A Bibliographic Overview of English-Language Opera Translation

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The translation of opera text is a special task which poses unique challenges for those working in the field. Striking a balance between maintaining the original intent of the composer and librettist, staying true to the musical rhythm, and creating an aesthetically pleasing text in another language is a complex problem. Music librarians should be aware of the diverse types of resources which include translations of operas. This paper aims to give an overview of the subject and guidance for librarians wishing to meet the needs of users searching for opera translated into the English Language. The paper begins with a short historical background of opera translation, and is followed by an overview of the types of translations, motivations of opera translation, and the principles of translation. Finally, resources for translators and collection development issues unique to translation conclude the paper.

History of Translation[1]

Because of the nature of the operatic singing technique and because different texts may be sung on stage simultaneously, intelligibility of lyrics in an opera performance, live or recorded, can be difficult. For this reason, opera libretti have been available to audiences since 1598, the year that Peri's *La Dafne* was first performed in Florence. Early libretti were distributed in the form of small booklets and included information about the performance, a list of the characters, and the text in Italian.[2] Opera was performed in its original language for the following century, even in countries which did not share

[1] This portion of the paper draws heavily from Arthur Jacobs, "Translation," *Oxford Music Online* 14 Apr. 2012 <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/O003143>.
[2] Richard Mancutt, "Libretto," *Oxford Music Online* 23 Apr. 2012 <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/16579>.

the native language of the opera. In 1690, Lully's *Armide* became the first non-Italian opera to be performed in Italy. A libretto of *Armide*, translated into Italian, was published in Rome during that same year. Later in the same decade, Lully's *Acis et Galathee* and Pallavicino's *La Gierusalemme liberata* were performed in Hamburg.

For operas composed and performed in London during the seventeenth century, Italian libretti were the norm. Bononcini's *Camilla*, with an English translation by Owen Swinley, was the first opera to be performed in English in London. There were approximately 120 performances at Drury Lane, and these first performances were given either completely in English or in a combination of English and Italian. The revivals, which took place at Lincoln's Inn Fields, were completely in English. Following the success of the English performances of *Camilla*, translated opera became more commonplace in London. It was commonplace for booklets, containing the original Italian text and an English translation, to be issued to audience members during this time period. After the 1780's, Italian-language operas performed in English for English-speaking audiences began to lose popularity. This may be attributable to the rising popularity of Italian castrati and other Italian singers in London.

Elsewhere in Europe, however, translated opera was thriving. Through the end of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, the translation of an opera into multiple languages often signaled the opera's popularity and was its "infallible mark of international success"[3]. The most well-known operas of Mozart, Rossini, Meyerbeer, and Verdi were translated and performed in multiple languages. In 1869, Breitkopf published a full score of *Le nozze di Figaro* with text in both Italian and German. In this score, the musical numbers of the work are indexed by their German titles only. Janáček's *The Bartered Bride* did not receive fame until it had been translated from the original Czech into German by Max Kalbeck. Massenet's *Werther* was premiered in Vienna in 1892, with a German

[3] Jacobs, "Translation," Oxford Music Online.

translation of its original French libretto. These examples make it clear that translated opera was alive and well in mainland Europe, and that audiences enjoyed foreign opera in their native tongue.

Some nineteenth-century composers actively participated in the translation of their own operas, sometimes being willing to make slight modifications to their music if necessary. Wagner, with a French *Tannhäuser*, Gounod, with an English version of *Faust*, and Verdi, with a French version of *Otello,* are all prime examples of this translator-composer collaboration. Donizetti took the trend one step further by writing his own translations for *Betly* and *La fille du régiment*.

Until the end of the nineteenth century, opera audiences were able to refer to translations in booklets while seated in a performance venue during an opera performance. This became impractical once the practice of full lighting on stage and in the audience seating ceased during performances. By the mid-twentieth century, the success of the gramophone record allowed opera enthusiasts to listen to recordings of full operas in the home. The purchase of these recordings often included a listening accompaniment booklet with translations of the libretto into multiple alternate languages.

The next technological development which aided operagoers was invented by Lofti Mansouri, general director of the Canadian Opera Company from 1971 to 1988. Surtitles, often referred to as supertitles, have been used worldwide since their first appearance during the Canadian Opera Company's 1983 production of *Elektra*. Strauss' libretto was adapted for English surtitles by Sonya Friedman. The trend of surtitles quickly spread from Canada and the United States to Europe, and is used during the present day worldwide. Some opera companies, including New York City Opera and Houston Grand Opera have taken the trend further and adapted English-language opera libretti into English surtitles, presenting them to audiences during performances in English.[4]

Today, performance of opera in its original language dominates the stage. However, performances in translation still exist. Many student productions of operas that take place at universities

[4] Roger Pines, "Surtitles," Oxford Music Online 14 Apr. 2012 <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/O007523>.

and conservatories are performed in translation. Additionally, Pocket Opera, founded in 1979 by Donald Pippin, is a San Francisco-based opera company which uses English singing translations for all of their performances. The company advertises their performances as "intimate, intelligible productions at affordable prices."[5]

Noteworthy English-language translators

There are several individuals who are known for their influential work in the field of opera translation. The work of these men may be valuable for translators-in-training. Arthur Kalisch (b. London, 1863; d. London, 1933), was one of the first British champions of the music of Richard Strauss. His translations of *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Salome*, and *Elektra* were performed in Britain and in the United States.[6] *Die Zauberflöte* was the first performed translation of Edward J. Dent (b. Yorkshire, 1876; d. London, 1957). The English musicologist and critic was a major supporter of translated opera who felt that "the barrier of a foreign language prevented many people from enjoying [opera] as much as they ought."[7] W. H. Auden (b. York, 1907; d. Vienna, 1973) and Chester Kallman (b. Brooklyn, NY, 1921; d. Athens, 1975) collaborated on translations of the operas of Mozart, Weill, and Dittersdorf.[8] Andrew Porter (b Cape Town, 1928) is an English music critic who has translated opera libretti, including Verdi's *Otello*, *Falstaff*, *Don Carlos* and *Rigoletto* and Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* for the English National Opera.[9]

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[5] "About Pocket Opera," 2012 <http://www.pocketopera.org/>.
[6] Arthur Jacobs, "Kalisch, Alfred," Oxford Music Online 21 Apr. 2012 <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/O006365>.
[7] Anthony Lewis et al., "Dent, Edward J.," Oxford Music Online 15 Apr. 2012 <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/07574>.
[8] Andrew Porter, "Auden, W.H.," Oxford Music Online 21 Apr. 2012 <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/01498>.
[9] Stanley Sadie, "Porter, Andrew," Oxford Music Online 21 Apr. 2012 <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/22146>.

Types of Translation

Translations which are located within a musical score are known as singing translations. They are typically found directly beneath the original language text, or are sometimes printed in place of the original language text. These translations are typically used by singers for role preparation and by repetiteurs, conductors, and directors during score study. Often, opera directors write singing translations for a specific production of an opera, in order to complement a modern adaptation of the opera or if a quality translation is unavailable.

Reading translations may be very similar to singing translations, although they are printed and published separately from the musical score. Publications which include reading translations may or may not include the text in its original language. Other additions may include bibliographic or historical information about the musical work, International Phonetic Alphabet transcriptions of the original language text, and the author's or editor's musical or poetic interpretation of the work.

Listening accompaniments are libretti which accompany a purchased audio recording of an opera, often including the original language text and translations in one or more alternate languages. These often exist in the form of a booklet, and may include a cast list, historical background of the work and composer, a synopsis, side reference numbers (in the case of a gramophone record), track reference numbers (in the case of a compact disc recording), and study score reference numbers.

The translations included in listening accompaniments have diverse origins. In a small survey of twenty-two publications of booklets which accompany compact disc or records, as seen in appendix 1, fourteen translators are given full credit, three translators are given credit but the copyright to their translations are held by recording companies, the copyright for two translations are held by recording companies, one translation is taken from a libretto published by Ricordi, and two translations do not give credit to the translators. Additionally, about half of these translations are not dated.

Surtitles, otherwise known as supertitles, are adaptations of an opera libretto which are projected, in real-time during a performance, above a stage or onto individual screens situated in front of seats in a performance venue. The purpose of surtitles is to inform the individual, who is unable to follow the text in a reading translation or listening accompaniment, of what is being sung on the stage. Because the goal of surtitles is to inform the audience while not distracting from the action on stage, a surtitler might eliminate non-essential text, retaining only that which may be read and understood at a glance. An entire opera libretto, in surtitle form, may reduce the number of lines of the original text by one quarter, and may include approximately 500 to 600 titles.

Why do we translate opera?

The translation of opera exists for two main reasons: accessibility and education. Reading translations and opera performed in the language native of the audience allows for greater comprehension of the plot. Herbert Peyser has said that "what is unintelligible to people does not exist to them."[10] Additionally, audience members who are not accustomed to performances of any kind in foreign languages may feel more inclined to attend a performance during which they can read surtitles in their own language. The educational purposes of opera translation are obvious, but Sigmund Spaeth states that it should only occur when increased intelligibility is warranted: "The only valid ground for translating text is increased intelligibility, implying further educational possibilities."[11]

The principles of translation

There are many characteristics which together make an excellent translation. Most basically, a translation should make the text intelligible for an audience who are experiencing the opera for the first

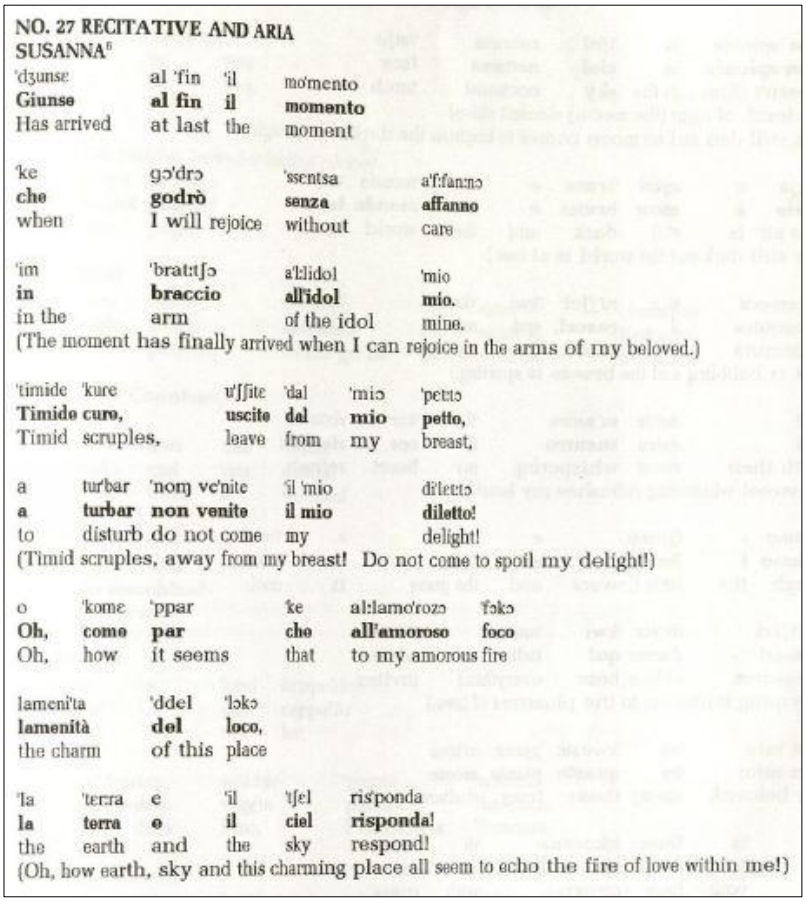
[10] Herbert F. Peyser, "Some Observations on Translation," Musical Quarterly 1922, 2 Feb. 2012 <http://jstor.org/stable/738160>.
[11] Sigmund Spaeth, "Translating to Music," Musical Quarterly 1915, 2 Feb. 2012 <http://jstor.org/stable/737851>.

time.[12] Peyser gives five criteria which encompass what he calls the "perfection of translation."[13] First is a flawless preservation of the original correspondence between poetry and music, which allows the original musical-poetic connection to be maintained. Second, an "absolute literalness of rendering" calls for the translator to maintain the original meaning of the text. Third, which Peyser calls a "complete coincidence of verse structures and metrical subtleties", is the performance on stage of text which has been skillfully translated, which seems to be a serendipitous occurrence to the audience. Fourth and fifth, the "identical nuances of idiom" and "intangible properties of word selection" call for the translator to re-create the poetic language of the original text. Fulfilling these criteria, while also maintaining the rhythm given by the composer, may seem like a predicament which no person, regardless of their grasp of the English language or poetic gifts could escape. Peyser himself acknowledges this, admitting that the "translator of an opera... toils in a straightjacket."[14]

Translators will cater their work to the users of their translations. Users of a listening accompaniment to read while listening to their favorite recording of *Tosca* may not have the same needs as someone doing scholarly research on the texts of Cavalli's operas. There are two broad types of translations, literal and poetic translations, which may be thought of as being at two ends of a spectrum. There are translations that are strictly poetic or literal, but sometimes translators want to strike a balance between the two. A word-by-word and line-by-line translation is a literal translation which preserves word order and line breaks of the text in the original language. This type of translation, as seen directly below the Italian text in figure 1, is not prepared in order to be sung, but is valuable to performers and scholars of opera, and is most often found in listening translations. Knowing the precise meaning of every word of a text in its original language allows singers to convey a meaningful performance to an audience, and allows scholars to study the relationship between the text and the

[12] E. J. Dent, "The Translation of Operas," Proceedings of the Musical Association 1935, 2 Feb. 2012 <http://jstor.org/stable/765656>.
[13] Peyser 353.
[14] Peyser 359.

musical structure of the piece. A poetic translation conveys the sense of the original text rather than the exact words and grammar of the original language. In general, the syntax and word order of the original language is ignored, and the translator may write text which is not only aesthetically pleasing, but understandable to native English speakers.



NO. 27 RECITATIVE AND ARIA
SUSANNA[6]

'dʒunse	al 'fin	'il	mo'mento			
Giunse	**al fin**	**il**	**momento**			
Has arrived	at last	the	moment			
'ke	gɔ'drɔ		'ssentsa		a'f:fan:no	
che	**godrò**		**senza**		**affanno**	
when	I will rejoice		without		care	
'im	'brat:tʃɔ		a'l:lidol		'mio	
in	**braccio**		**all'idol**		**mio.**	
in the	arm		of the idol		mine.	

(The moment has finally arrived when I can rejoice in the arms of my beloved.)

'timide	'kure	u'ʃʃite	'dal	'mio	'pet:to	
Timide	**cure,**	**uscite**	**dal**	**mio**	**petto,**	
Timid	scruples,	leave	from	my	breast,	
a	tur'bar	'nom ve'nite	'il 'mio		di'let:to	
a	**turbar**	**non venite**	**il mio**		**diletto!**	
to	disturb	do not come	my		delight!	

(Timid scruples, away from my breast! Do not come to spoil my delight!)

o	'kome	'ppar	'ke	al:lamo'rozo	'foko	
Oh,	**come**	**par**	**che**	**all'amoroso**	**foco**	
Oh,	how	it seems	that	to my amorous fire		
lameni'ta	'ddel	'loko				
lamenità	**del**	**loco,**				
the charm	of this	place				
'la	'ter:ra	e	'il	'tʃel	ris'ponda	
la	**terra**	**e**	**il**	**ciel**	**risponda!**	
the	earth	and	the	sky	respond!	

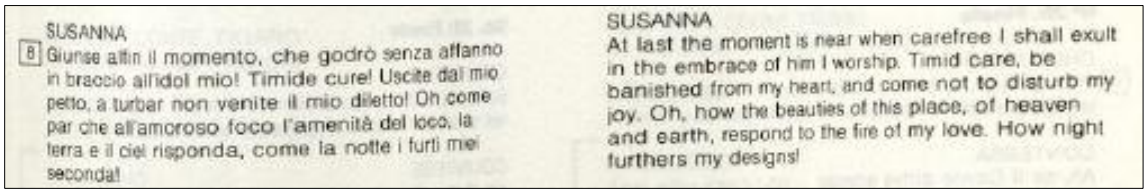
(Oh, how earth, sky and this charming place all seem to echo the fire of love within me!)

Figure 1[15]

Three portions of operas which may be translated are arias, recitatives, and ensembles. Each of these it treated differently, given the different characteristics of each. As seen in figure 2, a listening accompaniment taken from the booklet accompanying the 1991 EMI Classics recording *of Le nozze di Figaro*, the word placement and line breaks are not as strict as in the reading translation seen above. The purpose of this translation is to inform the listener of the character's thoughts rather than the

[15] Nico Castel, The Libretti of Mozart's Completed Operas (Geneseo: Leyerle Publications, 1998) 431.

precise words they use; the awkwardness of "*Has arrived at last the moment when I will rejoice without care in the arm of the idol mine*" does not have the same 'ring' as "*At last the moment is near when carefree I shall exult in the embrace of him I worship*."



SUSANNA

8 Giunse alfin il momento, che godrò senza affanno in braccio all'idol mio! Timide cure! Uscite dal mio petto, a turbar non venite il mio diletto! Oh come par che all'amoroso foco l'amenità del loco, la terra e il ciel risponda, come la notte i furti miei seconda!

SUSANNA

At last the moment is near when carefree I shall exult in the embrace of him I worship. Timid care, be banished from my heart, and come not to disturb my joy. Oh, how the beauties of this place, of heaven and earth, respond to the fire of my love. How night furthers my designs!

Figure 2[16]

While preparing an opera translation, the translator may treat recitative differently from arias. The more relaxed rhythms in recitative allow the translator to create a poetic translation which is more speech-like and conversational. This freedom comes at a price, though, according to Dent: "recitative is the part of an opera in which the translator is most exposed" and "the chief difficulty in recitative is that of literary style."[17]

The challenges of translating arias are somewhat different from those of translating recitative. The act 1 entrance aria of Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* is a cavatina and cabaletta, and the text of the cabaletta is quite simple and brief. However, when sung, the text is repeated until it becomes almost mantra-like. Rossini most likely made a choice to repeat this text numerous times for several reasons: to evoke the joy and sauciness of Rosina, and to fill out his chosen musical structure for the finale of the opera. This extreme repetition is common among Bel Canto arias. According to Dent, a translator has a decision to make when confronted with repetition of text. He or she may repeat the translated text much like the original has been translated, or he or she may write a new stanza in order to minimize repetition. Dent seems to favor the creation of new text, stating that "there is no reason why one should not write entirely new words, provided they express the general emotion painted in the music."[18] Jacobs

[16] W. A. Mozart, Le nozze di Figaro (EMI Classics, 1991).
[17] Dent 87.
[18] Dent 88.

says that the translator may provide new words in order to keep the attention of a more modern audience.[19] In table 1, we see two different singing translations of this aria. The first, found in the 2006 Ricordi piano-vocal score of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, with a translation prepared by George Mead,[20] eliminates much of the original repetition by adding text. The second translation, taken from *The Prima Donna's Album*, an anthology of arias published by G. Schirmer,[21] maintains much of the repetition given in the original Italian text.

Piano-vocal score (Ricordi, 2006)	**Piano-vocal score (Ricordi, 2006)**	**The Prima Donna's Album (Schirmer, 1956)**
Io sono docile, son rispettosa, Sono ubbediente, dolce, amorosa, Mi lascio reggere, mi lascio reggere, Mi fo guidar, mi fo guidar.	I am quite well behaved, as sweet as honey. My disposition is bright and sunny. For I am gently bred when I am gently led, It all depends on what you do.	On me should kindly love bestow correction In gentle breathing of fond affection, No leaf so pliable, no leaf so pliable Adorns the field, adorns the field.
Ma se mi toccano dov'è il mio debole, Sarò una vipera,sarò, E cento trappole prima di cedere, Farò giocar, farò giocar, E cento trappole prima di cedere, Farò giocar, farò giocar, E cento trappole prima di cedere, Farò giocar, farò giocar.	But if you push me 'round then I will stand my ground, I can be mean and nasty too! I'll get you in the end, I'll have the laugh my friend, The final joke will be on you. No matter what you say, I'll get my own sweet way, The final joke will be on you. No matter what you say, I'll get my own sweet way, The final joke will be on you, on you, will be on you.	But if cold tyranny's rude blast assaileth me, It falls most impotent, it falls. No measure faileth me to gain the victory, I never yield, I never yield. No measure faileth me to gain the victory, I never yield, I never yield. No measure faileth me to gain the victory, No measure faileth me, I never, never yield.
Io sono docile, sono ubbediente, Mi lascio reggere, mi fo guidar.	For I am gently bred, as sweet as honey. When I am gently led don't push me 'round.	On me should kindly love bestow correction, No leaf so pliable adorns the field
Ma se mi toccano dov'è il mio debole, Sarò una vipera,sarò, E cento trappole prima di cedere, Farò giocar, farò giocar, E cento trappole prima di cedere, Farò giocar, farò giocar, E cento trappole, prima di cedere, E cento trappole, farò, farò, farò giocar. E cento trappole, farò giocar, E cento trappole, farò giocar, farò giocar, farò giocar.	For if you push me 'round, then I will stand my ground, I can be mean and nasty too! I'll get you in the end, I'll have the laugh my friend, The final joke will be on you. No matter what you say, I'll get my own sweet way, The final joke will be on you. No matter what you say, I'll get my own sweet way, The joke will be on you, on you, will be on you. For if you push me 'round, I'll stand my ground, I'll have the laugh on you, I'll have the laugh, I'll have the laugh, I'll have the laugh on you.	But if cold tyranny's rude blast assaileth me, It falls most impotent, it falls. No measure faileth me to gain the victory, I never yield, I never yield. No measure faileth me to gain the victory, I never yield, I never yield. No measure faileth me to gain the victory, No measure faileth me, I never, never yield. No measure faileth me, I never yield, No measure faileth me, I never yield, I never yield, I never yield.

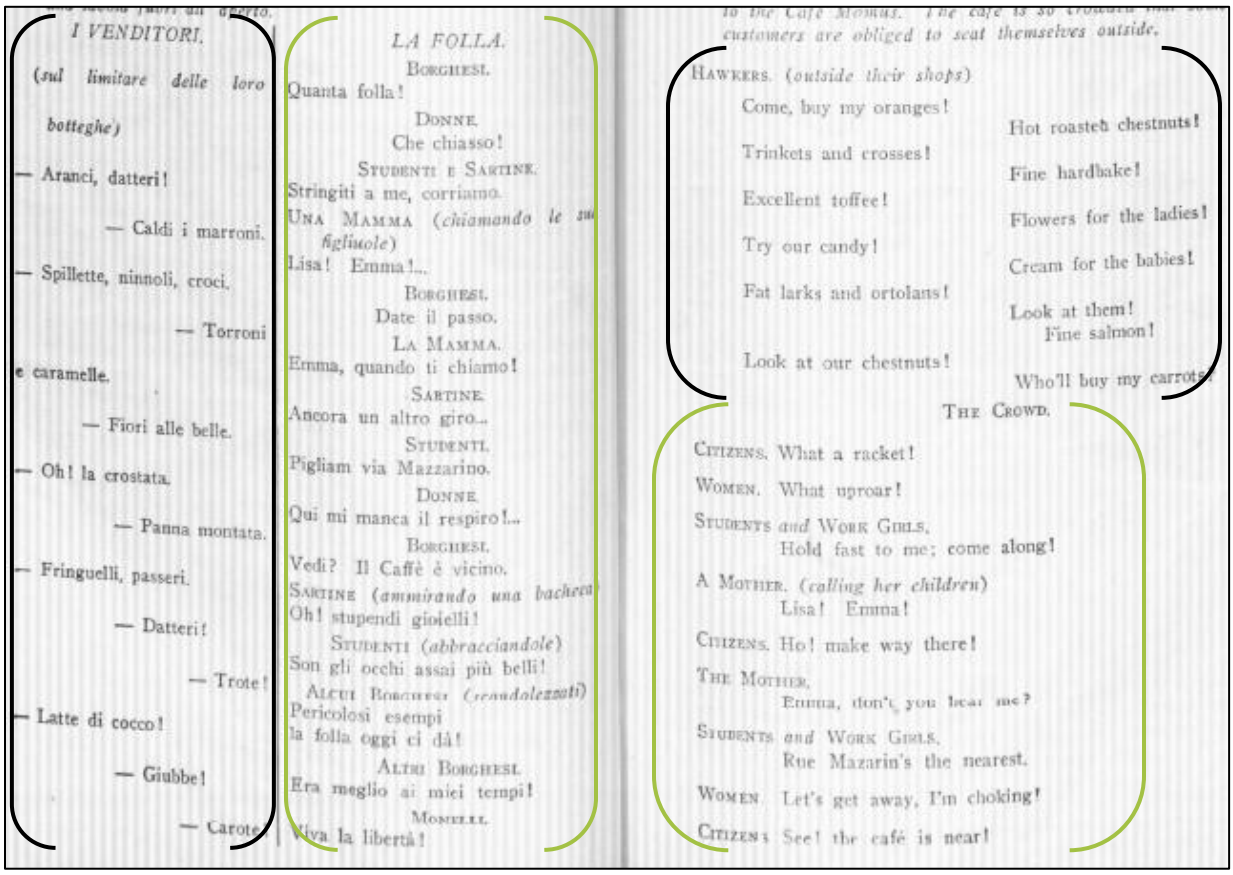
Table 1

Ensembles and choruses hold particular difficulties for translators. The fact that multiple characters sing simultaneously, often with different texts, makes intelligibility almost impossible. In the chaotic opening to act 2 of Puccini's *La Bohème*, a street scene set on Christmas Eve in nineteenth-

[19] Jacobs, "Translation," Oxford Music Online.
[20] Gioacchino Rossini, Il barbiere Di Siviglia (Milan: BMG Publications, 2006) 105-109.
[21] Kurt Adler, ed. The Prima Donna's Album (New York: Schirmer, 1956) 27-31.

century Paris, there are many characters singing different lyrics concurrently. In the score, the text and the singing translation are simple to follow given the horizontal direction of the text and the vertical arrangement of the voice parts. However, converting the multiple layers of simultaneous text to a reading translation or listening accompaniment can be a difficult task.

This problem may be handled in a number of different ways. As seen in figure 3, excerpted from a listening accompaniment booklet issued by G. Ricordi in 1898 for use during a production at the Metropolitan Opera, the choice was made to break up the two groups singing ("i venditori/the hawkers" and "la folla/the crowd") horizontally in the original Italian on the left side of the page, and vertically in the English translation on the right side of the page. The irregular placement of the text of the hawkers signals to the listener that text is quick and erratic.



I VENDITORI.

(*sul limitare delle loro botteghe*)

— Aranci, datteri!

— Caldi i marroni.

— Spillette, ninnoli, croci.

— Torroni e caramelle.

— Fiori alle belle.

— Oh! la crostata.

— Panna montata.

— Fringuelli, passeri.

— Datteri!

— Trote!

— Latte di cocco!

— Giubbe!

— Carote!

LA FOLLA.

BORGHESI.
Quanta folla!

DONNE.
Che chiasso!

STUDENTI E SARTINE.
Stringiti a me, corriamo.

UNA MAMMA (*chiamando le sue figliuole*)
Lisa! Emma!...

BORGHESI.
Date il passo.

LA MAMMA.
Emma, quando ti chiamo!

SARTINE.
Ancora un altro giro...

STUDENTI.
Pigliam via Mazzarino.

DONNE.
Qui mi manca il respiro!...

BORGHESI.
Vedi? Il Caffè è vicino.

SARTINE (*ammirando una bacheca*)
Oh! stupendi gioielli!

STUDENTI (*abbracciandole*)
Son gli occhi assai più belli!

ALTRI BORGHESI (*scandolezzati*)
Pericolosi esempi
la folla oggi ci dà!

ALTRI BORGHESI.
Era meglio ai miei tempi!

MONELLI.
Viva la libertà!

customers are obliged to seat themselves outside.

HAWKERS. (*outside their shops*)

Come, buy my oranges!

Trinkets and crosses!

Excellent toffee!

Try our candy!

Fat larks and ortolans!

Look at our chestnuts!

Hot roasted chestnuts!

Fine hardbake!

Flowers for the ladies!

Cream for the babies!

Look at them! Fine salmon!

Who'll buy my carrots!

THE CROWD.

CITIZENS. What a racket!

WOMEN. What uproar!

STUDENTS *and* WORK GIRLS.
Hold fast to me; come along!

A MOTHER. (*calling her children*)
Lisa! Emma!

CITIZENS. Ho! make way there!

THE MOTHER.
Emma, don't you hear me?

STUDENTS *and* WORK GIRLS.
Rue Mazarin's the nearest.

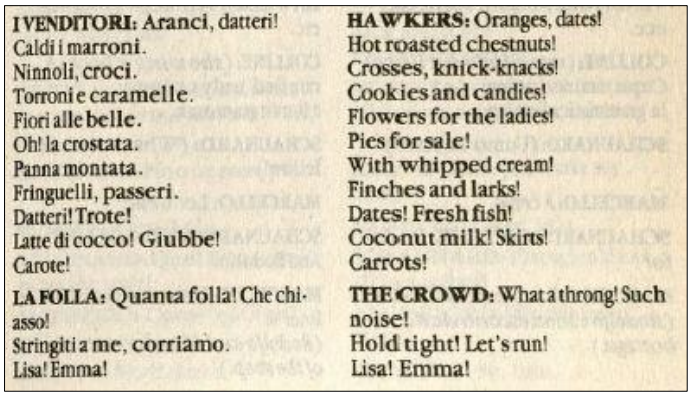
WOMEN. Let's get away, I'm choking!

CITIZENS. See! the café is near!

Figure 3[22]

In a more recently published listening accompaniment, excerpted from a booklet accompanying a 1997 EMI Classics recording of Bohème, the texts of the hawkers and the crowd are viewed vertically, as seen in figure 4. This does not inform the listener that multiple texts are happening simultaneously, but it does allow for a less confusing page layout.

[22] Giacomo Puccini, La Boheme (New York: G. Ricordi, 1898).



I VENDITORI: Aranci, datteri!	**HAWKERS:** Oranges, dates!
Caldi i marroni.	Hot roasted chestnuts!
Ninnoli, croci.	Crosses, knick-knacks!
Torroni e caramelle.	Cookies and candies!
Fiori alle belle.	Flowers for the ladies!
Oh! la crostata.	Pies for sale!
Panna montata.	With whipped cream!
Fringuelli, passeri.	Finches and larks!
Datteri! Trote!	Dates! Fresh fish!
Latte di cocco! Giubbe!	Coconut milk! Skirts!
Carote!	Carrots!
LA FOLLA: Quanta folla! Che chiasso!	**THE CROWD:** What a throng! Such noise!
Stringiti a me, corriamo.	Hold tight! Let's run!
Lisa! Emma!	Lisa! Emma!

Figure 4[23]

Dent gives one suggestion for solving the problems of translation for ensembles, stating that a character that has a particularly important line should be highlighted within the texture. He even goes so far as to state that "it is advisable to rewrite the words as far as possible so as to make all or at least some of the characters sing the same words."[24]

Resources for translators

To the author's knowledge, there are no guides or textbooks which are designed specifically for translators of opera. The reason for this may be related to the fact that there is no general theory on the subject; Jacobs states that this "perhaps lies in the incommensurability of the material."[25] Related to this, Claus Clüver claims that there is an "absence of a systematic set of criteria for judging opera translations."[26] The only resources for those translating operas are articles written by well-known and respected opera translators and the translations themselves. The quality of a translation must be judged by the user or by a librarian dealing with collection development.

[23] Giacomo Puccini, La Boheme (EMI Classics, 1997).
[24] Dent 89.
[25] Jacobs, "Translation," Oxford Music Online.
[26] Claus Clüver, "Revisiting the Classics: The Translation of Opera as a Multimedia Text," Translator 14 (2008): 401-409.

Library collection issues unique to opera translation

The user must be considered when selecting libretti, scores, and recordings which may include translations. If the community served by the library is a university or conservatory with a large opera program, singers, conductors, and directors will most likely be the main users. Authoritative piano-vocal scores with and without singing translations, libretti, quality reading translations, and a wide range of recordings of operas may be the most important additions to the collection. In these types of communities, surtitles are typically not handled by the library, but by the opera program, so the library need not consider the purchase or rent of surtitles. If the community is a university with a strong musicology program, the users will be those studying manuscripts, historical and authoritative scores, and recordings. Authoritative full scores, libretti, quality reading translations, and a wide range of recordings of operas from all time periods might be the most important additions to the collection. In communities where there are few performers or historians, but many operagoers and casual opera enthusiasts, collection development may focus on piano-vocal scores of famous and frequently performed operas, libretti with reading translations, and recordings which include listening accompaniments.

Collection development officers must consider budgetary issues when purchasing libretti, scores, and recordings. Opera libretti in translation volumes by Leyerle Publications can be purchased from the publisher's website, ranging in price from sixty to seventy-five dollars. On the website Amazon.com, libretti in translation published by the English National Opera range from seventeen dollars to twenty-six dollars, scores published by G. Schirmer which include English translations cost approximately twenty-five dollars, and compact discs which include listening accompaniments vary widely in price.[27]

[27] "Amazon Prime," 2012 <http://www.amazon.com/>.

Opera translation is a unique subject which should be considered by music librarians. There are numerous types of opera translations, each possessing a specific purpose and use. Knowledge of the uses of different types of opera translations will be useful for librarians involved in the collection of opera materials. Providing users with adequate resources, be they singing translations, reading translations, or listening accompaniments will allow them further access to opera and education in the field of opera.

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