

**Enacting the Nation on Stage:  
Style, Subjects, and Themes in  
American opera librettos of the 1910s**

by Aaron Ziegel

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Thy breath is in the breeze  
That cometh from the south  
Tempting the trembling trees  
With yearning from my mouth.

Poia, *Poia*, Act I

Hear me kindly, you must hear me.  
I would be your one protector,  
I would be your soul's one shelter,  
You to me are all I live for.

Burton, *The Sacrifice*, Act 1

And thus does the male protagonist in an American opera, at the height of an amorous passion, pour out his heart to his beloved in a fit of overblown rhetoric. To the ears of the original audience, and even more so today, this stylized version of English makes for an unnatural fit when coming from the mouths of American characters on stage. The audience members themselves did not converse this way, nor did characters in contemporary novels or plays. Yet in new American operas from the early twentieth century, characters consistently communicate in this contrived manner.<sup>1</sup>

In seeking out the roots of a nationalist operatic style, one must turn to the operas from the 1910s, as this decade marks the first period of sustained and consistent effort at operatic

production by American composers.<sup>2</sup> Around the turn of the century, a growing number of writers and critics began to recognize that the time was ripe for a distinctly national style of opera. Horatio Parker, for example, observed in 1910 that “The opera is just now the largest figure on our musical horizon,” while in 1911, Arthur Farwell thought that the nation’s composers were “upon the dawn of a liberal operatic productivity.”<sup>3</sup> In scores from the early decades of the new century, composers and librettists sought out suitably indigenous plot subjects and struggled to find a distinctive, New-World style of sung texts for this inherited, Old-World genre—all with the goal of enacting a national identity on the operatic stage.

This article focuses on examples from six operas premiered during the 1910s and written in response to these demands (see table 1). This set of works is significant in that all received fully staged premieres, published piano-vocal scores and librettos, widespread press attention and thorough critical commentary, all of which amplified their impact on the nation’s broader cultural scene. Victor Herbert’s *Natoma* (1911), Mary Carr Moore’s *Narcissa* (1912), and Frederick Converse’s *The Sacrifice* (1911) each dramatize the theme of racial encounter along the mid-nineteenth-century Western Frontier. Arthur Nevin’s *Poia* (1910) brings a Blackfeet Indian legend to the operatic stage. Henry Hadley’s *Azora* (1917) enacts the fall of Montezuma’s Aztec empire, while Charles Cadman’s *Shanewis* (1918) treats a contemporary plot of an ill-fated love between an Anglo man and an Indian woman who just so happens to be a trained operatic soprano. The collaboration between composer and librettist focused on three main areas: selecting a plot subject, managing the inclusion of elements inherited from the European repertory, and—perhaps the most daunting challenge—crafting the language style of their sung texts.

Table 1: Table of Selected Operas

DATE OF STAGE PREMIERE	OPERA	COMPOSER	LIBRETTIST	PLOT MATERIAL	PREMIERE
1910 Berlin	<i>Poia</i>	Arthur Nevin	Randolph Hartley	a treatment of the "Scarface" Blackfeet Indian legend, as collected by Walter McClintock	staged premiere at Berlin Royal Opera (sung to a German translation by Eugenie von Huhn), preceded by a 1907 concert reading in Pittsburgh
1911 Philadelphia	<i>Natoma</i>	Victor Herbert	Joseph D. Redding	racial encounter among Spaniards, Indians, and Americans; late Mission-Era California	Chicago Opera Company, but first performances given in Philadelphia and New York
1911 Boston	<i>The Sacrifice</i>	Frederick Shepherd Converse	Frederick Converse (lyrics by John Macy)	racial encounter between Mexicans and Americans during the Mexican-American War	Boston Opera Company (Converse was a vice president of the organization)
1912 Seattle	<i>Narcissa</i>	Mary Carr Moore	Sarah Pratt Carr	the historical killing of missionaries Marcus & Narcissa Whitman by the Cayuse Indians in the Oregon Territory	conducted by the composer; first American opera premiere both composed and conducted by a woman
1917 Chicago	<i>Azora</i>	Henry Kimball Hadley	David Kilburn Stevens	Montezuma's Aztec empire in decline and the arrival of Cortez	Chicago Opera Company, conducted by the composer
1918 New York	<i>Shanewis</i>	Charles Wakefield Cadman	Nelle Richmond Eberhart	cross-racial relationship between a white man and an Indian woman, modern day plot setting	Metropolitan Opera, first opera by an American composer to remain in the Met repertoire for two consecutive seasons

Anton Seidl, the famed conductor and New-World Wagner-evangelist, was unequivocal about what the foundation of any opera project must be: "To those American musicians who are ambitious to undertake the writing of grand opera I can only reiterate the great lesson which Wagner has given them... the libretto must be regarded as the basis of the work."<sup>4</sup> How then might one go about securing a libretto? Impresario Oscar Hammerstein took a quintessentially American approach: "The way to get a libretto is to ask for it and pay for it. So I offer a thousand dollars to the man, preferably an American,

who will provide a suitable libretto for Victor Herbert.”<sup>5</sup> If only money were all it took for the Great American Libretto to magically appear! Composers were not necessarily any more helpful. Victor Herbert’s attempt to explain what he wanted offered little more than a vague sense of direction: “I should like... a vigorous, picturesque and entirely human story arising out of our civilization.... I should like my opera to be such a genuine and successful work that it would go all over the world as the output of an American brain and the inspiration of American surroundings.”<sup>6</sup>

At least the range of potential subject matter was plentiful. Arthur Elson, writing in 1925, suggests

Indian legends, colonial adventures, pioneer events, and historical scenes of great power, [all of which] vary in local color from the Latin-American glamour of the tropics to the icy grandeur of the frozen north. With these advantages, librettists do not need to rush to foreign stories, or resuscitate antiquities.<sup>7</sup>

Eleanor Freer, herself an opera composer, wrote the same year even more insistently:

[I]f our opera is to serve—as all art should—as history, then the more intimate idea given of our race and customs the more valuable the opera will be as a document.... In our folk-lore, in the legends and stories of the countryside, in our history of pioneering and exploration—yes, in the life of today—lies treasure for those who will delve.<sup>8</sup>

Dvořák, during his visit to the United States in the 1890s, had of course already pointed in similar directions when he encouraged composers to incorporate the musical characteristics of African American and American-Indian musics in their works.<sup>9</sup> While the necessity for local subjects might easily be taken for granted, one must not forget that opera—as an imported genre—required this kind of vocal support if Ameri-

can works were ever to claim an equal place alongside the masterworks of the inherited European tradition.

Each of the operas examined here includes Indian characters in either major or minor roles, which, from the period's point of view, was a rather obvious source of Americanness.<sup>10</sup> The librettists extended a long pedigree of appropriated Indians in American culture, ranging from the novels of James Fenimore Cooper to innumerable tawdry dime novels with Indian characters. Wild West shows brought the frontier to Eastern cities, while the photographs of Edward S. Curtis delivered images of Indians safely to the drawing room. Zane Grey's novels of adventure in the West first appeared during the same years as these operas.<sup>11</sup> Since composers and librettists sought to create distinctly "American" operas, it is no surprise that they too would find inspiration in similar sources. Indeed, George Upton, in his 1914 book of standard opera plot synopses, remarked of *The Sacrifice* that "Like all other recent American operas, its scene is laid in the wild West" (emphasis added).<sup>12</sup>

During the same years that these opera projects were taking shape, the emerging Hollywood film industry was also busily exploring the Indian as subject matter. Film directors and opera librettists alike employed strikingly parallel plot devices and narrative solutions when dealing with similar subject matter. From among many pertinent examples, these few shall suffice. D. W. Griffith's *A Pueblo Legend* (1912) mirrors Nevin's *Poia* in that it too presents a legendary plot focused on Indian religious beliefs. Cecil B. DeMille's *The Woman God Forgot* (1917), like Hadley's *Azora*, allows the daughter of Montezuma to fall in love with someone from outside the Aztec people. Another DeMille film, *The Vanishing American* (1925), parallels the ending of *Natoma*—both suggest that the Indian can survive only through assimilation and the acceptance of Christianity.<sup>13</sup> With both opera writing and filmmaking simultaneously pursuing the same creative trends, it becomes even more apparent that librettists were simply extending a well-trod artistic path into operatic terrain.

The texts given to operatic Indians all tend to focus upon the assumption that Indians, as a “primitive” people, lead lives in sympathy with the earth. Thus, their lyrics are regularly enriched with extended metaphors built around nature imagery. In a choral dirge from *Poia*, for example, the tribe finds its grief reflected in the natural world: “Weary and old is our mother, the world, / And weak are the children she bears in her age. / The tribe is a forest of dying trees.”<sup>14</sup> In Act III of *Natoma*, as the title character ponders a revenge fantasy, her mood also finds a nature parallel. She sings, “We will rush from out the mountain / Like the lightning, like the thunder.”<sup>15</sup> Likewise, in *Shanewis* a recurring metaphor connects the title character’s own life to that of wild birds. She explains, “I am a bird of the wilderness, / I am a thrush of the woodland, / Captive awhile to art and song / Yet true to my traditions.”<sup>16</sup> Bird and nature imagery again appear in an aria she sings near the beginning of the work:

Oh, ye birds of spring,  
Come from your hiding;  
Robins all and humming-birds,  
Come unto this barren land.  
Hear the waters gliding  
From the melting ice and snow;  
Salmon leap unto my hand,  
Call ye springtime to the land,  
Call ye verdure to the hills,  
Wake the blossoms by the rills.<sup>17</sup>

Anglo-American characters, on the other hand, especially the men, provide a vehicle for proclaiming the ideals of expansion, progress, and exceptionalism—all patriotic expressions of the nation’s inherent destiny. In operas set on the frontier West, librettists found a most fitting locale for a nationalist acclamation. Burton, an American officer in *The Sacrifice*, for example, assures the Mexican woman he is in love with that “You must trust in us to guard you, / We who come with honest purpose / Here, to bring out of this turmoil / Lasting peace

and nobler justice,/Better planned for mightier progress."<sup>18</sup> Note the consistent use of comparative adjectives to express American superiority. Perhaps the most overtly nationalist aria of all is sung by Paul in *Natoma*, another military officer. Although his song is ostensibly a token of homage to the ruling Spanish, by altering the name "Columbus" to "Columbia," the aria concludes with a declaration that only the Americans (and "our Liberty") will achieve the true fulfillment of Columbus's mission to the New World:

No country can my own outvie  
In tribute to the one  
Who held the flag of Spain on high  
Toward the setting sun.  
His noble figure stands apart...  
Columbus! My country's love is thine!

. . .

The spirit that directed thee,  
Great Captain, safe to shore,  
Is goddess of our Liberty,  
Whose name we all adore.  
Columbia! Bright Goddess of the free!  
Columbia! We pledge our love to thee!<sup>19</sup>

For the moment, let us move away from sung texts and return to the fact that opera in the United States remained a European import in the early twentieth century. When constructing their opera plots, writers found themselves confronted with two competing tendencies. On the one hand was their desire for an indigenous setting and uniquely American action. Counterbalancing this nationalist motivation was the pull of the European tradition. As composers and librettists looked to the established European masterpieces for models, they recognized that by incorporating borrowed conventions, they could help their new works fit more comfortably alongside the standard repertory. They sought to prove that they too could successfully manage the same operatic ingredients. Cadman

apparently understood that American opera had to build upon a European foundation while retaining a distinctly American flavor, as he explained in a 1927 interview: "What Puccini has done for Japan in *Madama Butterfly* and Wagner for Germany in *Lohengrin* can be done for the New World by writing opera around historical and legendary themes."<sup>20</sup> Indeed, borrowed plot elements, derivative dramaturgical devices, and shared stock set pieces suggest points of contact with the most popular operas of the day.

*Carmen*, *Faust*, and *Aida*—three of the period's most frequently performed scores—supply a veritable storehouse of stock set-piece types. Whether actively seeking out a specific model or simply recalling the kinds of numbers that had proven effective on stage, a librettist would naturally emulate these precedents. In *Natoma*, Redding provides material for a chorus of convent girls, a drinking chorus, and Spanish dances. *Natoma's* convent girls are the chaste and proper version of *Carmen's* cigarette girls, but both groups make a similar entrance. While they are all eager to flirt with the gathered men upon their arrival, the convent girls maintain a demeanor of propriety, whereas the cigarette girls are more actively seductive (thus giving Bizet the advantage). The opera *Carmen* again casts a shadow over *The Sacrifice*, if only to add exotic color, since Converse incorporates a gypsy chorus and dance that play no role whatsoever in advancing the opera's plot. A soldiers' chorus from the same work suggests the influence of Gounod's *Faust*. The textual interplay in this scene—in which the full group responds to a soloist's verses—parallels Mephistopheles' "Round of the Golden Calf" from Gounod's work. *Azora* finds opportunities to incorporate all of *Aida's* set pieces in its plot: choruses for pagan priests, ceremonial processions, and again a soldiers' chorus. The "Festal Processional" that accompanies the entry of Montezuma could surely even reuse some of the same props required to stage *Aida's* "Triumphal March." This connection did not go unnoticed. *Chicago Tribune* critic Frederick Donaghey, for example, claimed that the cast "found the employment reasonably familiar, the story being an easy, if not facile, rewrite of *Aida*."<sup>21</sup>

Nevin's *Poia* is more closely aligned with post-Wagnerian trends, especially via the model of Nevin's teacher, Engelbert Humperdinck. The latter's most successful operas, *Hansel und Gretel* and *Königskinder*, present German folk legends in a fashion similar to how Nevin treats an American Indian legend in *Poia*. In this way, both Humperdinck and Nevin extend the legacy of Wagner by expanding on the range of legendary sources suitable for opera. With *Narcissa*, on the other hand, Moore and Carr seemed to be looking more in the direction of French Grand Opera. Large-scale choral scenes are a key ingredient. The third act, for example, ends with a tableau combining as many as seven independent strands of text and music.<sup>22</sup> The opera's closing massacre hearkens back to the finale of *Les Huguenots*; both operas present stories of protagonists who are killed for their religious beliefs. Moore and Carr were clearly aware of more contemporary French opera as well. Their handling of the opening scene of Act II, which enacts a busy day in the life of Fort Vancouver, is strikingly reminiscent of the scenes of Parisian city life depicted in Charpentier's *Louise* or Puccini's *La Bohème*. All three works attempt to operatize the regular happenings of an ordinary day in their respective cities.

Verismo and contemporary Italian operas, especially those of Puccini, are perhaps the strongest influences of all. One needed to look no further than this composer for a model of how to create a new opera that could immediately win a place in the standard repertoire. Herbert's *Natoma* shares a kinship with *Tosca*, as both women are willing to kill in order to protect those they love. Burton in *The Sacrifice* shares something with *Madama Butterfly*'s Pinkerton in that both are American military men who pursue an ill-fated love interest with a local woman. One might also recognize traces of *La Bohème*'s Mimi (or perhaps *La Traviata*'s Violetta) in Converse's character of Chonita, who, in the third act, becomes the stereotyped weak operatic soprano desperately struggling to stay alive. *Shanewis* leans even more heavily on verismo models, particularly *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci*. All three works share the same basic structure—two equal halves separated by a brief

instrumental intermezzo. *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci* both portray the events of a brief span of time, just as *Shanewis* presents a mere few hours from two separate days. *Shanewis*'s tragic ending, with Philip Harjo's sudden and unprovoked slaying of Lionel, who ultimately expires in the arms of Shanewis, matches its verismo precedents. In an article published shortly after the opera's premiere, Cadman himself claimed "that Bizet, Gounod, Verdi and Mr. Puccini were models worth taking"—although he carefully neglected to mention his most direct models.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, in these American operas, the use of dramaturgical devices and plot elements borrowed from the European operatic canon merges with distinctively New-World settings and textual content for Indian and Anglo characters. The blending of these paired tendencies ultimately results in the period's unique idiom of operatic composition. The librettists' most challenging task, however, one without a wholly satisfactory solution, was to design a style of English suitable for sung texts. Audiences were accustomed to incomprehensible operas sung in Italian, German, or French. However, with a newly composed American opera sung in the vernacular, the audience was forced to recognize, for perhaps the first time, that opera plots are frequently improbable, occasionally ridiculous, and filled with awkward lyrics. We have already encountered what emerged as the period's typical libretto style in texts from love declarations at the opening of this article. Through an examination of conversational passages of sung dialogue, however, one finds even more egregious examples of archaic locutions, inverse word order, and oddly poeticized grammar. For example, consider this conversation from *Natoma* between the antagonists, as Redding first introduces the conflict that drives the opera's plot:

CASTRO            She has come.

ALVARADO        What, Barbara?

CASTRO            The Padre brought her with the  
convent-girls; they are all inside,

and with them that young officer.  
Barbara has eyes for no one but him;  
she is entranced.

ALVARADO You are demented!

CASTRO It is true!

ALVARADO Nonsense! Wait until I see her!<sup>24</sup>

This style of English is even more absurd when it comes from the mouths of indigenous natives, as the following conversations between a pair of Indian lovers in *Narcissa* and among Aztec characters in *Azora* illustrate:

ELIJAH Siskadee! Before me, Maid of Dawn!

SISKADEE Perhaps too soon I came.

ELIJAH Excuse for me is ever on thy tongue,  
O Daughter of the Dawn. Still swiftly  
run thy feet the mission work to  
do?

SISKADEE As sun to flower after rain, so is this  
place to me.

ELIJAH 'Tis well. Lead thou the mission  
maidens here.<sup>25</sup>

o o o o o

MONTEZUMA Ramatzin, the beat of drums we  
hear! If you have news of war, de-  
clare it!

RAMATZIN News have I, indeed, for battle is at  
hand. Our signal-smoke proclaims  
the Tarascan! The sleeping ogre  
wakes and grinds his weapon!

CANEK            War! War! And Totec unappeased!  
                       We mock the god that serves us.  
                       The Sacrifice!

AZORA            (*enters in alarm*) My father! What  
                       means this ferment?

MONTEZUMA    War, my child! Strife and battle!  
                       Death and Victory!<sup>26</sup>

With English of this sort, one can begin to sympathize with the concerns of an anti-Indianist music critic like Lawrence Gilman, whose “imagination reels at the thought of [an] Indian... as a serious figure in opera.”<sup>27</sup>

What, then, is the source of this style of English and why did this group of librettists so consistently employ it? With few American precedents near at hand, it would appear that librettists turned to the one source of English-language texts that were an established staple of the operatic scene—the translated libretto. A perusal of anonymous translations of librettos printed during the period strongly supports this argument. Consider this excerpt of dialogue from the official, early twentieth-century Metropolitan Opera libretto for Verdi’s *Aida*:

AIDA            What dost thou tell me?

AMNERIS       Yes, Radames by thine is slaughtered—and canst thou mourn him?

AIDA            For ever my tears shall flow!

AMNERIS       The gods have wrought thee vengeance.

AIDA            Celestial favor to me was ne’er extended.<sup>28</sup>

A similar syntax to what is found in this article’s opening love declarations appears in the following translated proclamation from *Carmen*; it is Don José’s avowal of love for Carmen, taken

from a libretto printed for the Manhattan Opera Company's use sometime around 1906:

One only hope—my sole desire—  
That I might see thee once again.  
Now but one tender glance I ask,  
One word of kindness from thee crave  
True my heart to thine is ever;  
Carmen, am I not thy slave?<sup>29</sup>

Here indeed is an exact stylistic match! Both these translations and the newly written American texts all feature similarly unnatural grammar, formalized or archaic locutions, and a degree of heightened emotion not generally encountered in standard conversation.

From the viewpoint of contemporary critics, turning to translated libretti as an English style-model was hardly the right solution. H. J. Whigham, writing in 1911, recognized that "If opera in English is ever to sound natural, it must be English that we know and use and not that strange language which is found only in the translations of foreign librettos and should rather be called operese than English."<sup>30</sup> Even if critics were pleased with the subject matter, they were quick to condemn the taint of foreign librettos. Arthur Farwell, writing about Redding's text for *Natoma*, complained, "its lyrics take on the absurdities of old Italian opera and the literary schoolroom."<sup>31</sup> How "operese" would be chosen over the kind of English spoken by actual people is something that would seem to defy explanation, yet as the excerpts from these new libretti illustrate, "operese" is exactly the kind of language employed in what seems to have become the standard practice of the time. The effortful formality and seriousness of these texts seem to be intent on declaring one thing: these texts could only be for opera—that grand, inherited European tradition—and must not be confused with texts for any other "lighter" or more colloquial genre.

Any gains in intelligibility through the use of an English text set critics on the attack if they found a libretto to be of poor quality. The *New York Times* reviewer of *Natoma*, for instance, complained that “the lyrics are of the most hopeless operatic type, of the bad old kind, constructed on [the] theory that what is too foolish to be said is appropriate to be sung.”<sup>32</sup> And to give perhaps the most flagrant example of all, Frederick Donaghey, writing in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1917, notoriously shared this opinion of the libretto to *Azora*:

If there be a worse libretto than that of *Azora*, it is not readily accessible. It would, divorced from the music, classify as what a literate chemist would, doubtless, term para-opera. That is, something that is not really opera, but is the result of opera.<sup>33</sup>

Other critics, however, rose to the defense of American librettists by confronting what they perceived to be an unfair double standard. For example, B. M. Steigman, writing in 1925, perceptively observed that “nonsense finds something of a refuge in the foreign language: it is quite blatantly exposed only when it appears in the vernacular.”<sup>34</sup> Towards the end of his life, Victor Herbert apparently felt the very same way: comprehensibility was the downfall of American opera. He complained:

Here in America they swallow the most idiotic plot as long as it's in German, French, Italian or anything they can't understand. I still say my *Natoma* is as good as Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. My mistake was not to do it in some American Indian dialect!<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps Edward Hipsher calls out this prejudice in the most explicit terms. Defending the plot of *Shanewis*, he notes, “many a work with incongruities even more bald we have

swallowed at a single gulp, and all because the composer's name smelled of lager or ended in 'iski' or 'ini.'"<sup>36</sup>

The apparent "libretto problem" of *Poia*, *Natoma*, *The Sacrifice*, *Narcissa*, *Azora*, and *Shanewis* has in today's historiography been accepted as the principal reason why each of these six operas has failed to survive into today's repertoire. Indeed, the usual critique suggests that weak libretti limited the theatrical durability of these operas and thus prevented their ultimate success. However, by considering the broader artistic context, one can instead focus on how composers and librettists approached the daunting task of creating a product that could be both traditionally operatic yet uniquely American. In these works and others from the 1910s, librettists and composers proved that they were ready to present their operas alongside the European masterworks old and new. American opera had indeed come of age.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Opening excerpts taken from Randolph Hartley, libretto for Arthur Nevin, *Poia: Opera in Three Acts* [vocal score] (Berlin: Adolph Fürstner, 1909), 29–30; and Frederick S. Converse and John Macy, *The Sacrifice: An Opera in Three Acts* [libretto] (New York: H.W. Gray Company, 1911), 29–30.

<sup>2</sup> The most thorough survey of operas from this period is the pioneering Edward Ellsworth Hipsher, *American Opera and Its Composers* (Philadelphia: Theodore Presser, 1927); also see Elise K. Kirk, *American Opera* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 121–183.

<sup>3</sup> Horatio W. Parker, "Contemporary Music," *North American Review* 191, no. 653 (April 1910): 523; and Arthur Farwell, "Ameri-

can Opera on American Themes: Artistic Significance of Herbert's *Natoma* and Converse's *Sacrifice*," *The American Review of Reviews* 43 (1911): 446.

<sup>4</sup> Anton Seidl, "Wagner's Influence on Present-Day Composers," *North American Review* 158, no. 446 (January 1894): 92.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Joseph Kaye, *Victor Herbert: The Biography of America's Greatest Composer of Romantic Music* (New York: G.H. Watt, 1931), 212.

<sup>6</sup> Interview in the *New York Telegraph*, 8 April 1907; quoted in Rosemary Gainer, "Natoma, by Victor Herbert: An American 'Grand' Opera?" *Opera Journal* 29, no. 4 (1996): 13. Herbert's biographer Edward Waters notes that the great public interest surrounding the composer's progress on his opera project "forced him into utterances which could have little meaning." See Edward N. Waters, *Victor Herbert: A Life in Music* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 370.

<sup>7</sup> Louis C. Elson, *The History of American Music*, revised by Arthur Elson (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 379–80. The quote comes from Arthur's supplementary chapters and not Louis's main text.

<sup>8</sup> Eleanor Everest Freer, "Music and Musicians," *Overland Monthly* 83 (March 1925): 137.

<sup>9</sup> For a thorough study of Dvořák's residency in the United States, see John C. Tibbetts, ed., *Dvořák in America: 1892–1895* (Portland, Ore.: Amadeus Press, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> For an in-depth examination of the development and use of Indian musical materials in American composition, see Michael V. Pisani, *Imagining Native American in Music* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005), 79–291.

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed overview of these source materials, see Edward Buscombe, "Injuns!" *Native Americans in the Movies* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 30–78.

<sup>12</sup> George P. Upton, *The Standard Operas: Their Plots and Their Music*, rev. ed. (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1914), 62.

<sup>13</sup> For further information on these films, see Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 22–4; and Angela Aleiss, *Making the White Man's Indian: Native Americans and Hollywood Movies* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2005), 23–4 and 37.

<sup>14</sup> Hartley, text in Nevin's *Poia*, 117–9.

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<sup>15</sup> Joseph D. Redding, *Natoma: An Opera in Three Acts* (New York: Schirmer, 1911), 27.

<sup>16</sup> Nelle Richmond Eberhart, *Shanewis (The Robin Woman): An Opera* (New York: F. Rullman, 1918), 8.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. This is an excerpt from the so-called “Spring Song of the Robin Woman.” Shanewis sings to the accompaniment of an onstage piano for an audience gathered at the home of her benefactress. The number was recorded by Elise Baker in 1925 and re-released on the International Record Collectors Club CD “Souvenirs from American Operas” (IRCC-CD 818).

<sup>18</sup> Converse and Macy, *The Sacrifice*, 29.

<sup>19</sup> Redding, *Natoma*, 23. A recording of this aria also appears on the IRCC “Souvenirs from American Operas” CD, sung by John McCormack who originated the role, making this an original cast recording from 1912.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Robert W. Baisley, “Charles Wakefield Cadman: Completely American,” *Music Educators Journal* 61, no. 9 (1975): 58. Given that Cadman suggests Puccini’s *Butterfly* as an example, he apparently believes that a composer need not be a native of the land that he is defining operatically—a curious suggestion coming from a composer so closely associated with the movement towards creating a truly American music.

<sup>21</sup> Frederick Donaghey, “Mr. Hadley’s Opera, *Azora*,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 27 December 1917.

<sup>22</sup> The following musical strands are all present during this scene: immigrants from the East announce their arrival; a chorus of Indians perceive that their “fate is sealed” and they will lose their land; solo Indian voices highlight the same problem; Dr. McLaughlin, chief factor of the British Fort Vancouver, recognizes that the Hudson Bay Company will lose control of the Oregon Territory to the United States; Marcus Whitman sings of his eminent departure back East to seek governmental assistance for the newly arrived immigrants; the Indian brave Elijah announces he will depart for a trading expedition; and finally, Narcissa Whitman and the Indian maiden Siskadee wish their beloveds safe journeys and sing of their sorrow over their absence. The text for this ensemble can be found in Sarah Pratt Carr, *The Cost of Empire: Libretto for the Opera Narcissa* (Seattle, Wash.: The Stuff Printing Concern, 1912), 19.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Cadman, “Some Confessions about Shanewis,” *The Violinist* 23 (1918): 353. Contrary to the composer’s own claim, Wil-

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liam Chase mistakenly described the opera as a work “which, definitely ‘going native’ in character and scene, at last discarded all foreign models.” William B. Chase, “15<sup>th</sup> Native Opera in Gatti’s Regime,” *New York Times*, 11 February 1934.

<sup>24</sup> Redding, *Natoma*, 13.

<sup>25</sup> Carr, *The Cost of Empire*, 16.

<sup>26</sup> David Stevens, *Azora: The Daughter of Montezuma* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1917), 16.

<sup>27</sup> Lawrence Gilman, “The Red Man in the Theater,” *North American Review* 203 (1916): 617.

<sup>28</sup> Anonymous translated libretto for Verdi’s *Aida* (New York: Fred Rullman, n.d. [ca. 1900]), 15.

<sup>29</sup> Anonymous translated libretto for Bizet’s *Carmen* (New York: Charles E. Burden, n.d. [ca. 1906]), 19.

<sup>30</sup> H. J. Whigham, “Echoes of the Stage,” *Town and Country* (4 March 1911): 24.

<sup>31</sup> Farwell, “American Opera on American Themes,” 445.

<sup>32</sup> “*Natoma* Greeted by Great Audience,” *New York Times*, 1 March 1911.

<sup>33</sup> Frederick Donaghey, “Mr. Hadley’s Opera, *Azora*,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 27 December 1917.

<sup>34</sup> B. M. Steigman, “The Great American Opera,” *Music and Letters* 6 (1925): 367.

<sup>35</sup> Herbert in an interview conducted by Jerome Kanner, quoted in Neil Gould, *Victor Herbert: A Theatrical Life* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 418.

<sup>36</sup> Hipsher, *American Opera and Its Composers*, 107.

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