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Octavian and the Composer: Principal Male Roles in Opera Composed for the Female Voice by Richard Strauss

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF MUSIC

OCTAVIAN AND THE COMPOSER: PRINCIPAL MALE ROLES IN OPERA
COMPOSED FOR THE FEMALE VOICE BY RICHARD STRAUSS

By

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I'd like to dedicate this treatise to my parents, grandparents, aunt, and siblings, whose unconditional love and support has made me the person I am today. Through every attended recital and performance, and affording me every conceivable opportunity, they have encouraged and motivated me to achieve great things. It is because of them that I have reached this level of educational achievement. Thank you.

I am honored to thank my phenomenal husband for always believing in me. You gave me the strength and courage to believe in myself. You are everything I could ever ask for and more.

Thank you for helping to make this a reality. I dedicate this to you with eternal love and devotion.

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ABSTRACT

This treatise examines two of Richard Strauss's and Hugo von Hofmannsthal's operatic trouser roles, Octavian (*Der Rosenkavalier*) and the Composer (*Ariadne auf Naxos*). The author will discuss the history and operatic traditions of cross-gendered role assignments as a background to examining Strauss's reasons for writing male roles for women to sing, and also explores the vocal and dramatic characteristics of the two roles. Recordings, musical examples, and quotes from performers who created and sing these roles will be included to support the author's conclusions.

CHAPTER ONE

THE EVOLUTION OF THE TROUSER ROLE

The Renaissance theater offered the intriguing display of the male actor dressed as a female, and then proceeded to draw attention to the physicality of that character *en travesti* in various ways: undressing scenes, making jokes around the use of stuffing or prosthetic devices, and by complicating the plot, dressing boys as girls who have then disguised themselves as boys. Opera is one of the few mediums that continues to offer this fascinating display, but with a fundamental difference. Not only does opera consist of men dressing up as women, but includes the stimulating scenario of girls dressing up as boys or girls dressing up as boys and then disguising themselves as girls.

There are many opera roles of this kind, and Richard Strauss (1864-1949), a prolific composer of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is a prime example of one who composed such music for the female voice, namely those women who dressed up as men, or what the opera world would consider trouser or travesty roles. His most significant contributions to the genre of trouser roles and today's mezzo-soprano are the characters of Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*, and the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos*.

The Castrati Singers and the Opera

To understand the evolution of these significant travesty roles that today's mezzo-soprano has come to inherit, one must first go to the inception of opera. According to Meyer M. Melicow, the year 1600, with the performance of *Euridice* composed by Jacopo Peri, marks the birth of modern opera. Prior to that time, dramas were performed in which polyphonic choruses dominated. With his opera, *Euridice*, Peri rebelled against this style of performance, and introduced a significant innovation by employing single vocal parts consisting of arias and recitatives.¹ As this "modern opera" began to flourish, women in the Papal States and some other

¹ Meyer M. Melicow, M.D., "Castrati Singers and the Lost 'Cords'," Bull N.Y. Acad. Med. 59, no. 8 (1983): 744-757.

areas of Italy were strictly forbidden to sing in church or on the stage. Composers and producers of opera turned to what the church had already begun to use as an answer to employing singers with voices ideal for soprano parts: castrati.

It is difficult to ascertain the direct origin of the castrato. There have been forms of castrated males, such as eunuchs, since the beginning of civilization. Depending on the culture the eunuch was derived from, they were generally castrated to perform a specific social function, such as courtiers, government officials, military commanders, and guardians of women. Some of these castrated males were undoubtedly singers, but it is nearly impossible to determine the actual point in time where young boys were castrated solely for the purpose of cultivating singers. Castrati seem first to have appeared, probably from Morocco, in the Moorish courts in southern Spain and Portugal. By the fifteenth century they were singing at the court of Naples and in the Papal States. They were welcomed into the church and justified by the injunction of St. Paul: "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak..."(Cor. 13:34), and they could be heard in the Sistine choir up until 1884. This injunction would serve to provide a genuine musical reason for their existence, as according to the words of St. Paul, women were prohibited to sing in church. By 1625, castrati reigned supreme as *soprani* in the Vatican Chapel and elsewhere; however their fame would not be limited to the church. At this point, a new art form had arisen – opera – and for the next 200 years, this medium would allow castrati to achieve their greatest fame and superstar status.

Castrati were important figures in opera almost from its inception through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and even a little later, and were unsurpassed during a large part of that time. Between approximately 1600 and the early 1800s, many leading roles in opera were written for castrato males playing heroic and/or romantic leading male roles, and since women were prohibited from the stage in the Papal States and various parts of Italy, they were equally known for playing female roles.

Castrati have often been regarded as being the greatest singers of their time. Their extensive training made them superior, in both virtuosity and musical comprehension. The young castrato would be subjected to rigorous training that would last anywhere from eight to ten years

under the tutelage of world famous music masters, such as Nicola Porpora, Bernacchi, and Pistocchi.²

The physical characteristics of castrati differed from that of the average male. Castrati were usually tall, with long spindly legs and flat feet. Most were handsome with feminine facial features lacking facial hair. Occasionally, they had wide hips and were obese. They developed the thoracic cavity of a man, often a disproportionately large thorax, and the vocal cord structure physiologically similar to that of a woman. Their voices had a powerful, resonant quality, and their breath control was incredible, as the best of them could sing for a minute or more on a single breath. Contemporary descriptions of castrati singing remark on their projection and virtuoso skill. For example, Charles de Brosses³ states:

Their timbre is as clear and piercing as that of choirboys and much more powerful; they appear to sing an octave above the natural voice of a woman. Their voices have always something dry and harsh, quite different from the youthful softness of a woman; but they are brilliant, light, full of sparkle, very loud, and with a very wide range.⁴

Alessandra Moreschi singing “Ave Maria” by Schubert



Fig. 1.1 Portrait photo of Alessandro Moreschi

² Melicow, 747.

³ Charles de Brosses (1709-1777) was a French writer of the eighteenth century.

⁴ Angus Heriot, *The Castrati In Opera* (London: London, Secker & Warburg, 1956), pg 14.

“The castrato voice was more sought after not for its range and power, but for its strangeness and rarity. Because the sound was a strange voice in the wrong body, composers saw it more as a musical instrument, independent of the body it inhabited.”⁵ “The castrati became popular amongst opera goers due in part to the general Baroque taste for artificiality, the singers’ curiosity-provoking sexual ambiguity, and above all the unique qualities of the voices which could not be replicated by women or uncastrated men.”⁶ At that time, a particular fondness emerged among the public for higher voices, which were better able to execute the florid style of Baroque vocal writing.⁷

People were enamored of the high, and particularly, the soprano voice. This special value called for the exotic powers of the castrati. The high voice may have been in association with youth, as in opera castrati were to sing the parts of young and virile heroes. It may have also had to do with superiority, “soprano” meaning “higher.”⁸ During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the culture operated in terms of oppositions and hierarchies where the higher is valued over the lower and associated with concepts of superiority.⁹ And because the best high voice was assumed to be that of the castrato, the early operatic repertoire gives the main roles of kings and warriors, poets and gods to the castrato.¹⁰ Since the high voice reigned supreme, if a castrato was unavailable to perform for a particular production of Monteverdi or Handel in a city that allowed women to perform, the theater would find the next best high voice and offer the part of the god, king, warrior, or poet to a woman.

⁵ Blackmer and Smith, 137

⁶ Patrick Barbier, *The World of the Castrati: History of an Extraordinary Operatic Phenomenon* (London, UK: Souvenir, 1998), 91-92.

⁷ Barbier, 91.

⁸ John Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera: The History of a Profession* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992),

⁹ Blackmer and Smith, 136.

¹⁰ Blackmer and Smith, 136.



Figure 1.2 Giuditta Pasta as Tancredi

There are a few cited examples in which theaters engaged women where, *en travesti*, they took parts otherwise assigned to a male castrato. While the ban on women appearing on stage in the Papal States remained firm until 1798, women did sing in opera in the rest of Italy and throughout Europe. By the eighteenth century almost all the lead roles, male and female, were for high voices, and the vast majority of male opera singers were castrati.¹¹

The variability in the casting of either sex for both male and female roles was prevalent during that time, “so the audience of the first half of the eighteenth century saw no issue with suspension of disbelief, and everyone knew that opera was sound and spectacle and they discounted all other considerations.”¹² If the singer of the sex required was not available, one simply hired the voice needed.

In the early 1800s, the castrato’s place in opera changed dramatically, and “at stake was the voice of the hero. The eighteenth-century heroic voice, *par excellence*, was that of the ever-

¹¹ Blackmer and Smith, 137.

¹² Blackmer and Smith, 138.

flexible and awe-inspiring castrati.”¹³ With the increasing popularity of the *opera buffa* in the mid-eighteenth century, there seemed no suitable place for the voices or characters associated with castrati. “The comic opera was everything that the serious opera was not. It was natural, lively, based on everyday life, and often written in the local dialect. It was also inexpensive to produce and did not require superb singers, but rather, well-rounded artists with comic flair and the ability to capture the spirit of the character on stage ... As opera began to devote itself to Romantic themes in the second half of the eighteenth century, castrati were doomed to rejection from opera, and therefore, were forced to return to church music.”¹⁴

With Napoleon’s invasion of Italy in 1796, the political and cultural upheaval was immense, and the world of opera was changed forever. Concurrently, there was a movement to define femininity and use that definition to promote the idea of a dominance of masculinity. Strong women were demanding equality of sex, and “the sexual anarchy once seen only on the stage was now happening all around, and suddenly the sight of a castrato onstage became an affront. Under Napoleonic rule, stringent measures were taken to outlaw the practice of castration, and by 1844 they were all but extinct.”¹⁵

The holdover preference for flexible, high treble voices for the hero brought the sound of the castrati into the nineteenth century. In the beginning of the century, women’s voices also took this dual ability, and could represent what was considered masculine and what was considered feminine. The aural possibilities heard in the castrato’s voice were then transferred to the female travesty singers.”¹⁶

With the disappearance of castrati from the opera stage, their roles were taken over by female singers, and new roles for women “en travesty” were created in *opera seria* by contemporary composers such as Rossini and Bellini (Tancredi and Romeo).

As women became more active within the legitimate theatre scene, the need for male transvestite acting was superseded. Conversely, there arose a growing interest in female transvestite acting, or breeches parts. Phyllis Hartnoll, theatre historian, defines the term breeches parts as “the name given to roles written for handsome young heroes in romantic

¹³ Naomi André, *Voicing Gender: Castrati, Travesty, and the Second Woman in Early-Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 3.

¹⁴ Hensrud-Kerian, T. “A character study of two trouser roles for mezzo-soprano in opera : Cherubino from W.A. Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Octavian from R. Strauss ’s *Der Rosenkavalier*.” M.A., diss. (University of North Dakota, 1984), 13.

¹⁵ Blackmer and Smith, 139.

¹⁶ André, 33.

comedy and played by personable young women.”¹⁷ Concurrently, in eighteenth-century France, women playing the roles of young men, or “travesty” became a standard acting practice.

Beaumarchais explains the nineteenth century “travesty” convention by stating that the role of the page Chérubin could be performed only by a young woman since the theatre of his day no longer possessed young actors sufficiently trained to be able to penetrate the subtleties of the role.”¹⁸

Tammy Jo Hensrud-Kerian’s thesis includes an anecdote from the famous actress Sarah Bernhardt, who was revered for her travesty acting. Bernhardt states that in order to be performed correctly, travesty required intellect to overpower the physical.

A boy of twenty cannot understand the philosophy of Hamlet, nor the poetic enthusiasm of L’Aiglon,¹⁹ and without understanding there is no delineation of character. There are no young men of that age capable of playing these parts; consequently an older man essays the role. He does not look the boy, nor has he the ready adaptability of the woman...The woman more readily looks the part, yet has the maturity of mind to grasp it.²⁰

The travesty tradition and its practice continued and evolved: in the first half of the nineteenth century, women’s voices continued to represent both male and female characters. In order to more closely match the newly defined terms of masculinity and femininity, the voice of the hero had to more closely match these new conceptions. The pageboy travesty roles became the perfect compromise, as the representation of an adolescent boy was seen as a more realistic opportunity to cross-dress on the stage. “No longer the hero, and relegated to the secondary status of the pageboy travesty role, women’s voices gradually lost access to their former characterization of men with power.”²¹

Thus the number of trouser roles available to modern mezzo-sopranos is due in large part to the historic fact of the rise and downfall of the castrato.²² According to New Grove, “As the castrato gradually disappeared, his mantle fell initially on the prima donna contralto (more rarely

¹⁷ Phyllis Hartnoll, *The Theatre: A Concise History* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998).

¹⁸ Hensrud-Kerian, pg. 15

¹⁹ Napoléon François Joseph Charles Bonaparte (1811-1832) was known as “The Eaglet” (*L’Aiglon*), and was the son of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), the military and political leader of France.

²⁰ Hensrud-Kerian, pg. 15

²¹ André, 103.

²² Blackmer and Smith, 133.

soprano) who inherited his title of ‘*musico*;’”²³ hence the existence of a number of singers during the early and middle 19th century who specialized in masculine roles.

By the end of the 19th-century, composers had stopped writing principal males roles for women to sing. Richard Strauss, however, revived the tradition and wrote the roles of Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* and the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos* specifically for the female voice. These roles, and Strauss’s reasons for choosing to set them for female singers, are discussed in the following chapters.

²³ Owen Jander and Ellen T. Harris. "Breeches part." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/03911> (accessed March 7, 2010).

CHAPTER TWO

RICHARD STRAUSS AND HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL: THEIR LIVES AND COLLABORATION

The collaboration between Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal has always been one of interest, in that it took place almost entirely through letters and postcards between two very different men. Although Strauss frequently invited Hofmannsthal to visit and collaborate in person, the introverted poet usually declined. Strauss preferred to meet and socialize, and perhaps play a game of skat,²⁴ whereas Hofmannsthal preferred to work alone, and required a great deal of solitude. This is but one example of how the two men greatly differed from one another.

Richard Strauss was born in Munich in June of 1864 to Franz Strauss (1822–1905), an exceptional musician and principal horn player in the Munich court orchestra, and Josephine Pschorr Strauss (1837–1910), daughter of a wealthy Munich brewer. Richard showed musical promise from a very young age, and began piano lessons at the age of four, and even before he could write, composed his first pieces at age six. As Richard grew up, his greatest musical influence was his anti-Wagnerian, extremely conservative father, who used his connections as court musician to secure the best teachers for Richard. He exerted much control in what composers were to be taught and emulated, such as Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, with Mozart reigning supreme for both father and son. As principal horn player in the Munich court orchestra, Franz had the opportunity to play premieres of quite a few of Wagner's operas: *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Die Meistersinger*, and *Tristan und Isolde*. There was no love lost between Richard Wagner and Franz Strauss, and Strauss never missed the opportunity to challenge or embarrass Wagner. On one occasion, Wagner "came to write an especially difficult horn part in *Die Meistersinger*, and he insisted Strauss try it out first in case Strauss created a fuss. As it was, he told Wagner that he should find out how to write for the horn since what he had given him to play was more suitable for clarinets."²⁵ Although Wagner always had a great

²⁴ Skat is a German trick-taking card game.

²⁵ Alan Jefferson, *Richard Strauss* (London: Macmillan London Limited, 1975), 9.

deal of respect for Strauss, the feeling was never mutual, and older Strauss would always maintain his animosity towards the man and his works.

From an early age, music was a central part of Richard's life, with his father constantly taking him to various concerts, recitals and a variety of other performances. By the time he turned eight, Richard was taking violin lessons, and at age eleven he began composition lessons. At the age of ten, in 1874, after a great deal of coaching at home, Strauss entered the Ludwigs-Gymnasium, where he would stay for the next eight years. At the young age of thirteen, Strauss's mastery of the violin had become so highly developed that he was given permission to join the Wilde Gung'l Orchestra, which had been formed by his father Franz. His participation in the orchestra eventually led him to become not only first violinist, but to conduct rehearsals occasionally, particularly when they were rehearsing a composition he had written.

By the age of seventeen, Strauss had begun to develop a broader interest in all kinds of music, and was especially interested in hearing one of Wagner's operas. Eventually, Strauss's curiosity got the better of him, and he gave in to his desire. He borrowed a piano score of *Tristan und Isolde* to bring home, unbeknownst to his father, who forbade any Wagner score ever to enter their house. As he sat at the piano and began to play, he was completely entranced by the music. He was so absorbed in the music that he did not hear his father enter the house or begin to practice himself.

Suddenly the horn notes ceased, and Franz Strauss came into Richard's room, unable to believe what he could hear issuing from the piano. He strode up and down in anger, but gradually, as Richard's calm tenor voice answered each of his points rationally and intelligently, the old man stopped criticizing and went back to his own room.²⁶

Thus Richard was forever changed. He had taken the first step towards becoming his own man, and having been exposed to Wagner's opera, was forever changed as an artist.

In 1885, Franz Strauss approached Hans von Bülow to ask for his aid in finding Richard a job as a conductor. Bülow was the conductor of the Court Orchestra in Meiningen, and an avid supporter of Wagner's music. Bülow hired Richard as his assistant at Meiningen, not as a favor to his father, but because he believed in the young man's talent. While in Meiningen, Bülow became Strauss's valued mentor and patron, and "of all the musicians he observed in Berlin, Bülow made the greatest impression – as a pianist, whose 'phrasing, touch

²⁶ Jefferson, 11.

and execution' he admired, but even more so as a conductor, whose probing interpretations captivated him."²⁷ He often credited his knowledge as a conductor to Bülow.

During his time in Meiningen, he met Alexander Ritter,²⁸ who influenced him perhaps more than Bülow. Alexander Ritter, who was married to Wagner's niece, was a violinist in the Meiningen orchestra and an enthusiastic supporter of the ideals of Wagner. Ritter became Strauss's mentor, and he describes Ritter's impact on him and his future compositions: "My upbringing had left me with some remaining prejudices against the works of Wagner and, in particular, of Liszt, and I hardly knew Wagner's writings at all. Ritter patiently introduced me to them...until I both knew and understood them."²⁹ Over the years, they developed a strong friendship, and Ritter continued to stimulate Strauss's mind in both music and philosophy.

At the age of twenty-two, and against his father's wishes, Strauss accepted a position as third conductor with the Munich court orchestra, where Franz still served as principal horn player. Although a promotion on many levels, this post turned out to be less than what Strauss had anticipated. As third conductor, he was responsible for the work the conductors above him did not want, and he became bored in a short period of time. By this time, Strauss had become a well-known composer and conductor, and he took this opportunity to accept various offers that had been extended to him to conduct his music with different orchestras in places like Milan, Berlin, and Hamburg. In 1889, he was appointed Kapellmeister to the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, and prior to accepting that post, worked as musical assistant at Bayreuth. He continued to conduct and compose voraciously; traveling from place to place for work until he inevitably collapsed from his intense schedule, and convalesced in Egypt and Greece.

The "most important experience he gained from those eight months away [from Germany] was that of being on his own, with the time to reflect, read philosophy, and arrive at a philosophy that was all his own."³⁰ Strauss longed to forge a new path for German musical

²⁷ Bryan Gilliam and Charles Youmans. "Strauss, Richard." In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/40117pg1> (accessed March 1, 2010).

²⁸ Alexander Ritter (1833-1896) German violinist, composer and conductor, who married Wagner's niece. He was a violinist in Meiningen orchestra under Hans von Bülow. "Ritter, Alexander." In *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. rev., edited by Michael Kennedy. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/subscriber/article/opt/t237/e8578> (accessed March 1, 2010).

²⁹ Michael Kennedy, *Richard Strauss: Man, Musician, Enigma*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 46.

³⁰ Kurt Wilhelm, *Richard Strauss: An Intimate Portrait*. Translated by Mary Whittal. (München: Kindler Verlag GmbH, 1989), 49.

aesthetics. While on sabbatical, he began composing his first opera, *Guntram* in 1892. He describes the opera in a letter to his friend and publisher, Eugen Spitzweg, that he had found the perfect Wagner-Strauss fusion “in an opera packed with philosophy and melody, a masterpiece of tunefulness and contrapuntalism, dazzling, orchestrated, fresh, bright, serious and intoxicating.”³¹ As his sabbatical came to an end, he was restless to return to Germany. He had been offered several conducting positions, but he chose to go to Weimar, where *Guntram* would be staged. He cast soprano Pauline de Ahna, a former student and incidentally his fiancée, to play the leading role of Freihild in the opera. It was during these rehearsals that his future wife would begin her chronic public displays of temper towards him, to which he always managed to respond jovially. This type of behavior would pervade their marriage for the rest of their lives together. The charismatic Strauss, who happened to also be extremely good-natured, practical, and level-headed, remained faithful to his wife for their entire marriage, and he credited his continued success as a composer to her.

To Strauss’s dismay and bitterness, his first opera, *Guntram*, met with a harsh fate, and was ill-received by the public, especially in Munich, his home town. His next opera, *Feuersnot*, was much more successful. The opera is set in Bavaria and contains a lot of local color, as well as popular Bavarian tunes. It is still performed today in some parts of Bavaria and surrounding regions. With *Feuersnot*, Strauss “marked the beginning of a new association with a theatre management with whom he kept faith, on and off for thirty-four years; the Dresden State Opera, where nine of his premieres took place between 1901 and 1935.”³² His next work, *Salome*, would be the “downbeat of his operatic career.”³³ At the time, Oscar Wilde’s writing was the rage of Europe and several composers were vying for the opportunity to set his latest dramatic play as an opera. However, Strauss is the one who secured the rights. In November of 1905, in the midst of composing *Salome*, he saw Max Reinhardt’s Berlin production of Sophocles’ *Electra* as rewritten for the German stage by Hugo von Hofmannsthal. There the notion of setting Hofmannsthal’s adaptation as an opera entered his head, an idea that would soon lead to the start of a long professional partnership between the playwright and the composer.

³¹ Wilhelm, 50.

³² Jefferson, 58.

³³ Jefferson, 59.

Hugo Laurenz August Hofmann Edler von Hofmannsthal was born in Vienna on February 1, 1874, as the only son of a prominent banker. His upbringing was one of privilege, and he was tutored privately until the age of ten. When he entered Wiener Akademisches Gymnasium, he was already an avid reader, setting himself apart from the other children in intellect and his “astonishing wealth of knowledge.”³⁴ A fellow student, Carl J. Burckhardt, who became a noted Swiss historian, remarked that, “at age sixteen, Hofmannsthal had already touched upon every area of intellectual tradition.”³⁵ This proved to set him further apart from the others, and he often felt as if his school years were the loneliest of his life. Perhaps these painful experiences led to his becoming a great literary figure. It was his method to battle his loneliness with productivity. He wrote in a letter to a friend in 1899:

To be sure, when a person works, he is not lonely, because he rummages around in the deepest of his memories and really touches on everything that he has experienced, yes, even seen and felt, and through one work often unites with the existences of other people more deeply than through interactions or reflection.³⁶

His literary career began at the age of 16 when he began publishing lyric poetry, essays, and commentary in various Viennese periodicals under the pseudonym Loris Melikow. He astounded the literary community with his “particular combination of youth and virtuosity” as it was “an unparalleled phenomenon in the history of German letters.”³⁷ Hofmannsthal associated with a broad set of influential and diverse people, including an elitist group of poets, run by the famous symbolist poet, Stefan George and his contemporaries. The great literary figure and established writer and critic, Hermann Bahr, after reading a review about his own works by a critic called “Loris,” (Hofmannsthal’s pseudonym) recounted his first meeting with Hofmannsthal in 1891. Bahr was “extremely impressed by the article, and was eager to meet its author, whom he pictured as being ‘somewhere between forty and fifty, in the maturity of the intellect.’”³⁸ When he finally did meet the young poet while seated at the Café Griensteidl, a

³⁴ Lowell A. Bangerter, *Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1977), 2.

³⁵ Bangerter, 2.

³⁶ Bangerter, 3.

³⁷ Bangerter, 3.

³⁸ Bangerter, 4.

“‘young man with incredible energy’ came up and introduced himself as Loris. On that occasion I must have had the most foolish look on my face that I have ever had in my life.”³⁹

Under his father’s influence, Hofmannsthal unwillingly entered law school at the University of Vienna in 1892, where he completed only four semesters. In 1894, he left the university to enlist in the military. The military didn’t measure up to his expectations, and in 1895, while in the reserves, he decided to recommit to his original devotion, and re-enrolled in the University to study Romantic Philology. He received his doctorate in 1899. During his travels, Italy had become one of Hofmannsthal’s favorite places for inspiration and productivity, and the late 1890s were no exception. In the year 1897 he took a sabbatical to Varese, Italy, and wrote a great deal of poetry and lyric drama. He completed his first theatrical work to be staged, *Die Frau im Fenster* [The Woman in the Window], which premiered in Berlin on May 5, 1898. At this point, Hofmannsthal was interested in cultivating his growing passion for drama. “By presenting an experience of life as it ought to be, he believed that poetry, drama and music together could transform the way men lived their lives and provide a cure for the moral ills of industrial society.”⁴⁰ With this latest endeavor, he decided to adapt and rewrite plays by other dramatists, one of the most important being *Elektra*, his adaptation of Sophocles’ Greek play. It was this new interest in drama that led him to develop two very important relationships in his professional life; Max Reinhardt and Richard Strauss.

In May of 1903, Hofmannsthal became acquainted with Max Reinhardt, who was director of the Neues Theater in Berlin at the time. It was probably Reinhardt who provided him with the stimulus for writing *Elektra*. Hofmannsthal’s version of *Elektra* brought him phenomenal theatrical success, and incidentally was the catalyst that brought him together with Richard Strauss.

Although Hofmannsthal had contacted Strauss in previous years regarding their potential collaboration on a ballet for which Strauss would compose the incidental music, it wasn’t until Strauss saw Hofmannsthal’s *Elektra* that he recognized the writer’s genius, and wanted to begin their partnership right away. Strauss was in the finishing stages of composing *Salome*, Oscar

³⁹ Bangerter, 4.

⁴⁰ Robert Henderson and Thomas S. Hansen. "Hofmannsthal, Hugo von." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/13175> (accessed March 8, 2010).

Wilde's French play that had been adapted into a German opera libretto by Hedwig Lachmann,⁴¹ and he was struck by the similarities in content. Strauss recounts his first encounter with the play, *Elektra*: "When I first saw Hofmannsthal's inspired play at the Kleines Theater, I immediately recognized of course, what a magnificent operatic libretto it might be, and, just as previously with *Salome*, I appreciated the tremendous increase in musical tension to the very end."⁴² Shortly after the premiere of *Salome*, Strauss contemplated creating an opera based on *Elektra*, but in his mind was unable to rectify the similarities between *Salome* and *Elektra*. He worried that writing an opera with content so similar to his *Salome* would present problems for him musically. As he continued to grapple with this conundrum, he contacted Hofmannsthal to inquire if he might have something else for him. Strauss, full of praise for Hofmannsthal wrote,

I would ask you urgently to give me first refusal with anything composable that you write. Your manner has so much in common with mine; we were born for one another and are certain to do fine things together if you remain faithful to me. Have you got an entertaining Renaissance subject for me?⁴³

Hofmannsthal responded less than enthusiastically:

Allow me, my dear sir, to make you a frank reply. I do not believe there is any epoch in history which I and, like me, every creative poet among our contemporaries would bar from his work with feelings of such definite disinclination, indeed such unavoidable distaste, as this particular one (the Renaissance).⁴⁴

Eventually, Hofmannsthal was able to persuade Strauss to create an operatic version of *Elektra* by convincing him of the vast differences between both the plots and main characters of each story. With their creation of the opera *Elektra*, a twenty-nine year working relationship between the composer and loyal librettist was born.

There were occasional differences of opinion. The poet considered himself to have far finer taste in art and literature than Strauss, and reserved the right to dictate the subject matter they would create together, as well as carte blanche to dictate both scenery and costumes. Hofmannsthal was a strange character, and Strauss, always the jolly extrovert, accepted him for who he was, and never pushed him beyond his exceedingly complex social boundaries. There is a letter from Hofmannsthal to Strauss in which he expresses that in order to maintain such a true

⁴¹ Hedwig Lachmann (1865-1918) was a German translator and poet.

⁴² Charles Osbourne, *The Complete Operas of Richard Strauss*. (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1988), 56.

⁴³ Hammelmann and Osers, 3.

⁴⁴ Hammelmann and Osers, 5.

working friendship, Strauss must never prod him: “Please do not do it, even indirectly, and do not remind me of things, for I shall remind myself and as a result admonish myself. So bizarre is my constitution...So please take me as I am, and take me kindly.”⁴⁵ The agreeable Strauss always did just that.

There were a few disagreements that could have easily caused the two men to part ways had Strauss not been so willing to placate the poet. For example, when corresponding about their plan to add a prelude to the original version of *Ariadne auf Naxos*, in which Strauss expressed his plan to write the role of the Composer for a woman, Hofmannsthal responded to Strauss with bitterness and contention: “Oh Lord, if only I could bring home to you completely the essence, the spiritual meaning of these characters...I feel quite faint in mind and body to see us quite so far apart for once!”⁴⁶ Strauss, with his usual even temperament responded, “Why do you always get so bitterly angry if for once we don’t understand each other straightaway?”⁴⁷ Their correspondence is full of such exchanges, and as was usually the case, in the end Strauss won the argument and the role of the Composer was in fact written for a woman.

They quickly developed an exceptional working relationship and grew to learn each other’s idiosyncrasies. From the beginning of their collaboration, Hofmannsthal required validation from Strauss, and came to rely on it, or he would become very agitated. Whenever possible, Strauss complied. After Strauss received the first few scenes of *Der Rosenkavalier*, their second opera together, he responded to Hofmannsthal, “the opening scene is delightful: it’ll set itself to music like oil and melted butter: I’m hatching it out already. You’re da Ponte and Scribe⁴⁸ rolled into one.”⁴⁹ Their correspondence continued as such, with Strauss praising Hofmannsthal, and Hofmannsthal reacting with gratitude for the rest of *Der Rosenkavalier’s* conception. Theirs was a relationship built on delicate compromise.

In addition to *Elektra*, they created six more operas in their time together: *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, *Die ägyptische Helena*, and

⁴⁵ Hans Hammelmann and Ewald Osers, trans, *A Working Friendship: The Correspondence Between Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (New York: Vienna House, 1974), xix.

⁴⁶ Hofmannsthal, as quoted in Jefferson, 73.

⁴⁷ Hofmannsthal, as quoted in Jefferson, 73.

⁴⁸ Lorenzo da Ponte (1749-1838) was an Italian librettist. He wrote the librettos for Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*. Eugène Scribe (1791-1861) was a prolific French dramatist and librettist who often collaborated with German composer, Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864).

⁴⁹ Hammelmann and Osers, 29.

Arabella. In 1929, while working on *Arabella*, tragedy struck Hugo von Hofmannsthal's family. Hofmannsthal's son Franz committed suicide, and the untimely death of his son caused Hofmannsthal such immense grief that it spurred his own death only two days later. It is quite possible that Strauss would never have collaborated with another librettist if Hofmannsthal had not passed from a cerebral hemorrhage, said to be caused by his intense anguish. Stricken over the loss of his collaborator, Strauss was unable to attend the funeral services for his dear friend.

Although circumstances forced Strauss to seek out other writers, his operas with Stefan Zweig, Joseph Gregor and Clemens Krauss were never as satisfactory as his work with Hofmannsthal. In spite of their different personalities and frequent arguments, they were one of opera history's greatest collaborative teams.

CHAPTER THREE

OCTAVIAN: FROM PAGE TO CAVALIER

When the audience meets Octavian for the first time in the opera *Der Rosenkavalier*, he is lying peacefully in bed with his lover, the Marschallin, Marie Theres. The curtain rises after an erotic orchestral overture depicting their night of passion, to find Octavian disheveled in blissful afterglow, kissing his beautiful older mistress. He soon proclaims “*das Ich vergeht in dem Du*” [“this I is lost in this you”]. From the first few words of his opening sentiments while lying languorously across his lover we realize that “he” is a “she.” For the avid opera go-er, the occasional trouser role is of little consequence, and theater’s timeless ability to suspend disbelief is once again in evidence. However, this time it is different, for Octavian is not the archetypical trouser role.

One of the aspects of *Der Rosenkavalier* which makes it an extraordinary work is the lack of a male playing the role of the hero, or love interest. That role is played by a woman. The “hero,” Count Octavian Rofrano, is not only a trouser role, but his two lovers in this plot are sopranos, making the assignment of characters rather unusual. At the time of Strauss and Hofmannsthal’s collaboration, the trouser role was quite different from what one sees in *Der Rosenkavalier*. It was no longer in fashion to compose romantic or heroic male leads for women to portray on the stage as it had been in the first part of the 19th century. Trousers roles were generally confined to pre-adult characters, such as boys and pages, for whom the smooth skin and higher voices of women could represent masculine youth. They were most often secondary roles, and used to provide comic relief.

Octavian, with his blatant sensuality, is older than the usual trouser role character, and partakes in an overtly sexual and passionate relationship with an older noblewoman. He, as the rose bearer, is the title character and central to the plot, and is in fact a romantic contender for both leading women in the opera. The intense sexual nature of the first act alone defies the terms of acceptable travesty roles in opera of the late nineteenth century.

After the successes of *Salome* and *Elektra*,

... as usual Strauss was ready with a new surprise. Realizing that even he could not travel any farther in the tonal jungles and marshes into which he had led the music drama, he announced that his next work would be a light comic opera 'in the style of Mozart,' and he put himself at once in communication with Hofmannsthal for another libretto.⁵⁰

This proved to be a favorable match, and the collaboration ensued. This was the first true collaboration between Strauss and Hofmannsthal, since in the case of *Elektra*, the composer merely set the writer's already existing adaptation of Sophocles' play to music. *Der Rosenkavalier* marks the first project for which Hofmannsthal created words specifically for Strauss to set to music.

Billed as a comedy for music by the creators, not unnaturally in discussing it writers have drawn comparisons with the greatest works in which humour and music are combined. This comment refers most specifically to Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, and the character of Octavian is clearly an older version of Cherubino, one of the most famous trouser roles in opera. At the inception of *Der Rosenkavalier* Hugo von Hofmannsthal was drawn to French literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and also the characters of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*. In a letter to Strauss in early 1909, Hofmannsthal writes:

I have spent three quiet afternoons here drafting the full and entirely original scenario for an opera, full of burlesque situations and characters, with lively action, pellucid almost like a pantomime. There are opportunities in it for lyrical passages, fun and humor, even for a small ballet. I find the scenario enchanting and Count Kessler, with whom I discussed it, is delighted with it. It contains two big parts, one for baritone and another for a graceful girl dressed up as a man, a la [Geraldine] Ferrar⁵¹ or Mary Garden.⁵²

Mary Garden, a soprano most famed for her success in the portrayal of trouser roles such as Massenet's *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*, where she "astonished America with her impersonation of a young boy"⁵³ and his *Chérubin*, was asked to premiere the role of Octavian at the Opéra-Comique in Paris. "Garden refused to sing the role of Octavian because of its lesbian implications."⁵⁴ In her book, *Mary Garden's Story*, she explains why she never would have wanted to create the role in Paris.

⁵⁰ Henry T. Fink, *Richard Strauss The Man and His Works* (Boston: Little, Brown, And Company, 1917), 254.

⁵¹ Geraldine Ferrar (1882-1967) was an American opera singer and silent film star.

⁵² Hammelmann and Osers, 27.

⁵³ Michael T.R.B. Turnbull. "Garden, Mary." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/10659> (accessed March 4, 2010).

⁵⁴ Blackmer and Smith, 144.

Oh, I didn't care for that opera at all. So I was just as glad that I hadn't created it at the Opéra-Comique. Everybody said I would have made a wonderful Octavian. Perhaps. The role didn't appeal to me at all. Making love to women all night long would have bored me to death.

As the collaboration of *Der Rosenkavalier* commenced, Strauss, with the assistance of Hofmannsthal, sets out to create an opera both light and comic as well as Viennese in character, which suggests paying tribute to Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*. It is an obvious choice then for Octavian, the younger male character, to be sung by a woman, as is Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*. In the beginning of the Opera, Octavian does in fact seem like the youthful Cherubino in love with his Countess. "The Marschallin calls Octavian a childlike, playful boy who pouts and is insulted by every critical command"⁵⁵ much like Cherubino's character from start to finish. As the opera develops, the similarities of Octavian and Cherubino diminish. Where Cherubino represents boyish youth and an awakening in hormonal love and desire, Octavian is less about youth, and more about stature, mutual love and passion, and his journey into adulthood. His relationship with the Marschallin, unlike Cherubino to the Countess, is the most intimate relationship in the opera. Lotte Lehmann, who professes to having known how Strauss himself conceived Octavian, shares her perception of him "as a radiant creature, a startlingly delightful young boy who does not grow up and change into a real man until the second act, when he sees himself cast in the role of Sophie's protector."⁵⁶ Octavian, although modeled after Cherubino, encompasses a modern day aesthetic, and possesses intense passion that Strauss accentuates musically.

"When Richard Strauss came to write *Der Rosenkavalier* in 1911 and to give the part of Octavian to a young woman, he [Strauss] was wily and knowing in his transgression. Of course, he was following Mozart, but this was no frilly, tinkling, childish Mozart. This was the fully aware, wicked, and saucy Mozart."⁵⁷

Yet if Cherubino's descendent, Octavian, is the best-known of operatic trouser roles, he was also the exception to the implicit rules that had governed representations of desire *en travesti*, and his role breaks with that tradition as well as recalling it. Strauss and Hofmannsthal, unlike their predecessors up to and including Massenet, no longer treat female travesty as a problem or a challenge, and their opera contains no trace of ambivalence about the practice: their (excessively) frank staging of the relationship

⁵⁵ Hensrud-Kerian, 54.

⁵⁶ Lehmann, 201.

⁵⁷ Blackmer and Smith, 144.

between Octavian and the Marschallin puts the female lovers in a spotlight, clearly intended to titillate. Their “Cherubino” no longer undresses behind a screen, and this very shamelessness, this abandonment of over a century of shadows and veils over the page’s body and desire, leaves less to “read.”⁵⁸

Strauss and Hofmannsthal intentionally created the character of Octavian, although conceived to resemble Cherubino, to diverge from traditional trouser roles and their previous representation within the world of opera. Yet when

... soprano Lotte Lehmann, once asked Strauss why Octavian’s part was written for a woman’s voice, his answer combines an appeal to common sense with a hint of defensiveness. ‘Have you seen a man young enough to play Octavian and at the same time experienced enough to be an accomplished actor? Besides, writing for three sopranos was a challenge. I think I did the right thing.’⁵⁹

The Opera

Der Rosenkavalier (The Rose Bearer) was a grand and widely publicized success at its first performance at Dresden on January 26, 1911 and has since become a standard part of operatic repertoire in opera companies worldwide. It is an opera about time and transformation on multiple levels. In its opening lines (“What you were, what you are – that nobody knows, that no-one can explain”), Octavian transforms the verb ‘to be’ from the past to the present tense. In Act 1 Baron Ochs boasts that he is “Jupiter blessed with a thousand forms,” but it is Octavian who takes on various transformations throughout the opera: as the Marschallin's adolescent lover, as her chambermaid, as a Rose Cavalier and, by the end, as a wiser young man.

To Hofmannsthal the miracle of life is that an old love can die, while a new one can arise from its ashes; yet in this transformation, which requires us to forget, we still preserve our essence. How is it that – in the same body – we are what we once were, now are and will become? This great mystery of life is, in one way or another, a theme that permeates much of Hofmannsthal's work.⁶⁰

Perhaps this is yet another reason why Octavian was written explicitly for a soprano, to accentuate the ephemeral nature of time.

⁵⁸ Hadlock, Heather. “The Career of Cherubino or the Trouser Role Grows Up.” In *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera*, edited by Mary Ann Smart, 67-92. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

⁵⁹ Allen J. Frantzen, *Before the Closet* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 43.

⁶⁰ Bryan Gilliam and Charles Youmans. "Strauss, Richard." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/40117pg9> (accessed March 4, 2010).

Generations of critics have written off the girl in trousers as merely a titillating or decorative element. More recently others have embraced her as evidence of an authentic sexually subversive agenda in the opera. But I decided that the trouser role is there to make us all share the Marschallin's sadness at the ephemerality of pleasure. The Marschallin realizes that time itself will take her lover away: her darling "boy" will grow up into a man. The boy who jumps on the bed, who clumsily pours her cocoa, who exclaims "Marie Therese" again and again as if he cannot believe he is allowed to call her by her first name — "today or tomorrow" this boy will cease to exist. The audience's knowledge that "he" will cease to exist as soon as the curtain falls intensifies this pathos. Just as the Marschallin wants to stop all the clocks, we might wish for the woman portraying Octavian to remain in costume and in character forever. But time passes, and the opera must end. Our 20th century present reasserts itself. Like the Marschallin, we can only savor our memories of the ardent angelic boy and learn to let him go...⁶¹

The element of time is one of the central themes of the opera, and “might be summed up as ‘nothing gold can stay.’”⁶² This theme is greatly heightened with the knowledge that Octavian can never truly remain a “boy” and each night as the curtain closes, the “boy” will vanish, taking with him his attributes of love and devotion.

Characteristics and Challenges of the Role

There are significant musical and vocal challenges for the performer who sings the role of Octavian. Although it has become a standard mezzo-soprano role, there is a certain type of voice required to facilitate the challenges presented. The singer who undertakes the role of Octavian should possess a sizable voice that is not only powerful, but should also be capable of singing expressively. The singer must give full attention to the subtle nuances throughout the role as well as have the ability to inflect the German text clearly and naturally. It also requires an ability to sustain a high tessitura, which is often difficult for the mezzo-soprano voice. Because of the temptation to carry weight into the upper register, it can be tempting to over-sing the role as opposed to singing expressive legato lines. The performer’s voice should be seemingly even throughout, and she must have complete use of her lower and chest voice. This is especially necessary as Strauss has given Octavian opportunities to be sensual and/or masculine and he accentuates this by placing the vocal line in the lower register of the singer’s voice. In order to be

⁶¹ Heather Hadlock. “A Gorgeous Rosenkavalier Despite A Repulsive Ochs.” In *San Francisco Classical Voice Online*, http://www.sfcv.org/arts_revs/rosenkavalier_11_21_00.php (accessed March 4, 2010).

⁶² Hadlock, Heather.

heard, the singer should be well able to cut through and be heard where the underlying orchestration is heavy. Octavian's music consists of a wide range and the singer must be at ease singing throughout and into the extremities of the voice. The role is most effective when the singer is endowed with a warm, rich sound that will allow for ample contrast between the three principal female roles. The great physical and vocal endurance is required to sing the role of Octavian, as Octavian sings extensively in all three acts of the opera, so a solid vocal technique and the ability to pace oneself is a necessity in order to negotiate the role.

Just as one must be well suited vocally to undertake such a role, equal consideration must be given to the portrayal of the character. At the time of *Der Rosenkavalier's* emergence, it was a charming detail that Octavian was in fact played by a woman, and perhaps more acceptable for the performer to be voluptuous or fuller figured when portraying him. As the expectations for more realistic representations of the pants role has grown, the singer must acquiesce to the public's demand. Ideally the singer should be athletic and lean in stature, so as to appear masculine, with few traces of femininity. Not only should the singer look like a teenage boy, she must be able to emulate his movements onstage. It is equally important to study and perfect these movements and the general demeanor of a boy in his later teens. Although Octavian at times throughout the opera may seem inexperienced and immature (mostly seen in Act I), he is above all a young nobleman and carries himself as such. There must be a fine line between the movements of an average teenage boy and one that has been trained to coexist with royalty, and careful attention must be paid.

The role of Octavian is extremely difficult, and there are specific situations in the role that demand a refined acting ability. On two separate occasions, Octavian is disguised as the Marschallin's chambermaid, Mariandel, where the singer portraying Octavian must be able to act like a teenage boy dressed as a woman, all while adding an element of comedy. The singing actress must also be able to show Octavian's transition into adulthood as the opera progresses. In the first act, Octavian must act boyish and charming, yet courageous and ardent as a lover, and equally disarming as the flirtatious serving girl, Mariandel. In the second act, especially with Sophie, both characters should appear young and particularly naïve and tender towards each other. By the end of the third act, Octavian should have already made the transition to a more adult-like stature as he takes on the role of Sophie's protector rescuing her from her betrothal.

The role of Octavian is arguably one of the most difficult and challenging in the lyric mezzo-soprano repertoire. Various singers have met this challenge in different ways.

Famous Interpreters of the Role

German soprano Eva von der Osten (1881-1936) created the role of Octavian with great success. She was the first Dresden Ariadne, Dyer's Wife (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*), Kundry (*Parsifal*), Tatyana (*Eugene Onegin*) and Maliella (*I gioielli della Madonna*). She was Covent Garden's first Octavian (1913) and Kundry (1914); she also appeared as Ariadne at His Majesty's Theatre in 1913. She toured the USA with the German Opera Company (1922-4), as Isolde and Sieglinde. Other roles for which she was revered include Senta, Carmen, Louise, Tosca and Zazà. Osten was a fine actress and her physical beauty was much admired, as was her fine dramatic soprano voice. Her recordings, especially "*Euch Lüften, die mein Klagen*" from *Lohengrin*, show the purity of her tone.

Eva von der Osten singing "*Euch Lüften, die mein Klagen*" from *Lohengrin*

In this excerpt of Eva von der Osten singing "*Euch Lüften, die mein Klagen*" from Wagner's *Lohengrin*, the listener can begin to determine the vocal quality, size, and tone Strauss intended for the character of Octavian. This singer possesses a pure tone, with minimal vibrato, and surprisingly not the expected weightiness or size of a modern day "Wagnerian soprano." Her tone is very bright, with a bell-like quality, not generally associated with our modern day mezzo-soprano. She sings with such line and ease in the top of her range that when listening to this excerpt, it's almost as if she blends seamlessly with the orchestra, her voice that of another instrument.



Figure 3.1 Eva von der Osten as Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*

Austrian soprano, Sena (Srebrenka) Jurinac was born in 1924, and made her debut as Mimì in Puccini's *La Boheme* at the Zagreb Opera just after her twenty-first birthday. Then, in 1945, she performed the role of Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro* at the Vienna Staatsoper, and she remained with the company for quite some time. She is highly revered for her interpretations of Mozart and Strauss, and is a model both of style and of voice production.



Figure 3.2 Sena Jurinac as Octavian at the Vienna Staatsoper

Karl Heinz Ruppel, a German literary and theater critic describes seeing Jurinac in the role of Octavian: “The lad himself is played by Sena Jurinac, who has one of the most beautiful voices at the Vienna State Opera. She is charmingly natural both as the youthfully bewildered lover and as a rogue. The Cherubino-like nature of the character finds particularly delightful expression when playful amorousness turns to the tongue-tied awkwardness of the first real feeling of love.”⁶³ Jurinac possessed a beautifully pure and rich voice that was even throughout its range.

Sena Jurinac singing “Wie Du warst” from *Der Rosenkavalier*

Similarly to the vocal attributes of Osten, in this recording of “*Wie Du warst*” one can hear Jurinac’s clean and clear vocal production. They possess similar bell-like tones, giving the illusion of an ability to soar easily into the stratosphere of Octavian’s range. Jurinac’s tone flows seamlessly from the warmth in her lower register to the top of her range with complete evenness. From this excerpt, you can hear the strength and size of her instrument, and deduce that the role of Octavian is perfectly suited for her. In the words of Christa Ludwig, “he [Octavian] has a few beautiful phrases, but nothing really easy because he’s suddenly always hitting high notes without any preparation.”⁶⁴ This is one of the reasons that Strauss may have specified the need for a soprano to sing the role of Octavian, and why both Sena Jurinac and Eva von der Osten were so successful at negotiating this role. As for Jurinac, “she will be remembered as one of the outstanding operatic sopranos of her time, generous of voice and radiant of personality. This is reflected in her recordings of Ilia, Marzelline, Leonore and Octavian.”^{65*}

One of the greatest interpreters of the role to this day remains Brigitte Fassbaender. Fassbaender was born in 1939 in Berlin to actress Sabine Peters and celebrated German baritone,

⁶³ Andrea Suhm-Binder. “Sena Jurinac.” In *Subito-Cantabile Online*, http://www.cantabile-subito.de/Sopranos/Jurinac__Sena/jurinac__sena.html (accessed March 1, 2010).

⁶⁴ Christa Ludwig, *In My Own Voice*. Translated by Regina Domeraski (New York: Limelight Editions, 1994), 80.

⁶⁵ Peter Branscombe. “Jurinac, Sena.” In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/14554> (accessed March 4, 2010).

*Ilia, Marzelline, and Leonore are soprano roles from Mozart’s *Idomeneo*, Beethoven’s *Fidelio* (both Marzelline and Leonore), respectively.

Willi Domgraf-Fassbaender. “Her débuts at Covent Garden (1971) and the Metropolitan Opera (1974) were as Octavian, a part in which her dashing looks and her warm, darkly attractive tone won her particular praise.”⁶⁶ What sets her apart from the other singers that perhaps sang the role with more vocal opulence than Fassbaender, was her ability to “identify with the male role, and to identify completely. One critic describing Fassbaender singing Schubert’s *Winterreise*, a song-cycle written specifically for male voice, states that “she goes beyond empathy to identify completely with the boy himself, stepping into his boots with such preemptory conviction that we forget a woman is singing...”⁶⁷



Figure 3.3 Brigitte Fassbaender as Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*

⁶⁶ Alan Blyth. "Fassbaender, Brigitte." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/09354> (accessed March 4, 2010).

⁶⁷ Blackmer and Smith, 36.

If her embodiment of the boy in Schubert's *Winterreise* is so exact and convincing even in recital where she does not have the luxury of masculine costume to hide behind, one can only imagine how thoroughly compelling Fassbaender could be when donning the clothing of an aristocratic gentleman.

Brigitte Fassbaender singing "Wie Du warst" from *Der Rosenkavalier*

By listening to the excerpt of Fassbaender's "Wie du warst" the listener is able to determine that this particular singer adds another layer to the role of Octavian. Unlike the aforementioned singers, Fassbaender possesses a unique quality within her lower register. The core of the sound is firm and clear, while maintaining warmth and roundness. Her shimmering high notes give the impression of pliancy and ease. She has command of the text and every word is clearly understood and sung with purpose.

A modern day favorite amongst the Octavians of the twenty-first century is Susan Graham, American mezzo-soprano.

Octavian is one of Graham's signature roles. Tall and good-looking, her Octavian is an impetuous lover and a wicked comic. Disguised as the Marschallin's maid, she was a sparkling blend of self-reliant working girl and flustered sexual prey... Succulent, with a golden warmth and purity of tone, it was an ideal instrument for her ardent but singularly thoughtful Octavian.⁶⁸

The Chicago Tribune concurs: "there is no finer Octavian in any theater today than Graham, who delivered the mezzo's music with typical beauty and firmness of sound."⁶⁹ Although Susan Graham identifies herself as a "mezzo-soprano," she possesses some of the same "soprano-like" qualities of the most successful Octavians of the past. In this recording of "Wie Du warst" the listener can hear the similarities in tone, weight, and vocal coloring to the previously mentioned singers. She seems equally comfortable in the extreme top of her range as she is in the depths of Octavian's music. Her instrument is not "Wagnerian" in size, yet has the point in the sound as well as the clarity of tone that the previously mentioned Octavians possess.

⁶⁸ Delcoma, Wynne. *Chicago Sun-Times*, February 6, 2006

⁶⁹ Rhein, John von, *The Chicago Tribune*, February 6, 2006

Susan Graham singing “*Wie Du warst*” from *Der Rosenkavalier*

In addition to her splendidly apt voice, she just as easily looks the part as she sings it. Perhaps it has become more of an American tradition to cast women who more easily pass for men on the stage. According to Christa Ludwig,⁷⁰ it’s part of the charm to cast more womanly and curvaceous women to play pants roles in Germany. Susan Graham, with her height and statuesque figure, would not fit in this category, and yet, she ranks as one of the most celebrated Octavians of today.



Figure 3.4 Susan Graham as Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*

⁷⁰ Christa Ludwig (b. 1928) is a German mezzo-soprano.

Shortly after the premiere of *Der Rosenkavalier* at Dresden, an article was published in *The Musical Times* making reference to the particular type of soprano voice Strauss had in mind to play the role of Octavian. “It is a bold experiment on the part of Strauss, which will cause not a little perplexity to managers, that he has written this part for a mezzo-soprano and has distinctly said that he does not wish it to be played by those who usually undertake what are known as Dugazon⁷¹ [soubrette] roles.”⁷² Octavian is just young enough that his voice hasn’t changed, although he’s still a few years older than his prototype, Cherubino, and to show that age, maturity, and passion, Strauss wanted a fuller voiced soprano rather than a younger and more innocent sounding soubrette type. This author disagrees with Mr. Kalish in his article when he states that Strauss had written the role of Octavian for a mezzo-soprano. Although the term “mezzo-soprano” was in fact in existence when *Der Rosenkavalier* was composed, he specifically states within the score that Octavian should be sung by a soprano. Eva von der Osten, the first Octavian, was most certainly a soprano. His reference to excluding the Dugazon or soubrettes depicts explicitly the type of soprano he prefers sing the role, one with a heavier and darker voice, which would create contrast to the voices of the Marschallin and Sophie.

In specifying the preference of a darker, richer and heavier sound for that of Octavian, Strauss creates a more masculine yet luscious character. Simply stated, “in Europe, it’s understood that the charm of the role is directly related to the fact that Octavian is a woman,”⁷³ yet, by allowing a soubrette to portray him, he would lose a significant amount of his nobility and sensuality, for lack of depth in the tone. If he were to sing with the exact timbre of Sophie, a soubrette, Octavian would lose his credibility and appeal as a character.

The precise definition of vocal categories such as “soprano” and “mezzo-soprano” is difficult to ascertain. Such labels tend to shift their meaning over time, and what various commentators mean by “mezzo-soprano” cannot be assumed to be the same. In our own time, qualified terms such as “lyric mezzo-soprano,” “*zwischenfach* soprano” [“between-categories

⁷¹ Term used in French opera since the late 18th century for the types of role, and the types of voice associated with them, originally sung by Louise-Rosalie Dugazon (Richard Wigmore: “Dugazon,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (Accessed [15 June 2009]), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>> (1735-1821) and can be defined as a singer who specialises in soubrette roles, usually involving intelligent acting. The name comes from a French exponent of the type, Louise Rosalie Dugazon (1735-1821), who created 60 roles at the Opéra-Comique. Depending upon the age of the character portrayed, a dugazon part may be either a jeune dugazon or a mère dugazon. The role of Ellen in Delibes' opera *Lakmé* is listed in the cast of characters not as a “soprano” but as a “dugazon.” (Kupferberg)

⁷² A. Kalisch. “Der Rosenkavalier.” *The Musical Times*, Vol. 52, No. 817 (Mar. 1, 1911), pp. 165-167

⁷³ Ludwig, 80.

soprano”], and even “Straussian mezzo-soprano” have been used to distinguish the type of voice that should sing Octavian, as opposed to the mezzo-sopranos who sing Bizet’s *Carmen* or Saint-Saëns’s *Dalila*, or the dramatic mezzo-sopranos appropriate for Verdi’s *Azucena*, *Amneris* and *Eboli*. In the final analysis, whether one calls Octavian a soprano role or a mezzo-soprano one, the important facts are that the singer who undertakes the role should possess a wide range, a secure upper register, a vocal color that is darker and richer than the soprano who sings *Sophie*, and yet sounds younger and more naïve than the *Marschallin*. The role of Octavian is “one of the ultimate challenges of all trouser roles...”⁷⁴ [as it] provides an opportunity ... as few operas do, to gain the recognition and respect both as an outstanding singer and a fine actor.

⁷⁴ Hensrud-Kerian, 66.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE COMPOSER

“The history of *Ariadne auf Naxos* begins without ceremony; indeed, the casual manner with which both author and composer approached the work, an opera to become centrally significant in the overall production of each man, is but the first of many paradoxical elements in its genesis.”⁷⁵ After the completion of *Der Rosenkavalier*, Hofmannsthal and Strauss set out with eagerness to create another work together. Originally conceived to be a smaller scale work, Hofmannsthal persuaded Strauss to produce an opera that could be performed as an interlude in one of Max Reinhardt’s⁷⁶ productions. Seeing as how Reinhardt had proved himself invaluable during the staging of *Der Rosenkavalier* in Dresden, Strauss agreed.

Hofmannsthal proposed combining a play with an opera, and chose to make a new German translation and adaptation of Molière’s⁷⁷ play, *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* (The Would-be Gentleman), or *Der Bürger als Edelmann* in German. *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* is a *comédie-ballet* for which Lully wrote the music for the first performance in Chambord in 1670 for the court of Louis XIV. The *comédie-ballet* was Molière’s innovative synthesis of music, dance, and drama, and he “found clever ways to link the musical *intermèdes* to his dramatic subject and thereby making one single thing of the ballet and the play. Song and dance served to develop the play’s themes through music, metaphor and figured expression.”⁷⁸ Hofmannsthal hoped to recreate this seamlessness with Strauss.

⁷⁵ Donald G. Daviau and George J. Buelow, *The Ariadne auf Naxos of Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 31.

⁷⁶ Max Reinhardt (1873-1943) was an Austrian director. He is best remembered on the opera stage, however, for directing the première of *Der Rosenkavalier*, with sets and costumes by Alfred Roller (1911, Dresden); he also staged the première of the original version of *Ariadne auf Naxos* in Stuttgart (1912), with designs by Ernst Stern. His influence on Strauss and Hofmannsthal was considerable; both *Salome* and *Elektra* were directly inspired by his productions of dramatic versions. In 1920 Strauss, Hofmannsthal and Reinhardt united to create the Salzburg Festival.

Paul Sheren, “Reinhardt [Goldmann], Max,” *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed [4 July 2009]), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>

⁷⁷ Molière [Poquelin, Jean-Baptiste (1622-1673) French playwright and actor.

⁷⁸ John S. Powell. "Molière." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.fsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/18876> (accessed February 18, 2010).

The original Molière comedy tells the story of Monsieur “Jourdain, a bourgeois of unusually common origin, [who] after making a fortune in trade...longs for the polished manners and the allures of aristocracy. He takes lessons in dancing, singing, fencing and philosophy... and furthers a young musical genius, the composer of *Ariadne auf Naxos*.”⁷⁹

Jourdain attempts to court a Marchioness - all to the shame and embarrassment of his wife and daughter. The action of the play involves a Count who flatters him to keep borrowing money from him, who is truly himself courting the Marchioness; his daughter, Lucile, who is in love with a bourgeois man, Cléonte, whom her father will not allow her to marry because he is not a gentleman (although the script makes it clear that he is truly in the same class as the Jourdain); and the maid, Nicole, who is in love with the Cléonte’s valet, Covielle. Cléonte disguises himself as the “Son of the Grand Turk” (with Covielle as “translator”), in love with Lucile, who will promote M. Jourdain to a position of nobility in Turkish society and marry his daughter. M. Jourdain undergoes a humiliating “initiation,” and agrees to the marriage. At this point, the evening’s entertainment that M. Jourdain is sponsoring will take place.⁸⁰

The evening’s entertainment was to be the opera *Ariadne auf Naxos*, which Strauss and Hofmannsthal would write.

Hofmannsthal compressed the five acts of Molière’s play into two, and dispensed with the secondary plot. Strauss provided the incidental music, and in place of the play’s usual ending of a Turkish ceremony in the form of a ballet, Strauss would compose an opera loosely based on the theme of *Ariadne*. Hofmannsthal thought that substituting the opera for the play’s concluding ballet would work well and not obscure the drama, and the opera would serve as the climax of the evening. Thus came the first version of *Ariadne auf Naxos*.

The First Version

The world premiere of *Ariadne auf Naxos* took place in the Stuttgart Hoftheater, Kleines Haus, on 25 October 1912. The opera fused with Hofmannsthal’s German adaptation of Molière’s *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* (The Would-be Gentleman) encompassed one of the most curious productions in opera history. This first version of the opera met with varying opinions. “The majority of the critics were confused by the juxtaposition of styles and art forms, beginning

⁷⁹ Finck, 265.

⁸⁰ <http://amandamichellewhite.wordpress.com/2009/11/21/the-making-and-re-making-of-ariadne-auf-naxos-my-college-paper/>

with a sharply cut version of Molière's most famous play, interlarded with Strauss's incidental music, followed by a short transitional prose scene, and finally concluding with an opera."⁸¹

In the first version M. Jourdain offers a musical entertainment to his guests after a banquet and before a firework display in his garden. M. Jourdain has in fact engaged two companies, one of opera singers and the other a troupe of *commedia dell'arte* clowns. In a lively scene which Hofmannsthal wrote as a bridge between the original play and the new opera, the members of the two companies argue hotly about which shall have the advantage of performing first. The situation is resolved by the intervention of M. Jourdain who decides that there is not going to be time for both performances without jeopardizing the firework display, the two companies must perform simultaneously.⁸²

Hofmannsthal's idea for the opera is detailed in a letter he wrote to Strauss on March 20, 1911 in which he states his vision:

Ariadne auf Naxos is made up of a combination of heroic and mythological figures in 18th-century costume with hooped skirts and ostrich feathers and, interwoven in it, characters from *commedia dell'arte*; Harlequins and Scaramouches representing the buffo element which is throughout interwoven with the heroic.⁸³

The characters Ariadne, her three companions, and the god Bacchus represent the eighteenth-century *opera seria* figures. The story of Ariadne, who was banished to the deserted island of Naxos by her lover Theseus, sings of her torment and longs for death. The intermingling of *commedia dell'arte* with *opera seria* happens when Zerbinetta and her four lovers enter and attempt to cheer up Ariadne, until the god Bacchus rescues her and they fall in love.

The critics and general public did not take kindly to the production. The theater-goers did not agree with Hofmannsthal's revision of the Molière play, and the opera-goers were so disheartened that they had to sit through two hours of Molière, that by the time the Strauss opera was premiered, they had lost interest. One critic, O.P. Jacob, who wrote up the première for *Musical America*, states:

It is a pity that for this libretto he did not choose an abler man than Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Strauss's adherence to Hofmannsthal has certainly estranged a great percentage of the public. Let the composer emancipate himself from this librettist, whose reputation, to me at least, is unaccountable, and he will surely win over a great number of those who today are bitter opponents.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Daviau and Buelow, 54.

⁸² Anthony Besch, "Ariadne auf Naxos," *The Musical Times* (1961): 18-19.

⁸³ Hans Hammelmann and Ewald Osers, trans, *A Working Friendship: The Correspondence Between Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal* (New York: Vienna House, 1974), xix.

⁸⁴ Finck, 266.

There were also critics who focused all of their negativism on Hofmannsthal's libretto, and openly demanded that Strauss find a new librettist who would be better suited to supply him with more fitting operatic material. Although most placed the blame for failure with Hofmannsthal, there were those who felt Strauss fell short in innovation. Arthur M. Abell wrote in the New York *Musical Courier* that "thematically *Ariadne* offers nothing that is new; here Strauss again reveals his great weakness – the lack of originality of melodic invention. On the other hand, the duet between Ariadne and Bacchus toward the close of the opera is one of the most beautiful and impressive things Strauss has ever penned."⁸⁵ Just as some critics reacted with distaste, there were others such as William von Sachs, journalist for the New York *Evening Post*, who found that "pretty graceful melodies are strewn throughout the score... that proved so catching that even the typical amateur who 'longs for some pretty tune to carry home with him' would this time not have been disappointed."⁸⁶

Although the first attempt at *Ariadne auf Naxos* was a failure, Strauss and Hofmannsthal eventually made the decision to revise it extensively and salvage the opera that they had worked so hard to create.

The Revised Version

Four years later in 1916, "the work was produced in a new form, entirely remodeled, concerning which Strauss himself said: 'The Molière comedy has been entirely eliminated, and the erstwhile interlude in dialogue form, which represented the transition from the comedy to the opera, I have set to music and elaborated considerably.'"⁸⁷ The "second version of *Ariadne auf Naxos* involves three distinct though intermingled musical and dramatic styles – the first, for the Prologue, naturalistic and, except where the Composer expresses his own philosophy and ideals, strongly anti-Romantic; the second, for the *opera seria*, formal and Baroque; the third for the *commedia dell'arte*, lively and mercurial."⁸⁸

In order for the opera to be separated from its original form, Hofmannsthal had to invent an introduction. He revised and rewrote the original interlude that led to the beginning of the

⁸⁵ Finck, 268.

⁸⁶ Finck, 269.

⁸⁷ Finck, 270.

⁸⁸ Besch, 18.

opera, which was originally performed as a verbal dialogue, and decided to focus the entire scene on the energies of the character of the Composer. He “intended it to represent the tragedy and tragicomedy of the youthful composer dependent on the Macenas, singers and lackeys, similar to the youthful Mozart in the beginning of his glorious career.”⁸⁹

Instead of the action taking place in the home of M. Jourdain in Paris, the audience finds itself in the home of the richest man in Vienna, although he is never mentioned by name, nor seen. He desires to entertain his guests, and the young Composer is set to premiere his first opera, *Ariadne auf Naxos*. However, the wealthy man has also invited a troupe of actors to perform a burlesque called *Zerbinetta and Her Four Faithless Lovers*. When the Composer hears that both works shall be performed simultaneously, he is devastated and plans to withdraw his premiere, until Zerbinetta, the leader of the burlesque troupe of actors, succeeds in wooing him until he relents. Hofmannsthal asked Strauss to compose this new introduction, or Prologue, in *secco recitativo* form, but Strauss was so overcome with intrigue and enamored with the character of the Composer, that he composed this new music with as much passion as his beloved character, the Composer, sings “*Sein wir wieder gut.*” He succeeded in writing what some consider to be his finest music ever written.

The opera is an exceptional mix of melodrama with complete comedic absurdity. Despite the burlesque actors’ ability to spontaneously adapt to the abrupt change in program, the opera singers are unable to comply as easily, and the Composer specifically sees any change or “alteration to the notes of text as sacrilege, but ultimately they, too, bow to necessity, and a compromise is reached. The result – the ‘Opera’ as we now know it – brilliantly intermingles the lyrical and high romantic manner of *opera seria* with the gay, witty, pellucid frolics of *commedia dell’arte*.”⁹⁰ The opera is now performed as one act with a prologue, and has become a favorite in the standard operatic repertoire.

The Character

Although it may have been Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s idea to create the role of Octavian for a woman, creating the role of the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos* for a woman was Strauss’s

⁸⁹ Finck, 271.

⁹⁰ Besch, 18.

idea, and one that Hofmannsthal greatly opposed. Hofmannsthal could not willingly oblige Strauss's desire to create the role of the Composer for a woman. Within a light-hearted piece such as *Der Rosenkavalier*, Hofmannsthal could enjoy the cross-dressing and erotic games in allowing the role of Octavian to be played by a female. After all, *Der Rosenkavalier* was in part modeled after Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, and the character of Octavian on Cherubino, a well-known trouser role. Cherubino had been Hofmannsthal's muse for creating the role of Octavian for a female to portray, but the role of the Composer represented a very different image for the librettist. Although a product of *fin-de-siècle* decadence, he had clear ideas about what could and could not be represented by a woman, and the heroic role of artist could not fathom being represented by a woman.

“At one stage, Strauss tended to see the character of the Composer as the young Mozart; Hofmannsthal, of course, had the young Hofmannsthal in mind. However, when he wrote the Composer's moving outburst in which he declares that music is a holy art, Hofmannsthal told Strauss that ‘this struck me as the kind of text Beethoven might have liked to use.’”⁹¹ The underlying theme of Hofmannsthal's libretto for “*Ariadne auf Naxos* was integrity: the integrity of the individual to his own ideals in the face of scorn and disapproval of the world, and in spite of hostile circumstance and necessity. This thread, woven both in the Prologue and the ‘Opera’, gives unity to the interplay of character and situation.”⁹² Essentially, the character of the Composer is a clear representation of Hofmannsthal's theme, and is the image of integrity and principle, perhaps the way Hofmannsthal viewed himself. This could have also contributed to his unrelenting desire to have the role written for a male voice. This caused a great deal of strife between composer and librettist. In a bitter letter to Strauss, Hofmannsthal writes:

The idea of giving the part of the young composer to a female performer goes altogether against the grain. To prettify this particular character, which is to have an aura of “spirituality” and “greatness” about it, and so to turn him into a travesty of himself inevitably smacks a little of operetta, this strikes me as, forgive my plain speaking, odious.

Nevertheless, despite his protests, he eventually relented in the face of Strauss's determination.”⁹³ It has often been observed that Strauss disliked tenors and preferred to write

⁹¹ Osbourne, 99.

⁹² Besch, 18.

⁹³ Daviau and Buelow, 75.

for the female voice whenever possible. The question of why Strauss wrote the part of the Composer for a woman could perhaps be attributed to this preference. Strauss first settled on composing the role for a female after a colleague, conductor Leo Blech,⁹⁴ suggested the idea. And with the Composer (*der Komponiste*), the cross-dressing role comes full circle, as a woman is once again allowed to play the noble part of the hero, the leader, the artist, just as she had done in the eighteenth century. To further set the tone of this 18th-century motif, Strauss utilizes a relatively small orchestra of only a thirty-six musicians, rather than the enormous orchestras he required for *Elektra*, *Salome*, and *Der Rosenkavalier*.

The Composer is different from Strauss's other leading soprano roles in that the character only appears in the Prologue and sings for a mere 20 minutes; however,

...it is above all the Composer, with his ardent belief in the validity of his musical and personal experience, and his refusal to compromise with mediocrity, who represents Hofmannsthal's ideals – both he and Strauss [eventually came to see] the Composer as a young Mozart, ardent, zealous, and sympathetic, but so passionately bound up in his own art that he lacks a wider understanding of human relationships and a preserving sense of humor, a master in his art but a child in the ways of the world, much like the Composer in his reaction to Zerbinetta.⁹⁵

When the Composer meets Zerbinetta, leader of the *commedia dell'arte* players, he is not initially impressed, but goes on to fall in love with her, only to rebuke her once he sees her clowning around with her troupe. When he gets carried away by the thought of music, he's enthralled and ecstatic only to be downtrodden once again as the music comes to an end and he is returned to earth.

The Music

"Strauss sopranos" themselves are hard-put to define their satiny sheets of sound, flung out upon voluptuous air; lustrous, creamy, full-throated billows of sound. "It's basically the color of the voice," says one, a certain brightness, not Wagnerian.... "It has to do with the ability to spin out a phrase," says another, sustaining Strauss' achingly long lines on

⁹⁴ Leo Blech (1871-1958) was a German conductor and composer. He worked closely with Richard Strauss, whose operas he conducted in Berlin.

"Blech, Leo," Oxford University Press Online (Accessed [8 December 2009]),

<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>>

⁹⁵ Besch, 18.

Vorspiel [Prelude]. The aria captures the essence of the Composer perfectly. With the opening line, “*Sein wir wieder gut. Ich sehe jetzt alles mit anderen Augen,*”⁹⁹ he is bursting with excitement and passion, only to settle down and contemplate the meaning of life and art with, “*Die Tiefen des Daseins...*”¹⁰⁰ portrayed perfectly by the descending vocal line. He goes on to acknowledge the importance of the poet, in a matter-of-fact tone, and yet, he realizes that there’s so much more to the world that he cannot help but become excited again. When he contemplates what music is, he is nearly transformed to a different world. He gets lost describing music’s holiness, and is so transfused with passion, perfectly rendered in the vocal line ending with an exultant ascending line on the words, “*Die heilige Musik!*”¹⁰¹ that he is brought rudely back to earth with Zerbinetta’s calling her troupe back onstage.

Characteristics and Challenges of the Role

There are many common attributes between the Composer and Octavian such as vocal range and size of instrument required to portray the role appropriately. The text is set similarly in that if sung correctly, the natural flow of the language is captured, and thus will require a singer who will give proper focus to the inflection of language.

While the two characters are similar vocally, they could not be more different in terms of characterization. Although both male characters were created to be played by women, the Composer is a more serious character, governed by integrity and principle. Where Octavian is bred to function in high society, the Composer lives a socially inept existence and lacks an understanding of real human relationships. Wrapped up entirely in his musical compositions, he is unable to understand anything else throughout the opera, and is completely opposed to compromise or altering his artistic vision. He displays erratic behavior and is seemingly manic in his actions.

In order to portray the role effectively, much like the role of Octavian, the singer will need to prove adequate acting skills. She will need to appear masculine, as well as gesture and move like a man onstage, however, the need for the singer portraying the Composer to be athletic

⁹⁹ “Let us be friends again. I now see everything differently.”

¹⁰⁰ “The depths of existence”

¹⁰¹ “Sacred music!”

or slim is of less importance than for the role of Octavian. He is not a major contender for any of the female leads, nor is he the love interest in the plot. The major challenge for the singer is to capture the full spectrum of the Composer's inconsistent personality. The Composer can be seen as somewhat manic or bi-polar, jumping from one mood to another with great intensity. When the Composer is faced with the potential ruin of his opera performance by a simultaneous burlesque performance, he is inconsolable and will not consent to the prospect. He is rigid and will not allow the integrity of his music to be compromised in any way. However, when Zerbinetta charms and woos him in an attempt to change his mind, he quickly forgets his objection and gets carried away by her affections and his love for poetry and music. Once he drifts back to earth, he quickly realizes what he has done, and is once again completely devastated. The singer should take great care to reflect these sudden changes in mood, especially with the juxtaposition of the poetic and impassioned side with his social ineptness, and each and every variation in between.

From a vocal standpoint, singing the role of the Composer is perhaps easier than singing the role of Octavian in that the Composer is only onstage for approximately twenty minutes within the Prologue. The singer should have a powerful instrument and be comfortable singing in the extremities of her range at any given moment. The Composer's music is some of the most intense, unrelenting, impassioned music of the entire opera, culminating in his famous aria "*Sein wir wieder gut,*" where he gets carried away by his own passionate admiration for music. One challenge is having the stamina to sustain the passionate nature of this character when the impassioned music is paired with soaring phrases that remain in the stratosphere of the mezzo-soprano voice for long periods of time. There are also times where the vocal line dips into chest voice, and the singer must have ample sound to cut through the orchestra and be heard. One of the biggest challenges in the Composer's music is allowing the long legato phrases to sing while maintaining the difficult rhythmic structure.

Similar to the role of Octavian, the Composer is also one of the most challenging in the lyric mezzo-soprano repertoire. Various singers have had great success with this role and their interpretations have become the standard to emulate. The author will discuss some of the best-known in the following section.

Famous Interpreters of the Role

As stated in Chapter Three, the “Strauss soprano” Lotte Lehmann, was one of the composer’s most treasured performers, and sang all three of the soprano lead roles in *Der Rosenkavalier* at various times in her career. As a young novice in Hamburg, Ms. Lehmann portrayed the part of Echo in the first version of *Ariadne auf Naxos*. It was fate that she, chosen by Strauss, was given the opportunity to create the role of the Composer at the premiere in 1916. The great singing actress, Marie Gutheil-Schoder had been assigned the part of the Composer for this new version’s premiere, and Lotte Lehmann was her understudy, until the unthinkable occurred:

During one of the last rehearsals, I was suddenly summoned onstage; Frau Gutheil-Schoder had a cold and had been ordered to rest her voice. Strauss himself had announced that he would attend this very important rehearsal, and I was to sing the Composer. Carried away by the music, utterly living my role, I soon forgot my surroundings, and with my whole being plunged into the glorious experience of again creating a part. When the rehearsal was over, Strauss simply declared that I was to sing at the premiere.¹⁰²

A premiere was exactly what Ms. Lehmann was missing in her career, and with this opportunity offered to her by Strauss himself, her fame as a singer reached international status. Lotte Lehmann is rather unusual as she sang all three roles in *Der Rosenkavalier*, as well as both the role of the Composer and Ariadne in *Ariadne auf Naxos* in her time on stage. She had the phenomenal ability to throw herself into the role of the Composer, and sing the part with the greatest conviction. Her soprano voice easily negotiated the demands of the role to great success.

One of the most famous interpreters of trouser roles of the 20th century was American mezzo-soprano Tatiana Troyanos (1938-1993). Although “Troyanos sang across the gender line and was arguably equally well known for both her *travesty* roles and female heroines,”¹⁰³ she is revered for her portrayal of the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos* as well as Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*. She is considered to be one of the aforementioned Strauss sopranos. She first sang the role of the Composer in 1965, and it “immediately became one of her favorite roles.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Lotte Lehmann, *Five Operas and Richard Strauss* (New York, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964) 3-4.

¹⁰³ Naomi Andre, *Voicing Genders* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006), 94.

¹⁰⁴ Helena Matheopoulis, *Diva: Great Sopranos and Mezzos Discuss Their Art* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 295.

In her performance of the Composer, the audience forgets that she is a woman. She flings herself into the role with complete abandon, suspending all reality, as she encompassed the true essence of the Composer both in body and voice. She possessed a large voice that shone brilliantly in the upper register, making her ideal for these Strauss pants roles. In this excerpt of “*Sein wir wieder gut*” the listener will hear the brilliance in the height of her sound and the burnished warmth of her lower register, transfused with the passion of the Composer she portrays. She seems equally at home with the highest phrases of the aria as she does with the lowest parts. Her voice is often a “conduit for the pain, exaltation and rushes of emotion that suffuse her musical personality.”¹⁰⁵ This is precisely why she was one of the most favored Composers of her time, and few replace her today. Her ability to portray the Composer’s tormented anguish and passion for the music was transforming, and she *became* the Composer.

Tatiana Troyanos singing “*Sein wir wieder gut*” from *Ariadne Auf Naxos*



Figure 4.2 Tatiana Troyanos as Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*

“Such female singers of today and recent memory find their direct lineage in these early nineteenth-century cases of cross-gender vocal hybridity. Unlike the eighteenth-century Baroque’s delight in the interchangeability of the flexible treble timbres of castrati and women’s

¹⁰⁵ Allan Kozinn, “Tatiana Troyanos Is Dead at 54; Mezzo Star of Diverse Repertory,” *New York Times Online*, 23 August 1993. (Accessed [10 October 2009]), <<http://www.nytimes.com>>

voices, the nineteenth-century Romantic aesthetic drew a sharper distinction between the voice of the male and female characters.”¹⁰⁶ Additionally, once a “diva reached a point of comfort in her career, singers in the early nineteenth century – like today – performed the roles they liked best.”¹⁰⁷ Tatiana Troyanos knew her strengths as a singer, and when asked why she didn’t sing more Rossini, or if she liked to sing Rossini, she responded with praise for another singer, Marilyn Horne. “I would love to sing more Rossini, but any big theater is going to coordinate its Rossini productions with Horne’s schedule. I am a second-choice mezzo in the case of those operas. But perhaps...just perhaps...they’re not exactly beating down *her* door for Octavian!”¹⁰⁸



Figure 4.3 Sena Jurinac as the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1964)

Sena Jurinac, also mentioned in Chapter Three, is mentioned in Joyce Bourne’s, *Who’s Who In Opera* for her portrayal of the Composer. With her beautifully pure rich voice, and ease

¹⁰⁶ Andre, 95.

¹⁰⁷ Andre, 95.

¹⁰⁸ Bruce Burroughs, “Dining with Divas,” *The Opera Quarterly Online* (Accessed [1 December 2009]), <<<http://oq.oxfordjournals.org.proxy.lib.fsu.edu>>>

throughout the top of her range, she was an ideal Composer. The charmingly natural way in which she approached pants roles lent much credibility to her as Composer, she portrayed the young man with ease. Although Strauss and Hofmannsthal eventually came to model the Composer after Mozart, Sena Jurinac thought of him as a “young Schubert, an idealist, rather than a young Mozart, who was totally practical and knew what would sell and make him a living. The Composer knows no middle-path – he is either fully up or fully down, in heaven or in hell, one might say.”¹⁰⁹

When he first appears, he is full of enthusiasm – he is writing an opera (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) to entertain the guests of one of the richest men in Vienna. When he is told his opera and the entertainment by the *commedia dell’arte* troupe will have to be given simultaneously so as not to interfere with the fireworks which are to follow, and that he must reduce the length of the opera, he is immediately downcast. The Music Master tries to explain to him that in art, as in life, one must make compromises if one is to survive.¹¹⁰

Like Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Strauss specifically suggests that the role of the Composer be sung by a soprano, and as stated previously, that role was created by soprano Lotte Lehmann for the premiere in 1916. The role of the Composer has since been claimed by the modern day mezzo-soprano. Like the role of Octavian, the role of the Composer requires a dark and luscious tone, ability to sing into the depths of the lower register, as well as carry some heft into the upper register to signify that valiant passion and seriousness of the Composer. Perhaps Strauss wanted a darker sounding voice to sing the role of the Composer, for the same reason he specifically chose to “engage players who own[ed] old Italian violins, four of them Stradivari”¹¹¹ to play in the *Ariadne auf Naxos* orchestra: color. By having the modern day mezzo adopt this role, Strauss is validated in his endeavor. He gave the Composer an entirely different color and timbre, and sets him apart vocally from the other sopranos in the opera, Zerbinetta and Ariadne. The character of the Composer is only in the opera for approximately twenty minutes; however, he is thought to be one of the most endearing characters Strauss wrote.

¹⁰⁹ Joyce Bourne, *Who’s Who In Opera* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 82.

¹¹⁰ Joyce Bourne, 82.

¹¹¹ Finck, 270.

CONCLUSION

Richard Strauss was one of the most prolific composers of the early twentieth century, and remains a central figure in the development of opera. He composed his operas at a time when the operatic “trouser role” for soprano or mezzo-soprano had all but disappeared from the stage. The castrato male sopranos of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were gradually replaced in the early part of the nineteenth century by female singers playing “*en travesti*.” Opera audiences became accustomed to accepting women dressed as great lovers such as Romeo (Bellini), or warrior generals like Tancredi (Rossini). Soon, however, the Romantic era’s insistence on rejecting the extreme artifice of earlier times in favor of a more “natural” representation in the arts required that heroic/romantic male leads in opera be sung by men with unaltered voices. By the latter half of the nineteenth century, composers no longer wrote male leading roles for female voices; the only remnant of that tradition remained in the smaller roles of young boys and court pages, where the smooth skins and higher voices of ladies could reasonably be expected to pass for youthful, pre-adolescent males.

Strauss, partly due to his apparent dislike of the tenor voice, revitalized and refreshed the earlier tradition in two of his greatest operas, *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Ariadne auf Naxos*. In the case of *Der Rosenkavalier*, he was inspired to write the role of Octavian in homage to Mozart’s Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*. He successfully revived the “trouser role” tradition of one hundred years before and added an element that previous composers had avoided: overt sexuality. When he chose to give the central male role of the Composer in the Prologue of the revised version of *Ariadne auf Naxos* to a woman, he was once again breaking new ground. The Composer is a new kind of travesty role: the noble, idealistic artist rather than a head of state or warrior-general/lover. This alone would count as an outstanding artistic achievement, yet Strauss and his collaborator Hugo von Hofmannsthal also managed to fuse Italian *commedia dell’arte* and Baroque *opera seria* in the same work. They successfully combined the artifice of earlier times with the dramatic and musical aesthetic of early twentieth-century Germany, and in the process gave modern female singers new strong, masculine roles to play.

The existence of these Strauss cross-gender roles brought forth new questions. If an opera contains three roles for soprano, exactly what kind of soprano should sing each role?

The existence of these Strauss cross-gender roles brought forth new questions. If an opera contains three roles for soprano, exactly what kind of soprano should sing each role?

In current practice the roles of the Composer and Octavian are performed by women who call themselves mezzo-sopranos, but Strauss's scores indicate only "soprano." By studying the careers and recordings of major performers who found success in these roles from Strauss's time to the present, it is possible to form an impression of what Strauss intended and how his intentions have been realized. Whether one refers to the Composer or Octavian as a soprano or a mezzo-soprano is irrelevant. What is relevant is that the roles require a female singer with a wide range, strength and brilliance in the upper register, warmth and virility in the lower register, and an ability to convince audiences that they are in fact believable as men on the stage.

APPENDIX A

SYNOPSIS OF *DER ROSENKAVALIER*

***Der Rosenkavalier* by Richard Strauss**

Original Cast (Premiere: January 26, 1911; Königliches Opernhaus, Dresden)

The Feldmarschallin [Marschallin],

Marie Thérèse, Princess Werdenbergs	Margarethe Siems
Octavian, Count Rofrano ('Quinquin')	Eva von der Osten
Baron Ochs auf Lerchenau	Karl Perron
Sophie von Faninal	Minnie Nast
Herr von Faninal <i>Sophie's father</i>	Karl Scheidemantel
Marianne <i>her duenna</i>	Riza Eibenschütz
Valzacchi <i>an intriguer</i>	Hans Rüdiger
Annina <i>his niece and partner</i>	Erna Freund
A Notary	Ludwig Ermold
An Italian Singer	Fritz Soot

Synopsis

ACT I

Vienna, during the reign of the Empress Maria Theresa. The Marschallin, Princess von Werdenberg, has spent the night with her young lover, Octavian, Count Rofrano. He hides when a page brings breakfast, then again when loud voices are heard in the antechamber. The unexpected visitor is the Marschallin's country cousin, Baron Ochs auf Lerchenau. Bursting into the room, he brags about his amorous conquests and his upcoming marriage to Sophie von Faninal, the young daughter of a wealthy bourgeois. When he asks the Marschallin for advice as to which cavalier could present Sophie with the traditional silver engagement rose, she suggests Octavian—who suddenly, to avoid discovery, emerges from his hiding place disguised as a chambermaid. The Baron instantly starts to make advances towards “Mariandel,” who quickly makes her escape as the room fills with the daily crowd of petitioners and salespeople. Among them is an Italian singer, whose aria (“*Di rigori armato*”) is cut short by The Baron's wrangling with a lawyer over Sophie's dowry. The baron hires a pair of Italian intriguers, Annina and Valzacchi, to locate the shy servant girl.

When the room is cleared, the Marschallin, appalled by the thought of the rude Ochs marrying the innocent young girl, muses on her own waning youth (“*Da geht er hin*”). The returning Octavian is surprised to find her in a distant and melancholy mood. He passionately declares his love but she can only think about the passing of time and tells him that one day he will leave her for a younger woman (“*Die Zeit, die ist ein sonderbar Ding*”). Hurt, he rushes off. The Marschallin tries to call him back, but it is too late. She summons her page and sends Octavian the silver rose.

ACT II

On the morning of her engagement, Sophie excitedly awaits the arrival of the Cavalier of the Rose. Octavian enters and presents her with the silver rose on behalf of the baron. Sophie accepts rapturously, and the two young people feel an instant attraction to each other (Duet: “*Wo war ich schon einmal*”). When Ochs, whom Sophie has never met, arrives, the girl is shocked by his crude manners. The Baron goes off to discuss the wedding contract with Faninal, and Sophie asks Octavian for help. They end up embracing and are surprised by Annina and Valzacchi, who summon The Baron. The outraged Octavian grazes The Baron’s arm with his rapier and Ochs melodramatically calls for a doctor. In the ensuing confusion, Sophie tells her father that she will not marry The Baron, while Octavian enlists Annina and Valzacchi to participate in an intrigue he is hatching. When Ochs is alone, nursing his wound with a glass of wine, Annina, sent by Octavian, appears with a letter from “Mariandel,” asking the baron to a rendezvous. Intoxicated with his own charm, Ochs is delighted at the prospect of a tête-à-tête. When he refuses to tip Annina, she determines to get even.

ACT III

At Octavian’s instigation, Annina and Valzacchi prepare the back room of a dingy inn for Ochs’s rendezvous. Before long, The Baron and “Mariandel” arrive for a private supper. As she coyly leads him on, grotesque apparitions pop out of windows and secret panels, terrifying The Baron. Annina, disguised as a widow, runs in crying that Ochs is the father of her many children. When the police appear, Ochs claims that “Mariandel” is his fiancée. The arriving Faninal, furious at his future son-in-law’s behavior, summons Sophie to set matters straight, then faints and is carried off. At the height of the confusion, the Marschallin enters. Octavian takes off his disguise and the Marschallin explains to Ochs that it was all a farce. The Baron finally admits defeat and leaves, pursued by the innkeeper and various other people who all demand payment of their bills. Left alone with Octavian and Sophie, the Marschallin laments that she must lose her lover so soon, but nevertheless accepts the truth. She gives the bewildered Octavian to Sophie and quietly leaves the room (Trio: “*Hab’ mir’s gelobt*”). The young lovers realize that their dream has come true (Duet: “*Ist ein Traum*”).¹¹²

¹¹² The Metropolitan Opera, “Synopsis of *Der Rosenkavalier*,” The Metropolitan Opera Archives, <http://www.metoperafamily.org/metopera/history/stories/synopsis.aspx?id=334>

APPENDIX B

SYNOPSIS OF *ARIADNE AUF NAXOS*

Ariadne auf Naxos by Richard Strauss

First Version (Premiere: October 25, 1912; Stuttgart, Hoftheater, Kleines Haus)

Second Version (October 4, 1916; Vienna, Hofoper)*

(The characters in the opera are the same in both versions; those of the Prologue belong only to the second version, the original conception of the opera calling for the cast of Molière's *Le bourgeois Gentilhomme* for the first part of the evening)¹¹³

The Prima Donna (later Ariadne)	Maria Jeritza, *
The Tenor (later Bacchus)	Herman Jadlowker, Béla von Környey*
Zerbinetta	Margarethe Siems, Selma Kurz*
Harlequin	Albin Swoboda, Hans Duhan*
Scaramuccio	Georg Maeder, Hermann Gallos*
Truffaldino	Reinhold Fritz, Julius Betetto*
Brighella	Franz Schwerdt, Adolph Nemeth*
Naiad, nymph	M. Junker-Burchardt, Charlotte Dahmen*
Dryad, nymph	Sigrid Onégin, Hermine Kittel*
Echo, nymph	Erna Ellmenreich, Carola Jovanovic*

Roles Added For the Second Version [Prologue]:

The Composer	Lotte Lehmann*
His music-master	Hans Duhan*
The dancing-master	Georg Maickl*
A wigmaker	Gerhard Stehmann*
A footman	Viktor Madin*

¹¹³ Antony Peattie and The Earl of Harewood, Editors, *The New Kobbé's Opera Book*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1976), 771.

An officerAnton Arnold*
The Major-Domo (spoken) Anton August Stoll*

Synopsis

PROLOGUE

Vienna, 18th century. In the house of a rich Viennese, preparations are in progress for the performance of a new opera seria, “*Ariadne auf Naxos*.” The major-domo enters to inform the music master that immediately after the opera an Italian comedy will be performed, followed by a fireworks display in the garden. The outraged music master replies that the composer, his young pupil, will never tolerate that, but the major-domo is unimpressed by his objections and leaves. When the composer appears, hoping for a last-minute rehearsal, a disdainful servant tells him that the musicians are still playing dinner music. Suddenly the tenor rushes from his dressing room, arguing with the wigmaker. The prima donna furiously comments on the presence of the comedy troupe and their leading lady, Zerbinetta. In the middle of the confusion, the major-domo returns with an announcement: in order for the fireworks to begin on time, the opera and the comedy are to be performed simultaneously.

General consternation soon gives way to practical reactions. The dancing master suggests cutting the opera’s score. The music master persuades the despairing composer to do so, while the two lead singers independently urge him to abridge the other’s part. Meanwhile, Zerbinetta gives her troupe a briefing on the opera’s plot. Ariadne, they are told, has been abandoned by her lover Theseus on the island of Naxos, where she now waits for death. Zerbinetta, however, claims that all Ariadne really needs is a new lover. When the composer vehemently disagrees, Zerbinetta begins to flirt with him. Suddenly the young man finds new hope. Filled with love and enthusiasm for his work, he passionately declares music the greatest of all the arts (“*Musik ist eine heilige Kunst*”). But when he catches sight of the comedians, ready to go on stage, he realizes with horror what he has agreed to. He blames the music master for the artistic debacle and runs off.

THE OPERA

Ariadne is alone in front of her cave. Three nymphs look on and lament her fate. Watching from the wings, the comedians are doubtful whether they will be able to cheer her up. Ariadne recalls her love for Theseus (“*Ein Schönes war*”), then imagines herself as a chaste girl, awaiting death. Harlekin tries to divert her with a song (“*Lieben, Hassen, Hoffen, Zagen*”) but Ariadne ignores him. As if in a trance, she resolves to await Hermes, messenger of death. He will take her to another world where everything is pure (“*Es gibt ein Reich*”). When the comedians’ efforts continue to fail, Zerbinetta finally addresses Ariadne directly (“*Grossmächtige Prinzessin!*”), woman to woman, explaining to her the human need to change an old love for a new. Insulted, Ariadne leaves. After Zerbinetta has finished her speech, her colleagues leap back onto the scene, competing for her attention. Zerbinetta gives in to Harlekin’s comic protestations of love and the comedians exit.

The nymphs announce the approach of a ship: it carries the young god Bacchus, who has escaped the enchantress Circe. Bacchus's voice is heard in the distance ("*Circe, kannst du mich hören?*") and Ariadne prepares to greet her visitor, whom she thinks must be death at last. When he appears, she at first mistakes him for Theseus come back to her, but he majestically proclaims his godhood. Entranced by her beauty, Bacchus tells her he would sooner see the stars vanish than give her up. Reconciled to a new existence, Ariadne joins Bacchus as they ascend to the heavens. Zerbinetta sneaks in to have the last word: "When a new god comes along, we're dumbstruck."¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ The Metropolitan Opera, "Synopsis of *Ariadne auf Naxos*," The Metropolitan Opera Archives, <http://www.metoperafamily.org/metopera/history/stories/synopsis.aspx?id=294>

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Native Floridian, Melissa Garvey, obtained her B.M. degree in 2001 from the University of Central Florida. Ms. Garvey began her operatic training at the New England Conservatory of Music where she received her M.M. degree in Vocal Performance in 2003 under the instruction of Mark Pearson. While at NEC, she performed the roles of Florence Pike in *Albert Herring* and The Mother in *Hansel and Gretel*. She returned to her native state to continue her studies at Florida State University, where she obtained her D.M. degree in Opera Performance in 2010. During her time as a student at FSU, Ms. Garvey was actively involved in the opera program, where she had several opportunities to sing main stage principal roles, including: Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro* (2003), Isolier in *Le Comte Ory* (2004), The Secretary in *The Consul* (2004), Charlotte in *Werther* (2005), as well as Giulio Cesare in *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* (2006).

Ms. Garvey has also been the recipient of several awards, including: finalist and winner of the Bel Canto Scholarship Foundation's twentieth and twenty-first Annual Vocal Scholarship Competitions in 2007 and 2008, the "Sue M. Wiesen Award" in the 2008 Connecticut Opera Guild Competition, as well as third place in the 2007 Orpheus Vocal Competition in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.