

coincidences by which the real Marie Duplessis and her fictional incarnations blurred together. The Jewish actress Judith Bernat, whose talent Marie Duplessis had encouraged, and who also became a conquest of Morny, would go on to play the role of Marguerite in the provinces.

*The Real Traviata* offers the fullest account we have of Marie Duplessis, her cultural universe, and her successive mythologization (what one disgruntled *Times* journalist in 1856 called ‘the apotheosis of prostitution’). While narrating her life, Weis also uses it as a pretext for parallel inquiries and wider cultural ruminations. In the range of exciting documentation he has uncovered, Weis highlights the limits of her first nineteenth-century biographer, Romain Vienne; but in his strong subjective identifications, and novelistic writing, Weis suggests that he is just as infatuated as was Vienne with this fallen woman and her literary and musical posterity.

Larry Wolff, *The Singing Turk: Ottoman Power and Operatic Emotions on the European Stage from the Siege of Vienna to the Age of Napoleon*, Stanford University Press: Stanford, CA, 2016; 504 pp.; 9780804795777, \$65.00 (hbk)

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In this penetrating study, Larry Wolff suggests not only how operatic representations of Turkish themes and characters might have reflected transformations in perceptions of Ottoman power, but also how – as in, say, Montesquieu’s *Lettres persanes*, yet closer to ‘home’ – they enabled Enlightened criticism of European ‘reality’. Wolff sells himself short with the pre-emptive defence that ‘this is not a musicological study but rather a study in cultural and intellectual history’. Is that not a considerable, if not the only, part of what musicology is? Perhaps we should simply say this is not a musico-analytical study, for Wolff is not one of those historians who shies away from dealing with music.

From the success in London of Handel’s *Tamerlano* in 1724 to the 1848 failure in Habsburg Trieste, concerning which it would have been good to have heard more, of Verdi’s *Il corsaro*, Wolff’s story takes in a commendably grand narrative of European musical and intellectual history that yet does not lack revealing detail. From such detail, we learn, for instance, that, during rehearsals for *Tamerlano*’s 1731 revival, the visiting Duke of Lorraine, later Francis I, Holy Roman Emperor, and Maria Theresa’s consort, ‘sang a part’, likely to have been that of the Ottoman Sultan, Bajazet. (As Wolff drily points out, ‘the future father of Maria Theresa’s 11 children could not possibly have been a castrato.’)

Francis Stephen’s successor as Emperor, Joseph II, in founding the German-language *Nationalsingspiel* theatre company in Vienna, would enable the part-representation of himself and Enlightened Absolutist magnanimity in the person of Pasha Selim in Mozart’s 1782 *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, the most enduring repertoire example of the Turk in opera – albeit not a singing one, for the role is

purely spoken. Wolff is especially interesting on the closing vaudeville, ‘an acclamation in favor of the benevolent prince’, who can only ‘passively and silently receive...tribute and might as well be a stone monument to enlightened rule’ (201). The problematic Orientalism of the opera notwithstanding, it remains that Christian convert to Islam who emerges with the greatest credit. Moreover, as Wolff points out, ‘in the vanquishing of Osmin’, the Pasha’s malign servant, ‘it is not Turkishness that has been silenced, for the Turkish instruments, march tempo, and oscillating intervals [a better phrase might have been found there] all return in their clamorous brilliance’ (203) to acclaim him.

Wisely, no attempt is made to exaggerate the importance of such connections as that between Habsburg-Lorraine father and son, but they encourage us to think and remind us that there is an ongoing tradition of representation, even of ‘temporary interplay of political identities’, that not only underlies and forms the broader narrative but also deepens our understanding of canonical works such as Mozart’s. Wolff appreciates, moreover, that the canon is not always the thing, and certainly not always in the way we might understand it. It is at least as enlightening, for instance, to read about André Grétry’s 1783 opera for Fontainebleau, *La caravane du Caire*: in the shadow of *Die Entführung* to us, but not for Louis XVI and Joseph’s sister, Marie Antoinette, or indeed their audience. He reminds us also that, if we think in terms of Handel, Mozart, Rossini, even Grétry, the eighteenth century did not always do so. Librettists receive their due; so do potential librettists, Grétry’s Étienne Morel de Chédeville may have been assisted by Louis’s brother, the Comte de Provence and Restoration Louis XVIII. As King, he would appoint the soprano, Angelica Catalini to direct Paris’s Théâtre-Italien, where she would star in a revival and Italianization of the *ancien régime* comedy, *Les trois sultanes*, as *Il trionfo di Rosselane*. No longer, we might note, would the Sultan hold centre stage, but his diva-impresario-favourite.

If librettists, singers and impresarios are properly discussed, so too are alternative composers and contexts. The libretto by Agostino Piovene from which that for Handel’s *Tamerlano* would be adapted, had been and continued to be used elsewhere, from its first setting by Francesco Gasparini for San Cassanio in 1711, through a 1735 Venetian *pasticcio* by Vivaldi, to Giuseppe Marinelli in 1799, also for Venice, possibly understood ‘as an allegory for the demise of the Republic of San Marco in 1797’. Wolff can only begin to scratch the surface here; that, however, he certainly does, and in certain cases, does much more than that. In opening our eyes to the array of material, he performs just as much a service as in more detailed discussion.

One interesting point in conclusion concerns the disappearance of the Turk from nineteenth-century opera. There is plenty of nineteenth-century operatic Orientalism, much of it well-trodden ground, but it looks elsewhere for inspiration. Perhaps, given the recent American vogue for ‘documentary’ opera and the ‘reforms’ of President Erdoğan, the singing Turk will return: *Trump* – or *May* – in *Ankara*?