Singing with Richard Strauss*, trans. Ernst Pawel (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1964), 69. While Strauss was indeed very adamant that the resemblance between the actors and their real-life counterparts be made explicit, it seems that the story of Joseph Correck wearing a mask to look more like Strauss at the premiere is false [see Michael Kennedy, *Richard Strauss*, The Master Musicians Series, ed. Stanley Sadie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 155]. For one thing, Lotte Lehmann mentions makeup but no mask for Correck in her memoir of singing Christine across from Correck's Robert in the premiere [see Lehmann, 70]. Furthermore, a picture of Correck from this first production [albeit after Grete Nikisch had replaced Lehmann] shows the baritone in costume without a mask. The picture is reprinted in André Tubeuf, "La paix chez soi," in "Intermezzo," special issue, *L'avant-Scène Opéra* 138 (March-April 1991): 18.

Accounts of Pauline's obsession with cleanliness indicate the accuracy of this portrait. Michael Kennedy claims that Pauline examined others' houses for cleanliness (although he does not cite a source for this information).[13] Thankfully, Lotte Lehmann provides a few helpful anecdotes. In describing the Strauss household, she says, "The house was a model of order and antiseptic cleanliness, and one literally could have eaten off the floor—except that Pauline would never have permitted it. Her cupboards were arranged like showcases…."[14] She also confirms the oft repeated habit of Pauline to order anyone entering her house to wipe their feet, no matter their rank. Once Pauline visited Lehmann while the latter was out. Lehmann's maid said that the visiting Pauline went through all of the cupboards, ordering the maid to rearrange or clean things here and there.[15] When drafting the libretto for one of Strauss's other marriage operas, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Hofmannsthal had said that the role of the Dyer's Wife could be modeled "in all discretion" on Pauline.[16] In creating Christine, Strauss threw out all of this discretion, and it seems that he invented very little for the libretto.

It is clear both that the realistic autobiographical nature of this opera was of the utmost importance to Strauss and that, furthermore, he wanted that aspect to be in plain view of the audience. He did not want to hide behind a façade of a false pretense of fiction. He wanted his audience to view an intimate portrait of his home life and especially his marriage. Turner Cassity suggests that *Intermezzo* could represent "a Straussian idea of *verismo*, for in the Preface he speaks of it as 'turning its back upon the

---

[13] Kennedy, *Man, Musician, Enigma*, 93.

[14] Lehmann, *Singing with Richard Strauss*, 25.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Rodaun, March 20, 1911, in *Correspondence*, 76.

popular love-and-murder interest of the usual operatic libretto, and taking its subject

matter perhaps too exclusively from real life.'"[17] What, then, did Strauss want to say

about his marriage? What does this self-referential "Straussian *verismo*" opera reveal

about the Strausses?

Gilliam and the Question of Ironic Tonal Polarity

Bryan Gilliam attempts to answer this question through the opera's tonality. For

Gilliam, the dichotomy between the opera's opening—in a mundane C major—and the

closing scene of reconciliation—in F-sharp major—reveals a possible hint of irony or

parody from Strauss.[18] Gilliam points out that Strauss often uses F-sharp major for scenes

of a dreamlike or otherworldly quality (e.g. Daphne's transformation or the Empress's

entrance in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*) and that this contrast reveals Strauss's belief that

"only the wave of a magic wand could create peaceful marital bliss between Strauss and

his wife."[19] Gilliam also entertains the possibility that this F-sharp ending could represent

a contradiction of Strauss's intent that his previous opera, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, would

be the last Romantic opera.[20] Gilliam does not, however, consider the possibility that this

tonal polarity could simply represent a regular up and down in the Strausses' marriage.

Indeed, all reports of Richard's marriage to Pauline do present a picture of a

challenging marital life: she, domineering, jealous, stubborn, and he, loving, patient, and

---

[17] Turner Cassity, "*The Egyptian Pauline,*" *Parnassus: Poetry in Review* 10, no. 2 (Fall–Winter 1982): 122–23.

[18] Note that although the opera begins in C major and ends in F-sharp major, Strauss uses many chromatic alterations throughout the opera (as one would expect of the composer) and explores secondary keys as well; the entire first scene does not lie completely in C major.

[19] Gilliam, "Strauss's *Intermezzo*," 276.

[20] Ibid., 260, 279.

forgiving. For most people, this union would not suggest anything near marital happiness, and this picture does allow for an ironic reading of Strauss's F-sharp-major marital bliss, but it seems that neither Richard nor Pauline believed that their marriage lacked bliss, even if peace in their relationship was never permanent. We have to entertain the possibility that the Strausses were blissfully happy together, even in their stormy relationship. Even if it seems unlikely to outside observers, Pauline and Richard seem to suggest throughout their lives that no magic wand was needed in their marriage; perhaps Strauss used the two keys—as distant as possible on the circle of fifths—to represent the difference between their every day relationship and those special moments in which the two could not help but express their love for each other. Strauss wanted to represent the whole of his marriage, from the every day C major to the sublime F-sharp major.

The C-major and F-sharp-major aspects of the Strausses' marriage become apparent when reading their letters. Like most married couples, the Strausses experienced a regular occurrence of lows and highs. One letter from Strauss, responding to Pauline, mentions these ups and downs directly and shows Strauss's usual gentle manner of dealing with his wife's outbursts:

> Have just received your wrathful missive—ah, that's my old, cutting little woman again, signed "Bi" this time too, that always portends something of a tempest! It doesn't matter, my dear Bauxerl, I've had so many dulcet letters by now that I can perfectly well sustain the occasional one that modulates into the minor.[21]

Furthermore, in spite of these expected ups and downs in their relationship, and despite Pauline's abrasive qualities and Richard's tendency to (unintentionally) upset her at times, the two did love each other very much throughout their fifty-five-year marriage.

---

[21] Willi Schuh, *Richard Strauss: A Chronicle of the Early Years 1864–1898*, trans. Mary Whittall (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 426–27.

Lotte Lehmann's account presents perhaps the most moving report of their love for each other. Lehmann recalls Pauline telling stories about giving recitals of Richard's songs in which she would interrupt Strauss's long postludes with deep bows, causing the audience to applaud over the music. Richard would stare at his wife with "wonder and tender delight," and Lehmann insists that Strauss "saw and valued [Pauline] as she truly was—a jewel in a very rough setting."[22]

Strauss acknowledged this "rough setting" in a letter to his parents in the beginning of his marriage. Something had happened between Strauss's parents and Pauline; the exact nature of it is unknown, but from Strauss's letter we can assume that Pauline was not completely justified in her actions. Still, Strauss took Pauline's side, chastising his parents for their unwillingness "to understand the peculiarities of her nature nor to condone" her faults, and Strauss insisted that Pauline "intend[ed] sincerely to correct her faults, faults which are minor and harmless and of which she herself is aware."[23] Even in the beginning of their marriage, Strauss was struggling to help people understand Pauline's essentially "good, childlike, and naïve nature."[24] *Intermezzo* not only displays Strauss's love for his wife, but also shows him, however successfully, still trying to explain Pauline's good nature to the world, despite her temperamental qualities.

Strauss continued to love Pauline for the rest of his life. Thirty-six years into their marriage, and six years after the premiere of *Intermezzo*, Strauss wrote to Pauline, "…my

---

[22] Lehmann, *Singing with Richard Strauss*, 27.

[23] Richard Strauss to Josephine Strauss, 1896 (?), in Willi Schuh, ed., *Richard Strauss: Briefe and die Eltern* (Zürich: Atlantis Verlag, 1954), 201–3, translated in George Marek, *Richard Strauss: The Life of a Non-Hero* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 110–11.

[24] Ibid.

inner belonging to you grows greater all the time, I think of you and the children all day long. I am wholly happy only with you. With our family!"[25]

Pauline had many critics, and there are endless stories about her rude, snobby behavior, even and especially toward her husband. But it appears that Strauss loved even these faults of Pauline. In the same letter criticizing his parents' behavior toward his wife, Strauss refers to Pauline as "the woman with whom I have chosen as my wife, and whom in spite of her faults I love and admire."[26] He explained to Lehmann that "the whole world's admiration interests me a great deal less than a single one of Pauline's fits of rage."[27]

While we may fairly admire Strauss's saint-like patience with his wife through her criticisms, bickering, and occasional rudeness, it seems that Pauline did indeed love Strauss just as much as he loved her. In fact, much of what has been interpreted as mean spirited in Pauline's behavior may have actually arisen out of good intentions, even if her delivery left something to be desired. The conductor Karl Böhm recalled visiting the Strausses in Garmisch.[28] While the Strausses and Böhm were sitting at a table in the villa, Richard said that he wanted a mineral water. When Pauline told him to get it himself, Böhm himself began to get up from the table to fetch it for him, but Pauline ordered him to stay where he was, saying that Richard could get it himself. Later, when Strauss was outside and Pauline and Böhm were alone, she reportedly said "It does him good to move

---

[25] Richard Strauss to Pauline Strauss, Paris, October 29, 1916, in *Der Strom der Töne trug mich fort*, 333–34, translated in Kennedy, *Man, Musician, Enigma*, 94.

[26] Marek, *Richard Strauss*, 111.

[27] Lehmann, *Singing with Richard Strauss*, 25.

[28] Karl Böhm, *A Life Remembered*, trans. John Kehoe (London: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1992), 88.

about, you know." Böhm felt that this was "A small event, but one that helps to explain a lot in vindication of her."[29]

Michael Kennedy has another theory that, like Böhm's, may "help to explain a lot in vindication" of Pauline. Before Pauline and Richard were married, and before they had even publicly announced their engagement, Pauline premiered the role of Freihild in Strauss's first opera, *Guntram*. During an orchestral rehearsal, Strauss stopped several times to correct the tenor singing the title role. When it came time for Freihild's aria, however, Strauss did not stop even once, causing Pauline to stop singing and ask him why he had not stopped her. When Strauss replied that it was because she knew her part, she threw her score at Strauss's head (she missed and it landed on a violinist's music stand, apparently to everyone's amusement) and stormed off the stage, saying "I want to be stopped."[30] Kennedy believes that this story demonstrates that many of Pauline's explosions could be explained by her sense of insecurity.[31]

In any case, we do not have to infer that Pauline loved her husband by assuming that her more abrasive qualities all rose out of concern for him or that her outbursts were a mere cover for insecurity; she indicated many times in her life that she loved Strauss very much. In a letter from 1897, she confessed: "You and Bubi [their newborn son, Franz] are all my happiness…. You will be here on the 10th, I am so looking forward to it, I weep for sheer longing for you…. I love you with the utmost love."[32] Years later, at

---

[29] Böhm, 88.

[30] The story is recounted in Richard Strauss, "Reminiscences of the First Performance of My Operas: From *Guntram* to *Intermezzo*," in *Richard Strauss: Recollections and Reflections*, ed. Willi Schuh, trans. L. J. Lawrence (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1974), 147.

[31] Kennedy, *Man, Musician, Enigma*, 80.

[32] Ibid., 93.

Strauss's funeral, Pauline wept and convulsed while a group of musicians led by Georg

Solti fulfilled Strauss's request that the final trio from *Der Rosenkavalier* be performed at

his funeral.[33] According to Alois Melichar's account, at the final chords, Pauline spread

her hands out as if to ask "And a man who wrote this must die?!"[34] Alice, Pauline's

daughter-in-law, said that "I never knew someone could weep so much," after Strauss's

death, and Pauline was found at least once in the middle of the night weeping in the room

where her husband had died.[35]

This evidence seems to suggest that the Strausses needed no "magic wand" in

their marriage. Rather than indicating irony, one could fairly interpret this F-sharp-major

ending as a serious representation of one extreme of Strauss's married life. The F-sharp-

major bliss of the sublime moments in their marriage may be a world away from the

mundaneness of the C-major preparing for a journey, running a household, and harmless

bickering, but that bliss is no less real because of the distance. Strauss loved Pauline, fits

of rage and all, and seems to have cherished both the highs and lows of his marriage.

Gilliam considers that "many of the scenes are not only dramaturgically but tonally

open," but does not consider this reasoning for the whole opera.[36] Ending worlds away

from the opening key of the opera could indicate that, while this scene depicts

reconciliation, it does not depict dramatic closure; the opera is tonally and dramatically

open. At the end of the opera, we view Strauss and his wife in blissful reunion, but we

can be sure that there will be more marital lows and highs after the opera ends. However,

[33] Ibid., 394.

[34] Alois Melichar, "12 September 1949," in *Der Strom der Töne trug mich fort*, 479–80. Translation mine.

[35] Kennedy, *Man, Musician, Enigma*, 395.

[36] Bryan Gilliam, "Strauss's *Intermezzo*," 278.

the Strausses' love through all of those highs and lows will not falter. Lehmann remained convinced that "between them there existed harmony and understanding beyond all appearance" and saw in their union "a tie so elemental in strength that none of Pauline's shrewish truculence could ever trouble it seriously."[37] The story of the marriage does not end with the final chords of the opera; Strauss draws attention to the rest of the story, his continued, real life marriage, by leaving the opera tonally unresolved, musically engendering enunciative self-reference.

Besides the tonal polarity between C major and F-sharp major, Strauss's musical style in the beginning and end of the opera show this difference between the everyday and the sublime moments of the Strauss marriage. Despite his ability to write beautiful, sustained *cantilena* vocal lines, for most of the opera, Strauss opts for a more matter-of-fact, declamatory recitative. For instance, Strauss sets the first line of the opera, in which Christine barks for her maid's attention, syllabically. The rest of the scene follows suit as Strauss shows the every day affairs of the household. Strauss also depicts the mundanity of everyday modern life in orchestral word painting. For example, when Christine complains about the "perpetual telephone" ringing, the strings, piano, and triangle in the orchestra ring with rapid, mechanical sixteenth notes and triplets at a blaring *forte*, disrupting the *piano* dynamic level of the surrounding orchestral fabric just as the telephone disturbs Christine's daily routine (see Example 1).[38]

---

[37] Lehmann, *Singing with Richard Strauss*, 27, 69–70.

[38] "dieses fortwährend Telephonieren." Translation mine.

Example 1: Richard Strauss, *Intermezzo,* Act I, Scene 1. Telephone ringing in the orchestra. [39]

In fact, Strauss writes beautiful, sustained melodies only once outside of the

orchestral interludes: in the final reconciliation scene. This scene shows the Storches (and

by extension, the Strausses), at their most loving and sentimental, and uses the same

---

[39] Example created in Sibelius from Richard Strauss, *Intermezzo* (Vienna: Verlag Dr. Richard Strauss, 1996), 9.

sustained style often associated with the most loved music from Strauss's operas—think of the final trio of *Der Rosenkavalier,* the "Aber der Richtige" duet from *Arabella*, or the Composer's aria in the 1916 version of *Ariadne.* However, instead of showing the waving of a magic wand or some miracle as an unrealistic picture of marital bliss, this change in style again simply indicates another extreme of married life for the Strausses. The melodies sound different stylistically compared to the terse recitative of the rest of the opera, but Strauss still sets them almost exclusively syllabically (See Example 2, where Christine sings to Robert, "You are my beautiful, pure, magnificent man! I love you alone and ever and ever").[40] This realistic setting of text could place this scene firmly within the realm of possibility (and reality), rather than in some impossible fairytale land as Gilliam suggests. After all, the scene still occurs in a modern living room during the Weimar Republic.

For anyone examining Strauss's life, Pauline presents an intriguing puzzle. How could Strauss endure such a long, almost certainly faithful marriage with this callous and capricious woman whom most other people could not stand? But from the evidence presented here, we might accept that Strauss loved his wife deeply and viewed his marriage happily in both C-major mundaneness and F-sharp bliss despite his wife's fits and unpopularity. Lotte Lehmann says that she took it as the utmost compliment when Strauss told her, during *Intermezzo* rehearsals, "Lotte, you're really so much like my wife in your whole being," even though she "had to swallow hard a few times" before she could bring herself to thank him.[41] We might also "swallow hard" and consider that

---

[40] "Du bist mein schöner, reiner, prachtvoller Mann! Ich liebe Dich allein und immer und ewig." Translation mine.

[41] Lehmann, *Singing with Richard Strauss*, 69.

Example 2: Richard Strauss, *Intermezzo*, Act II, Scene 6[42]

[42] Example created in Sibelius from Richard Strauss, *Intermezzo; eine bürgerliche Kömodie mit sinfonischen Zwischenspielen in Zwei Aufzügen*, libretto by the composer, piano reduction by Otto Singer (London: Fürstner, 1952), 344–45.

Strauss meant this opera to compliment his wife, as Lehmann told Pauline herself.

Strauss felt that his was the perfect marriage and that it did not need a magic wand.

Moreover, we should hesitate to interpret the end of the opera as a fairy tale ending since

the rest of the libretto displays such unabashed honesty about the marriage. It seems

unlikely that Strauss would end such a genuine retelling by saying that his marriage could

never be as happy as in the opera's conclusion.

Self-referential Statements in the Libretto

Strauss's libretto, as a whole, represents his life in a manner analogous to literary

autobiographies, which does indeed create an aura of enunciative self-referentiality

throughout the opera. But in a few places, Strauss's scenario creates more traditional

instances of self-referentiality in which the opera refers to itself or alludes to its medium

rather than only to its author. Of course, first we must acknowledge the superficial, thin

layer of self-reference accorded to the opera simply by the presence of a

composer/conductor character. While this can certainly lift the veil of disbelief in

audience members by drawing attention to the fictiveness and mediality of the piece, we

can fairly dismiss this general observation as insignificant. However, specific moments in

the libretto create more explicit self-reference.

For instance, while Robert Storch, the husband representing Richard Strauss,

prepares for his trip in the first scene, Christine (Pauline) complains about "shameless

poets" who "carry all their experiences out on the street so a conductor…can be a

jumping jack and expose his animalistic emotions in four-four time for the full people in

the stalls!"[43] This idea of librettists exposing all of their experiences to the public

accurately describes *Intermezzo*. Strauss, his own librettist here, airs his dirty laundry in

this opera, so to speak, and much of the criticism of the opera centers on its intimate view

of his personal life. For instance, Norman Del Mar called Strauss's use of his home life

"disturbing" and said that "the charge of tastelessness is hard to answer."[44] Fifty years

after the opera's premiere, Theodore Bloomfield described the opera's plot as a series of

"excruciating disagreeable episodes of the Strausses' household…being paraded before

our embarrassed eyes."[45]

The Victorian attitude toward Strauss's brazen display of his private affairs can

likely account for most of the opera's failure to find a permanent place in the repertoire

despite its musical charms and innovations. Strauss probably anticipated a negative

reaction from audiences and critics regarding his autobiographical opera, having

experienced similar accusations of indecency for his autobiographical tone poem

Symphonia Domestica, the bold, revealing program of which Romain Rolland thought

"diminishes the work and makes it puerile."[46] Christine's complaints in the libretto about

poets who "carry all their experiences out on the street" and conductors who "expose

---

[43] "…diese schamlosen Dichter, die alle ihre Erlebnisse auf die Straße tragen, so ein Kapellmeister, der den Vollgefress'nen unten im Parkett den Hampelmann macht und seine brünstigen Gefühle im Vierviertteiltakt preisgibt!" Translation mine.

[44] Norman Del Mar, *Richard Strauss: A Critical Commentary on His Life and Works* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 2: 261, 262.

[45] Theodore Bloomfield, "Opera Domestica," *Music and Musicians* 22, no. 10 (1974): 34.

[46]Kennedy, *Man, Musician, Enigma*, 140. Strauss's *Symphonia Domestica* shocked audiences with its personal subject matter, depicting a day in the life of the Strauss household.

[their] animalistic emotions" may serve to help Strauss beat his critics to the punch.[47] He suspected people would not like *Intermezzo*'s intimate, personal plot, but he used it anyway and even predicted their displeasure within the libretto.

Another consideration regarding Christine's complaints here lies in whether or not this line describes *itself* in the same way as the words "pentasyllabic," "awkwardnessfull," and "recherché" describe themselves, as Douglas Hofstadter points out.[48] Christine's complaint certainly applies to *Intermezzo* as a whole, the larger set to which her comment belongs, but does it directly comment on itself? In some ways, yes. Strauss likely based this line on an actual exchange with his wife. Pauline seems to have enjoyed a private life and suggested on several occasions that marrying a musician "constituted…a shocking mésalliance as far as she was concerned."[49] Moreover, Lotte Lehmann thought that Strauss lifted the beginning of the opera directly out of his home life, "verbatim."[50] Therefore Strauss, his own "shameless poet," parades this experience of his wife criticizing such brandishing of experiences for the public to see. In this way, the comment is self-descriptive.

Musically, however, this comment contradicts itself. Christine talks of conductors displaying their emotions in four-four time, but Strauss sets this entire passage in three-four (see Example 3). The music, to which Christine is deaf in any case, does not

---

[47] "…diese schamlosen Dichter, die alle ihre Erlebnisse auf die Straße tragen, so ein Kapellmeister, der den Vollgefress'nen unten im Parkett den Hampelmann macht und seine brünstigen Gefühle im Viervierteiltakt preisgibt!" Translation mine.

[48] Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 20.

[49] Lehmann, *Singing with Richard Strauss*, 24.

[50] Ibid., 70.

conform to the verbal musical description in Strauss's libretto. Christine, of course, does

not mean that only music in four-four can express conductors' emotions in the

embarrassingly revealing way that she describes here; it is just an expression. But one

still wonders why Strauss did not take this moment to insert an obvious musical

connection to his libretto.

Example 3: Richard Strauss, *Intermezzo*, Act I, Scene 1[51]

[51] Example created in Sibelius from Richard Strauss, *Intermezzo; eine bürgerliche Kömodie mit sinfonischen Zwischenspielen in Zwei Aufzügen*, libretto by the composer, piano reduction by Otto Singer (London: Adolph Fürstner, 1952), 30–31.

The answer probably lies in his sense of text setting. Strauss viewed the conversational tone of this opera as of the utmost importance to its "entirely realistic" effect, as he wrote in the Preface. He likely did not want to break up the natural declamation he had set up for this section simply to insert a measure of common time for a musical joke which, in any case, referred to a figure of speech in the text rather than anything to be taken literally.

Intermezzo also displays self-reference in a more usual sense of the term in the scene of the card game (a game of Skat, Strauss's favorite), albeit still in an uncommon presentation. In this passage, Storch defends his wife and his marriage to his colleagues who are gossiping about Christine, making this scene a microcosm of the whole opera.

Strauss used this opera to defend his wife to the world in the same way he had defended her to his parents years before at the beginning of their marriage. Pauline had a reputation as a sort of terror among those who knew her. Many of her contemporaries (Hofmannsthal, for example) did not particularly like her, and her reputation has not recovered much even now. Some of that poor reputation can be blamed on Alma Mahler's book on her husband, which vilifies Pauline, claiming that the latter trashed Strauss's *Feuersnot* during a performance.[52] Strauss read this memoir later and claimed that the story must be nonsense since Pauline liked the opera. It is possible that Pauline lied to her husband about liking it, though this seems unlikely. Not only did Pauline rarely conceal her true feelings, but Alma's memory seems fairly consistently marred by strong bias.[53] Despite Pauline's persistent bad reputation, Strauss truly felt that he had a

---

[52] Alma Mahler, *Gustav Mahler: Memories and Letters*, trans. Basil Creighton (New York: The Viking Press, 1946), 26–27.

[53] Kennedy, *Man, Musician, Enigma*, 87–88.

great marriage despite outward appearances. By giving such an intimate glance of the Strausses' home life, *Intermezzo* attempts to defend his happy marriage. He may have been largely unsuccessful, as many people may find *Intermezzo* a rather unflattering portrait, but Lotte Lehmann, who created the role of Christine, called the opera "a magnificent declaration of love by the husband to his wife."[54]

The card game scene presents a sort of fractal zoom into a theatrical synecdoche, a symbol of the whole opera. By showing a representation of the whole opera in a scene within itself, *Intermezzo* discusses itself, its own subject matter, and its manner of presentation. Moreover, Strauss uses this scene to further emphasize his defense of his marriage. Robert's direct defense here mirrors some of Strauss's own views on his marriage. Strauss said that he needed Pauline and all of her outbursts as stimulation.[55] When Robert joins the card game in the opera, his colleagues have just finished stating their dislike for his wife. When the subject returns to the conversation, Robert is able to explain how Christine perfectly complements him: "And for me she is just the right thing. I have a talent for dozing and being lazy; what I have become is thanks to her."[56] Robert further emphasizes that his wife's fickle disposition stimulates him, saying, "I must have life and temperament around me."[57]

Strauss felt that he alone knew his wife's true nature. From Frankfurt, he wrote to her:

---

[54] Lehmann, *Singing with Richard Strauss*, 68–69.

[55] Kennedy, *Man, Musician, Enigma*, 86.

[56] "Und für mich ist sie gerade das Richtige. Ich habe ein Talent zum Verdösen, Verbummeln; was aus mir geworden, danke ich ihr." Translation mine.

[57] "Ich muß Leben und Temperament um mich haben." Translation mine.

Since I know you so very well, and also know for certain that you are very fond of me, "scenes" like this are never going to be able to shake my trust in you. The only thing is that I'm often distressed for you, because your nerves are not strong enough to help you stand up to these bursts of feeling…. So calm down, my sweet darling…my love for you is always the same. So there's nothing to forgive.[58]

Strauss explains this understanding of his wife's true nature to the world via Robert in the skat scene. He explains to Stroh that his "fiery, fanciful" wife, "due to somewhat lacking self-discipline, is often pathetically helpless."[59] The Commercial Counselor, also at the card game, cannot believe his ears: "Helpless? Not that I've seen."[60] But Robert insists on the point. Strauss recognized his wife's lack of self-control and actually worried about her during her "scenes." Strauss inserts his voice in a more literal way in *Intermezzo* than in the other works have I examined in this thesis, but by the opera presenting a microcosm of itself in the skat scene, self-reference once again plays a role in allowing the composer to speak directly to his audience.

Strauss recognized Pauline's imperfections: her occasional frank rudeness, fiery temper, and pride. But he maintained, in real life and through his operatic doppelgänger, that he knew his wife's true good nature. "Everyone has two sides…. She is one of those with a tender, bashful nature and a rough shell. I know several, and they are the best!" Robert insists.[61] Pauline showed what could be called her "good side" only to Richard. Christine similarly reveals what lies under her rough shell only twice in the opera: in the final private duet with Robert and in her soliloquy at the end of Act 1, scene 5. She comes

---

[58] Quoted in Kennedy, *Man, Musician, Enigma*, 86.

[59] "die hitzig, starker Phantasiemensch, von etwas mangelnder Selbstdisziplin, oft rührend hilflos…" Translation mine.

[60] "Hilflos? Davon hab'ich noch nichts gemerkt." Translation mine.

[61] "Jeder Mensch hat seine zwei Seiten…sie ist eine von den ganz zarten, shamhaften Naturen mit rauher Schale, ich kenne manche—es sind die Besten!" Translation mine.

closest to showing her true gentle nature to someone else when she tells Baron Lummer that she knew her husband was innocent all along, but even this comment is rather self-serving. If Strauss wanted to paint his wife in a positive light in *Intermezzo*, he may not have been successful. At first viewing, the opera does not seem flattering since Christine's character displays Pauline's personality in its entirety, showing many of the qualities that most people detested in her. But a closer examination shows that Strauss loved and appreciated all of these things about his wife that others seemed to detest. He needed Pauline's stimulating, fiery nature and furthermore understood that she found it "difficult…to disguise her feelings when something has upset her."[62] Strauss loved his wife in a way that only he could. Christine ends the opera by asking, "Isn't this, my dear Robert, what is truly called a happy marriage?"[63]

---

[62] Strauss to Dora Weis, March 3, 1911, translated in Willi Schuh, *Richard Strauss: A Chronicle of the Early Years 1864-1898,* 174.

[63] "Gelt, mein lieber Robert, das nennet man doch wahrhaftig eine glückliche Ehe?" Translation mine.

Chapter 3

The Last Will: *Capriccio*

When Clemens Krauss asked Richard Strauss if he would write another opera after *Capriccio*, Strauss replied, "…it's only possibly to leave *one* will."[1] The plot of this opera, Strauss's last completed work for the stage, explores questions central to operatic composition, reception, and performance. In the context of an allegorical love triangle in which a poet and a composer vie for the hand of a countess in the days approaching her birthday, the main characters of the opera, including an actress and a stage director, argue about the nature of opera and the problems inherent in this most collaborative of art forms. Moreover, the characters decide to compose and perform an opera about the events of the day, thereby composing *Capriccio* itself. The term "metafiction" characterizes this type of story, in which the text critiques the nature of fiction and often, as here, acknowledges its own fictiveness. Literary critic Patricia Waugh defines metafiction as fiction that "self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" and "explores the *theory* of writing fiction through the *practice* of writing fiction."[2] The reflexive nature of this plot, in which the characters not only argue about the nature and aesthetics of opera but also compose themselves into existence, categorizes *Capriccio* as a meta-opera.

---

[1] Ernst Krause *Richard Strauss: The Man and His Work*, translator unknown (Boston: Crescendo Publishing Company, 1969), 434.

[2] Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Methuen & Company, 1984), 2.

After a long and complicated genesis involving three other librettists, Strauss himself wrote *Capriccio*'s libretto jointly with Clemens Krauss, who conducted the world premiere of the piece in Munich on October 28, 1942. Strauss had always closely supervised the writing of his librettos, as the many suggestions and revisions in the published correspondence with his librettists demonstrate, but he had encountered this intimate authorial involvement in the creation of a libretto only twice before: in his first opera, the Wagnerian *Guntram*, premiered in 1894, and the autobiographical *Intermezzo* of 1924.[3] In these two earlier instances, Strauss had specific reasons for writing his own text. In the former, his Wagnerian aesthetics informed his creative process, and in the latter, he wrote about his own life. *Capriccio*, then, was very important to Strauss. His decision to author this libretto himself, after failed attempts at using Josef Gregor's texts, implies that Strauss had a specific, detailed conception of the piece even before the scenario was completely finished. The rarity of Strauss's own authorship of libretto in his fifteen music dramas as well as the meta-operatic nature of this plot highlights *Capriccio* as an important personal statement from Strauss regarding his views toward music, drama, and text in opera. Comparing *Capriccio* to other texts, both by Strauss and known by him, can not only contextualize, but also clarify and expand Strauss's "one will" as an operatic manifesto.

The idea for *Capriccio* originated in 1934 when Stefan Zweig, the librettist for the in-progress *Die schweigsame Frau*, first mentioned turning to the librettos of Giovanni Battista Casti for inspiration for future projects. Strauss wanted Zweig, who had sent the

---

[3] *Salome*, to a pre-existing Hedwig Lachmann translation of Oscar Wilde's play, represents an exception in Strauss's operatic output in that the composer was *not* intimately involved in the creation of the libretto. *Elektra* was also written from a pre-existing play, but Strauss required many revisions of Hofmannsthal's original text. See Bryan Gilliam, *Richard Strauss's "Elektra"* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 217–33.

final act of *Die schweigsame Frau* to Strauss on January 17, 1933, to replace

Hofmannsthal as his next longtime collaborator and was naturally interested in Zweig's

ideas for more productions to begin after he finished composing *Die schweigsame Frau*.[4]

In January of 1934, Zweig wrote to Strauss, "Next month, in the British Museum, I plan

to read through all libretti Abbate Casti wrote for Pergolese [*sic*]—who, second-class

musician that he was, could not do justice to the great charm and the perfect comedy style

of these texts."[5] Casti (1724–1803), a contemporary and rival of librettist Lorenzo Da

Ponte, penned a libretto called *Prima la musica e poi le parole*, which Salieri, rather than

Pergolesi, set to music.[6]

 The plot centers around a poet and composer who must produce an opera in four

days while pacifying both a prima donna and a comic singer, the latter of whom the

collaborators include for the generous fee they are promised for engaging her.[7]

Additionally, the composer has already written the music and needs the poet to write a

libretto to fit his score, hence the title *Prima la musica e poi le parole*. Zweig found this

idea intriguing and specifically mentioned it to Strauss in a letter in August of that year:

> Dear Herr Doctor,
> I am just studying Abbate Casti. The small piece *by itself* is not usable but could
> easily be adapted. Delightful is the title, *Prima la musica, poi le parole*, "First the

---

[4] Norman Del Mar, *Richard Strauss: A Critical Commentary on His Life and Works* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 3: 8.

[5] Stefan Zweig to Richard Strauss, Salzburg, about January 31, 1934, in *A Confidential Matter: The Letters of Richard Strauss and Stefan Zweig, 1931–1935*, trans. Max Knight (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 41–42.

[6] Zweig was mistaken: Casti actually wrote no librettos for Pergolesi. See Charles H. Parsons, comp., *Opera Librettists and Their Works*, The Mellen Opera Reference Index (Queenston, ON: The Edward Mellen Press, 1987), s.v. "Casti, Giovanni Battista."

[7] This plot contains so many correspondences with the prologue to the 1916 version of *Ariadne auf Naxos* that one wonders whether Hofmannsthal knew this libretto. There seems to be no evidence that he did.

music, then the words," which, in any case, ought to be retained for this light comedy; also some details. I will write more when I have Vienna behind me.[8]

Strauss replied the next day enthusiastic about the possibility of another collaboration with Zweig. This libretto provided the original seed of what was to become *Capriccio* nearly a decade later after a long, arduous process involving five librettists: Strauss himself, Giovanni Casti, Stefan Zweig, Josef Gregor, and Clemens Krauss. A comparison of *Prima la musica e poi le parole* to *Capriccio* will clarify Strauss's views as expressed in his last artistic statement on the nature of musical drama.

The opera centers around Countess Madeleine and takes place at her chateau on the day before her birthday. The composer Flamand, the poet Olivier, the stage director La Roche, and Madeleine listen to a performance of a sextet, newly composed by Flamand. Both the poet and the composer declare their love for Madeleine. As the day continues, many other performers arrive at different times, all in preparation for Madeleine's birthday celebration. When the characters decide to compose an opera but cannot agree on appropriate subject matter, Madeleine suggests writing an opera about the events of the day. However, Madeleine must tell Flamand and Olivier how the opera will end; that is, she must decide which suitor to be with. The opera ends with Madeleine soliloquizing over the importance of words and music in opera, comparing having to decide which is most important to her choice of lovers. She does not want to choose one only to lose the other. Her servant tells her that her dinner is ready and she follows him to the dining room as the curtain closes.

The plot of *Capriccio*, in which the Countess must allegorically choose between poetry and music, parallels Casti's libretto in many obvious respects. The librettists for

---

[8] Stefan Zweig to Richard Strauss, Salzburg, postmark August 23, 1934, in *A Confidential Matter*, trans. Max Knight, 54–55.

Capriccio appropriated the characters The Poet and The Composer, who became Olivier and Flamand, respectively, in Strauss's opera. However, the Salieri opera makes no use of allegory in representing The Poet and The Composer. In that work the characters merely collaborate on an opera and do not vie for importance. This does not mean, of course, that the piece lacks any consideration of the relative importance of words and music in opera, as we will see, but merely that the plot does not turn on the central problem of words versus music.

The title *Prima la musica e poi le parole* serves as another immediately distinguishable parallel between Salieri's opera and Strauss's work. The title of Casti's libretto highlights and stresses an important aesthetic debate throughout *Capriccio*, albeit in a slightly altered form, having evolved through several steps of misquotation and misspellings in Strauss's letters. (This type of misquotation commonly appears throughout Strauss's letters; he very often includes a snippet of a melody that he misquotes, even when referencing his own music.) In the first incarnation of Casti's title in Strauss's libretto, Olivier, the poet, sings "Prima le parole—dopo la musica!" to which Flamand, the composer, replies vehemently "Prima la musica—dopo le parole!" The title as used in the Salieri-Casti collaboration merely refers to the unusual chronology of composition for the fictitious opera, whereas the paraphrased title as employed in Strauss's *Capriccio* concerns itself with the relative importance of words and music in opera. Strauss envisioned the conception of this phrase as an aesthetic marker throughout the opera from the beginnings of the project. Gregor, who would later be replaced as librettist by Krauss and Strauss, sent Strauss a draft of what he hoped would become

Strauss's next opera. Strauss replied in a somewhat condescending and surely

disheartening letter, which is nonetheless revealing:

> Your de Casti draft was a disappointment…nothing like what I had in mind: an
> ingenious dramatic paraphrase on the subject of
> > First the words, then the music (Wagner) or
> > First the music, then the words (Verdi) or
> > Only words, no music (Goethe) or
> > Only music, no words (Mozart)
> to jot down only a few headings! In between there are naturally many half-tones
> and ways of playing it![9]

The paraphrased title of Casti's libretto certainly plays an important role in

Strauss's libretto as a signal of developing musico-textual philosophies. After the

characters decide to compose an opera, Flamand repeats the paraphrase of the Casti title,

but this time saying *Primo le parole—dopo la musica* instead. LaRoche's defensive

petition for new great works for the theater (after being mocked for the spectacle he

planned for the countess's birthday) altered Flamand's aesthetic views. Similarly, Olivier

reveals his mollified perspective, responding, "No, first the music, but supported by the

words."[10] The many references in the several philosophical debates throughout the opera

refer to the "many half-tones and ways of playing it" which Strauss recommends in his

letter, even though the text does not always explicitly use Casti's altered title as a

signpost of an aesthetic viewpoint. For instance, throughout the opera the countess's

brother admires traditional, spoken theater first and foremost and calls opera's setting of

---

[9] Quoted in Norman Del Mar, *Richard Strauss: A Critical Commentary*, translation by the author, 3: 183.

[10] Clemens Krauss and Richard Strauss, *Capriccio: Ein Konversationsstück für Musik in einem Aufzug*, libretto, trans. Maria Massey, in liner notes of *Capriccio*, Karl Böhm, conductor (Deutsche Grammophon 445 347-2, CD, 1994), 102. Immediately after this, the characters do immediately revert to their old way of articulating this phrase: "Flamand: Prima la musica—She has decided….Olivier: Yes, for the words. Prima le parole." However, the dramatic scenario makes it clear that these statements are referring to their continued competition for Madeleine's hand rather than to a feigned aesthetic revision.

dramatic texts to music absurd. Strauss even references another famous operatic composer, Gluck, in the first scene when the characters are considering the merits and downfalls of his *Iphigénie en Aulide*, while quotes from that opera embellish the score. Strauss named Gluck as the "patron saint" of *Capriccio* because of the operatic reforms codified in the preface to *Alceste*.[11]

We have seen two fairly obvious parallels between *Capriccio* and *Prima la musica e poi le parole*. However, the subtler correlations between these two works reveal even more about Strauss's aesthetic statements in *Capriccio*. We must consider the different levels of parody in these works before evaluating these contradictions and corroborations. Both works contain satire and parody, but Salieri composed his opera for a much different setting than did Strauss. *Prima la musica* premiered in a double bill with Mozart's *Der Schauspieldirektor* on February 7, 1786 as a sort of contest between the Italian and German opera troupes at a party given at Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna.[12] This performance took place in the palace's *Orangerie,* and the *Capriccio* libretto specifically mentions the Countess Madeleine's *Orangerie* in the opening description of her chateau, perhaps intentionally paying homage to the operatic contest that inspired Strauss's last opera. Moreover, La Roche, the character of the stage director in *Capriccio*, uses the term "noble competition" (*edlem Wettstreit*) to describe the festivities initially planned for the countess's birthday, again recalling the 1786 contest between German and Italian opera.

---

[11] Richard Strauss, preface to his opera *Capriccio* (Eine Konversationstück für Musik in einem Aufzug), trans. Stewart Spencer, libretto by Clemens Krauss and the composer, Richard Strauss Edition: Complete Stage Works, vol. 18 (Mainz: Schott Musik International, 1996), pages unnumbered, first page of English translation.

[12] Christopher Raeburn, "An Evening at Schönbrunn," *The Music Review* 16, no. 2 (1955): 96; Thomas Betzweiser, preface to Antonio Salieri, *Prima la musica e poi le parole* (*divertimento* in one act), libretto by Giovanni Battista Casti, ed. Thomas Betzweiser (Cassel: Bärenreiter, 2007), VII.

In any case, the pairing of *Prima la musica* with the Mozart opera places Salieri's piece much more firmly in the category of parody than *Capriccio*, which often takes a more serious tone than Salieri's purely comic opera. Still, *Prima la musica*'s maternal connection to *Capriccio* suggests that a comparison of the two pieces can provide beneficial subtext and perspective in reading the latter work as Strauss's final operatic manifesto.

Casti's and Strauss's librettos correspond in their comic treatment of serious opera singers. In *Prima la musica*, the *opera seria* singer Eleonora insists on acting a scene from her repertoire even though there are not enough people to fulfill all of the necessary roles in the scene. To fill this gap, she designates two chairs and the composer and poet as her additional actors, making the poet and composer play her children. Since they are too tall and rigid for her to embrace them properly while acting her scene, she forces them to bend lower and lower as they complain audibly of bodily pains over her singing ("I'll become crippled here," "A bone is coming out of my body").[13]

In *Capriccio*, there are two serious opera singers: two Italians (a tenor and a soprano). These characters are made comic not through an exaggerated seriousness as in the Salieri opera, but through inappropriate behavior and stereotypical gluttonous eating habits. LaRoche brings these singers in as part of the entertainment planned for the countess's birthday. After their performance, to which I will return for its own comic aspects, the soprano drinks too much wine and sobs openly when LaRoche describes his future tombstone, thinking that the stage director is already dead. Moreover, the

---

[13] Giovanni Battista Casti, *Prima la musica e poi le parole*, libretto, translator unknown, in liner notes of *Antonio Salieri: Prima la musica e poi le parole, Allesandro Scarlatti: Lesbina e Adolfo*, Domenico Sanfilippo, conductor, Orchestra da Camera della Filarmonica della Boemia del Nord, (Bongiovanni, CD, 1986), 31.

soprano's insatiable appetite also draws comic attention. When the servants are clearing the dirty dishes from the room after the guests leave, one of them remarks: "And that Italian girl, oh my! What a very healthy appetite. She finished the cake completely."[14] The Italians' obsession with being paid their fee also paints these serious singers in a comic light: "I fear that we will not get our money which he has promised." "I definitely told you to demand it this morning before we started out."[15]

Another important source to consider when interpreting *Capriccio* is the E.T.A. Hoffmann essay "The Poet and the Composer." Strauss had recommended this essay to Stefan Zweig at the beginning of the project when Zweig was still the projected librettist for the opera.[16] In this essay, Hoffmann presents his argument in a fictional dialogue between a poet and composer (in a manner similar to, for instance, Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum*), and this dialogue lies within another fictional conversation as a story within a story. Because of this dialogic manner of presentation and the parallel subject matter, the essay reads very similarly to parts of *Capriccio*'s libretto. More importantly, the essay often corresponds to the Strauss-Krauss libretto and can provide important clarifying addenda to and commentary on *Capriccio*. The correspondences and contradictions between these two texts prove more substantive than those between *Capriccio* and *Prima la musica*, which often merely help to trace certain elements of the plot in the later opera.

The composer in Hoffman's essay, named Ludwig, tries to convince Ferdinand, the poet, that one person should not serve as both the librettist and composer of an opera because musical inspiration will dry up while writing and revising the text: "…if success

---

[14] Krauss and Strauss, *Capriccio*, libretto, trans. Maria Massey, 104.

[15] Ibid., 83.

[16] Norman Del Mar, *Richard Strauss: A Critical Commentary*, 3: 181.

is to be achieved, it seems to me that in no art is it so necessary as in music to embrace the whole work in the first, most intense flash of inspiration, down to the smallest detail of every part."[17] Here Ludwig supports composition by instant inspiration from the whole of the text and contends that if a composer wrote his own libretto, he would have fleeting moments of musical inspiration while writing it and that these musical ideas would be too disjunct and fragmented to amount to anything useful for the final version of the libretto. *Capriccio* seems to reference this idea during the scene in which Flamand composes Olivier's sonnet. When Olivier reads the sonnet—the characters and audience having heard it once before during a reading of lines from Olivier's play—Flamand goes to the harpsichord and begins improvising a melody, moved by the completed sonnet text. The stage directions in the libretto state this action explicitly, and the score includes a harpsichord part underscoring Olivier's reciting; Flamand composes his song in a moment of instant inspiration from Olivier's completed text.

This reference to Hoffmann's idea of separate composer and poet, as expressed through Ludwig, carries with it a trace of irony since Strauss had an authorial hand in the libretto of this opera. Nevertheless, this description of instant inspiration seems to line up with Strauss's own compositional procedures, and it actually seems more likely that rather than denouncing the composer-librettist, Strauss is advocating here a type of music that is instantaneously inspired by a general impression of another source in its entirety. Hoffmann seems to support this type of composition again later in the essay when Ludwig derides much of the operatic cannon, in which "the composer has unconsciously worked entirely on his own, and the wretched libretto trots along beside him quite

---

[17] E. T. A. Hoffmann, "The Poet and the Composer," in *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, ed. David Charlton (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 193.

independently of the music."[18] Charlotte E. Erwin has demonstrated that writing tempo

markings, fragments of music, and even instrument combinations in the margins of his

texts during his first few readings proved essential in Strauss's composition process.[19]

Moreover, Strauss's correspondence with his librettists seems to paint a picture of this

type of composition. When Hugo von Hofmannsthal sent Strauss the first act of *Der*

Rosenkavalier, the composer famously replied, "It'll set itself to music like oil and

melted butter: I'm hatching it out already."[20] Strauss preferred writing even instrumental

music in this way, inspired by an extramusical program, as the importance of the

symphonic tone poems in his orchestral output attests.

Stefan Zweig also attested to this method of Strauss's composing: "He could

compose music for a subject already to hand, because with him musical themes

developed spontaneously out of situations and words."[21] Zweig even said that this was

the reason Strauss cited for his largely operatic output in his later years.[22] If this

spontaneous creation of musical themes based on text and dramatic scenarios does indeed

explain the preponderance of opera in Strauss's mature output as a conscious shift on his

part as Zweig's quote suggests, then Strauss's ability to compose based on spontaneous

inspiration represents one of the most important aspects of his career, and this

---

[18] Ibid., 200.

[19] Charlotte E. Erwin, "Richard Strauss's Presketch Planning for *Ariadne auf Naxos*," *The Musical Quarterly* 67 (1981): 348–65.

[20] Richard Strauss to Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Garmisch, April 21, 1909, in *The Correspondence between Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, ed. Franz and Alice Strauss, trans. Hanns Hammelmann and Ewald Osers (London: Collins, 1961), 29.

[21] Krause, *Richard Strauss*, 200.

[22] Ibid.

correspondence in *Capriccio* with Hoffmann's composer reveals a valuable insight into Strauss's compositional aesthetics.

A comparison of the composer and poet characters in *Capriccio* and "The Poet and The Composer" proves more revealing than the examination of the same characters in *Capriccio* and *Prima la musica e poi le parole.* Ferdinand, the poet in Hoffmann's essay, is a weaker character than Ludwig, his composer friend, whereas Olivier and Flamand are more equally matched in *Capriccio.* This is to say that these two characters both have firmly held views and they debate fiercely over them, whereas Hoffmann's essay merely shows the composer explaining his views to the poet, who listens attentively and is easily persuaded. In *Capriccio*, Olivier insists, "Poetry is the mother of all the arts!"[23] Ferdinand, less aggressive than his Straussian counterpart, prompts Ludwig to promote the opposite view:

> *Ferdinand*: When you speak so enthusiastically about your art, you lift me up to see things that I previously had no inkling of, and you can believe me when I say that at this moment I feel as though I understand a great deal about music. Indeed, I do not think a good line of poetry could awaken in my heart without issuing forth in music and song.

> *Ludwig*: Isn't that the librettist's real inspiration? I maintain that he must inwardly compose everything in musical terms just as well as the musician, and it is merely a conscious awareness of specific melodies and specific notes from the accompanying instruments…which distinguishes the latter from the former.[24]

Ferdinand does, however, inject his own views into the conversation occasionally, if only for them to be usurped by Ludwig. (Recall that this dialogue exists as a story within a story and that it is told by Theodor, a composer himself trying to make a point to a group of friends.) Ferdinand explains why he considers writing a libretto to

---

[23] Krauss and Strauss, *Capriccio*, libretto, 72. Translation mine.

[24] Hoffmann, "The Poet and the Composer," trans. Martyn Clarke, 201–02.

be "the most thankless in the world," complaining that composers "so often strike out our finest lines, abuse our noblest words by twisting and inverting them, in fact by drowning them in music."[25] This complaint parallels Olivier's proclamation in *Capriccio* that opera collaborators are "dreadfully hampered each by the other" and that even Gluck "treats the words as a stepchild of music."[26] David Charlton has related Ferdinand's views here to Diderot's *Le Neveu Rameau*, in which the Nephew petitions for a new type of libretto with short, clear phrases that the composer can manipulate at will, repeating and omitting words as necessary.[27] LaRoche proclaims a near carbon copy of these views in *Capriccio* after the characters decide to write an opera: "(to Olivier)…Write comprehensible verses with (to Flamand) many repeats—that betters their chances of being understood."[28] Strauss did not repeat text as often as many operatic composers before him, believing that drama should always proceed at a lively pace, but he did occasionally repeat text in ensembles (e.g. the endless repetitions of the word *vivat* in the large ensemble at the end of the first act of *Die schweigsame Frau*), and he always took special care in his music that the text should be understood. He even expressed his frustration with this difficult aspect of the operatic medium throughout his career. Strauss even surpasses LaRoche in his obsession with text clarity.

In the preface to *Intermezzo*, Strauss explained in detail the care he had taken in his stage works to ensure that audiences can clearly understand the text. He highlighted his special attention to dynamic and expressive markings in his operatic scores and

---

[25] Hoffmann, "The Poet and the Composer," trans. Martyn Clarke, 194.

[26] Krauss and Strauss, *Capriccio*, libretto, trans. Maria Massey, 73.

[27] David Charlton, ed., *E. T. A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 194, n. 48.

[28] Krauss and Strauss, *Capriccio*, libretto, trans. Maria Massey, 96.

revealed his frustration with orchestras that do not follow them precisely. Strauss

specifically mentioned *Salome* and *Elektra* as two especially troublesome works if they

are not performed precisely as he intended since only by carefully following his

directions can a performance "invest the orchestral writing with the translucency that [he]

took for granted when writing the work."[29] In *Capriccio* Strauss expresses some of his

frustration through LaRoche, whose years of experience as a stage director have

solidified his opinion that orchestras can easily ruin a performance by covering the

singers. In LaRoche's words, "The fundamental defect in every opera lies in the

deafening noise of the orchestra. Its ranting and raving drowns the voices. The singers are

simply forced into yelling."[30]

Strauss also warns that ignoring or approximating his proscribed dynamic and

expressive markings will muddle the texture of his richly polyphonic music regardless of

textual intelligibility: "Only in this way [by following the markings in the score exactly]

can finely textured polyphony find clear expression."[31] About a decade later, Strauss,

still discouraged by less than ideal performances of his works, wrote to Karl Böhm that

he wished he could write music like Verdi or Puccini and condemned his pervasive

orchestral polyphony: "To the devil with German counterpoint!"[32] Strauss's desire to

abandon his polyphonic working-out of themes here cannot be taken too literally, since

---

[29] Richard Strauss, preface to his opera *Intermezzo* (Eine bürgerliche Komödie mit sinfonischen Zwischenspielen in zwei Aufzügen), trans. Stewart Spencer, libretto by the composer, Richard Strauss Edition: Complete Stage Works, vol. 11 (Mainz: Schott Musik International, 1996), pages unnumbered, first page of English translation.

[30] Krauss and Strauss, *Capriccio*, libretto, trans. Maria Massey, 74.

[31] Richard Strauss, preface to his opera *Intermezzo,* third page of English translation.

[32] Richard Strauss to Karl Böhm, Bad Kissingen, May 19, 1935, in *Der Strom der Töne trug mich fort: Die Welt um Richard Strauss in Briefen* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1967), 364. Translation mine.

he so pointedly satirizes Italian opera in *Capriccio* and throughout his operatic oeuvre

beginning with *Der Rosenkavalier*, as Schlötterer has demonstrated.[33] However, Strauss's

career-long pursuit of textual and textural clarity indicates the importance of this issue,

which he directly confronted in the opera that he considered his last will and testament.

Strauss took special care that his operas would be understandable from a dynamic

and expressive point of view, but also from the perspective of the text itself. Strauss's

desire for understandable text reveals itself most strongly not in text repetitions, as

LaRoche would require, but in his specific requests of his librettists for general texts void

of excessive details and poetic rambling. While Gregor was working on the libretto for

Friedenstag, his first collaboration in his rocky working relationship with Strauss, the

composer advised him:

> Action and character! No "thoughts"! No poetry! Theater!! The audience can only
> hear a third of the words, and if they can't follow the action, they get bored! You
> must permit me to accompany your first steps in the operatic classroom with the
> gentle strokes of the experienced, grey-haired schoolmaster's rod. No weighing of
> motives, no poetic self-indulgences. Headlines![34]

While Strauss cannot have been completely serious that *no* "'thoughts', … poetry…[, or]

self-indulgences" could be included in what he viewed to be a viable libretto, as many of

the Hofmannsthal librettos contain passages that would surely fall under those categories,

this letter reveals an important tenet of opera for Strauss that points us again to

Hoffmann. In "The Poet and the Composer," when Ludwig introduces his admiration of

the Italians and their infinite settings of *addio* (see below), he asserts that "for the

composer who expects inspiration not from words but from action and situation, even a

---

[33] Reinhold Schlötterer, "Ironic Allusions to Italian Opera in the Musical Comedies of Richard Strauss," in *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and his Work*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 77–91.

[34] Quoted in Wilhelm, *Richard Strauss*, 242.

simple 'Goodbye' will enable him to depict in powerful strokes the mental state of the young hero or the parting lover."[35] Strauss's admonition to Gregor demonstrates his own desire for a paring down of operatic text to the essential points of the drama. For Strauss, textual transparency stems not from textual *repetition*, but rather from textual *directness*. Strauss would almost certainly agree with Ludwig that "genuinely operatic, romantic subject-matter" can supply sufficient inspiration for a great composer, even in the absence of elaborate poetic metaphors, imagery, and other such purely literary devices.[36]

While the correlations between Strauss-Krauss and Hoffmann can prove enlightening, Strauss did not agree with Hoffmann on all accounts. Hoffmann's composer praises the expressivity of Italian opera, whereas Strauss openly satirizes it. In the Hoffmann essay, Ludwig tries to convince Ferdinand that great operas are possible with simple poetry: "…what a countless variety of heart-rending inflections the Italians have employed while singing the little word *addio*! How many thousand upon thousand nuances musical expression is capable of!"[37] Strauss flatly contradicts this view with biting parody in *Capriccio* when the two Italian singers perform for the Countess and her guests. They sing a goodbye duet between two lovers with a text by Metastasio that is tellingly littered with *addio*.

Between the two verses of this duet, the company comments on the inappropriate setting of the text. The characters who comment on the performance all seem to be dissatisfied with the piece, or at the very least left tepid and unmoved by it. The Countess comments on the disconnect between the unsuitable happy tone of the music and the

---

[35] Hoffmann, "The Poet and the Composer," trans. Martyn Clarke, 206.

[36] Ibid., 207.

[37] Ibid., 206.

sorrowful goodbyes of the lovers, and indeed Strauss sets this text in a warm A-flat major with luscious string accompaniment. The Count seems to approve, giving the performance two hearty *bravos* and asserting that in such a charming setting no one cares whether or not the words make sense, but this statement is facetious. The Count loves spoken theater (and even obsesses over the actress Clairon who is visiting for the day) and has said previously that opera is absurd and that the problem with opera is that the text cannot be understood. The Count, who would most certainly lie under the banner of *Prima le parole, dopo la musica*, actually ironically expresses here his disappointment in the fact that an audience would likely not care whether the musical setting corresponds to the words as long as the music is beautiful. Olivier, the poet and playwright, echoes this sentiment when he highlights the one "advantage" of such a setting: that the music enchants everyone despite the unhappy subject matter. The most positive reaction comes from Flamand, who merely acknowledges the composer's ability to express a melancholy text with such cheery notes.

Strauss's setting of this text openly satirizes Italian music. He had previously expressed a disliking for Italian music, calling it "such trash" in a letter to his father and saying that he would never convert to Italian music.[38] Moerover, Reinhold Schlötterer has demonstrated that Strauss alludes to and obfuscates typical *bel canto* meters in the contradiction between the tenor's apparent 3/4 melody against the orchestra's 6/8 accompaniment. Schlötterer also identifies Strauss's mockery of *bel canto's* stereotypical "oom-pah-pah" accompaniment in his off-kilter adaptation of it in the two verses of this

---

[38] Schlötterer, "Ironic Allusions to Italian Opera," 79.

duet.[39] The thick textures in Strauss's operas and orchestrated songs attest to the fact that

he preferred thick orchestral polyphony to such accompanimental oom-pahing.

Nevertheless, in the preface to *Capriccio*, Strauss does recognize that Verdi uses this type

of accompaniment with "particular subtlety and inventiveness," and asserts that this type

of homophonic orchestral support is indeed the best way to ensure that singers can be

clearly understood.[40] But Strauss singles Verdi out as the only composer to inventively

use such uninteresting techniques and maintains furthermore that "the ideal relationship

between vocal line and orchestra may be found in Wagner's works" with their motivic

polyphony.[41] Schlötterer also finds "an even greater dichotomy…implied" between

German and Italian opera in the first scene's aesthetic debate.[42] This dichotomy is

reminiscent of the operatic contest that birthed the whole opera: that of the 1786 premiere

of *Der Schauspieldirektor* and *Prima la musica e poi le parole* at the Schönbrunn

Orangerie. Strauss further highlights his ridiculous setting of this duet later when the

singers hysterically repeat the melody to different text during the quarreling ensemble in

the ninth scene, this time saying goodbye to their promised fee.

Flamand and Olivier both seem to agree with Strauss's low opinion of Italian

opera. When LaRoche praises Italian opera above all else, Olivier replies, "With its bad

text?," to which LaRoche responds, "With its good music!"[43] LaRoche defends Italian

opera (in particular the works of Piccinni) for its popular musical style and for its ability

---

[39] Ibid., 81–82.

[40] Richard Strauss, preface to his opera *Capriccio,* second page of English translation.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Schlötterer, "Ironic Allusions to Italian Opera," 84.

[43] Krauss and Strauss, *Capriccio*, libretto, 36. Translation mine.

to show off *opera buffa* singers' voices. Flamand later deems Italian music "music only as a smokescreen!"[44] Flamand's impression that Italian music merely hides bad text in operas resembles Olivier's assertion, quoted above, that the composer and librettist of an opera merely hamper each other during the writing process. Both statements comment on the two primary elements of opera working against each other in the final product, although Olivier's reveals a universal distrust of composers and the operatic art form in general (comically summarized later in the opera when he proclaims, "I fear [Flamand] is composing me!").[45]

The poets in the outer story of "The Poet and the Composer" also express this distrust of operatic collaboration in general. Lothar, one of these poets, believes that "perfect unity of text and music" can only occur when both the text and the music spring from the same mind.[46] Cyprian and Ottmar, the two other poets in this story, voice their agreement as well. Early in his career, Strauss may have agreed with all of these poets. About half a century before *Capriccio*, he composed *Guntram*, his first opera, to his own libretto. Unlike the circumstances surrounding *Capriccio*, Strauss himself wrote the *Guntram* libretto because of his strong Wagnerian leanings at this time, as evinced by opera's subject matter and music. Of course, Strauss's Wagnerian phase did not last his entire career, even though Wagner's music had a lasting impact on him, and he did not return to writing his own opera libretto until *Intermezzo* in the early 1920s. With that piece, though, the need to write his own text stemmed from the autobiographical nature of the plot rather than from any Wagnerian philosophical stance.

---

[44] Ibid., 45. Translation mine.

[45] Ibid., 52. Translation mine.

[46] Hoffmann, "The Poet and the Composer," 189.

All of the aesthetic debates thus far have taken place before the ultimate scene in the opera, when the Countess considers her predicament: will she choose Flamand (music) or Olivier (text)? She must decide how the opera will end. In the consequences of this scene lies an enormous opportunity for interpretation, since the opera closes before the countess makes her final decision. The scene opens with the opening horn solo of the famous *Mondscheinmusik*, which quotes a theme from one of Strauss's song cycles, *Krämerspiegel*. Strauss composed this cycle to literary critic Alfred Kerr's specially written lyrics in response to frustration with the music publisher Bote & Bock and can be read as a mini musical manifesto in its own right since Strauss criticizes the nature of the music publishing business.[47] Barbara Petersen has shown that Strauss cared greatly about composer's rights, including the rights involved in dealing with publishers, an issue that occupied much of Strauss's time and effort during his career.[48] Strauss's allusion to this cycle in *Capriccio* has been noted, but only on musical terms; the semiotic implications of this reference have not yet been explored in the secondary literature. Here I will make some preliminary observations.

This theme comes from the piano introduction to *Krämerspiegel*'s eighth song, "Von Händler wird die Kunst bedroht." After this introduction, the vocal part begins,

---

[47] Barbara A. Petersen, *Ton und Wort: The Lieder of Richard Strauss* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1980), 118.

[48] Barbara A. Petersen, "Die Händler und die Kunst: Richard Strauss as Composers' Advocate," in *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and His Work*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 115–32.

"Art is threatened by tradesmen…. They bring music to its death."[49] This text has

implications for the interpretation of the enigmatic final scene.

Example 4: Richard Strauss, *Krämerspiegel*, song eight, mm.1–6, theme used in *Capriccio*[50]
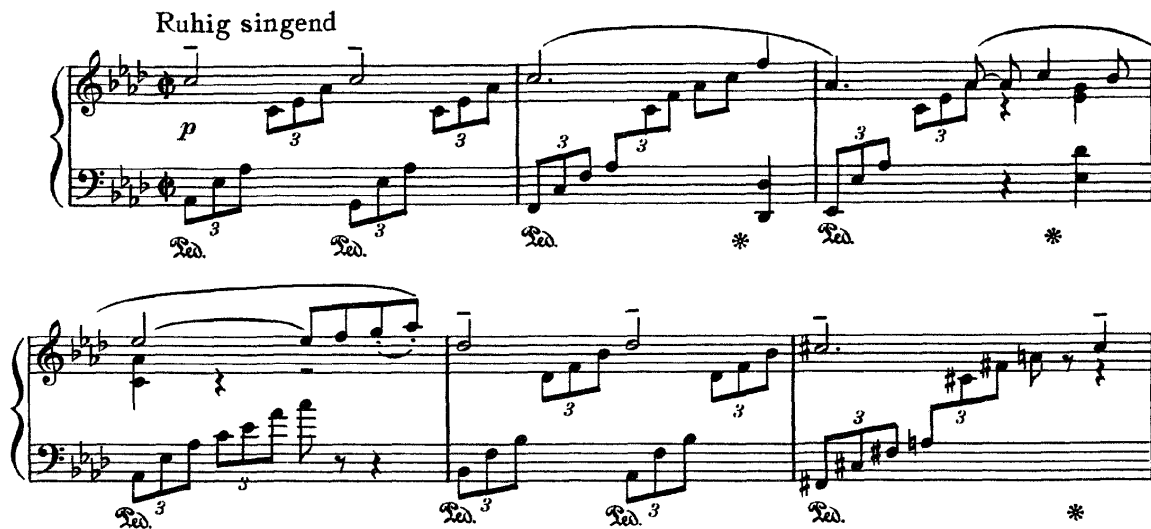
Few commentators are bold enough to decide whether Strauss would choose

words or music at the end of the opera since the libretto does not state the Countess's

choice. However, Michael Kennedy believes that Strauss subtly hints that music wins this

contest. In her soliloquy at the end of the opera, the countess asks herself if she will be

able to find an ending that is not trivial. Then the Major-Domo sings the final line of the

---

[49] "Von Händler wird die Kunst bedroht, da habt ihr die Bescherung. Sie bringen der Musik den Tod." Richard Strauss, *Krämerspiegel: Zwölf Gesänge von Alfred Kerr für eine Singstimme mit Klaverbegleitung*" (London: Boosey & Co., 1959), 29–31. Translation mine.

[50] Richard Strauss, "Von Händler wird die Kunst bedroht," from *Krämerspiegel*, ed. Paul Cassirer, (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1964), 267, http://javanese.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/2/24/IMSLP135600-PMLP94403-Richard_Strauss_-_Kr__merspiegel__op._66.pdf (accessed December 13, 2012). This score is in the public domain.

opera: "Madame, your supper is served."[51] In Kennedy's view, Strauss's "lyrical" and

"touching" setting of this last line of text, which is indeed trivial, proves Strauss's

position.[52] This is certainly a valid interpretation, and since the libretto precludes any

absolute answers, no interpretation can be called definitive. However, the intertextuality

explored in this chapter suggests an alternative reading: that the Countess (and therefore

Strauss) does not choose at all.

The Countess herself foreshadows this possibility early in the opera, explaining to

her brother, "Perhaps I'll choose neither, for choosing either means I must lose one."[53]

Moreover, Strauss's allusion to "Von Händler" from *Krämerspiegel* could suggest that

the Countess does not want to ruin art, like businessmen do, by making decisions for

personal gain. After all, the opera contains two characters obsessed with making money:

the Italian Opera Singers, comically anxious that they will not be paid for their services.

We have already seen that Strauss used these characters to represent aspects of Italian

opera that he at the very best found distasteful, so their inclusion here could also

comment on the sin of creating art for money's sake, rather than for art's sake. The

mollified philosophies of Flamand and Olivier, discussed above, could also point toward

this reading of the opera's end. Furthermore, Hoffmann's essay seems to agree that "to

choose one is to lose the other." In the essay, Ludwig asserts, "Poets and composers are

closely kindred members of *one* church; for the secret of words and sounds is one and the

---

[51] Krauss and Strauss, *Capriccio*, libretto, trans. Maria Massey, 112.

[52] Michael Kennedy, *Richard Strauss* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 172–73.

[53] Krauss and Strauss, *Capriccio*, libretto, trans. Maria Massey, 43.

same, unveiling to both the ultimate sublimity."[54] Ludwig not only gives equal credit to both words and music for opera's sublimity; he also says that dramatic failings in opera are "imputed now to the libretto, now to the music."[55] Ludwig's views could support the interpretation that, for Strauss, the Countess chooses neither Olivier nor Flamand: neither words nor music.

Strauss composed his "one will" near the end of his life as a final statement on opera, the medium that had occupied the largest portion of his compositional efforts for half a century. That Strauss actually did begin another operatic project, *Des Esels Schatten*, leaving it incomplete upon his death in 1949 despite having said that he would not write another opera, diminishes nothing from reading *Capriccio* as Strauss's meta-operatic manifesto. The composer, seventy-eight years old at *Capriccio*'s premiere, did not think he would survive to the end of World War II, much less live to the age of eighty-five. Strauss demonstrated the importance of this opera by the care he put into writing its libretto, rejecting all of Josef Gregor's earnest attempts to please him. Moreover, Strauss's knowledge of other works regarding the same aesthetic questions reveals a richer layer of meaning for *Capriccio*. By analyzing Strauss's last finished opera as a piece in dialogue with these other works, one can discern a crisper, deeper image of Strauss's operatic philosophies. Moreover, Strauss had often used his music to make statements about music itself, from the reference to music critics as "The Hero's Adversaries" in *Ein Heldenleben* to sharp criticism and ridicule of his publishers in the song cycle *Krämerspiegel*. This intertextual approach to reading *Capriccio* carries important implications for the performance and interpretation of all of Strauss's operas

---

[54] Hoffmann, "The Poet and the Composer," trans. Martyn Clarke, 195.

[55] Ibid., 200.

and provides commentary on the composer's viewpoints as they changed throughout his career.

Chapter 4

Self-Reference from without: Medial (un)Awareness and *Die Frau ohne Schatten*

Die Frau ohne Schatten, probably Strauss's most problematic opera because of its obscure libretto, does not present any significant instances of self-reference in itself. The fairytale libretto never refers to itself or to opera, nor does it draw attention to its fictionality in any way. However, Christof Loy's unorthodox 2011 production of the opera for the Salzburger Festspiele imposes self-referentiality on this otherwise non-self-referential work.

Hofmannsthal's abstruse libretto tells a fairytale story of two couples who must achieve or retain their humanity. In the opening of the opera, a spirit messenger from Keikobad, the Empress's father and a deity (unseen in the opera), visits the Nurse to give a warning. If the Empress, a spirit being who the Nurse aids, does not obtain a shadow (which allows her to bear children), her husband, the Emperor, will be turned to stone. With the help of her Nurse, the Empress descends to the world of humans in order to obtain a shadow from the Dyer's Wife, a woman unhappy in her marriage to Barak (the Dyer).

The cunning nurse strikes a deal with the Dyer's Wife: the Nurse and the Empress will serve her for three days in exchange for her shadow. In the process, the Dyer's Wife will lose her ability to bear children, which at the beginning of the opera she does not want anyway, despite her husband's ardent desire for a family. When the deal is struck and the Wife worries that she has not prepared dinner for her husband's imminent return, the Nurse conjures fish and oil into a pan. While this cooks, voices of unborn children

issue from the pan, scaring the Wife. During the next three days, the Nurse magically conjures dozens of maidservants and even turns a broom and kettle into the form of a young man after whom the Dyer's Wife had lusted previously, tempting the Dyer's Wife with riches and power in exchange for her shadow.

During a fight with her husband on the third day of The Nurse's and The Empress's servitude, The Dyer's Wife falsely confesses to infidelity and to having already sold her shadow, angering her Barak. The Dyer's handicapped brothers, who live with the Dyer and his Wife, see that the Wife indeed casts no shadow. Barak tries to kill his wife while his brothers hold him back and a huge earthquake swallows the married couple, placing them in separate chambers. The Dyer and his Wife separately express their regret at their actions and their desire to see each other again. Meanwhile, the Empress leaves the Nurse, now convinced of the latter's evil intentions and resolving not to take the Dyer's Wife's shadow and therefore her ability to bear children; she then enters a mystical temple where, through trials similar to those in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, the Dyer (Barak) and his Wife must reconcile their marriage. When the Empress can finally obtain the shadow by drinking the Water of Life, she refuses even though the Emperor will be turned to stone, shouting at the end of a spoken monologue, "Ich will nicht!" ("I do not want to!"). By refusing to deprive Barak and his Wife of the chance to have children even at great personal cost, the Empress passes the test and gains her shadow and her humanity.

This complicated synopsis, though reduced, helps to explain why many consider *Die Frau ohne Schatten* as Strauss's most difficult opera for audiences. Hofmannsthal wrote a highly symbolic libretto and even wrote that it would bear "a certain analogy" to

Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, whose libretto presents similarly obscure symbolism.[1] The

complex, intricate plot also explains why Strauss and Hofmannsthal struggled in the

creation of this opera. Strauss admired Hofmannsthal's poetry: "…you've never written

anything more beautiful and compact in your life…I only hope my music will be worthy

of your fine poetry."[2] However, Strauss, practical in matters of theater, had many

misgivings about whether audiences would understand Hofmannsthal's poetic message as

told in this intricate fairytale allegory:

> I have let Hülsen and Seebach read the first two acts of the text. Both displayed
> total incomprehension of the thing, and Seebach understood it only after I had
> once more orally explained the subject to him and played the first act to him on
> the piano. Everything tells me that the subject and its theme are difficult to
> understand and that everything must be done to make it as clear as possible.[3]

Hofmannsthal responded that Strauss should not have let anyone read the script and that

in any case, the public must not approach this opera without background knowledge,

which would be provided in a written introduction to the opera that would explain all of

the symbolism at work.[4] Hofmannsthal planned that the poet Max Mell would write this

introduction, but this never came to be.[5] In a subsequent letter, Strauss elaborated on

some of the changes he thought might make the libretto more in the context of the opera.[6]

For instance, Strauss thought that the voices of the unborn children coming from the

---

[1] Hugo von Hofmannsthal to Richard Strauss, Rodaun, March 3, 1911, in *The Correspondence between Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, ed. Franz and Alice Strauss, trans. Hanns Hammelmann and Ewald Osers (London: Collins, 1961), 76.

[2] Strauss to Hofmannsthal, Garmisch, July 16, 1914, in *Correspondence*, 208.

[3] Strauss to Hofmannsthal, Garmisch, April 5, 1915, in *Correspondence*, 219.

[4] Hofmannsthal to Strauss, Rodaun, early April, 1915, in *Correspondence*, 220.

[5] Ibid., n. 1. Hofmannsthal subsequently published a prose version of the opera's story.

[6] Strauss to Hofmannsthal, Garmisch, April 14, 1915, in *Correspondence*, 221–4.

cooking fish and oil would be confusing to audiences, suggesting that this be represented

by instrumental themes rather than sung voices.[7] However, this section, like most of

Strauss's suggestions, stayed the same, and audience members can easily become

confused about the origin of these voices in a production if they have not read the

synopsis. In this case, as always, Hofmannsthal displayed his indifference to practical

matters in the theater, favoring his complex themes and motifs over intelligibility,

contrary to Strauss's theatrical aims.

Die Frau's complicated plot and the tension between Strauss and Hofmannsthal

during its creation could also explain why Loy may have been attracted to the idea of

presenting this opera with another level of allegory and symbolism. Perhaps Loy wanted

to present the themes and poetic essence of Hofmannsthal's scenario without the

distractions of actual mythic characters. A quote from Loy's website seems to support

this possibility:

> …We have the big responsibility to identify not only those parts that require
> faithfulness to the text, but also those that only appear convincing once one has
> departed from the libretto and given way to one's imagination. Faithfulness to the
> original understood in a wrong way can obscure the audience's view upon the
> essence of the play. This is all about old habits of seeing theatre which became
> antiquated. However, in theatrical pleasure we are constantly tempted to apply
> those antiquated habits of seeing to our time. That can be funny, maybe even
> revealing, but in applying a false sense of tradition we achieve the exact opposite
> of what the composer really wanted to say.[8]

So Loy wants to present his view of "what the composer really wanted to say" even if he

must change the setting or other aspects of the piece to present that in the most direct way

---

[7] Ibid.

[8] Christoph Loy, "Points of View," English version of Loy's website, translator unknown, http://www.christof-loy.de/left01/english/men04/head04f.htm (accessed December 20, 2013).

possible. For him, being faithful to a work means being faithful to its message over its text.

Loy's reading of *Die Frau* replaces all of the fairytale scenery described in the libretto with a recreation of the famous Sofiensaal in Vienna. The whole production recreates the recording process of a famous 1955 recording of the opera conducted by Karl Böhm.[9] The singers wear typical 1950s clothing and sing into (inactive) microphones while a red light on stage indicates that recording is in progress. Instead of watching the Empress gain a shadow, the audience watches opera singers recording an opera. This production, then, draws attention to the opera's status as an artifact. By watching the recording process, the audience constantly remembers the mediality of the work they are watching; there can be no suspension of disbelief on a large level (regarding Hofmannsthal's story) since the production constantly shows the process of recording. Using Werner Wolf's classification then, this could be called a meta-production since it generates medial awareness. More specifically, it falls under Winfried Nöth's definition of *performative metareference*, "a metasign which states, shows, or indicates that a semiotic act is being performed, that a speaker is speaking, a writer is writing, a painter is painting, a musician is performing a piece of music, etc."[10]

Why *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, though? A director could apply this concept to any opera that has been previously recorded. Further, even if an opera has not ever been recorded, the concept would still work; the fictionality of the recording session would not

---

[9] Richard Strauss, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Karl Böhm, conductor, Decca 425981, CD, re-release 1991.

[10] Winfried Nöth, "Metareference from a Semiotic Perspective," in *Metareference across Media: Theory and Case Studies*, ed. Werner Wolf (Amsterdam: Rudopi, 2009), 89.

change the over all indication that a musician is performing a piece of music, and Loy's

re-creation of the recording follows the story only very loosely anyway. Loy explains the

inspiration for his production: "I happened upon the story that in 1955 Karl Böhm was

able to persuade singers of the Vienna State Opera to take part in the first recording of

Die Frau ohne Schatten in unheated halls in the middle of winter and without any fee."[11]

Loy had some of his facts wrong: several earlier recordings of *Die Frau* exist, one made

by an identical cast just a few months earlier in the same year, the earlier recording being

live and the later being a studio recording. Incorrect facts aside, this story inspired Loy to

add yet another layer of symbolism to Hofmannsthal's already allegorical libretto.

Loy's conception centers around a young singer hired to sing the role of the

Empress cast alongside more famous colleagues. Early in the first act, Loy wants the

audience to realize that "to fight for the survival of her beloved emperor and to face the

important task entrusted to her in the course of this recording become one and the same

for the artist [the singer of the Empress]," as Loy explains in his *Persönliche*

Inhaltsangabe ("Personal Synopsis").[12] Loy divides the three acts into three days of

recording, and Barak and his Wife become a married couple, both singers, struggling in

their marriage. The talk of swearing unborn children from one's body to gain slaves and

---

[11] Quoted in Mike Ashman, liner notes to Christof Loy, stage director, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, opera in three acts by Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, conducted by Christian Thielemann (London: Opus Arte, 2011), 4.

[12] Christof Loy, "*Die Frau ohne Schatten*: Eine persönliche Inhaltsangabe"*, in *Pressegespräch: Die Frau ohne Schatten von Richard Strauss* (Salzburg, Salzburger Festspiele, 2011), Word document at: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CDIQFjAA&url=http%3 A%2F%2Fwww.salzburgerfestspiele.at%2FLinkClick.aspx%3Ffileticket%3Dubz3SBqMYWY%253D%26 tabid%3D90%26mid%3D894%26language%3Den- US%26forcedownload%3Dtrue&ei=YmISUu_YPLTk4AObtIG4Aw&usg=AFQjCNGM7QBdioiVqWYC ZRq8fvYcVFqBoA&sig2=y7pfu2WvcCDrN__fZoUgEw&bvm=bv.50768961,d.dmg (accessed August 14, 2013), 2. "Für das Überleben ihres geliebten Kaisers zu kämpfen und sich der wichtigen Aufgabe, die man ihr im Rahmen dieser Aufnahme anvertraut hat, zu stellen werden für die Künstlerin ein und dasselbe." Translation mine.

riches becomes talk of birth control to ensure a successful career. Parts of the action are portrayed surrealistically as the singer's dreams (or nightmares). During the recording of her last monologue, she faints. When she awakens, her dream is over and she has apparently successfully recorded the scene. "She has passed the test and has matured as a person, and therefore as an artist. But the former is more important to her."[13] The final scene is portrayed as a Christmas party for the cast and crew, during which the cast sings the final scene on stage to the audience of the recording crew and executives. Although Loy worked out this additional synopsis in great detail, superimposed over Hofmannsthal's scenario, much of it cannot come across in performance, since all of the singers' text still refers to the magical world Hofmannsthal created. Many individuals have noted this failure of the production, but Loy's intention adds another layer of allegory by allowing the production to constantly reaffirm its own status as an opera.[14]

Loy's production, by showing the recording process, deals with the issue of mediality in a broader respect than just drawing attention to *Die Frau*'s opera-ness. The audience experiences a live operatic performance, but views a recording session. The recording in question had its original release in LP format in 1955 and was subsequently re-released several times, eventually on compact disc. Furthermore, a filmed version of Loy's production exists on DVD.[15]

---

[13] Ibid., 4. "Sie hat die Prüfung bestanden, ist als Mensch gereift, und damit auch als Künstlerin. Doch ersteres ist ihr wichtiger." Translation mine.

[14] Mark Berry, "Salzburg Festival (2) – *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, 21 August 2011," Boulezian, entry posted August 25, 2011, http://boulezian.blogspot.com/2011/08/salzburg-festival-2-die-frau-ohne.html (accessed August 16, 2013); Zerbinetta (username), "The Salzburg Festival's *Die Frau ohne Schatten,*" Bachtrack, entry posted August 1, 2011, http://www.bachtrack.com/review-die-frau-ohne-schatten-salzburg-festival (accessed August 16, 2013).

[15] Christof Loy, stage director, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, opera in three acts by Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, conducted by Christian Thielemann (London: Opus Arte, 2011).

All of this reworking, recording, re-releasing, and filming questions the idea of a work's "text." Typically an operatic production (now at least) would revere the "text" of an operatic work as gospel. But this production recreates a specific *event*, a recording session from the 1950s. So this production does not primarily concern itself with Barak, the Empress, or the Nurse. Rather, Loy presents a production about another production, albeit the production of a recording rather than a theatrical production. Each of these productions can constitute a "text" of its own accord. The decisions that a recording engineer makes (microphone type and distance from the musicians, etc.) give a specific quality to each recording. Similarly, every production can be referred to as a "text" in its own right. So Loy presents a visual production of an aural production of an opera. Furthermore, the filmed version adds another layer or text onto this intricate web. Karina Fibich, the video director of the DVD, similarly made decisions regarding camera angles, zoom, and the like that could once again merit her work as worthy of analysis as a text in its own right. This, of course, occurs in all filmed versions of theatrical pieces. The difference here is that Loy's production is aware of its reliance on this previous production (the 1955 recording), its current production, and, arguably, of the future layer of production added by Fibich.

So Loy seems to present a history of audio and video recording through a history of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*'s recording history. Recording figures importantly in the production from the beginning, and not only from the presence of microphones and recording engineers on the stage. In the beginning of the opera, when Strauss's score depicts the light over the sea that the Nurse sees, a red light turns on on stage. The recording assistant's gestures clarify that this light indicates that they are now recording.

Additionally, Loy's production reaches down into the text of *Die Frau ohne Schatten* itself, occasionally drawing elements from the inner world of the opera into the outer world of the recording. For instance, in the opera's second scene, while the Nurse magically conjures a meal for Barak's wife ("The Woman") to serve to her husband, Strauss employs a wind machine in the orchestra. In Strauss's score, it simply creates a sinister feeling and perhaps indicates diegetic wind that the characters can hear while the Nurse works her magic. However, in Loy's production, the singer of the Nurse quizzically looks around and blows into her microphone as if testing it when the wind machine plays, clearly indicating that she hears electronic feedback from her microphone. The wind machine crosses the barrier of the inner world of the opera into the outer world of the recording, thereby performing a sort of instrumental metalepsis. This metalepsis reminds the informed audience member of the recording process and the releases and re-releases that the recording had, even going through a change of medium from LP to CD.

The mediality of this piece comes more strongly to the forefront in the final scene of the opera. In Hofmannsthal's scenario, the main characters have just completed their trials and rejoice in their newfound happiness at the prospect of bearing children. In Loy's production, the scene shows a cast party for everyone involved in the recording at which the four main cast members perform for the rest of the cast and crew. As they finish singing, their audience stands and applauds, but this ovation occurs in slow motion. However, rather than any type of digital manipulation of the film, this slow motion actually occurs on stage in the theatrical production; the DVD version of the opera accurately shows the action onstage without any temporal manipulation. The slow motion effect is native to media such as television and film because of the ability to manipulate

the image so that it presents the action more slowly. Having actual actors move at reduced speeds here shows that Loy borrowed the technique from these recent mediums in his production. On the recorded version of the production, this draws more attention to both the theatrical medium and the film medium; the viewer sees that the slow motion in this film is made not by technological manipulation, but by actors moving in slow motion (this is clear from the video). Thus, the addition of the film in the DVD version brings another layer of medial awareness to this production.

Loy's production presenting a history of *Die Frau*'s recordings—and subsequently becoming subject to the same process of medial change in its transferal to DVD—creates an interesting overlay, a perception of the opera itself proposed by Christian Thielemann, the conductor for the production. For Thielemann, *Die Frau ohne Schatten* presents a history of opera:

> But most of all, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*—…described by Strauss as the "last Romantic opera"—depicts a summary of German operatic history: Wagner sounds in it as well as comic opera; the sweeping upward and pressing forward, which is so typical of Strauss, ultimately goes back to Weber—think of the *Euryanthe* overture or the fast part of the *Oberon* overture. Strauss knew all these works very well because he conducted them himself—just like Mahler.[16]

---

[16] Christian Thielemann, "Alles, was Strauss ausmacht: Notizen zu *Die Frau ohne Schatten*", in *Pressegespräch: Die Frau ohne Schatten von Richard Strauss* (Salzburg, Salzburger Festspiele, 2011), Word document at: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CDIQFjAA&url=http%3 A%2F%2Fwww.salzburgerfestspiele.at%2FLinkClick.aspx%3Ffileticket%3Dubz3SBqMYWY%253D%26 tabid%3D90%26mid%3D894%26language%3Den-US%26forcedownload%3Dtrue&ei=YmISUu_YPLTk4AObtIG4Aw&usg=AFQjCNGM7QBdioiVqWYC ZRq8fvYcVFqBoA&sig2=y7pfu2WvcCDrN__fZoUgEw&bvm=bv.50768961,d.dmg (accessed August 14, 2013), 6. "Vor allem aber stellt *Die Frau ohne Schatten* – von Strauss und Hofmannsthal bewusst als „Hauptwerk" geplant und von Strauss als „letzte romantische Oper" bezeichnet – auch ein Resümee der deutschen Operngeschichte dar: Wagner klingt in ihr ebenso nach wie die Spieloper; das schwungvolle Empor- und Vorwärtsdrängende, das für Strauss so typisch ist, geht letztlich auf Weber zurück – man denke an die *Euryanthe*-Ouvertüre oder den schnellen Teil der *Oberon*-Ouvertüre. Strauss kannte all diese Werke auch deswegen so gut, weil er sie selbst dirigierte – ebenso wie Mahler." Translation mine.

Loy's production, then, alludes to a history of recordings of an opera, which, for

Thielemann, presents a history of opera itself. Loy even underscored the importance of

recording history in his production by changing the place of the recording from the

Musikverein to the Sofiensall, which had burned down in 2001, because of the latter's

importance in recording history: "The Sofiensäle are the more typical place for a

recording session; think of the famous Solti *Ring* with Birgit Bilsson. Decca had set up

the most advanced recording studio in Europe there."[17] Loy goes on to point out other

historical uses of the hall, including the founding of the Austrian Nazi Party and as a

holding area for Jews awaiting deportation.

    The DVD of the production strongly displays the various levels of the hierarchy

created here; it is a video production of a theatrical production of a recording production

of a meta-historical opera. Rather than confidently showing self-awareness like so many

self-referential pieces, Loy's production presents a medial identity crisis, pointing to

itself in many potential texts in these four different media; it is aware that it exists in a

fabricated medium, separate from the real world, but it is not sure which one.

---

[17] Christof Loy and Thomas Jonigk, "Hier ist Altes anwesend, hier kann Neues entstehen"*, in Pressegespräch: Die Frau ohne Schatten von Richard Strauss* (Salzburg, Salzburger Festspiele, 2011), Word document at:
https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CDIQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.salzburgerfestspiele.at%2FLinkClick.aspx%3Ffileticket%3Dubz3SBqMYWY%253D%26tabid%3D90%26mid%3D894%26language%3Den-US%26forcedownload%3Dtrue&ei=YmISUu_YPLTk4AObtIG4Aw&usg=AFQjCNGM7QBdioiVqWYCZRq8fvYcVFqBoA&sig2=y7pfu2WvcCDrN__fZoUgEw&bvm=bv.50768961,d.dmg (accessed August 14, 2013), 11. "Die Sofiensäle sind der typischere Ort für eine Schallplattenaufnahme, denken Sie an den berühmten Solti-Ring mit Birgit Nilsson. Die Decca hatte dort das modernste Aufnahmestudio Europas eingerichtet." Translation mine.

Conclusion: Strauss and Self-Reference

Strauss wrote very little about music in any formal capacity. This stands in sharp contrast to composers like Wagner or Schoenberg, whose many writings scholars have studied in close detail since they were penned. Strauss's output of this kind, however, consists of several very short articles, which all fit into one volume of less than two hundred small pages.[1] Similarly, Strauss wrote very little prose concerning his life, again contrasting with Wagner's extensive autobiography. Anyone looking for the type of information that such formal writings from Strauss would have contained has to look elsewhere: to his letters and music.

Luckily, Strauss's music often refers to himself, his family, and his aesthetic positions. Moreover, Strauss's operas' tendency to exhibit some form of self-reference often allows him to insert his voice and opinion. Reading his letters regarding the genesis of these operas allows us to further clarify Strauss's, his collaborators', and his later interpreters' views of themselves and their work.

Self-reference in these pieces proves interesting and enlightening in light of their compositional history. The Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, as we have seen, expressly states concerns about textual fidelity to the inner opera that apply directly to *Ariadne auf Naxos* itself. That these concerns applied to the opera as a whole accidentally—because of the many unplanned revisions and derivative works that arose after the unsuccessful premiere of the original 1912 version—does not make them any less interesting or

---

[1] Willi Schuh, ed., *Recollections and Reflections,* trans. L. J. Lawrence (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1974).

meaningful. The Composer's anxieties over his opera parallel many of the concerns of Strauss and Hofmannsthal as they revised their opera. Moreover, the Composer's apprehension about textual fidelity corresponds to that of modern-day listeners and interpreters of this opera. There is no way to present or view the entire opera; each version presents an incomplete picture of the network of works related to it. No definitive version exists, and each incarnation of the piece suffers from an amputation, a separation from the rest of the music and text written for the story. Furthermore, the versions cannot be combined into one composite piece as they are mutually exclusive. Different versions treat the same text differently, and there is no viable way to present the piece with every treatment of each line of text or each dramatic situation. A production of the 1912 *Ariadne* lacks the singing in the linking scene, which became the sung prologue of the 1916 version, which in turn lacks the speech in that scene as presented in the original version. In the plot of the opera, a patron's requirements prevent a complete, textually faithful performance; in real life, this cannot occur, because it is impossible.

Intermezzo, on the other hand, deals exclusively in enunciative self-reference, in which the author (Strauss) "become[s] the topic of the message."[2] This opera not only represents daily life in the Weimar Republic, exhibiting dispassionate values of the New Objectivity, but also acts as a love letter to his wife, however unflattering it may seem at first blush. This opera shows that Strauss loved Pauline wholly, including her traits which others found so off-putting.

Capriccio brings questions of operatic aesthetics, especially the primacy of words or music, to the forefront. The presence of singers, a poet, a stage director, dancers, a

---

[2] Winfried Nöth, "Self-Reference in the Media: The Semiotic Framework," in *Self-Reference in the Media*, ed. Winfried Nöth and Nina Bishara (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2007), 20.

composer, and even a prompter as characters in the opera highlights all aspects of the operatic medium in a similar fashion to the linking scene (1912)/prologue (1916) of *Ariadne auf Naxos*. But this opera's plot even more explicitly centers around opera, since the characters decide to compose themselves into existence by writing an opera about themselves, an opera that is implied to be *Capriccio* itself; *Capriccio* is about its own creation. This opera allows Strauss to hint at his own views of words vs. music in opera, and while the opera cannot provide any definitive answers, the Countess, as the most sympathetic character, seems to provide a voice for Strauss within the opera, albeit in a more covert way than he provides himself that voice in *Intermezzo*.

If *Capriccio* is an opera about its own creation, then Christof Loy's production of *Die Frau ohne Schatten* is about opera in different media—LPs, CDs, DVDs, live performances, etc.—and the recording history of opera in general and *Die Frau ohne Schatten* in particular. Music director Christian Thielemann's views on *Die Frau* itself as an opera about operatic history further extends this production's historical scope as a visual production reproducing an audio recording of an opera about operatic history itself, even placing the production itself in the history that the opera and production present.

All of these cases of self-reference can present only self-referential potentialities. The audience must comply and usually must have some sort of background knowledge about the work, its medium, or its authors to receive the self-referential messages that these pieces contain. The audience's compliance and background knowledge proves especially important in instances where this self-reference relies on an awareness of a

piece's status as an artifact, or on medial awareness. "It is in the recipient that the essence of metareference, the eliciting of a medium awareness, takes place."[3]

Werner Wolf distinguishes metafiction from metamusic in that the latter does not rely on any text for its meta-effects.[4] In other words, musical pieces that exhibit metareference through a reliance on text (or any other medium) do not represent examples of metamusic; in the case of the operas and the production examined here, the ones that present strong medial awareness (*Ariadne, Capriccio,* and Loy's production of *Die Frau*) belong to the category of metafiction or metatheater rather than metamusic. In particular, *Ariadne* and *Capriccio* provide examples of meta-operas while Loy's production of *Die Frau* could be called a meta-production.

These pieces not only elucidate their creators' views of their work and themselves; they also comment on the nature of their media in general. *Ariadne auf Naxos* shows opera's status as an artwork that relies on patronage (or ticket sales in general) for its production and displays how it may be presented in altered forms for commercial reasons. Loy's production of *Die Frau* highlights opera recordings' status as a commercial commodity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. *Capriccio* almost literally presents a dialogue between words and music in the debates between Olivier and Flamand, and shows the other forces (such as drama and dance) that combine to create an opera while vying for supremacy. An analysis of self-referentiality in these pieces provides a largely unexplored interpretation of them, as well as shedding light on the views of Strauss in particular and, to a lesser degree, those of his collaborators and interpreters.

---

[3]Wolf, "Metafiction and Metamusic," 307.

[4] Ibid., 303–24.

Bibliography

Abbate, Carolyn. *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Alfaro, María Jesús Martínez. "Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept." *Atlantis* 18, nos. 1–2 (1996): 268–85.

Beinl, Stephan. "A Producer's Viewpoint: Notes on *Die Frau ohne Schatten.*" *Tempo* New Series 24 (Summer 1952): 28–31.

Bernhart, Walter, Steven Paul Scher, and Werner Wolf, eds. *Word and Music Studies: Defining the Field; Proceedings of the First International Conference on Word and Music Studies at Graz, 1997.* Amsterdam: Rudopi, 1999.

Bernhart, Walter, and Werner Wolf, eds. *Self-Reference in Literature and Music.* Amsterdam: Rudopi, 2010.

Betzweiser, Thomas. Preface to Antonio Salieri, *Prima la musica e poi le parole* (divertimento in one act). Libretto by Giovanni Battista Casti. Edited by Thomas Betzweiser. Cassel: Bärenreiter, 2007.

Bloomfield, Theodore. "Opera Domestica," *Music and Musicians* 22, no. 10 (1974): 34.

Böhm, Karl. *A Life Remembered.* Translated by John Kehoe. London: Marion Boyars, 1992.

Cassity, Turner. "The Egyptian Pauline." *Parnassus: Poetry in Review* 10 no. 2 (Fall–Winter 1982): 115–34.

Casti, Giovanni Battista. *Prima la musica e poi le parole.* Libretto. Translator unknown. In liner notes of *Antonio Salieri: Prima la musica e poi le parole, Allesandro Scarlatti: Lesbina e Adolfo.* Domenico Sanfilippo, conductor. Orchestra da Camera della Filarmonica della Boemia del Nord. Label: Bongiovanni. CD. 1986.

Cohn, Dorrit. "Metalepsis and Mise en Abyme." Translated by Lewis S. Gleich. *Narrative* 20, no. 1 (January 2012): 105–14.

Del Mar, Norman. *Richard Strauss: A Critical Commentary on His Life and Works.* 3 vols. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986.

Der Strom der Töne trug mich fort: Die Welt um Richard Strauss in Briefen. Editor unknown. Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1967.

Dürhammer, Ilija, and Pia Janke, eds. *Richard Strauss, Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Frauenbilder.* Vienna: Edition Praesens, 2001.

Erwin, Charlotte E. "Richard Strauss's Presketch Planning for *Ariadne auf Naxos*." *The Musical Quarterly* 67 (1981): 348–65.

Forsyth, Karen. *"Ariadne auf Naxos" by Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss: Its Genesis and Meaning.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Gass, William H. *Fiction and the Figures of Life.* New York: Vintage Books, 1971.

Gilliam, Bryan. "*Ariadne, Daphne* and the Problem of 'Verwandlung.'" *Cambridge Opera Journal* 15, no. 1 (March 2003): 67–81.

———. *Richard Strauss's "Elektra."* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

———. "Shadowland." *Opera News* 66, no. 7 (January 2002): 14–17.

———. "Strauss's *Intermezzo*: Innovation and Tradition." In *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and His Work*, edited by Bryan Gilliam, 259–83. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992.

Grasbinger, Franz, ed. *Der Strom der Töne trug mich fort: Die Welt um Richard Strauss in Briefen.* Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1967.

Hoffmann, E. T. A. "The Poet and the Composer." In *E. T. A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, edited by David Charlton, 188–209. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

von Hoffmannsthal, Hugo. *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1912 version). Libretto. In *Dramen 15*. Edited by Gudrun Kotheimer and Ingeborg Beyer-Ahlert. Vol. 17 of *Hugo von Hoffmannsthal: Sämtliche Werke*, edited by Rudolf Hirsch, Mathias Mayer, Christoph Perels, Edward Reichel, and Heinz Rölleke. Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 2006.

———. *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1916 version). Libretto. Translated by Peggie Cochrane. In liner notes of *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Giusseppe Sinopoli, conductor. Deutsche Grammophon 289 471 323-2. CD. 2001.

Hofstadter, Douglas R. *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.

Jenkins, Chadwick. "A View From Death: *Ariadne auf Naxos* as Failed Totality." *Current Musicology* 77 (2004): 69–95.

Kennedy, Michael. *Richard Strauss: Man, Musician, Enigma.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

———. *Richard Strauss.* The Master Musicians Series, edited by Stanley Sadie. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

———. "Elgar, Strauss, and their Wives." In *Cockaigne: Essays on Elgar "in London Town": Lectures Given to the Elgar Society, London Branch*, edited by Kevin D. Mitchell, 47–57. London: Elgar Editions, 2004.

Kovach, Thomas A, ed. *A Companion to the Works of Hugo von Hofmannsthal.* Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002.

———. "*Die Frau ohne Schatten*: Hofmannthal's Response to the Symbolist Dilemma." *The German Quarterly* 57 (1984): 377–91.

Krause, Ernst. *Richard Strauss: The Man and His Work.* Translator unknown. Boston: Crescendo Publishing Company, 1969.

Krauss, Clemens, and Richard Strauss. *Capriccio: Ein Konversationsstück für Musik in einem Aufzug.* Libretto. Translated by Maria Massey. In liner notes of *Capriccio*. Karl Böhm, conductor. Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks. Gundula Janowitz, Tatiana Troyanos, Peter Schreier, and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. Deutsche Grammophon 445 347-2. CD. 1994.

Kukkonen, Karin. "Metalepsis in Popular Culture: An Introduction." In *Metalepsis in Popular Culture*, edited by Karin Kukkonen and Sonja Klimek, 1–21. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011.

Lehmann, Lotte. *Singing with Richard Strauss.* Translated by Ernst Pawel. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1964.

Loy, Christof, stage director. *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. Opera in three acts by Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Conducted by Christian Thielemann. London: Opus Arte, 2011.

———. "*Die Frau ohne Schatten*: Eine persönliche Inhaltsgabe." In *Pressegespräch: Die Frau ohne Schatten von Richard Strauss,* 2–4. Salzburg, Salzburger Festspiele, 2011. Word document at: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CDIQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.salzburgerfestspiele.at%2FLinkClick.aspx%3Ffileticket%3Dubz3SBqMYWY%253D%26tabid%3D90%26mid%3D894%26language%3Den-US%26forcedownload%3Dtrue&ei=YmISUu_YPLTk4AObtIG4Aw&usg=AFQjCNGM7QBdioiVqWYCZRq8fvYcVFqBoA&sig2=y7pfu2WvcCDrN__fZoUgEw&bvm=bv.50768961,d.dmg (accessed August 14, 2013).

———, and Thomas Jonigk. "Hier ist Altes anwesend, hier kann Neues entstehen."In *Pressegespräch: Die Frau ohne Schatten von Richard Strauss,* 7–11. Salzburg, Salzburger Festspiele, 2011. Word document at: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CDIQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.salzburgerfestspiele.at%2FLinkClick.aspx%3Ffileticket%3Dubz3SBqMYWY%253D%26tabid%3D90%26mid%3D894%26language%3Den-US%26forcedownload%3Dtrue&ei=YmISUu_YPLTk4AObtIG4Aw&usg=AFQjCNGM7QBdioiVqWYCZRq8fvYcVFqBoA&sig2=y7pfu2WvcCDrN__fZoUgEw&bvm=bv.50768961,d.dmg (accessed August 14, 2013).

Marek, George R. *Richard Strauss: The Life of a Non-Hero.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967.

Misch, Ludwig. "Neue Sachlichkeit." *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* 54 (1927): 613–15.

Nöth, Winfried. "Metareference from a Semiotic Perspective." In *Metareference across Media: Theory and Case Studies*, edited by Werner Wolf, 89–120. Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2009.

———. "Self-Reference in the Media: The Semiotic Framework." In *Self-Reference in the Media*, edited by Winfried Nöth and Nina Bishara, 3–30. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2007.

Parsons, Charles H., comp. *Opera Librettists and Their Works*. Queenston, ON: The Edward Mellen Press, 1987.

Petersen, Barbara A. "Die Händler und die Kunst: Richard Strauss as Composers' Advocate." In *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and His Work*, edited by Bryan Gilliam, 115–32. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992.

———. *Ton und Wort: The Lieder of Richard Strauss*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1980.

Pier, John, ed. *The Dynamics of Narrative Form: Studies in Anglo-American Narratology.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004.

Polzonetti, Pierpaolo. "Opera as Process." In *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-century Opera*, edited by Anthony R. DelDonna and Pierpaolo Polzonetti, 3–23. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Puritz, Gerd. *Elisabeth Schumann: A Biography.* London: A. Deutsch, 1993.

Raeburn, Christopher. "An Evening at Schönbrunn." *The Music Review* 16, no. 2 (1955): 96–110.

Rieschel, Hans-Peter. *Komponisten und ihre Frauen.* Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1994.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. "Metaleptic Machines." *Semiotica* 150 (2004): 439–69.

Schlötterer, Reinhold. "Ironic Allusions to Italian Opera in the Musical Comedies of Richard Strauss." In *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and His Work*, edited by Bryan Gilliam, 77–91. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992.

———. "Das Harmonium in *Ariadne auf Naxos.*" *Richard Strauss-Blätter* 55 (June 2006): 22–33.

Schmidt-Neusatz, Helga. "Pauline Strauss-De Ahna: Weg und Wirkung als Sängerin." *Richard Strauss-Blätter* 44 (December 200): 3–45.

Schuh, Willi. *Richard Strauss: A Chronicle of the Early Years 1864–1898.* Translated by Mary Whittall. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

———, ed. *Richard Strauss: Briefe an die Eltern: 1882–1906.* Zürich: Atlantis Verlag, 1954.

———, ed. *Richard Strauss: Recollections and Reflections.* Translated by L. J. Lawrence. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1974.

Shirley, Hugo. "Melancholy and Allegory in *Die Frau ohne Schatten.*" *Cambridge Opera Journal* 24, no. 1 (2012): 67–97.

Soucek, Brian. "Giovanni auf Naxos." In *The Don Giovanni Moment: Essays on the Legacy of an Opera*, edited by Lydia Goehr and Daniel Herwitz, 193–210. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

Strauss, Franz and Alice Strauss, eds. *The Correspondence between Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal*. Translated by Hanns Hammelmann and Ewald Osers. London: Collins, 1961.

Strauss, Richard. *Die Frau ohne Schatten.* Karl Böhm, conductor. CD. Decca 425981. Re-release 1991.

———. "On Composing and Conducting." In *Recollections and Reflections*, edited by Willi Schuh, translated by L. J. Lawrence, 39–40. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1974.

———. Preface to his opera *Capriccio* (Ein Konversationsstück für Musik in einem Aufzug). Translated by Stewart Spencer. Libretto by Clemens Krauss and the composer. Richard Strauss Edition: Complete Stage Works, vol. 18. Mainz: Schott Musik International, 1996.

———. Preface to his opera *Intermezzo* (Eine bürgerliche Komödie mit sinfonischen Zwischenspielen in zwei Aufzügen). Translated by Stewart Spencer. Libretto by the composer. Richard Strauss Edition: Complete Stage Works, vol. 11. Mainz: Schott Musik International, 1996.

———, and Hugo von Hofmannsthal. *The Correspondence between Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, translated by Hanns Hammelmann and Ewald Osers. London: William Collins Sons & Co., 1961.

———, and Stefan Zweig. *A Confidential Matter: The Letters of Richard Strauss and Stefan Zweig, 1931-1935*. Translated by Max Knight. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Stravinsky, Igor. *An Autobiography*. 1936. Reprint, London: Calder and Boyars, 1975.

———, and Robert Craft. *Expositions and Developments*. London: Faber and Faber, 1959.

Thielemann, Christian. "Alles, was Strauss ausmacht: Notizen zu *Die Frau ohne Schatten*." In *Pressegespräch: Die Frau ohne Schatten von Richard Strauss*, 5–6. Salzburg, Salzburger Festspiele, 2011. Word document at: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CDIQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.salzburgerfestspiele.at%2FLinkClick.aspx%3Ffileticket%3Dubz3SBqMYWY%253D%26tabid%3D90%26mid%3D894%26language%3Den-US%26forcedownload%3Dtrue&ei=YmISUu_YPLTk4AObtIG4Aw&usg=AFQjCNGM7QBdioiVqWYCZRq8fvYcVFqBoA&sig2=y7pfu2WvcCDrN__fZoUgEw&bvm=bv.50768961,d.dmg (accessed August 14, 2013).

Tubeuf, André. "La paix chez soi." In "Intermezzo." Special issue, *L'avant-Scène Opéra* 138 (1991): 16–21.

Waugh, Patricia. *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. London: Methuen & Company, 1984.

Werbeck, Walter. "'Eine Frau muß die Mittelpunktfigur sein:' Richard Strauss' Vorliebe für Frauengestalten in seinen Opern." *Frauengestalten in der Oper des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (2003): 97–111.

Wilhelm, Kurt. *Richard Strauss: An Intimate Portrait*. Translated by Mary Whittall. London: Thames and Hudson, 1989.

Wolf, Werner. "Metafiction and Metamusic: Exploring the Limits of Metareference." In *Self-Reference in the Media*, edited by Winfried Nöth and Nina Bishara, 303–24. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2007.