1 Introduction

In the second half of the eighteenth century, operas disseminated more broadly than ever before. The abandonment of *opera seria*'s signature lavishness: elaborate stage display, astonishing effects, and castratos' vocal pyrotechnics made *opera buffa* suitable for multiple productions – also by secondary theatres – as well as wider circulation, including exportation abroad.[1] Demand for Italian opera eventually became so high that it could only be satisfied through prevalence of mobile singers vying for contracts on a large free market.[2] Over a lesser spatial extent, but likewise in transnational terms, *opéra-comique* found appreciation outside its homeland among educated elites to whom literary merits of stage works in the lingua franca appeared as a paragon of refined taste.[3] The Singspiel became subject to expansionist ambitions reaching beyond an established, densely interconnected theatrical space in the wake of rapidly advancing German theatre.[4] All these operatic genres found their way to Warsaw, the capital city of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania (1569–1795), during the reign of the enlightened King Stanisław August Poniatowski (r. 1764–95) by means of periodical hire of incoming Italian, French, and German performers.

The welcoming of theatre and opera professionals fit into a wider plan of obtaining foreign specialists so that to boost progression: Warsaw was on a rising trend, despite its slow start in attaining local importance. Having become the site of the royal residence at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the city reached the status of a residential metropolis, besides that of the political and cultural centre of Poland, only well over a hundred years later.[5] Following long decades of stagnation caused (among other factors) by destructive wars sweeping through Polish territory, the rule of King August III (r. 1733–63), also known as the Elector of Saxony Friedrich August II, coincided with the earliest modernizing initiatives: reformist speculations, urban planning, and utilitarian public institutions. It was not until the reign of King Poniatowski encompassing the most mature decades of Polish *Oświecenie* ('Enlightenment'), however, that Warsaw went through a metamorphosis as a reform hub. Along with the actions of the open-minded monarch striving to overcome Poland's prolonged sociocultural, political, and economic crisis, it became livelier and more exposed to extraneous innovations. An influx of newcomers, among them foreign burghers attracted by employment opportunities, contributed to the growth of the urban area and population, which reached

[1] Piperno, 'Opera Production', pp. 67–73. [2] Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera*, pp. 79–90.
[3] Pendle, 'Opéra-Comique as Literature', pp. 229–30.
[4] The most desired, although not easily attainable, directions of this expansion were Paris and London. *Theater-Kalender* 10 (1784), 193; [Müller], *Beyträge zur Lebensgeschichte*, p. 32.
[5] For a concise early history of Warsaw, see Bogucka, 'Between Capital', pp. 198–216.

about 120,000 inhabitants towards the end of the Stanislavian period, thereby placing Warsaw among comparably large European cities.[6]

Carrying moralistic or otherwise instructional overtones, operas presented by the foreign performers served to bolster a special educational mission of a newly established public theatre (1765) prescribed by King Poniatowski at the outset of his propagandist reformist actions. While promoting a sociocultural revival through performances of both spoken drama and opera, the king fostered the Enlightenment conviction that the arts closely coexisted with political, economic, intellectual, and technological aspects of life, thereby creating civilization.[7] In line with his enlightened, cosmopolitan patriotism, a multidimensional process of self-improvement conducted under royal auspices involved enriching national culture with experiences of other countries.[8] One consequence was that the arrival of operas whose fame transgressed beyond regional and national boundaries conveyed something more profound than straightforward social didacticism: it signalled participation in a shared domain of operatic reception, which may well be deemed a universal domain of the Enlightenment. In grappling with an impasse of ideological ossification among the Polish nobility, repertoire programming had the capacity to not only affect customs and attitudes but also reconfigure reality by situating Warsaw near Enlightenment rationality and creativity.

Regardless, opera provided attractive entertainment – an opportunity not to be overlooked by fun-loving inhabitants of Warsaw. In the midst of pervasive among moneyed nobility habits of gambling, debauchery, and luxury – more unbridled than elsewhere, according to foreign visitors – operagoing appeared an innocent, if not constructive, pastime. Still, it fuelled the city's propensity for insouciant amusement that Enlightenment commentators wished to eradicate; as the learned Saxon immigrant Lorenz Christoph Mitzler complained, the Warsaw audience disregarded morally valuable tragedy and bourgeois drama because it 'only wanted to laugh'.[9] Joining in the circulations of comic operas, besides eventually prompting aspirations for a domestic operatic style (since 1778), accomplished a forward-looking goal of installing refined and moralistic, yet commonly accessible and captivating attraction at the centre of urban sociocultural life. In addition, it opened up more space for superficial lifestyles. Both effects were symptomatic of Warsaw's contradictory character: a fast-growing city indulging in overt moral libertinism while coping with a burden of long-standing social inequalities and political turbulences surrounding the three partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (between Prussia, Austria, and Russia) in 1772, 1793, and 1795.

[6] Grochulska, 'Miejsce Warszawy', pp. 109–10. [7] See Zamoyski, *The Last King*, pp. 239–57.
[8] Butterwick, 'Stanisław August Poniatowski', p. 50. [9] [Mitzler], *Dritter Brief*, 46.

The ups and downs of King Poniatowski's politics had vast consequences for the intensity of the theatrical reformist fervour, as well as for Warsaw's operatic life. The first two years of the public stage (1765–67) that coincided with the Enlightenment camp's dominance over the political scene were characterized by strict royal supervision and a bold propagandistic agenda. However, this changed in a gloomy political climate caused by rebels of traditionalist nobility (the Radom Confederation, 1767; the Bar Confederation, 1768–72) and the First Partition (1772). The royal patronage ceased in spring 1767, and the public theatre closed for five years in 1769. Soon after its reopening, the king lost the immediate influence over theatrical matters due to the introduction of a monopoly by the diet (the Partition Sejm, 1773–75) but managed to regain control owing to the purchase of the theatrical privilege by his trusted chamberlain François Ryx (1776), and by providing various subventions. The emergence of Polish opera in 1778 was closely related to renewed, although short-lived, reformist actions; the 1780s showed relatively lukewarm engagement with controversial issues. Then, in the wave of patriotic zeal stirred by the parliamentary debates on the Constitution of 3 May 1791 (the Great Sejm, 1788–92), an unparalleled enthusiasm for King Poniatowski's stance inspired a turn towards an overtly political theatre. Once again, this hopeful moment was interrupted by the unfortunate events: Russia's military invasion in May 1792, the rescission of the May Constitution, the seizure of Warsaw by adherents to the anti-reformist Targowica Confederation (September 1792), and, lastly, the Second Partition (1793). Although the public theatre survived the tumults, the king's strategic joining in the Targowica Confederation made his patronage gain ambivalent undertones. The turn of events that brought an end to the Stanislavian theatre in October 1794 was the fall of the Kościuszko Insurrection against the external powers. Preceded by an unsuccessful uprising in Warsaw, it ensued the Third Partition, the dissolution of the Polish-Lithuanian state, and the king's forced abdication (1795).

This case study focusing on Warsaw's idiosyncrasies and transnational entanglements, while also taking into account specificity of the Polish Enlightenment, aligns with the current thinking about eighteenth-century circulation of operas (adjustable rather than fixed works) in terms of universally engaging repertoires disseminating throughout a common cultural sphere in parallel with performers' extensive mobility.[10] Propelled by demand for opera performance, and possible through increased autonomy of performing professionals, dissemination processes as well as the functioning of specialized labour markets were hardly spontaneous. Complexity of the operatic venture, especially when transgressing political and linguistic borders, called for tactical co-operations effectuated within trading

[10] Beaurepaire and Wolff, 'Introduction', p. 3; Korneeva, 'Introduction', p. 12.

systems and possibly through channels of noble sociability or diplomatic relations – various networks of theatrical connections and interdependencies which have recently become of special interest for English-language opera studies.[11] Scholars have focused their attention on intermediaries in transnational operatic dissemination, as opposed to fortuitous circulation of artefacts and trends. Thus, leaders of Italian itinerary troupes, besides being instrumental in taking *opera buffa* across the Alps as early as 1745, played a part in spreading particular operas to non-Italian territories of their activities later in the century.[12] A new light was shed on the importance of *Wandertruppen* for bringing the Singspiel to diverse audiences, also at a handful of locations in non-German polities.[13] Moreover, diplomats acted as cultural mediators between distant operatic stages;[14] whereas specialized agents: playwrights, stage performers, and musicians advised those in charge of non-domestic troupes established at various European centres on matters of repertoires and practices.[15] Concurrently, the mapping of networks and migration paths revolves around the significance of authority figures – hosts (and often generous sponsors) of foreign spectacles – for undertaking initiatives. It has been shown that, from the outset, courts in Central Europe launched *opera seria* independently, alongside rulers' pursuit of 'Italianità' inspired by their acquaintance with Italian culture.[16] A decentralized image of the European cultivation of *opéra-comique* emerged through emphasizing viewpoints and intentions of authorities who invited French theatre to cities outside France.[17] Warsaw exemplifies how repertoire importations, besides resulting from existing predilections of the audience, depended on concrete objectives of King Poniatowski and the profit-oriented entrepreneurs, some of whom were experienced heads of mobile troupes.

[11] Strohm (ed.), *The Eighteenth-Century Diaspora*; Bucciarelli et al. (eds.), *Italian Opera in Central Europe*, vol. 1; Herr et al. (eds.), *Italian Opera in Central Europe*, vol. 2; Dubowy et al. (eds.), *Italian Opera in Central Europe*, vol. 3; Woodfield, *Performing Operas for Mozart*; Guzy-Pasiak and Markuszewska (eds.), *Music Migration*; Katalinić (ed.), *Music Migrations*; Nieden and Over (eds.), *Musicians' Mobilities*; Beaurepaire et al. (eds.), *Moving Scenes*; Scuderi and Zechner (eds.), *Opera as Institution*; Korneeva (ed.), *Mapping Artistic Networks*; Markovits, *Staging Civilization*; Glatthorn, *Music Theatre and the Holy Roman Empire*. A Germany-based research group utilized, for the first time, a digital tool for visualizing and analysing the early dissemination of *opera buffa* in Europe; see Hoven et al., *Die Opera Buffa*.

[12] Examples include impresarios who worked in Prague; see Niubo, 'Italian Opera in Prague'; Woodfield, *Performing Operas for Mozart*.

[13] Glatthorn, *Music Theatre and the Holy Roman Empire*. The study focuses, nevertheless, on the centrality of the Holy Roman Empire and its ideological implications for German theatrical enterprises.

[14] This was the case in Stockholm whose *opéra-comique* benefitted from a diplomatic contact in France; see Wolff, 'Lyrical Diplomacy'.

[15] A notable instance of such services was the employment of Charles Simon Favart as theatrical advisor to the Viennese court; see Mele, 'The Adaptation of French Performance'.

[16] Dubowy, 'Introduction', p. 2; Strohm, 'The Wanderings of Music', p. 27.

[17] Markovits, *Staging Civilization*.

An opera centre midway between Vienna and Saint Petersburg, the city further demonstrates the role of factors such as geographical proximity and location.

The place of Warsaw on an operatic map of late eighteenth-century Europe gains prominence in view of a comparably large number and variety of foreign works presented at the public theatre.[18] During the period under discussion, Italian operatic seasons predominated, followed by French and German (see Table 1). But it hardly means that opera functioned as a quintessentially cosmopolitan genre, fashionably removed from the local sociopolitical and national concerns.[19] Ergo, this Element adopts a perspective exploring intersections between universalist and particularist operatic phenomena. The firm national framework under the rubric of the Polish Enlightenment serves to illuminate circumstances and reverberations surrounding the presence of foreign opera on the Warsaw public stage, as well as to mark distinctive goals of emergent Polish (that is, national) opera. It thereby becomes apparent that eighteenth-century theatre, indeed, was 'a means of expressing and fashioning identities, at once social, political and national'.[20]

2 The Domain of Enlightenment Opera

2.1 A Noisy City

'Indisputably, Paris, London, Naples, and Vienna are the noisiest cities in Europe. I am very much inclined to place Warsaw next to them. Several districts could well compete with the abovementioned capitals,' noted Friedrich Schulz (1762–98), a literary man and a burgher representative from Mitau at Warsaw's Great Sejm (1788–92) that enacted the revolutionary Constitution of 3 May 1791.[21] It was a noise of movement, liveliness, and spontaneity. An extraordinary number of coaches and horseback riders, day and night traversing through the city core: Stare Miasto, Nowe Miasto, and Krakowskie Przedmieście, added to street hubbub and sleep deprivation. The parliamentary sessions occasioned endless sumptuous parties and dinners thrown by powerful noble magnates lobbying for different political purposes. In teeming public places, polite

[18] Żórawska-Witkowska, *Muzyka na dworze*, p. 242.

[19] There has been some scepticism about using national musical types as the principal category of historical research, and some scholars have recently put a greater emphasis on cosmopolitan – that is, universalizing – aspects of eighteenth-century operatic life; see Weber, 'Cosmopolitan, National, and Regional Identities'. However, musicologists have also recognized the importance of various Enlightenment formations for the groundbreaking processes behind the emergence of newer national operas, particularly in relation to German opera.

[20] Beaurepaire and Wolff, 'Introduction', p. 3.

[21] 'Unstreitig sind Paris, London, Neapel und Wien die lärmendsten Städte in Europa. Ich bin sehr versucht, Warschau gleich nach ihnen zu nennen. Einige Theile dieser Stadt wetteifern schon mit den vorhin genannten'. [Schulz], *Reise eines Liefländers*, vol. 1, p. 127.

Table 1 Operatic enterprises at the Warsaw public theatre

Season	Italian Opera	French Opera	German Opera	Polish Opera
1765–66	Carlo Tomatis (beg. Aug. 1765)	Carlo Tomatis		
1766–67				
1767–68		Jossé Rousselois		
1768–69				
1774–75	Johann Joseph Kurz; August Sułkowski		Johann Joseph Kurz; August Sułkowski	
1775–76	August Sułkowski; Johann Joseph Kurz; François Ryx		August Sułkowski; Johann Joseph Kurz; François Ryx	
1776–77	François Ryx	Hamon & Claude Philippe Saint-Huberty (beg. Sept. 1776)		
1777–78		Hamon		
1778–79		Louis Montbrun (end Sept. 1778)		Louis Montbrun (end Sept. 1778)
1779–80				Michał Bessesti (beg. Sept. 1779)
1780–81	Michał Bessesti; The society of Italian singers			Michał Bessesti; The society of national actors
1781–82	The society of Italian singers (end June 1781)		Bartolomeo Constantini	The society of national actors
1782–83				
1783–84			Jerzy Marcin Lubomirski (end June 1783)	Jerzy Marcin Lubomirski; Wojciech Bogusławski (beg. Sept. 1783)

1784–85	Francesco Zappa & Pierre Gaillard		
1785–86	Pierre Gaillard (end May 1785); Jerzy Marcin Lubomirski (Sept.–Dec. 1785)		Wojciech Bogusławski (end Jan. 1785)
1786–87	François Ryx (beg. Sept. 1786)	Bartolomeo Constantini (beg. ?)	François Ryx (beg. June 1785)
1787–88			
1788–89			
1789–90	Domenico Guardasoni		Wojciech Bogusławski (beg. Feb. 1790)
1790–91			
1791–92			
1792–93	Giuseppe Pellatti	Franz Heinrich Bulla (beg. July 1793)	
1793–94	(end May 1793)		
1794–95			(Oct.–Nov. 1794)

people expressed themselves freely and loudly as no pedantic etiquette prevailed.[22] But it was not only during this momentously hopeful, busy time of the 'dancing Sejm', as dubbed by another outsider, that Warsaw witnessed exhilaration and a myriad of dazzling entertainments.[23] The nobility, constituting about a quarter of the city's population, liked to have fun, and the wealthiest often spent their days in a frivolous manner. Cosmopolitan encounters added to the thrill of the *beau monde*, and vice versa: 'Warsaw became very brilliant during the Carnival,' noted Giacomo Casanova, having established himself a member of the local elite, and hence a participant at 'the great banquets and balls which were given almost every day in one house or another' in autumn 1765.[24] Despite the political misfortunes marking the Stanislavian period, the social life pulsated to the rhythm of masquerades (*reduty*), amateur *théâtres de société*, outdoor fetes, public concerts, visits of touring virtuosos, acrobatic gymnastics shows, cheers in public gardens, and other more or less sophisticated distractions. Dance music accompanying crowded gatherings, night sounds of serenades, and street musicians on the barrel organs likely added to the impression that even during Holy Week the noise of Warsaw's dailiness surpassed that of carnivalesque festivities in other cities.[25]

There was something peculiarly decadent about this persistent commotion, a bacchanal atmosphere of 'la capitale du fameux Païs de Cocagne', as depicted in a contemporaneous account.[26] Libertine attitudes towards temporal pleasures spreading among the upper classes, clergymen included, and rampant divorces bespoke a crisis of traditional morality.[27] Schulz could not help noting with disapproval that Warsaw's extraordinary moral laxity, an odd mixture of immodesty and wildness, went in hand with prodigality and other vices.[28] Overt debauchery spurred age-old deprecation of city life as the antithesis of virtuous countryside, but in view of the political affairs as disastrous as the First Partition, which resulted in the loss of one-third of the country's territory and population, Warsaw's gaiety genuinely upset down-to-earth natives and perplexed visiting foreigners. The poet Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz retrospectively lamented over nobles plunging into enjoyment and luxury, as if oblivious, whereas some intellectuals vented frustration in circulating pamphlets.[29]

[22] [Schulz], *Reise eines Liefländers*, vol. 1, pp. 126, 151–2; vol. 2, pp. 180–92, 202–4; vol. 3, p. 78.
[23] Daniel Hailes, a British envoy; Engeström, *Pamiętniki,* p. 95.
[24] Casanova, *History of My Life*, vol. 10, pp. 164, 167.
[25] Magier, *Estetyka miasta*, p. 215; Jan Chrzciciel Albertrandi to Pius Kiciński about his impressions of Stockholm in comparison to Warsaw, Autumn 1789, quoted by Ciesielski (ed.), *Skandynawia w oczach Polaków*, p. 37.
[26] [Essen], 'Correspondence', 51. [27] Snopek, *Objawienie i Oświecenie*, pp. 210–13.
[28] [Schulz], *Reise eines Liefländers*, vol. 3, pp. 49–50.
[29] Niemcewicz, *Pamiętniki*, vol. 1, p. 69; Woźnowski, *Pamflet obyczajowy*, pp. 101–2.