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Introduction: Divo worship

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Stephen Daldry's *Billy Elliot* (2000), a British film about a boy from the industrial north-east who forsakes his roots to train as a professional dancer, opens and closes with two almost mythic scenes of male dancing. In the first, the film's opening, the eleven-year-old Billy lays the stylus on a T-Rex LP and, after a scratchy false start, the soundtrack begins with the 1978 'Cosmic Dancer'. Hopping onto his bed, Billy starts to leap up and down – first as any boy would, but then higher and higher, his body caught in slow motion in a variety of abstract poses. In the film's final scene, we return to Billy dancing, this time as a mature, muscular adult arriving in the wings of a London theatre. This is the first and only time we see the grown-up Billy, and his face is kept from us so that we can focus on the strength and immensity of his limbs, the astonishing athletic body. At the climactic statement of a soaring late Romantic phrase – the music is now *Swan Lake* – Billy leaps onto the stage. Boy becomes man, adolescent energy is transformed into athleticism and film and soundtrack freeze, capturing Billy in another abstract leap.

These two scenes in a sometimes clichéd film can be extraordinarily moving, resonating, as they do, with ideas about the transformation from boy to man, the struggle to achieve and the liberating power of artistic expression.[1] They also communicate a powerful view of male balletic dancing, a form of male performance prone to stereotype and misunderstanding. Billy is no 'sissy', to quote from early in the film: no, he is an innovator, an achiever, a sportsman. Director Daldry and his young actor-dancer Jamie Bell communicate this message with a degree of nuance (for example, Billy's sexuality is never unambiguously defined), but they do so, in this instance, at the cost of music-historical accuracy. Tchaikovsky, after all, didn't write soaring Romantic phrases for *male* dancers. His was a profoundly feminised balletic culture and Billy can only make his final transfigured appearance because he is starring in Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*, in which men play the female roles of swans (including the lead role of Odette/Odile, played by Adam Cooper in the original London production, the same dancer who plays the adult Billy).[2] Not only that, but the choreography in the scene is more modernist or contemporary than traditionally balletic. In particular, it evokes Vaslav Nijinsky leaping out of the window, as if taking flight, at the end of the Ballets Russes's 1911 *Le Spectre de la rose*,

[1] For reviewer Claire Monk this is a Blairite cliché: like its predecessors *Brassed Off* (1996) and *The Full Monty* (1997), *Billy Elliot* is based on a 'Blairite narrative . . . where post-industrial despair and masculine crisis are resolved through an engagement with the entertainment or cultural industries' (*Sight & Sound*, 10 [2000], 40).

[2] On Bourne's *Swan Lake*, which was premièred in 1995 and is still touring, see *www.swanlaketour.com*; the London production is available on WEA/NVC Arts B00004CW08, 1998. See also *www.adam-cooper.com*.

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one of a number of proto-modernist choreographies by Michel Fokine and a now iconic image of male dancing.[3]

It might seem strange to begin this special issue with a feel-good British film, but in the articles that follow we would like to do what *Billy Elliot* does for male performance, but without the sleight of hand. That is, we celebrate the male performer without circumventing his difficulties and profound strangeness. For the nineteenth-century male performer *was* strange, as Daldry's avoidance of his actual choreographic language suggests. This was true of his balletic incarnation, the *danseur* (the subject of the second article in this issue), but also of the vocal-histrionic types and individuals to which the first and third pieces turn: the once light-voiced but increasingly heavy and heroic tenor and the actorly, declamatory 'dramatic' baritone. Indeed, this strangeness seems crucial to such figures and to the music-historical configurations they represent: voice/musical expression, the body and musical performance.

These articles could not have been written without developments in opera studies in the last fifteen years. It is a cliché to cite Catherine Clément's *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* and Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings* in this respect, but the two books and the lively response to them brought about a remarkable growth and development of the discipline as well as a new confidence, a sense that one no longer needed to apologise for one's subject matter.[4] While Clément and McClary offered models for thinking about gender and sexuality in opera, writers from outside the discipline suggested other ways of expanding our purview, making the 1990s an important moment in opera's relationship with the intellectual.[5] Some of this writing was published by the *Cambridge Opera Journal*, including articles by psychoanalysts, medievalists, medical doctors.[6] Carolyn Abbate, the figure who has most virtuosically communicated ideas from outside musicology, in her *Unsung Voices* imagined

[3] See Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballets Russes* (Oxford, 1989), 32–9. *Billy Elliot* includes three other dance 'numbers'. Daldry has described these numbers – which were choreographed by Peter Darling in collaboration with Bell – as 'dance as action rather than as aesthetics; dance as conversation rather than as abstract; the kid expressing himself rather than the brilliance of the finished product'; 'Cosmic Dancer', interview with Stephen Daldry, *Sight & Sound*, 10 (2000), 12–13.

[4] Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (1979; Minneapolis, 1988) and Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis, 1991).

[5] See, for example, Herbert Lindenberger, *Opera: The Extravagant Art* (Ithaca, 1984) and *Opera in History: From Monteverdi to Cage* (Stanford, 1998); Paul Robinson, *Opera and Ideas: From Mozart to Strauss* (New York, 1985), *Ludwig van Beethoven: 'Fidelio'* (Cambridge, 1996) and *Opera, Sex, and Other Vital Matters* (Chicago and London, 2002); Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, trans. Arthur Denner (1986; Ithaca, 1992); Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, *Opera: Desire, Disease, Death* (Lincoln, NE, 1996), *Bodily Charm: Living Opera* (Lincoln, NE, 2000) and *Opera: The Art of Dying* (Cambridge, MA, 2004); Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar, *Opera's Second Death* (London, 2002); and Lawrence Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture: Wagner and Strauss* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2004).

[6] See Poizat, ' "The Blue Note" and "The Objectified Voice and the Vocal Object" ', *this journal*, 3 (1991), 195–211; Arthur Groos, 'Return of the Native: Japan in *Madama Butterfly*/*Madama Butterfly* in Japan', *this journal*, 1 (1989), 167–94, and his 'Madame Butterfly: The Story', *this journal*, 3 (1991), 125–58 (Groos was of course also co-founder of the journal); and Hutcheon and Hutcheon, 'Syphilis, Sin and Social Order: Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*', *this journal*, 7 (1995), 261–75.

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an influential model for thinking of opera as a source of feminine power. Her concept of 'voice', which she locates not in vocal lines or singers, but in uncanny moments when opera seems to issue from multiple authorial utterances, insists on opera's specificity, its in-the-theatre force.[7] Wayne Koestenbaum, Elizabeth Wood and Terry Castle also wrote about voice, but emanating from the singer and the body. Inspired by queer theory, they argued that the excess and ambivalence of – particularly female – operatic vocality could be empowering for the audience.[8]

The figure of the diva has become almost a symbol of this type of scholarship. Indeed, it is a cliché of such studies that they include on their covers various pained/transfigured sopranos. This is as much true of what could be termed a 'second wave' of opera studies, involving younger scholars as well as established figures rethinking their approach.[9] Gender remains a concern: Ellen Rosand, Suzanne Cusick, Wendy Heller and Bonnie Gordon have among them virtually written the history of women and gender in seventeenth-century Italy.[10] However, this new current of gender studies seems increasingly to be focused on singers, staging and the body. Mary Ann Smart, Heather Hadlock, Suzanne Aspden, Naomi André, Philip Gossett and Susan Rutherford have drawn attention to the role of the soprano in opera's creative economy.[11] Smart has proposed a parallel to Abbate's

[7] Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, 1991). See also her 'Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women', in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993), 225–58, and *In Search of Opera* (Princeton, 2001).

[8] Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire* (New York, 1993); Elizabeth Wood, 'Sapphonics', in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood and Gary C. Thomas (London, 1994), 27–66; and Terry Castle, 'In Praise of Brigitte Fassbaender: Reflections on Diva-Worship', in *En Travesti: Women, Gender Subversion, Opera*, ed. Corinne E. Blackmer and Patricia Juliana Smith (New York, 1995), 20–58 (first published in Castle's *The Apparitional Lesbian*, 1993).

[9] For the latter, see Roger Parker, *Leonora's Last Act: Essays in Verdian Discourse* (Princeton, 1997); Parker, *Remaking the Song: Operatic Visions and Revisions from Handel to Berio* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2006); and Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera* (Princeton, 1999).

[10] Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Creation of a Genre* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991); Suzanne Cusick, 'Gendering Modern Music: Thoughts on the Monteverdi–Artusi Controversy', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 46 (1993), 1–25, and 'Of Women, Music, and Power: A Model from Seicento Florence', in Solie, *Musicology and Difference*, 281–304; Wendy Heller, *Emblems of Eloquence: Opera and Women's Voices in Seventeenth-Century Venice* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2003); and Bonnie Gordon, *Monteverdi's Unruly Women: The Power of Song in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge, 2004). Questions of gender in opera were also addressed in three essay collections published during this period: Blackmer and Smith's *En Travesti*; Richard Dellamora and Daniel Fischlin, eds., *The Work of Opera: Genre, Nationhood, and Sexual Difference* (New York, 1997); and Mary Ann Smart, ed., *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera* (Princeton, 2000).

[11] Mary Ann Smart, 'The Lost Voice of Rosine Stoltz', *this journal*, 6 (1994), 31–50, and 'Verdi Sings Erminina Frezzolini', *Women and Music*, 1 (1997), 33–45; Heather Hadlock, 'Return of the Repressed: The Prima Donna from Hoffmann's Tales to Offenbach's *Les Contes*', *this journal*, 6 (1994), 221–44, 'On the Cusp Between the Past and the Future: The Mezzo-Soprano Romeo of Bellini's *I Capuleti*', *Opera Quarterly*, 17 (2001), 399–422, and 'Women Playing Men in Italian Opera, 1810–1835', in *Women's Voices Across Musical Worlds*, ed. Jane A. Bernstein (Boston, 2004), 285–307; Suzanne Aspden, 'An Infinity of Factions:

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concept of voice, arguing that power in opera can be bodily generated, when music and gesture come together to communicate an onstage presence.[12] Another branch of the discipline, more German-orientated, has focused on staging and technology.[13] And scholars have drawn on political and socio-cultural history to rethink certain operatic pairings (Wagner and anti-Semitism, Verdi and Italian nationalism, even Verdi and German-ness).[14] Anselm Gerhard has rethought an entire repertory, approaching nineteenth-century French opera from the perspective of urban theory and nineteenth-century visual culture.[15] Technology reappears in several books on the relationship between opera and cinema.[16] And a group of scholars have

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Opera in Eighteenth-Century Britain and the Undoing of Society', *this journal*, 9 (1997), 1–19, and ' "The Rival Queans" and the Play of Identity in Handel's *Admeto*', *this journal*, 18 (2006), 301–31; Naomi André, *Voicing Gender: Castrati, Travesti, and the Second Woman in Early Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2006); Philip Gossett, *Divas and Scholars: Performing Italian Opera* (Chicago and London, 2006); and Susan Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera 1815–1930* (Cambridge, 2006). For a more abstract perspective, see Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones, eds., *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture* (Cambridge, 1994).

[12] Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2004).

[13] See the debate between David Levin and James Treadwell on Wagner staging: David J. Levin, 'Reading a Staging/Staging a Reading', *this journal*, 9 (1997), 47–71; James Treadwell, 'Reading and Staging Again', *this journal*, 10 (1998), 205–20; and Levin, 'Response to James Treadwell', *this journal*, 10 (1998), 307–11. For historical approaches to staging, see Mark A. Radice, ed., *Opera in Context: Essays on Historical Staging from the Late Renaissance to the Time of Puccini* (Portland, OR, 1998); H. Robert Cohen and Marie-Odile Gigou, eds., *Cent Ans de mise en scène lyrique en France (env. 1830–1930)* (Stuyvesant, NY, 1986); Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli, eds., *Opera Production and Its Resources*, trans. Lydia B. Cochrane, vol. IV of *The History of Italian Opera* (1987; Chicago and London, 1998); Bianconi and Pestelli, eds., *Opera on Stage*, trans. Kate Singleton, vol. V of *The History of Italian Opera* (1988; Chicago and London, 2002); Pierluigi Petrobelli and Fabrizio Della Seta, eds., *La realizzazione scenica dello spettacolo verdiano* (Parma, 1996); Alison Latham and Roger Parker, eds., *Verdi in Performance* (Oxford, 2001); and Barry Millington and Stewart Spencer, eds., *Wagner in Performance* (New Haven, 1992).

[14] Paul Lawrence Rose, *Wagner: Race and Revolution* (New Haven, 1992); Marc A. Weiner, *Richard Wagner and the Anti-Semitic Imagination* (Lincoln, NE, 1995); and Dieter Borchmeyer, Ami Maayano and Susanne Vill, eds., *Richard Wagner und die Juden* (Stuttgart, 2000). See also Parker, *'Arpa d'or dei fatidici vati': The Verdian Patriotic Chorus in the 1840s* (Parma, 1997); and Gundula Kreuzer, ' "Erzieher und Bannerträger an der Spitze des Volkes": Aspects of Verdi Reception in the Third Reich', in *Verdi 2001: Atti del Convegno Internazionale Parma-New York-New Haven, 24 gennaio-1° febbraio 2001*, ed. Fabrizio della Seta, Roberta Montemorra Marvin and Marco Marica (Florence, 2003), I, 295–306, and her ' "Oper im Kirchengewande"? Verdi's Requiem and the Anxieties of the Young German Empire', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 58 (2005), 399–449.

[15] Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Chicago and London, 1998). Other books that have revitalised this field include Hervé Lacombe, *The Keys to French Opera in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Edward Schneider (1997; Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2001) and Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style* (Oxford, 1999).

[16] See Jeongwon Joe and Rose Theresa, eds., *Between Opera and Cinema* (London, 2002); David P. Schroeder, *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure: The Operatic Impulse in Film* (New York, 2002); and Michal Grover-Friedlander, *Vocal Apparitions: The Attraction of Cinema to Opera* (Princeton, 2005). See also Marcia J. Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven, 2000).

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wondered what we might learn from the new field of performance studies.[17] Abbate has even suggested that we devote ourselves to performance, abandoning the study of music-as-works. Addressed to musicology – even the humanities – as a whole, her idea seems very much the product of a field that for over a decade has been imagining and reimagining itself.[18]

It is in this spirit of reimagining that our articles were written, for if we are indebted to previous scholarship, we are also a little frustrated by it. In particular, we are frustrated by that pained/transfigured diva, as she represents the tendency of opera studies to continue to gravitate towards women and, more important, towards ideas and strategies developed for dealing with women and gender but increasingly applied to opera generally. The first objection to this trend in the field can be expressed very simply: though the histories of female vocality, of female bodies, of the diva in opera have not yet been fully sketched, recent work has been surprisingly oblivious to male operatic vocality, male bodies, divos.[19] This is perhaps because of an assumption that, particularly in the nineteenth century, men are not important to opera or to what makes opera interesting. Perhaps they are assumed to represent the medium's patriarchal and less-nuanced side. John Rosselli has written of the rise of the female singer in the nineteenth century, relating it to the decline of the castrato and to a pan-historical attraction to high voices.[20] One should also note the truism well known to historians, that this was a period of a polarising and rigidifying of gender norms, with 'woman' becoming the important gender question or problem, one associated with expressivity, display and even song, music and musical performance.[21] Indeed, Lynn Garafola has argued that nineteenth-century ballet reflected this shift particularly faithfully, becoming so concerned with the display of female bodies that male characters became almost an impossibility (or reduced to the kind of mime and choreographic support-work of which *Billy Elliot* can make little use).[22] One could make similar points about operatic men, seeing them as the

[17] See *this journal*, 16 (2004), a special issue on 'Performance Studies and Opera'.

[18] Abbate, 'Music – Drastic or Gnostic?', *Critical Inquiry*, 30 (2004), 505–36.

[19] Exceptions are Laura DeMarco, 'Rossini and the Emergence of Dramatic Male Roles in Italian and French Opera', Ph.D. diss. (Columbia University, 1998); my 'Victor Capoul, Marguerite Olagnier's *Le Saïs*, and the Arousing of Female Desire', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 52 (1999), 419–63; Maribeth Clark, 'The Body and the Voice in *La Muette de Portici*', *19th-Century Music*, 27 (2003), 116–31; Roger Freitas, 'The Eroticism of Emasculation: Confronting the Baroque Body of the Castrato', *Journal of Musicology*, 20 (2003), 196–249; J. Q. Davies, ' "Veluti in Speculum": The Twilight of the Castrato', *this journal*, 17 (2005), 271–301; Naomi André, *Voicing Gender*; and Gregory W. Bloch, 'Early Vocal Physiology and the Creation of the Modern Operatic Voice,' Ph.D. diss. (University of California, Berkeley, forthcoming). Richard Taruskin's discussion of nineteenth-century opera in the *Oxford History of Western Music* ([Oxford, 2005], III, 223–37, 578–81) also pays welcome attention to male performers and voice-types.

[20] John Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera: The History of a Profession* (Cambridge, 1992), 56–78, 176–83.

[21] The classic accounts are Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (1976; Harmondsworth, 1990), Peter Gay, *Education of the Senses*, vol. I of *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud* (Oxford, 1984) and Thomas W. Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA, 1990).

[22] Lynn Garafola, 'The Travesty Dancer in Nineteenth-Century Ballet', *Dance Research Journal*, 17–18 (1985–86), 35–40.

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theatrical equivalent of the nineteenth-century's sombre-suited and emotionally restrained masculine ideal, or what historians have termed 'the great masculine renunciation'.[23]

But the pained/transfigured diva can stand for more, for a number of ideas and strategies now invoked regularly enough in opera studies to have crossed the line separating theory from fact. In the 1990s, the concern was perhaps of an endless future of critiquing the gender politics of the repertory. Today one faces a more reassuring but similarly repetitive prospect, of interpreting female vocality as liberating, female bodies as subversively expressive, female singers resistant to the controlling efforts of the composer and his collaborators. In the end the various possibilities tend to collapse into a single massive binary opposition: woman/voice/body/performance vs. composer/work/libretto/music. If these ideas sound familiar, it is not only because they are invoked regularly but because they lie very close to nineteenth-century discourse itself, to its polarising of the cultural roles and biological identities of men and women. Indeed, surveying opera studies, one wonders whether it has to a small extent reinscribed what it wanted to critique, women staged and scrutinised and men invisible, unhistoricised, unquestioned.

'The divo and the danseur' aims to address this neglect, to bring male voices and bodies into the spotlight, to try, in a small way, to make them audible and visible. We do so not to reassert some masculinist norm (or indeed the male–female division itself, which even in the nineteenth century was never rigid). Rather, we would like to show that masculinity, too, is a construction and that uncovering its history and multiplicities might equally be part of a feminist (and certainly a gender studies) project.[24] In the case of the male performer, this involves addressing men's difficult, inscrutable surface – all those urgent tenors, declaiming baritones and miming danseurs – and mining a deep and unexplored vein of strangeness. For if nineteenth-century opera and ballet women can be characterised as oppressed by plot but liberated by an often overwhelming vocal and/or bodily presence, men seem distinguished by a combination of surface inscrutability and something more profoundly strange than women ever present, even at their most uncannily voiced and physically melodramatic.

[23] For more on this, or what David Kuchta has called nineteenth-century masculinity's 'inconspicuous consumption', see David Kuchta, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity: England, 1550–1850* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2002), 1–16, 133–78. Other histories of nineteenth-century masculinity include James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity* (Ithaca, 1995); Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York, 1996); and Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago and London, 1995).

[24] We have in this respect been – cautiously – inspired by the growing field of masculinity studies. See Rachel Adams and David Savran, eds., *The Masculinity Studies Reader* (Oxford, 2002); Michael Kimmel, Jeff Hearn, and R. W. Connell, *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* (Thousand Oaks, CA, 2005); and Bryce Traister, 'Academic Viagra: The Rise of American Masculinity Studies', *American Quarterly*, 52 (2000), 274–304. Cautiously, because the field has a regressive, anti-feminist side; see, for example, Robert Bly, *Iron John: A Book about Men* (Reading, MA, 1990).

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This combination of inscrutability and strangeness takes on different forms across the century. The three articles gathered here suggest that the styles and cultural meanings associated with male performers in opera and ballet correspond to the trajectory historians have traced for men across the nineteenth century in general, moving from a relatively expressive to a more restrained, 'sombre-suited' model of masculinity. Each article explores aspects of this shift: from light, lyrical tenor singing to the feats of vocal heroism of which the French tenor Gilbert-Louis Duprez was the famous exponent, discussed by Gregory Bloch; from the *danseur noble* to mime- and character dance-orientated dancers like Joseph Mazilier and Lucien Petipa, discussed by Marian Smith; from the almost tenor-like lyricism of early nineteenth-century baritonal writing to the emphasis on acting and enunciation of Victor Maurel, discussed in my own article.

If the overall trajectory is familiar, however, what is distinct, and fascinating, is the texture of individual moments of this evolution, moments when the understanding of what is 'normal' becomes uncertain. This is brought out especially strongly by Bloch, who in a richly contextualised discussion of nineteenth-century voice science explores the reaction of two Lyonnais doctors to Duprez's full-chest high C. The pre-Duprez style, with its sweetness, lyricism and vulnerability, seems like much else in the early nineteenth century: unfamiliar, even 'feminine' in terms of modern modes of masculinity. By focusing on the heavier style's emergence, however, and on arguments by the two doctors that the style was pathological, Bloch leaves us by the end of the article wondering why we prefer the heavier style, why we like our tenors to be all trumpet-tones and exertion. Marian Smith explores another representative of early nineteenth-century masculinity, the danseur of Romantic ballet. As mentioned earlier, nineteenth-century ballet was a profoundly feminised genre, and Garafola and others have emphasised its paucity of male characters and performers. Although she cites reviews whose horror of the male body and of male bodily activity rivals the misogynist rhetoric of the period, Smith argues that this anti-male rhetoric was the product of a group of Romantic writers with a particular agenda, who were then championed in the early twentieth century by another group brandishing Romantic values and style against the balletic reforms associated with the Ballets Russes and other ensembles. There was a reality behind the rhetoric, in other words, in which men were active and performing in a style – orientated towards mime – that has still to be appreciated. Given this lack of appreciation, Smith ends her piece with a series of questions.

The final article in this issue takes us to the second half of the century, where men seem more immediately recognisable: they sing low and not too lyrically; and they are more reserved physically, preferring to act in small gestures and enunciate. My article explores the emergence of this performative restraint through the lens of a particular singer–composer relationship, between Verdi and the French baritone Victor Maurel. This exploration of their work together reveals something that has obscured the activities of male (and female) performers in these years as much as any anti-male rhetoric: a powerful anti-*performance* rhetoric in which both Verdi and Wagner indulged, and which looks forward to the modernist attitudes of a Stravinsky. Like Smith, in other words, I am concerned with revealing a reality

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behind a rhetoric, in which a still-very-practical Verdi and an arguably very influential baritone remain. Yet even in this period, one senses a profound strangeness, one perhaps best communicated by our cover image, a rare photograph of Maurel posing as a sculptural subject. The endeavour was a serious one, typical of a certain *fin-de-siècle* aspiration towards male classical poise and muscularity. It also suggests in extreme form the strangeness of having men on stage in a period when such 'unbuttonedness' was far from ideals of real-life masculinity.

As I hope will be clear, to bring the male performer into the spotlight, to make him audible and visible, is also to turn a spotlight on the ways we think about opera and ballet. Nineteenth-century men fit uneasily with current methodological models, encouraging us to come up with new ideas, new methodologies. Inscrutability and strangeness, and the distance (and tensions) between onstage and offstage masculinities, are two ideas that emerge from our pieces. We also offer thinking about opera and ballet not as abstractions at all, but as bodies circulating and leaving traces: in the archive, on vocal-histrionic and choreographic types, even on the music that accompanies the performances. Indeed, if there is a single 'theory' that informs the articles gathered in these pages, it is a commitment to history and to past performances, and to trying to recuperate and engage with past performances, no matter how difficult the task. And this perhaps represents a reimagining of opera studies not only as it has developed in the last fifteen years, but also in its latest phase, which has involved a turn to performance, but performance conceived of in surprisingly abstract and even personal terms.[25]

A final point, one that takes me back to *Billy Elliot* and to an aspect of the film's final scene that I did not mention earlier. The audience at *Swan Lake* is crucial to the scene – and it is crucially gendered. The scene begins with Billy's father and brother arriving at a London underground station. Here, as later in the performance and the film as a whole, women are a shadowy presence (Billy's dead mother is literally a shadow and Julie Walters as Billy's formidable ballet teacher is the exception that proves the rule). This obscuring of women is another means by which Daldry and Bell communicate their sportsmanlike view of ballet. In this respect their view is continuous with the discourse surrounding nineteenth-century opera and ballet, for no matter how much these repertories call to mind the pained/transfigured diva they rarely invoke or imagine a female listener. Nineteenth-century reviews of opera and ballet occasionally mention women, but when they do the emphasis is on identification, on female audience-members naïvely consuming or projecting themselves onto events on stage.[26] Opera studies, strangely, has reproduced this view, the many women writing about female characters and singers giving the

[25] I am referring to Abbate's 'Music – Drastic or Gnostic?', which, partly for polemical reasons, focuses on moments of performance involving the author at the piano or alone with her thoughts in a darkened auditorium. The *Cambridge Opera Journal*'s special issue on 'Performance Studies and Opera' shows a related tendency, opening with an article about a production that never took place and including few discussions of actual performers or performances.

[26] For this type of review, see my 'Victor Capoul, Marguerite Olagnier's *Le Saïs*, and the Arousing of Female Desire', 430–2.

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impression that, again, identification is what is most at stake. Yet, *pace* Daldry, the nineteenth-century male opera and ballet performer implies another listener: the woman who consumes with delight but distance, nuance but also desire and pleasure. Our special issue, then, is not only a celebration of opera and ballet men, but also of the many neglected ways of appreciating them.[27]

[27] Finally, some brief thanks: to Emanuele Senici and Mary Ann Smart for encouraging us in this project; to Daniel Callahan, for his comments on the introduction; and to my co-authors, with whom it has been a privilege to work.

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