Transatlantic Arias: Early Opera in Spain and the New World.

Chad M. Gasta
Iowa State University, gasta@iastate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/language_books
Part of the Spanish Linguistics Commons

Recommended Citation
Employing current theories of ideology, propaganda and musical reception, Transatlantic Arias examines the development and impact of early opera in Spain and the Americas through close examination of the New World's first three extant operas. What emerges is an amazing history of extraordinarily complex lyrical and musical works for their time and place, which are also critical for illuminating inimitable perspectives on the cohabitation and collaboration of indigenous groups and Europeans.

Chad M. Gasta is Associate Professor of Spanish and Chair of the Department of World Languages & Cultures at Iowa State University where he also serves as Director of International Studies and Co-Director of the Languages and Cultures for Professions (LCP) program. He has been honored with many all-university teaching awards and is the recipient of the Iowa State International Service Award. Gasta is the author of Imperial Stagings: Empire and Ideology in Transatlantic Theater of Early Modern Spain and the New World and a critical edition of Lazarillo de Tormes.
Dirección de Ignacio Arellano  
(Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona)  
con la colaboración de Christoph Strosetzki  
(Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster)  
y Marc Vitse  
(Université de Toulouse Le Mirail/Toulouse II)  

Subdirección:  
Juan M. Escudero  
(Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona)  

Consejo asesor:  
Patrizia Botta  
Università La Sapienza, Roma  
José María Diez Borque  
Universidad Complutense, Madrid  
Ruth Fine  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
Edward Friedman  
Vanderbilt University, Nashville  
Aurelio González  
El Colegio de México  
Joan Oleza  
Universidad de Valencia  
Felipe Pedraza  
Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Ciudad Real  
Antonio Sánchez Jiménez  
Université de Neuchâtel  
Juan Luis Suárez  
The University of Western Ontario, London  
Edwin Williamson  
University of Oxford  

Biblioteca Áurea Hispánica, 89
TRANSATLANTIC ARIAS

Early Opera

in Spain and the New World

CHAD M. GASTA

Universidad de Navarra • Iberoamericana • Vervuert • 2013
For my girls, Sofia and Victoria
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................... 9  

INTRODUCTION  
Manipulating the Masses? Ideology and Early Opera .................................................. 11  

CHAPTER ONE  
A European Invention: The Genesis of Opera in Europe ............................... 33  
   The Origins and Development of Opera in Early Modern Europe .. 33  
   An Italian Revolution: The Expansion of Opera in Europe ........... 43  

CHAPTER TWO  
Opera in Spain and the New World: Transatlantic Opera and Its Origins 59  
   Opera and Musical Culture in the New World .............................. 79  

CHAPTER THREE  
Opera in the City of Kings: Tomás de Torrejón’s *La púrpura de la rosa*..... 93  
   Funding the Arts in Lima: The Political and Social Responsibility of Aesthetics ................................. 103  
   Opera and the Ideological Agenda ................................................. 115  
   Ideology and Persuasion in Torrejón’s *Lou to La púrpura de la rosa* .... 127  

CHAPTER FOUR  
Sacred Arias: Intercultural Engagement and Musical Culture in the Jesuit Missions of South America ................................................................. 151  
   Mission Musical Culture .............................................................. 158  
   Domenico Zipoli’s *San Ignacio de Loyola* and Jesuit Strategies of Evangelization ................................................................. 176  
   *San Francisco Xavier*: The Emergence of Indigenous Opera ............. 199
CONCLUSION
Past Forward: The Legacy of Early New World Opera .......................... 221

WORKS CITED ................................................................................ 235

INDEX ............................................................................................... 249
INTRODUCTION

MANIPULATING THE Masses? Ideology and Early OPERA

The subject of early New World opera is a difficult one, when one considers that there are few critical studies on the topic—and even fewer operas. In fact, even the most renowned specialists of colonial Latin American literature are usually unaware that operas were produced in the New World in the time after Spain's conquest. What are the reasons for this unawareness? In part, the lack of research—particularly outside of musicology and a few literary circles—is related to a general dismissal of New World opera's forerunner, Spanish opera, and the accompanying lack of investigation into the genre both in Spain and its colonies. Spanish opera is a product of Italian and French traditions and of course is the most direct precursor of early opera in the Americas. This unfamiliarity with Spanish opera is a long-standing problem related to the fact that non-Hispanist scholars historically ignore Spain's contributions to world culture, a problem that is especially severe in the field of drama studies where English and French drama enjoy great attention whereas the Spanish theater is rarely studied by anyone except specialists in that area. A similar unawareness of early opera in Spain and the Americas is partly a result of the genre's irregular development in the peninsula, and its parallel intermittent emergence in the New World, both shaped by increasingly problematic political and economic times for Spain's empire. For most of the seventeenth century, opera was embraced in

1 The notable exception here is, of course, specialists on Spanish Golden Age drama in the U.S., Spain, and the United Kingdom who are also teachers of the genre. Spanish drama, like Spanish or New World opera, has never received the widespread popular or scholarly attention that English, French, or American drama has.
Italy, Germany, and England, but it floundered in Spain\(^2\). It would not be until the first decades of the eighteenth century that opera finally matured in the peninsula to such an extent that it was regularly staged and could be simultaneously exported to the New World. Other than experiments that featured musical pieces integrated into drama, opera’s sporadic development in the New World—first in Lima, followed a short time later by Mexico City, then into the Jesuit missions in South America—arose soundly within the European lyrical drama tradition as exported from the peninsula.

The chief significance of this study is to reassess the role and impact of early opera in Spain and the New World by resituating the genre within its cultural context to elucidate how the dramatic and the musical were combined to offer public entertainment on the one hand, and to impart a particular ideological agenda on the other. In the chapters that follow, I survey the historical and cultural origins of opera in Europe, its intermittent development in Spain, followed by its importation into the American cultural scene. Chapter 1 provides an appraisal of the historical roots of key operas in Europe, particularly in Italy. Chapter 2 discusses how the genre’s early development impacted the dramatic structure and musical configuration of the first productions in Spain and its New World colonies, and how opera played considerable roles in shaping the political and religious landscape. Finally, in Chapters 3 and 4, I take up close analysis of the three first extant operas in the New World, viewing them not only as extraordinarily unique complex lyrical and musical works for their time and place, but critical for illuminating inimitable perspectives on the cohabitation and collaboration of New World inhabitants and Europeans. Taken as a whole, this study demonstrates how early opera in the New World was an ideologically-charged aesthetic tool that is of value to our present-day perspective as much for its dramatic and musical characteristics as for the insight it affords on the role of musical theater in the political and religious panorama of the colonial period in the Americas. As such, American opera was a transatlantic creation that crossed space and time, sometimes bridging cultural differences, sometimes exposing them, but ultimately revealing

\(^2\) Rafael Lamas argues that the blame falls on Spanish intellectuals and professionals who, unlike their counterparts in other European countries, opted for earlier lyrical forms such as the zarzuela over refined Italian opera, thus limiting the latter’s evolution to a national Spanish opera (2006, p. 39).
a reciprocal relationship with Europe. New World opera emerges from the shadow of Spain's empire to challenge prevailing ideological attitudes about the colonies and their peoples.

In nearly all ways this study is original because few scholars survey New World opera, and those who do are occupied with only one or two of opera's many aesthetic components. As might be expected in their disciplines, specialists stick with what they know. Hence, musicologists study the music (voice, instrumentation, musical notation, etc.) and the culture that gave rise to it. Literary critics tend to examine the dramatic verse, performance, staging, and spectacle. Historians are interested in the chronology of events, biographical data, and other archived materials. Likewise, psychologists or sociologists might analyze the meaning behind the words and the music or the actions that brought them together in one place. All espouse a particularly valid point of departure, but none tend to look beyond their own fields. What I propose is to act as a sort of intermediary between these valued disciplines and offer a multifaceted examination of opera that provides an alternate picture of how the development of opera in Europe led to the genre's transmission to the New World where it emerged as quite a potent cultural, political, and religious force. What becomes immediately visible is that, despite great obstacles, New World opera has a rightful place in analyses of musical theater not least because of its surprising appearance in locations far removed from the great European centers but because the genre played an active role in shaping New World politics and religion. New World opera emerges as a very ideological art form fraught with often-hierarchical questions of authority, control, and propaganda.

If early opera were to achieve any sort of success in the New World, it had no other choice than to do so within Church and state power structures. The most significant scholar on early opera in Spain and the Americas, the musicologist and historian Louise K. Stein, consistently shows in her work that there was a causal relationship between ideology and music as the latter was used to promote the former. Stein discusses how early opera in Spain and the New World was produced within circumstances that were extraordinarily political. She matches great opera productions to particular historical events to show how operas were produced to honor or promote a crucial political moment. She is quite right both historically and politically. However, a deeper examination of the actual dramatic verses of these same productions moves beyond the contextual to show exactly how and why music and text can have
ideological implications. Indeed, this study looks closely at individualized singing parts to determine what exactly defines these operas as political or ideological. What surfaces is that particular verses, scenes, or characters were introduced because they were extraordinarily ideological, especially when one matches the operas’ content with the religious or political context within which they were produced.

Such an examination of ideology in music or theater is certainly not a new one. Critics such as Louis Althusser and Theodor Adorno, and more recently, Fredric Jameson, have similarly suggested that aesthetics and other cultural products are mediums that were deliberately manufactured to uphold and advance state ideology. The Church and state, the ultimate holders of power, were also the ultimate benefactor of artistic trends since without their patronage, artists, musicians, and writers normally had no alternate employment. For these reasons, artists were beholden to these authoritative bodies because, quite simply, they were paid to do so.

Theorizing that aesthetics have political or ideological purposes, as Althusser, Adorno, and Jameson have, is especially appropriate in a world where one’s political status and riches were entirely necessary to produce great public opera, such as in Lima or Mexico City. But, if we look beyond the political overtures and economic advantages afforded only a few, there are more explicit ways to match ideology in music to unfolding events. In his now well known study, Noise: The Political Economy of Music, Jacques Attali views music as a cultural form intimately tied up in the mode of production in any given society that has transformed over time due to a change in the relationship between musicians and their patrons as well as to the invention of technologies for producing, recording, and disseminating music. According to Attali, music is a «channelization of noise», which is the control and subjugation of clatter into a harmonious and appealing structured order of sound. Until «noise» has been harnessed and systematized into something akin to music, it is nothing but an interruption, a meaningless construct that represents disorder and disunity. Noise is, in short, noise. In this channelization, Attali adeptly shows how music has passed

3 See Dialectic of Enlightenment, 1972.
4 See The Political Unconscious, 1981.
through four distinct cultural stages in history: Sacrificing, Representing, Repeating, and Composing. What interests me most in his analysis of music is the economic and social function of music prior to its becoming a commodity, during its sacrificial period. For Attali, this is the period prior to the late eighteenth century, which was dominated by ritualized sacrifice of music to higher powers, generally the monarchy. Drawing on Renee Girard's theories of ritual and sacrifice, Attali equates the Medieval and Renaissance musician to a minstrel who played when commanded, his art nothing more than a function of the ideological apparatus of his employer. The musician's music had no material worth since it was rarely copied, distributed, and sold; he and his product had no market value outside the court that employed him. In this position, music was ritualized, and the player became a sacrificial offering: "Tool of the political, his music is its glorification, just as the dedicatory epistle is its explicit glorification. His music is a reminder that, in the personal relation of the musician to power, there subsists a simulacrum of the sacrificial offering, of the gift of the sovereign, to God, of an order imposed on noise". Music, then, regardless of its beauty, had a political function in that it represented the will of the patron:

The musician, then, was (...) economically bound to a machine of power, political or commercial, which paid him a salary for creating what it needed to affirm its legitimacy. Like the notes of tonal music on the staff, he was cramped, channeled. A domestic, his livelihood depended on the goodwill of the prince. The constraints of the work became imperative, immodest, similar to those a valet or cook was subjected to at the time.

It would not be until the late eighteenth century that the musician enters the commodity exchange, his music possessing some value and contributing to society's capital (Representing) only to be consumed, fetishized, and disseminated on a mass scale by new technical means (Repeating) in the twentieth century, before becoming an object of utopian self-expression thereafter (Composing). Up through the late eighteenth century, however, the musician falls victim to the whims of his benefactor and his work is a cog in the ideological machine of the Church and state.

8 Attali, 1985, p. 17.
It is quite intriguing to transfer Attali's theory to the New World musical venue. On the one hand, composers like Lima's Tomás de Torrejón y Velasco who composed the first opera in the New World, *La púrpura de la rosa* (Chapter 3), was completely beholden to the Viceroy and the Church for material support. Torrejón's compositions enjoyed regular rotation in the ecclesiastical facilities in the city before being distributed to churches in smaller cities outside Lima. On the other hand, no matter what he created he earned very little for his work and even struggled to pay his own bills. Hence, mounting grand public performances was impossible without the patronage of the Viceroy, as is evidenced by the 1701 production of *La púrpura de la rosa*, composed in honor of the new King, Philip V. Similarly, in the ecclesiastical missions of South America, the Jesuits composed short tunes and taught the Indians to sing them before allowing indigenous musicians to compose complex operatic works. Their sole purpose was to uphold Church principles and transmit orthodoxy, and both European and Indian composers and musicians did so willingly. Their capital was not money but rather faith in God and the Catholic Church as well as an interest in advancing the order's mission. The results of these cultural advances were two extant operas under study in Chapter 4, *San Ignacio de Loyola* by the Jesuit organ master Domenico Zipoli and *San Francisco Javier* by an unknown Indian composer. Composed separately in different geographical locations of the Americas, and with several years between them, both operas were then copied and circulated among other missions where local Indian musicians, singers, and performers collaborated with their Jesuit masters to present the pieces as part of their glorification of the Church. Their musical pieces were likewise disposable cultural products that could be easily replaced by others, hence the shortage of historical data indicating their popularity. They were, in a word, sacrificial.

Such analysis of music as ritual has far-reaching effects. While musicians had no control over the sale or representation of their works until the nineteenth century, opera composers sometimes were exempt from this status and enjoyed a privilege of literary and musical protection that led to a possible source of revenue, at least in Europe. Even Attali admits that royal patronage did not disappear overnight as musicians and composers long continued to find solace and pay by working at the beckon of their patron. The practice of patronage in the New World

\footnote{Attali, 1988, p. 49.}
likewise endured well into the nineteenth century—much longer than in Europe—suggesting that musicians and composers as well as playwrights, actors, and producers remained under the influence of the state or Church for quite a long time. Much of this prolonged system of patronage for opera has to do with economics and politics. Based on the complex and elaborate nature of staging opera and its associative high cost, opera was a genre for the wealthy, the only class who could afford to employ among their households musicians and composers. This is particularly the case in the Americas where Bourbon viceregal representatives were plagued by financial problems in the everyday operation of colonial cities, and they simply were not willing (or permitted) to expend endless resources on artistic works. Unlike their Habsburg predecessors, Bourbon patrons and patronage abated for a time after France’s Philip V came to the Spanish throne in 1700. Although patronage persisted under the Bourbons, the practice was more focused and strategic. Unless a composer occupied the position of Chapel Master or principal church organist in a major city—and these were coveted positions and infrequently vacated—musicians were regarded as nothing more than lowly servants or craftsmen, not worthy of receiving anything more than an occasional commission for their work.

Even among the self-sustaining Jesuit missions, which were far from the cities, composers were generally priests (or those studying to be priests), and music was one responsibility among many. In these missions, the composer, obviously for different reasons, worked at the behest of a higher calling and wrote and played musical works that advanced His mission.

What emerges is the notion that early music was a powerful tool to negotiate identities, conceptualize romantically distant worlds, represent particular belief systems, and neutralize opposing views. Attali’s stages of music’s political economy help describe music’s transformation since the Middle Ages, and how musicians were economically bound to the machine of power, but there are germane and obvious questions, of course, as to just how, on a more semantic level, opera became an ideological tool. The most recent theories for understanding manipulation and control through music are offered in Steven Brown and Ulrick Volgsten’s *Music and Manipulation: On the Social Uses and Social Control of Music*. Brown writes that music is intrinsically and implicitly connected

---

11 Attali, 1985, p. 17.
to propaganda since there is always a willing «sender» whose music propagates group ideology among mostly passive «receivers». He sees music as a functional object that holds a powerful influence over behavior because it reinforces collective actions and isolates heterogeneity, thus demanding group conformity. Within the same volume, Peter Martin admits that a specifically constructed social context can establish a particular viewpoint or foster social identity, but he cautions against assuming the passivity of any listener since many studies suggest that the receiver interprets very little of the implied message. This suggests that there is a remarkable gap between any intended message and what is actually internalized by a given audience. It also opposes Theodor Adorno who quite famously insisted that the culture industry inculcates absolute ideological acceptance and compliance to the message being sent while simultaneously concealing the method of delivery. What seems to be the consensus is that while spectators may not always be aware of an ideological message being imparted by the sender, or they do not care what it is, this does not preclude the sender from trying to convey one. Music itself has always enjoyed an unusual capability to capture meaning and shape opinion via several specific devices, such as rhythm, harmony, and melody. In Steven Brown’s enlightening introductory essay to Music and Manipulation, the cognitive neuroscientist specifically illustrates six ways that music successfully influences behavior. Among other points, Brown shows how music has a homogenizing effect on

---

14 See Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s Dialectic of Enlightenment.
15 In The Sublime Object of Ideology Slavoj Žižek believes that any successful ideology allows for «ideological disidentification», a conscious distance between what is being pursued by the authority and the subject’s knowledge of it. When an individual realizes that a particular ideological message is being imparted but chooses to ignore it, Marx’s classical definition of ideology, «they do not know it, but they are doing it», can be re-written to «they know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it». This is because, as Žižek points out, «The cynical subject is quite aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality, but he none the less still insists upon the mask» (1989, p. 29). The paradox that arises between unknowingly being duped by an ideology and knowingly accepting it and still not rejecting it is related to Žižek’s suggestion that ideology is an illusion located in knowledge, and barring access to that knowledge, one cannot be fully aware of any interest hidden behind an ideological universality (1989, p. 31).
16 Strandberg and Tallin, 2006, p. xi.
people, persuades them to conform and comply, provides a context for groups to define or reinforce a specific social identity, inculcates values and beliefs, is useful for conflict resolution, and channels emotional expression at the group level. In reviewing Wayne Bowman’s analysis of Attali’s sacrificial stage of music, it seems that here Attali and Brown converge. According to Bowman, music’s ritualistic uses of individuality is essentially erased as group cohesion becomes music’s dominant goal: «In musical ritual, participants physically enact the subordination of individuality to the greater whole, events that worked powerfully to crystallize collective social organization». These views are not unlike those taken by Malena Kuss who sees music in the Americas as a form of kinetic energy that communicates with ancestors and the supernatural on the one hand and bonds communities and erases social tensions on the other. Seen through this lens, music elicits social cooperation and cohesion and works against group incongruity as it reaches beyond the here and now as it attempts to force inclusion.

Composers and dramatists alike, in their capacity to write at a particular moment in time and for a precise audience, use the stage as a purposeful object to elicit desired audience behavior and participation. In the Early Modern period, composers were “centralized on the level of ideology and decentralized on the economic level” because they fell under the direct influence of Church and the state, not least of all because these institutions employed them. It would be these two bodies that provided the ideological impetus and the financial backing to write and perform music for public spectacles. Within this setting, music often was conceived as a communication system with a specific lexicon of acoustic devices shared by a particular culture or subgroup. The sender shapes this lexicon by matching sound with message and attempts to achieve a desired action or reaction from his audience. Few would agree that musicians and composers make music simply for themselves. Instead, they create particular harmonies, melodies, and the like because they believe their works will elicit a response in others. Applied to the operas studied here, the sender, aware of the social, political, religious, and economic situation in which he finds himself, exploits opera as a

---

17 Brown, 2006, pp. 4-5.
20 Attali, 1985, p. 31.
unique and rare musical device—sometimes in the language of the con­querors, sometimes in that of the conquered—to demand compliance on the group level.

Theories of music production, dissemination, and ideology mostly consider the effects of voice and music on listeners. But, it must never be forgotten that opera was originally a dramatic genre, and from its inception it was widely believed that music should aspire to drama, not the reverse. Beginning with the first operas in Europe in the late fifteenth century, the words of an opera—the poetic verse structure that expresses the plot, the characterization, and the climax and denouement—were normally written well before the work was put to music. As the Florentines conceived it, sung poetic verse accompanied by light music was to be the fundamental feature of opera. And up through the middle of the seventeenth century, opera in Europe was generally considered a «tragédie en musique», as the French composer Jean-Baptiste Lully called it, emphasizing the primacy of poetry and tragedy, which was then set to music. Here, the dramatic rendering was still central. But, under Claudio Monteverdi’s genius, music’s significance was greatly increased so that music and verse held equal footing. Monteverdi believed that only when sung poetry was integrated carefully into dramatic action, when music articulated both action and song, and when spectacular stage sets and costumery were visually realized, could opera then come to full fruition and achieve unification between the stage and its audience. After Monteverdi, the advance of opera followed a pattern: a librettist created a dramatic poetic text, a composer put it to music to combine word with song, and a stage designer crafted elaborate sets, costumes, special effects, and mechanizations that, together, transformed the stage into a new and exotic world. Nowhere in these early works was there a particular hierarchy elevating voice, music, or poetry. It would take opera’s great expansion in the second half of the seventeenth century, and especially in the eighteenth century, to demarcate the dramatic text in favor of grand orchestras and singers. For Attali, this later period corresponds to Representation, the time of the great spectacle when the public opera house or concert hall replace the

---

21 As Grout and Williams make clear, by the end of the seventeenth century, audiences demanded more music and singing—especially arias—and cared less about the poetry; composers’ interest in drama correspondingly began to wane (2003, p. 99).
more intimate religious or official court venues and music begins to be printed and sold.  

Today, most would agree that when it comes to opera, music and verse should be examined as a cohesive whole. It is this fundamental misunderstanding that music or song supersedes the dramatic text, or the opposite, against which Joseph Kerman rails in *Opera as Drama*: «Of the many current partial attitudes towards opera, two are most stultifying: the one held by musicians, that opera is a low form of music, and the one apparently held by everyone else, that opera is a low form of drama. These attitudes stem from the exclusively musical and the exclusively literary approaches to opera (...)»  

Opera studies by musicologists, philosophers, historians, musicians, designers, and literary critics, among other interested critics, have mostly privileged one aesthetic facet of the genre over another. However, this really should not at all be surprising; after all, opera is an all-encompassing genre as it stretches beyond each of these disciplines to enter many other areas, such that no one critical approach could ever really give it the attention it requires. Any examination of opera from its inception through the eighteenth century makes plain the genre’s multifarious aesthetic groundings. In Early Modern Europe, playwrights understood the effect produced by powerful storylines, interesting characterization, and unique staging devices as well as how captivating themes of honor, love, jealousy, and hatred could transport the audience from Early Modern cities to some other exotic time and place. This is precisely why the theater in Spain, called the *comedia nueva*, was so triumphant among audiences for the entire seventeenth century and part of the eighteenth. Dramatists were well aware that their success depended upon making an impact on spectators. They were beholden, to some degree, to audience appreciation, and so Spanish plays had a communal relationship with its audience. Constantly overcoming theatrical and dramatic limitations—to stay fresh and relevant—sometimes required great ingenuity on the part of playwrights. The strategic placement of popular instrumental pieces or brief songs into theatrical works promised to be one inventive resource that would draw in spectators. At first, these short musical pieces were derived directly from the traditional *romances* and were  

---  

24 Kerman, 1988, p. 16.
already known to many spectators, sometimes by heart. Little by little, however, these simple and catchy tunes became ever more complex as playwrights began to experiment with longer musical numbers until some dramas, such as the zarzuela, were nearly entirely sung (but falling just short of full-blown opera). For Spanish playwrights, totally sung musical drama provided an innovation the stage had not known, and stories took on dramatic new life. Hence, music was linked to drama early on and would remain so in Spain and the Americas during the colonial period. It would take the daring and ingenious Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca to initiate opera in Spain, the first by writing a Florentine style opera, the latter by initiating a Spanish genre based upon an amalgamation of previous Italian and Spanish models. Both attempts were not without their detractors or their defects, and Spanish opera would not reach its maturity until the first decades of the eighteenth century. At that time, thanks to royal patronage, several Italian schools of opera emerged in Madrid which developed out of coalesced forms from Naples, where it would then be transported to Spain’s colonies in the New World.

In the Americas, musicians and composers were almost always working in cathedral music. These composers had to fight for notoriety and pay by working within the realm of the sacred musical themes imposed by the Catholic Church, which was for a time the only benefactor of musical life. And no matter what they wrote or played for public consumption, the popular comedia routinely overshadowed the composers’ pieces. As in Spain, New World opera was rarely funded and therefore not easily installed into the artistic scene. But, there were exceptions. Chapter 3 describes how available patronage in Lima, easily the most accommodating location for both music and theater in the Americas during the period, secured a place for the genre in the early eighteenth century where a few secular operas were produced to celebrate the king and the monarchy. There, in the City of Kings, Tomás de Torrejón re-staged the first opera in the Americas, La purpura de la rosa, a work originally written by the great Spanish playwright Calderón de la Barca and staged in Madrid in 1660. Torrejón was Chapel Master of Lima’s Cathedral and, by 1700, the New World’s greatest musician and composer. His refashioned opera—complete with a new libretto—exalted the new King Philip V, a French Bourbon, and championed the Peru-

---

vian Viceroy’s decision to support the new monarchy over the competing Austrian Habsburgs as a War of Succession raged. Passed down to us today, the opera exudes propaganda, not just for its blatant praise of the monarchy, but because Torrejón sought to use it in order to secure additional patronage at a particularly difficult economic time in the colonies. It was therefore a magnificent public display of music and aesthetics that was a significant development in the history of opera.

*La púrpura de la rosa* and subsequent operas in Lima from the period were inspired by previous Spanish models and dependent upon Italian and French lyrical-dramatic trends. As was the case with Torrejón’s work, opera in Lima often featured secular themes. In the areas outside of Lima, however, opera was unquestionably more sacrosanct. In the Jesuit missions of South America, another significant area to cultivate an opera tradition, missionaries believed the religious themes dramatized and brought to life through music were an excellent method to Christianize and educate the Indians. The Jesuits produced several short operas (or brief musical dramas), most of which were either written in one of the principle cities and distributed to the mission towns, or composed by European missionaries installed in the jungle villages of South America. Chapter 4 examines two operas from these Jesuit missions. The first was *San Ignacio de Loyola*, written by the grand Roman organist and composer Domenico Zipoli who was studying the priesthood in Córdoba, Argentina and writing pieces for distribution to the missions. The second was a mission opera titled *San Francisco Xavier*, by an unknown Indian composer and written in the local native language. The two operas are extremely important to our understanding of cross-cultural collaboration since through the intercession of music and dance Europeans and the indigenous worked together to introduce spectacular musical pieces extolling the virtues of the faith. Therefore, New World opera developed along two branches: one that reflected secular European palatial and court tastes in the metropolitan centers such as Lima; and a sacred style in the Jesuit missions in the Andean region of South America where indigenous musicians, singers, and composers played active roles in sacred music making. Regardless of where, why, or how early American opera came about, the genre was, from its initiation, an ideologically-driven medium that glorified the state or the Church, primarily because composers were beholden to these two authoritative bodies.
One aspect that both traditions had in common was their European derivation. Early opera in the New World has no specific pre-Colombian precursor as the genre had in Medieval and Renaissance Europe. Instead, New World opera was an adaptation of both secular and sacred European opera as well as a receptor of a few theatrical and musical traditions drawn from pre-Colombian drama. For example, it has been well documented that prior to the Spaniards’ arrival, the Indians had a strong theatrical and musical tradition but nothing that was entirely sung. The anonymous Rabinal Achi (Guatemala), Apu Ollantay (pre-Colombian Peru or reconstructed in the seventeenth century), Diún-Diún (Ecuador), Güegüence or Macho Raton (Nicaragua) are a few of the extant indigenous plays of the New World which survive today. Several of these plays—Rabinal Achi and Diún-Diún, for example—were set to music and danced, suggesting a pre-Colombian tradition of matching music and song to drama, at least in isolated cases. Song and dance, whether in traditional indigenous styles or fashioned from European modes, were important indigenous cultural rituals that eventually were incorporated into European-styled works. In his Natural and Moral History of the Indies (1590), the Jesuit priest and historian José de Acosta describes the Indians’ attraction to music and song while dancing, making it apparent that European styles could be adapted to their cultures:

They play different instruments for these dances. Some are like flutes or pipes, others like drums, others like conch shells; the usual thing is for them to use their voices, all singing, with one or two reciting their poetry and the others coming in with the refrain. Some of these ballads of theirs were very ingenious and told a story; others were full of superstition, and still others were pure nonsense. The members of our society who work among them have tried to put things of our Holy Faith into their way of singing, and this has been found to be extremely useful, for they enjoy singing and chanting so much that they can spend whole days listening and repeating, never getting tired. They have also translated compositions and tunes of ours into their language, such as octaves and ballads and roundelays, and it is wonderful how well the Indians accept them and how much they enjoy them. Truly, this is a great way, and a very necessary one, to teach these people.

---

The great interest in musical genres paved the way for the Jesuits and other missionaries to assimilate doctrinal lessons into traditional cultural spectacles. In fact, in his *Royal Commentaries* (1609), the famous chronicler of the Incan people, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, states that the Indians also had a long tradition of pre-Colombian theater such that dramatic productions were a frequent part of everyday life and easily adapted to European styles: «Some ingenious religious men, of various orders but especially Jesuits, have composed comedies for the Indians to perform so as to give the Indians a feeling for the mysteries of our redemption. They realized that the Indians performed plays in the time of the Inca Kings and saw that they had great natural ability (…)» 

Early historians like Garcilaso consistently provided narratives about the long musical tradition among many Indian groups in the Americas. Once exported, these accounts fueled the belief and wonder of a curious European readership, and European courts took note of the Indians' musical abilities. European missionaries wrote vivid descriptions of a variety of celebrations that included singing, dancing, and music as well as details regarding the advanced ability of several Indian musicians and singers to rise to a level on par with their counterparts in Europe. Indians in Jesuit schools in Potosí, Cuzco, and Lima learned to sing musical dramas with such skill that the Spaniards took note that «la gracia y habilidad y buen ingenio trocaron en contra la opinion que hasta entonces tenian, de que los Indios eran torpes, rudos e inhábiles» («Their grace and ability and ingeniousness conflicted with the opinion held until then that the Indians were simple, uncouth, and inept»). There was no doubt, then, of the Indians' strong musical abilities or of their interest in dramatic performance.

The foundation and population of cities and towns by Spaniards spelled the end of indigenous theater. It was supplanted by Spanish drama, which quickly rose to prominence as the principal form of both court spectacle and popular entertainment. 

29 Lohmann Villena, 1945, p. 278.
mances included comedias, short satirical or burlesque works, masquerades, and the auto sacramental, followed later by the zarzuela and, eventually, opera. Nearly all of these included music, singing, and dancing to some degree. In Lima, the most important center of theatrical activity during the Early Modern period where many corrales and casas de comedias were constructed, works by Spanish playwrights such as Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, and especially Calderón were regularly staged up through the first half of the eighteenth century. The success enjoyed by Spanish drama in the colonies was not surprising. For regular spectators, the variety and frequency of dramatic performances provided a never-ending flow of popular entertainment, normally sanctioned by the local government, the Viceroy, the Church, and sometimes by all three. From a state or Church standpoint, drama had long been viewed as an excellent means to provide diversion and to communicate ideology, and theatrical productions were therefore closely controlled.

In Lima, plays with music were staged in public plazas, churches, and on the street whereas lyrical theater was cultivated behind closed doors, in palaces, and estates. Limeños as well as citizens in the rural Indian villages exhibited strong inclinations toward Spanish dramas that included music, especially when song was integrated into comedias. The first documented attempts at mixing music and drama include a restaging of Calderón's original auto sacramental called El gran teatro del mundo (The Great Theater of the World), which was set to music in 1670 by José

Las ánimas y los albaceas (Souls and Executioners, sixteenth century), and La educación de los hijos (The Education of the Children, sixteenth century). There is also a Nahuatl drama written by a Spanish priest, Andrés de Olmos, called El juicio final (Final Judgment, 1571). Among several dramas written in Quechua are the auto sacramental, El hijo pródigo (The Prodigious Son, seventeenth century), Tragedia del fin de Atahualpa (Tragedy of the End of Atahualpa, sixteenth century), Usca Puacar (sixteenth century), and Sauri Tito Inca: el pobre más rico (Inca Sauri Tito, the Richest Poor Man, sixteenth century).

31 Hesse, 1955, p. 12. According to Hesse, no less than 25 works by Calderón had been staged by 1701 in Lima alone, and another 76 within the next decade, for a total of at least 190 performances of Calderón’s autos, zarzuelas, and comedias by 1793, easily making him the most popular Spanish playwright there (1955, pp. 13-15). Tirso even traveled to the New World, living in Santo Domingo (1616-1618) where he was a professor of theology. At least a few of his later dramas, such as Amazonas en las Indias (Amazons in the Indies, 1635), drew on this experience.

32 Mendoza de Arce, 2001, p. 29.
INTRODUCTION

Diaz, a Lima-born musician and composer\(^{33}\). The originality and success of the production set off others. In 1672 the Jesuits organized and presented a «breve coloquio en recitativo musical» («brief colloquium in musical recitative») by seven boys in honor of the transfer of the Holy Cross from one church to another\(^{34}\). The citation is significant since it mentions recitative, or sung dialogue that mimicked natural speech, which was a principle component in early opera. And in 1672, a fully-sung musical drama, *El arca de Noé* (*Noah’s Arc*), written by Antonio Martínez de Meneses, Pedro Rosete Niño, and Jerónimo de Cáñcer, was performed nine times in the palace of the Count of Lemos, the Peruvian Viceroy—the only one who could financially support such a spectacle\(^{35}\). The Count of Lemos was a strong advocate of lyrical theater since his arrival in Peru in 1667, and he believed that public musical drama was a good means to instill religious values while consolidating viceregal authority\(^{36}\). What makes his sponsorship of *El arca de Noé* important is not so much its elaborate use of artificial lighting, grand costumes, stage machinery, and other special affects—many extraordinarily complex comedias and autos sacramentales put to use these production devices—but rather that it was presented in «música recitativa» («recitative music»), denoting (one of) the first totally recitative work(s) in the New World\(^{37}\). There is disagreement as to who the composer of the music was, but Guillermo Lohmann Villena, Gerard Behague, and Daniel Mendoza de Arce hypothesize it to be either the famous Tomás de Torrejón or another lesser known composer, Lucas Ruiz de Ribayaz, both of whom came to Lima in 1667 with the new Viceroy.\(^{38}\) Robert L. Stevenson also suggests José Díaz\(^{39}\). Torrejón’s success with *La púrpura de la rosa* makes him a logical choice as composer of *El arca de Noé*. Besides, the Chapel Master occupied several other important political or church positions, and he earlier provided music for the sung zarzuela, *También se*

\(^{34}\) Lohmann Villena, 1945, p. 276.  
\(^{35}\) Lohmann Villena, 1945, p. 278.  
\(^{36}\) Lohmann Villena, 1946, pp. 294-297 and Rodríguez Garrido, 2003, pp. 32-34.  
\(^{37}\) For a full contextualization of the work and its significance to Lima’s theatrical development, see Chapter 1 of Rodríguez-Garrido’s unpublished dissertation (2003).  
\(^{38}\) Lohmann Villena, 1945, pp. 276-277; Béhague, 1979, p. 63; and Mendoza de Arce, 2001, p. 194.  
\(^{39}\) Stevenson, 1976, p. 102.
vengan los dioses (Even the Gods Seek Vengeance) (1689) based on a comedia written by Lorenzo de la Llamosas.

As these early successes demonstrate, from the beginning music was matched to theater, just as it had been in the peninsula. But, musical pieces were European in nature, despite the fact that the Indians were by far the largest cohesive group in the major cities (Lima, Bogotá, Córdoba, La Paz, and Santiago) as well as the smaller outlying urban villages and towns dependent upon these metropolises. Almost immediately after the Spaniards arrived, Indian music, like other indigenous cultural production, fell victim to the same ethnocentric attitudes that relegated their religion and politics to secondary status. Europeans generally rejected native music and imposed Old World religious musical styles with the intention of controlling and indoctrinating the masses.

European styles did not dominate everywhere, however. An important exception was the remote rural areas under Jesuit control, which included a large swatch of South America. There, short musical pieces were regularly composed on the spot, and the missionaries made a point to integrate local indigenous customs in an effort to be inclusive. These faraway mission villages were mostly cut off from the urban centers, and indigenous music and theater there often surpassed its urban counterpart, although it was much simpler, less ostentatious, and less frequent. In such places as Chiquitos and Moxos in present-day Bolivia, for example, the Jesuit mendicant orders ministered to the Indians by developing a rich musical and theatrical practice that arose based on what was in fashion when they left Europe, or on what they learned about upon arriving in Spanish centers in the New World. They then took these models and incorporated local costumes and traditions, including the native languages, and located European themes within native contexts. When new missionaries arrived, they brought news of changing trends in Europe, which was also integrated into local musical culture equating in a virtual non-stop renewal of music in the missions. A cultural history of the Jesuits, and of their Indian counterparts, tells us that it should not surprise us that two operas were composed and staged there since the collaborative environment of the two groups produced an incredible array of musical pieces that have been passed down for centuries and which are still actively performed today. From its inception in Europe, the Company of Jesus routinely used plays and music

Mendoza de Arce, 2001, p. 194; Stevenson, 1976, p. 112.
in all of their teachings, believing that the melodic rehearsal of poetic verses helped improve memory and physical presence, taught about rhetoric, and, most significantly, helped instill Catholic virtues. The culture of the Jesuit mission towns yielded a remarkable collection of psalms, hymns, carols, lyrical dramas, keyboard pieces, and other sacred musical pieces, not to mention the two operas in question, all of which point to a strong record of friendly cooperation between the Indians and their European brothers. This collaborative production was willful since both Europeans and the indigenous peoples embraced the other willingly. Nonetheless, it can be said that the Europeans, although generally peaceful and benevolent toward their Indian understudies, were absolutely the dominating group. After all, the aesthetic creations that emerged from this collaboration were decidedly Catholic. The high degree of artistic glorification of God demonstrates an intent to control music production and consumption.

Opera composers throughout history worked under and responded to state and Church power, receiving overall support or patronage from these two authoritative entities, and therefore were required to operate completely within the parameters of accepted ideology. Early operas were ideologically-motivated, aesthetic acts founded on concepts of public control and manipulation as they set out to imagine drama as a way to face real-life problems for which no tangible solution existed. In The Political Unconscious, Fredric Jameson writes that cultural artifacts are representative of their moment of production and are conceived as a means to alter, inhibit, and convert concrete social contradictions through the construction of aesthetic form. New World opera, as an aesthetic creation, is here believed to offer «imaginary or formal solution(s) to unresolvable social contradictions» related to specific quandaries faced by the monarchy and the Church. For example, the two Jesuit mission operas from South America, San Ignacio de Loyola and San Francisco Xavier, were new and exciting ways for the Jesuits to fulfill their obligation to Christianize the Indians and teach doctrinal lessons and, in the process, introduce previously unknown musical genres. Moreover, indigenous musicians and singers played overarching roles in these productions, which raises the specter of their being complicit.

42 Mendoza de Arce, 2001, pp. 3-4.
43 James, 1981, p. 79.
in their own evangelization. Similarly, Torrejón’s *La púrpura de la rosa* was funded and staged specifically to garner support for the Bourbon monarchy in the midst of a war of succession, symbolically reaching out to the Crown’s new citizens to persuade them of the state’s legitimacy. The opera, in this light, is an aesthetically formulated response to political problems associated with the reception of a new Bourbon king after two centuries of Habsburg control. Taken as a whole, the visible «unresolvable social contradictions» (political issues in *La púrpura de la rosa* and religious anxieties in *San Ignacio* and *San Xavier*) are resolved by constituting themselves as symbolic acts that «find a purely formal resolution in the aesthetic realms»\(^{44}\). Seen through this lens, these operas operate within a process of socialization and coercion as they offer authoritative and formulated responses to perceived religious, social, and political problems.

In what follows I make evident that as senders of a particular message, dominant political and economic bodies influenced composers. Compositions matched content with form, and musical pieces took advantage of persuasive strategies to shape group behavior and elicit a desired response. By emphasizing the role of the composer-as-sender, the use and control of the musical devices (instruments, singers, and staging mechanisms, etc.) at his disposal, as well as the codification of his music, it becomes readily apparent that early operas in the New World were generally political and philosophical discourses laden with semantic meaning. These operas were, in short, extraordinarily entertaining and amazingly political:

The arts had two primary functions: when financed by the court they could proclaim the power and grandeur of the monarchy, while for the educated commoner and the nobility they were a forum for social criticism and a mirror of society. The visual arts were especially important for their representational potential and their immediate impact. Music, however, did develop its own propagandistic and nationalistic function, towards political or religious ends, especially certain forms of vernacular sacred and theatrical music\(^{45}\).

\(^{44}\) James, 1981, p. 79.
\(^{45}\) Stein, 1990, p. 327.
The captivating effects of music and dance configure and reinforce group identity and ritualize aesthetic practices, marking a point of audience convergence. Although not all music is deceptive or explicitly attempts to be manipulative, we must approach each piece one by one and examine the sender, the reactions of the receiver, and the social and economic impetus propelling the composition in the first place. To do so will provide unique perspective on how these opera composers, confronted with a set of seemingly insurmountable problems, instilled a desired ideological belief as they created unique works that not only mystify and astound, but also relate intensely political points of view. At the same time, this book describes how Spaniards and other Europeans, working within the shadow of the Old World and taking inspiration from it, expanded opera beyond the political locus of Lima to the Andean region where it became a component of the Jesuits' evangelical strategy. From there, the genre was taken up by adept Indian composers, only to be exported back to Europe in chronicle accounts, eyewitness testimony, and missives, suggesting that opera was a transatlantic venture, an oscillating force that moved back and forth across the Atlantic, and one laden with the political undertones marking the cooperation and conflict of the imperial center with its periphery.