

Acknowledgments

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CAL POLY
SAN LUIS OBISPO

Music Department
California Polytechnic State University

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A Senior Lecture-Recital in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for a Bachelor of Arts in Music

"Seeing, Hearing and Believing: Depictions of
Ethnicity from *The Mikado* to *In the Heights*"

Susan Azaret Davies, accompanist

April 28, 2011

Thursday at 7:30 p.m

Davidson Music Center

Room 218



Sponsored by the Cal Poly Music Department and College of Liberal Arts

Forward

Examining the musical representations of the different ethnicities in these particular operas and musicals is an exciting project for me because some of the depictions I chose have been relatively unexplored. This could be due to the fact that a number of terms used in the ethnic portrayals of the past might seem offensive to the modern listener. I aspire to be accurate when I quote how certain people were identified not only by society, but also by themselves, yet I do not want to hurt anyone's feelings while doing so. Admittedly, what might be considered inappropriate today was generally accepted in the past. I encourage you to keep an open mind because perceptions of particular ethnic groups—and the terms used to describe them—had a huge influence on how and why the music in these works was crafted.

Lin-Manuel Miranda, *In the Heights*, “Paciencia y Fe”

Each one of us fantasizes about winning the lottery. What would happen if we held the winning ticket? Lin-Manuel Miranda explores this notion in *In the Heights*, a story about a lucky lotto ticket, among other things. He himself comes from a close-knit Puerto Rican family, which he says greatly inspired his musical career. Miranda grew up in a New York neighborhood, where he would hear music playing out of apartments, car windows, and storefronts. He added to the music by carrying a boombox everywhere when he was a teenager and started to compose at Hunter College High, writing music for the school musicals and plays. After high school he attended Wesleyan University. *In the Heights* was written in May 2000 for a student workshop during Miranda's sophomore year in college. It sold out his college theatre in 2002 and was picked up by producers in 2004 with the condition that Miranda play the leading role. While everything was becoming finalized with the musical, Miranda worked as an English teacher and was a member of Freestyle Love Supreme (a hip-hop improv troupe that is famous for making up rap songs with the words the audience gives them).

In the Heights tells the universal story of a vibrant community in Manhattan's Washington Heights where the breeze carries the rhythm of three generations of music. It's a community on the brink of transformation, full of hopes, dreams, and demands, where the biggest struggles are choosing which traditions to keep, and which ones to leave behind. It was an instant success and was nominated for thirteen Tony Awards, including Best Score and Musical. Miranda rapped his Tony acceptance speech, dedicating this musical to “Latinos everywhere.”

One possible reason that the show fared so well is that this musical portrays and reaches out to people from a variety of Latino and Hispanic backgrounds. The character of Abuela Claudia, who is a woman of Cuban descent, sings “Paciencia y Fe,” which translates to “Patience and Faith.” Her character is based on Miranda's live-in nanny, whom he called Abuela Mundi. Her passion in life was gambling and she would end up playing slot machines for hours; she gave Miranda the job of pulling the arm of the machine. Her love of gambling is most likely what inspired Miranda to write a plot that involves Abuela Claudia possessing the winning lottery ticket. In “Paciencia y Fe,” Claudia talks about the journey that her mother travelled to get Claudia where she is today. She sings of her childhood in Cuba, of moving to New York, and of the importance of patience and faith throughout these stages of her life. The returning motifs in the song represent the conflict between the past and the present. There are no real transitions between the musical sections of the work, which reflects the way a person would tell a story in reality, treating it as a series of events and memories that all make up a bigger picture. In the second half of the piece, Miranda infuses new material until the last line of the song, when Abuela Claudia's Cuban values ring true. Patience and faith, or “paciencia y fe,” are what will help her make the difficult decisions that lie ahead.

Program

Bizet, *Carmen*, “Près des remparts de Séville”

To say that Bizet was an accomplished young man would be an understatement. He was unusually intelligent, an exceptional sight-reader, a talented pianist, composer, and organist, a winner of the Prix de Rome (the Conservatoire’s highest accolade), and he wrote his first full-length opera, all by the age of 24. Before his boast-worthy career began, Bizet’s musical gifts were apparent at an early age, perhaps as a result of having two musical parents. He could sing songs by ear, without looking at music. He went to the Conservatoire in France for nine years and won the Prix de Rome at age 19. He began to gain recognition as an arranger for other musicians and began to make money doing this. Later on, he was a well-known member of French society and was in demand for his fluent piano-playing and his lively, blunt character. He attempted a grand opera, but he was agonized by self-doubt and moved on to orchestral symphonies. He was so worried about what other people thought of him that he had many unfinished and abandoned projects. He finally believed in himself sufficiently that he undertook an opera. The press tore apart the libretto and said it was noisy and offensive, but Berlioz recognized Bizet’s talent and said that he had a great future. After this, Bizet entered music contests compulsively to prove his talent to himself. He married the beautiful and young Genevieve Halévy with whom he was deeply in love in 1867. He died from rheumatism eight years later at age 36 in 1875.

Written just a few years before his death, Bizet’s *Carmen* is now one of his most beloved works, although it was far from an unqualified success in its first performances. This opéra-comique differed from previous works because Bizet replaced the customary recitatives with spoken dialogue. The story is based on Prosper Mérimée’s novella *Carmen*. Critics found the opera unusual in structure and shockingly immoral. Despite this, it achieved 35 performances and was revived for the next season. It gradually grew in popularity until it became one of the most well-known French operas of all time. Nineteenth-century composers such as Tchaikovsky, Brahms, and Wagner expressed their admiration for the opera. Nietzsche declared it to be the “perfect antidote to the Wagnerian neurosis.” *Carmen* relays the tale of a Spanish gypsy woman lusted after by all the men in town. She is wild, radical, and believes that “love obeys no known laws.” Among her many admirers, a soldier named Don José becomes especially obsessed with her. The rest of the opera unfolds with the death of a factory girl, an arrest and escape, a mother’s letter, and ends in tragedy after one of the characters goes into a jealous rage.

Although the end of *Carmen* is tragic, not all of the music is heartbreaking. “Près des remparts de Séville” is a light-hearted aria. This piece uses coloratura techniques such as triplets, runs, and grace notes that capture Carmen’s vibrant spirit and her carefree attitude. The phrase “mon cœur est libre comme l’air!,” which means “my heart is free like the air!,” embodies the personality of the vivacious Carmen. At this point in the opera, Carmen has been accused of murdering one of the factory girls. Don José is ordered to bind her hands and detain her. Carmen sings this piece, also known as the “Séguédilla” because of its Spanish dance influences, in order to seduce him and trick him into setting her free.

Senior Lecture-Recital — “Seeing, Hearing and Believing: Depictions of Ethnicity from *The Mikado* to *In the Heights*”

Kellie Barragán, mezzo-soprano

Susan Azaret Davies, piano

The Mikado Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900)

Three Little Maids from School

Brittney Zearfoss, soprano

Lisa Figel, soprano

Avenue Q..... Robert Lopez (b. 1975)

The More You Ruv Someone

Jeff Marx (b. 1970)

Porgy and Bess George Gershwin (1898-1937)

My Man’s Gone Now

Bubblin’ Brown Sugar Billie Holiday (1915-1959)

God Bless the Child

Arthur Herzog, Jr. (1900-1983)

(Brief Pause)

Carmen Georges Bizet (1838-1875)

Séguédille: Près des remparts de Séville

In the Heights Lin-Manuel Miranda (b. 1980)

Paciencia y Fe

Brittney Zearfoss, soprano

Lisa Figel, soprano

Natalie de Bruijn, soprano

Texts and Translations

Three Little Maids from School

Three little maids from school are we,
Pert as a schoolgirl well can be,
Filled to the brim with girlish glee,
Three little maids from school!

Ev'rything is a source of fun.
Nobody's safe, for we care for none!
Life is a joke that's just begun!
Three little maids from school!

Three little maids who all unwary,
Come from a ladies' seminary,
Freed from its genius tutelary
Three little maids from school!
Three little maids from school!

One little maid is a bride, Yum-Yum
Two little maids in attendance come
Three little maids is the total sum.
Three little maids from school!

From three little maids take one away
Two little maids remain, and they
Won't have to wait very long, they say
Three little maids from school!
Three little maids from school!
Three little maids who, all unwary
Come from a ladies' seminary
Freed from its genius tutelary
Three little maids from school!
Three little maids from school!

My Man's Gone Now

My man's gone now, ain' no use a-listenin'
For his tired footsteps climbing up de stairs.
Ah, Ah,
Ole Man Sorrow's come to keep me comp'ny,
Whisperin' beside me when I say my prayers.
Ah, Ah,
Ain' dat I min' workin'
Work an' me is travelers
Journeyin' togedder to de promise land.
But Ole Man Sorrow's marchin' all de way wid me,
Tellin' me I'm ole now
Since I lose my man.
Since I lose my man.
Ah, Ah,
Old Man Sorrow sittin' by de fireplace,
Lyin' all night long by me in de bed.
Tellin' me de same thing mornin', noon an' eb'nin',
That I'm all alone now
Since my man is dead.
Ah,
Since my man is dead.
Ah!

other members of Catfish Row all pitch in to help her. Although the subject matter is quite sad, this piece is considered to be one of the most beautiful in the opera. The wailing and “sing-screaming” reinforce feelings of loss and perhaps hint at the African American traditions of grieving. The *glissandi*, or sliding up in pitch from a fixed note, at the end of the aria are considered a “vocal novelty” and are one of the aspects that illustrate how vocally and emotionally demanding this piece is for the singer. Gershwin allows a musician to emulate the anger, sadness, and helplessness that come with losing someone—feelings that many people are encouraged to stifle in everyday life.

Billie Holiday and Arthur Herzog, Jr., *Bubblin' Brown Sugar*, “God Bless the Child”

If time travel were possible, people could re-experience many things, including music of the past and even certain events that transpired during their own lives. Unfortunately, because time travel is not feasible at this time, much information about Billie Holiday's life is obscure; the account given in her autobiography is known to be inaccurate. Scholars do know that she had little schooling and did menial work until she began singing in small clubs in Brooklyn. She was later discovered in Harlem and soon after, her career took off. Her recordings with Benny Goodman constitute a major body of jazz music and are a staple of jazz collections even today. Though these recordings were aimed at black jukebox audiences, the performances caught the attention of musicians throughout the United States. Holiday was one of the first black singers to be featured with a white orchestra; she was also admired by intellectuals and gained a popular following. She began to use drugs in the 1940s and as a result, her health suffered and her voice coarsened through age and mistreatment.

Calling a show a “jukebox musical” seems pejorative, but *Bubblin' Brown Sugar*, a revue with a variety of music, allows audiences to experience the Harlem heyday in an appealing way. This musical was written in 1976 by Lofton Mitchell and was based on a concept by Rosetta LeNoire. The characters in this musical are both black and white and they go back in time to experience Harlem's golden days of black entertainment. The title was chosen and deemed “doubly appropriate” because LeNoire claimed that to make brown sugar, one must mix white sugar and dark molasses together. Some famous songs featured in their “original version” include “It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing),” “Sophisticated Lady,” and “Love Will Find a Way.” One of the best-known songs from this revue is “God Bless the Child,” originally composed by Billie Holiday and Arthur Herzog, Jr.

“God Bless the Child” had an unusual inspiration: in 1940, Herzog wanted to write a piece based on an old-fashioned Southern expression. When he was conversing with Holiday, she remembered how her mother used to ask for money. In the first place, Holiday didn't have much to give, and what she had, she didn't want to give to her mother, so she said, “God bless the child that's got his own.” Herzog decided that would be the perfect phrase, and from that point the song took twenty minutes to write. Because this piece is in song form (AABA'), the returning A material allows the singer to add her own personal twist through improvisations and embellishments.

perhaps not quite succeeding, to equate love with hate. It is hard not to fall in love with this song and this character; Christmas Eve knows she is quirky and that she has an accent, but she is not afraid of putting herself out there or looking stupid. Marx and Lopez triumphed in their handling of this hilarious, yet endearing, ethnic depiction.

George Gershwin, *Porgy and Bess*, “My Man’s Gone Now”

What is the result of mixing music by the son of a Russian-Jewish immigrant, a story about the descendants of African slaves written by a white Southern aristocrat, and stage direction by an Armenian refugee? The outcome is a uniquely American ethnic mélange known as *Porgy and Bess*. An interesting fact about composer George Gershwin’s childhood was that music was seldom heard in the Gershwin’s Brooklyn home until 1910, when his parents purchased their first piano. It was this purchase that would be the impetus behind his now-famous musical career, and it was in 1912, only two years after his first musical experience, that George Gershwin was considered a musical “genius” by teacher Charles Hambitzer. Later on, Gershwin took a job as a paid composer, and before his first year in this position was over, three different Broadway shows featured his songs. After this early success, he began to study counterpoint, orchestration, and musical form, and began to write Classically inspired music. George also decided to collaborate with his brother Ira in 1924. The two were greatly inspired by the African American experience and the rich musical tradition of these people. Together, George and Ira wrote *Porgy and Bess* in 1935, which they considered their “magnum opus.” Unfortunately, just two years later, George died unexpectedly of a brain tumor at age 38. In his short life, though, Gershwin brought musical spheres together that were formerly considered separate: popular and Classical traditions and black American folk music and opera (all of which are evident in *Porgy and Bess*).

Porgy and Bess blurs not only musical traditions, but also racial lines. This three-act “folk opera” is based on DuBose Heyward’s novel *Porgy*. The setting of Catfish Row was inspired by Cabbage Row in Charleston, South Carolina. This work played nightly on Broadway and featured trained opera singers. Because his *Porgy and Bess* was to feature such fine musicians, Gershwin wanted to write his own spirituals that ranged in mood and technique rather than “borrow” preexisting ones, a choice that some felt was unconventional. Another aspect of *Porgy and Bess* that was unusual was the main character Porgy, who is “crippled”; he loves Bess although she is “another man’s woman.” Their story begins with dancing and gambling. After Serena’s husband Robbins wins, Crown, the man who is Bess’s lover, murders him, setting the stage for Robbins’ wife Serena’s lament. The rest of the opera is full of similar stories of heartbreak as characters are deceived and manipulated through fake deaths and abandonment.

Serena’s grief in “My Man’s Gone Now” is bone-chilling, and Gershwin uses many musical techniques to express her despair. This aria is in song (AABA’) form, and the returning A material helps convey the notion that although Serena tries to be strong and move on, the thought that she has lost her husband cannot and will not leave her mind. She does not have enough money to pay the undertaker to bury him, so the

Près des remparts de Séville

*Près des remparts de Séville,
chez mon ami Lillas Pastia,
j’irai danser la Séguédille
et boire du Manzanilla.
J’irai chez mon ami Lillas Pastia.
Oui, mais toute seule on s’ennuie,
et les vrais plaisirs sont à deux;
donc, pour me tenir compagnie,
j’emmènerai mon amoureux!
Mon amoureux!
il est au diable!
Je l’ai mis à la porte hier!
Mon pauvre cœur,
très consolable,
mon cœur est libre comme l’air!
J’ai des galants à la douzaine,
mais ils ne sont pas à mon gré.
Voici la fin de la semaine;
Qui veut m’aimer?
Je l’aimerai!
Qui veut mon âme?
Elle est à prendre!
Vous arrivez au bon moment!
Je n’ai guère le temps d’attendre,
car avec mon nouvel amant
près des remparts de Séville,
chez mon ami Lillas Pastia,
nous danserons la Séguédille
et boirons du Manzanilla:
Tra la la la la la la la la la,
Tra la la la la la la la la la.*

Near the Ramparts of Seville

Near the ramparts of Seville,
at the place of my friend Lillas Pastia,
I will go to dance the Seguidilla
and to drink Manzanilla.
I will go to the place of my friend Lillas Pastia
Yes, but all alone, one gets bored,
and the real pleasures are for two;
so, to keep me company,
I will take away my lover!
My lover!
he has gone to the devil!
I put him out yesterday!
My poor heart,
easily consolable,
my heart is free like the air!
I have suitors by the dozen,
but, they are not to my taste.
Here it is the weekend;
Who wants to love me?
I will love him!
Who wants my soul?
It’s for the taking!
You’re arriving at the right time!
I hardly have the time to wait,
for with my new lover
near the ramparts of Seville,
with my friend Lillas Pastia,
we will dance the Seguidilla
and drink Manzanilla:
Tra la la la la la la la la la,
Tra la la la la la la la la la.

Program Notes

Gilbert and Sullivan, *The Mikado*, “Three Little Maids”

Many people would not guess that the professional relationship between W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan was less than harmonious; nevertheless, the two men never even got to the point of familiarity where they would call each other by their first names. The two men irritated each other and Gilbert once described Sullivan as “the sort of man who would sit on a fire and then complain of his bottom burning.” Long before the famous Gilbert and Sullivan partnership began, Sullivan showed extraordinary musical talent; he was well versed in piano, beginning composition at an early age. It was his exceptional singing voice that won him admission to the Chapel Royal. There, he was the first recipient of the Mendelssohn Scholarship. His first collaboration with Gilbert was a modest success, which encouraged their manager Richard D’Oyly Carte to commission additional works from the duo. They kept working together and each effort was more successful than the last, causing “Gilbert and Sullivan” to be recognized as virtually a commodity. By the mid-1800s, Gilbert began to resent his partnership with Sullivan. This makes sense as the two were exact opposites. Sullivan was known for his musical warmth while Gilbert was known for the dryness of his prose. Sullivan felt that music did not play a large enough role in their works, while Gilbert felt rigor and rhyme were the most important aspects of the verses. Sullivan wanted a more realistic plot, while Gilbert favored a farcical satirical “unreality.” Ultimately their partnership ended with the “Carpet quarrel,” in which Gilbert sued D’Oyly Carte, and Sullivan took the opposing side.

The Mikado, perhaps Gilbert and Sullivan’s most famous work, was written during the more peaceful days of their uptight partnership, and features characters with pseudo-Japanese names such as Nanki-Poo, Yum-Yum, and Ko-Ko. They must navigate a world where one risks being executed for violating anti-flirting laws and where the executioner cannot execute anyone before decapitating himself. It is no wonder that with such a wacky plot, *The Mikado* earned Gilbert and Sullivan their longest run with 672 performances. Besides embracing the story, audiences really appreciated the operetta for its musical value as well. Sullivan’s “counterpoint of characters” technique was reminiscent of Berlioz’s *réunion de deux themes*, where two seemingly independent musical ideas would later come together. It is apparent in this work that Sullivan draws from different musical styles, and composes music that pleases his more sophisticated listeners without abating the flow of readily memorable tunes and repetitive rhythms. At the same time, this work used the Japanese make-up, costuming, and set design to disguise the fact that Gilbert and Sullivan were making a commentary about Victorian British society.

A highlight of *The Mikado*, “Three Little Maids” may sound familiar, as it has been used in many movies, and even our favorite TV characters occasionally dress up as Japanese schoolgirls in a parody of this song. The mood of the piece is fun and silly, but many consider it the wittiest in the operetta. The light-spiritedness is perfectly reflected in the rondo (ABA’CA’) form, since the returning A material serves as a sort of inside joke between Yum-Yum, Peep-Bo, and Pitti-Sing, who are sometimes referred to as sisters and other times as classmates.

Jeff Marx and Robert Lopez, *Avenue Q*, “The More You Ruv Someone”

For most people, *Sesame Street* is the most memorable production to combine puppets and music as a form of entertainment. However, thanks to Jeff Marx and Robert Lopez, *Avenue Q* follows that tradition. It is not hard to notice the similarities between these two works, and perhaps even simpler to spot the differences—*Sesame Street* is intended for children, while *Avenue Q* targets more mature audiences. At an age when most children were watching *Sesame Street*, co-composer Robert Lopez displayed early musical promise, composing his first song at age seven. A Yale graduate, his talent was indicative of the success he would achieve in the future. Jeff Marx, on the other hand, wanted to pursue a career in law, but signed up for the 1998 BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop, where the two men met for the first time. Marx had enrolled in the workshop after taking the bar examination, and thought this would be a good place to meet potential clients in the entertainment industry. Lopez and Marx became instant friends and admired each other’s sense of humor, deciding to collaborate for the workshop. Their first project, a spoof of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, was *Kermit, Prince of Denmark*; even early in their career, the two had an unusual interest in puppet parodies. This comedy won the \$100,000 Kleban Award. Immediately afterward, in 1999, they began working on *Avenue Q*, which was originally meant to be a television series. They wanted to make it “autobiographical yet biographical.” Since the success of their musical, they have collaborated with the creators of *South Park* for their musical *The Book of Mormon* which is now on Broadway.

The creators of *Avenue Q* spoke these words that any graduating college student would be dismayed to hear, “It doesn’t matter who you are, your life is going to ‘suck’ after college when you venture out in the real world. The difference between us and you is that we did something about it.” Marx and Lopez have said they wrote this musical to help themselves, and others, cope with the transition from childhood to adulthood. *Avenue Q* is the story of Princeton, a “bright-eyed college grad,” who travels to New York to pursue his dreams. He finds the only neighborhood he can afford is situated on Avenue Q, and it is there he meets characters such as Christmas Eve, Kate Monster, and Gary Coleman. The show depicts the characters struggling to find work, true love, and their ever-elusive purpose in life. The creators felt that puppets have a certain permission to say things that would be offensive or distasteful if they came out of a human’s mouth. *Avenue Q* is known for its outrageous sense of humor and its ability to address real-life issues in a relevant and entertaining way.

The show challenges us repeatedly, and one of its lightning rods is the character Christmas Eve, a Japanese immigrant struggling to find work as a therapist. She is engaged to Brian, who yearns to be a stand-up comedian. All of her lyrics are written to emulate stereotyped Japanese pronunciation of English. For example, “love” becomes “ruv” and “kill them” becomes “kirrem,” etc. People adore this character because her role credits the audience with intelligence and a liberal attitude. In “The More You Ruv Someone,” a Barbara Streisand-esque power-ballad, the returning line “the more you ruv someone” illustrates the fact that Christmas Eve is trying extremely hard, though