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ANCIENT EGYPT ON STAGE FROM BONAPARTE'S MILITARY CAMPAIGN UP TO THE PRESENT TIME

Jean-Marcel Humbert
Conservateur général honoraire du patrimoine (France)

ABSTRACT

The popularity of ancient Egyptian themes found expression on stage, where opera designers of sets and costumes tried to strike a balance among the public's idea of Egypt-and the tastes of the day. The disguise of Egypt—both historical and fantastical—allowed for the exploration on stage of many ways to transpose the archaeological knowledge of the time through stories, spectacle, and the reflection of the society attending to the shows.

Through the centuries, Egyptian exoticism and Egyptianization have been among the most universally recognized and appreciated of exoticisms, for ancient Egypt most especially fascinates and thrills, and all social classes, even the lowest working classes, enjoy encountering a complete change of scenery at the theater: an exotic setting of sun-drenched palms, spectacular and bizarre architecture, astonishing zoomorphic gods, strange practices such as mummification, writing that remains cryptic to the uninitiated, different customs, and a highly structured society, from pharaoh to fellah… This is all the more so as Egypt is so often related to current events, whether colonial (General Bonaparte's Egyptian expedition of 1798–1801; the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869; the Fashoda incident of 1898...) or archaeological (the unending discoveries of Egyptologists).

Librettists made no mistake to offer composers the most diverse themes in response to public taste. Egyptianizing operatic works are, therefore, very numerous; Egyptologist Michel Dewachter expertly drafted lists of these for an exhibition catalog:[1] for the single operatic category relating to Egyptian antiquity, he tallied ten titled *Isis* or *Osiris*, four operas of initiation, twenty-one pharaohs, queens, princes, and princesses, and fifty *Cleopatra*s. Add in the biblical category—four *Joseph*s, three *Moses*es, two *Prodigal Son*s, and two courtesans—and the total comes to a hundred operas, not to mention ballets and other musical pieces, accompaniments, theater music, etc. At the margin of orientalism, the theatrical antiquarianism of Egyptomania has experienced long-lasting success that continues still today.[2]

BETWEEN EGYPTOLOGY AND EGYPTOMANIA

This success is based on a taste for both Egypt and classical texts (including the Bible), elements of which are known to all. But how does one create on the stage the most conducive atmosphere? Rapport between archaeology and theater is not easy to achieve. It is, indeed, a relationship between genuine knowledge of the country, its mythical knowledge (that is, the image in the mind of the general public), the image that is perceived, and the representation presented on stage both musically and through sets and costumes. Of all of these elements, acknowledgment of the objective ones recorded in collective memory that speak instantly to all audiences must, of course, figure prominently.

However, a simple transposition of these objective elements alone onto the stage would not have sufficed unless recognition of the most spectacular aspects of Egyptian civilization had occurred. Now, the 19th century had seen not only the birth of the new discipline of Egyptology, with Jean-François Champollion's discovery, in 1822, of how to read hieroglyphs, but also the publication of illustrated archaeological volumes, including by Champollion, Auguste Mariette, and Émile Prisse d'Avennes, which provided set designers with iconography in increasingly archaeological quality. Thus the monumental *Description de l'Égypte*, a publication that emerged, between 1809 and 1829, from the work of the scientists who accompanied the military campaign of General Bonaparte, was used as early as 1812 by Jean-Baptiste Isabey, director of stage decorations of the Opéra

de Paris, for *L'Enfant prodigue*, a pantomime ballet by Pierre Gardel.[3]

Moreover, theater is highly sensitive to the fashion of the day and remained faithful over the centuries—especially in the 19th—to the Egypt revisited through the phenomenon of Egyptomania. Architecture, painting, and other *objets d'art*[4] continue to offer infinite variations of reinterpretations of ancient Egyptian art, the theater being one of the most important components of this. The ornamental constructions of Anglo-Chinese gardens (the pyramid at the estate of the duc de Chartres at Monceau, created by Carmontelle in 1779, or the Egyptian temple in the gardens of the château de Valençay, by J.-A. Renard in 1805), foreshadowed more ambitious buildings, such as the portico of the Hôtel de Beauharnais in Paris by Renard (c. 1808), the Egyptian Hall in London, by Peter Frederick Robinson (1811), or the Hathoric building of the Place du Caire in Paris, by G. J. Garraud (1828).

World fairs also helped to strengthen the public taste for spectacular scenery, re-creating without necessarily copying the finest of ancient Egypt's monuments. Thus were presented, in 1854, the colossi of the Egyptian Court at the Crystal Palace in London (Sydenham), and, in 1867, the Egyptian temple built by the Egyptologist Auguste Mariette at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris. Quantities of sphinxes that decorated entrances of buildings, gardens, and public squares, such as those added in 1858 at the fountain in the Place du Châtelet in Paris by Alfred Jacquemart, offer still other sources of inspiration. Meanwhile, the tradition of large historical paintings—such as *Pharaon et les porteurs de mauvaises nouvelles* by Lecomte du Noüv (1871), or *Cléopâtre essayant des poisons sur des condamnés à mort* by Alexandre Cabanal (1887)—offered scenery and scenes that needed only to be transposed onto the stage.

Alongside these multiple sources of inspiration, popular advertising images of the *Liebig* type (such as the trade cards issued by the Liebig meat-extract company and many others) disseminated from 1872 onward a completely different vision with a sort of very simplified thematic grammar of ancient Egypt: Cleopatra, Aida, the festival of Thoth, and the priestess of Isis constituted the basic elements, along with stylistic elements such as temple pylons, cavetto cornice, and winged solar disk, which one finds inspired, for example, curiously enough in the decorations for *Samson et Dalila*[5] (Camille Saint-Saëns, Paris, 1890; Figure 1).

Like other fields of art, set designs generally try to approach as close as possible to archaeology and its constant progress—with one major difference, however, namely the obligation to render believable the living characters who will animate the scenery that one wishes to be plausible. Yet these designs, although trying to slavishly copy Egyptian antiquity, sometimes re-create it in a manner quite unexpected: they move constantly between two poles, Egyptology and Egyptomania. This is reflected throughout the 19th century (and continues into the 20th and 21st centuries) through a gap between the advances of archaeology and the representations of ancient Egypt offered to the public.

This study will not undertake a thorough analysis of the relationship between ancient Egypt and opera through its multiple themes but rather will illuminate the phenomenon by some representative examples from English, American, Italian, Spanish, German, and French repertoires, place them in relation to each other, and show that, at the same era, the territories they explored were identical. Some of the operas, which were very successful in their time, are no longer performed today. Yet they reveal the taste of the public for this very particular exoticism, showing not only what were its elements but also limitations that may explain why many of these works have fallen into oblivion.

The Dramatic Component: Scenery, between Architectural Realism and Fantasy

True "*péplum scénique*" (sword-and-sandal costume drama) appears with the play *Caligula* by Alexandre Dumas, which premiered at the Comédie-Française in Paris in 1837;[6] the author, in his preface, highlights his new approach to antiquity and his method for stage setting, thus making it intelligible to the public. It is interesting to note that all of the ingredients of "epic" theater and film were already well established long before they were taken up in the 20th century on the screen. Of these elements, the spectacular nature of production in general—and especially scenery—is particularly fundamental.

Nevertheless, well before this key date, designers were interested in antiquity, Egypt in particular. At the end of the 18th century, Pierre-Adrien Pâris imagined a large Egyptian temple for Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne's tragedy *Nephté*, presented for the first time by the Académie de Musique in 1789; among its accessories was an amazing "Egyptian lamp for the temple of Osiris" that accompanied the decor.[7] Paradoxically, despite its early date, this set is perhaps also the most Egyptian. In the years that followed, it was the fantastical side that prevailed, with details closer to the creations of the Italian printmaker Giovanni Battista Piranesi than to the archaeological knowledge of the time. Even before Bonaparte's expedition, Cleopatra took center stage: Pelagio Palagi offered, around 1797, the underground chamber of a pyramid for Sebastiano Nasolini's *La Morte di Cleopatra*; in 1807, Paol Landriani



Figure 1: ***Samson et Dalila*****, opera by Camille Saint-Saëns, Nouveau Théâtre-Lyrique (Paris), 1890. Act 3: Samson (played by M. Talazac) toppling the columns of the temple, here shown as Egyptian (*****L'Illustration*****2489 [8 November 1890]: 403; author's private collection).**

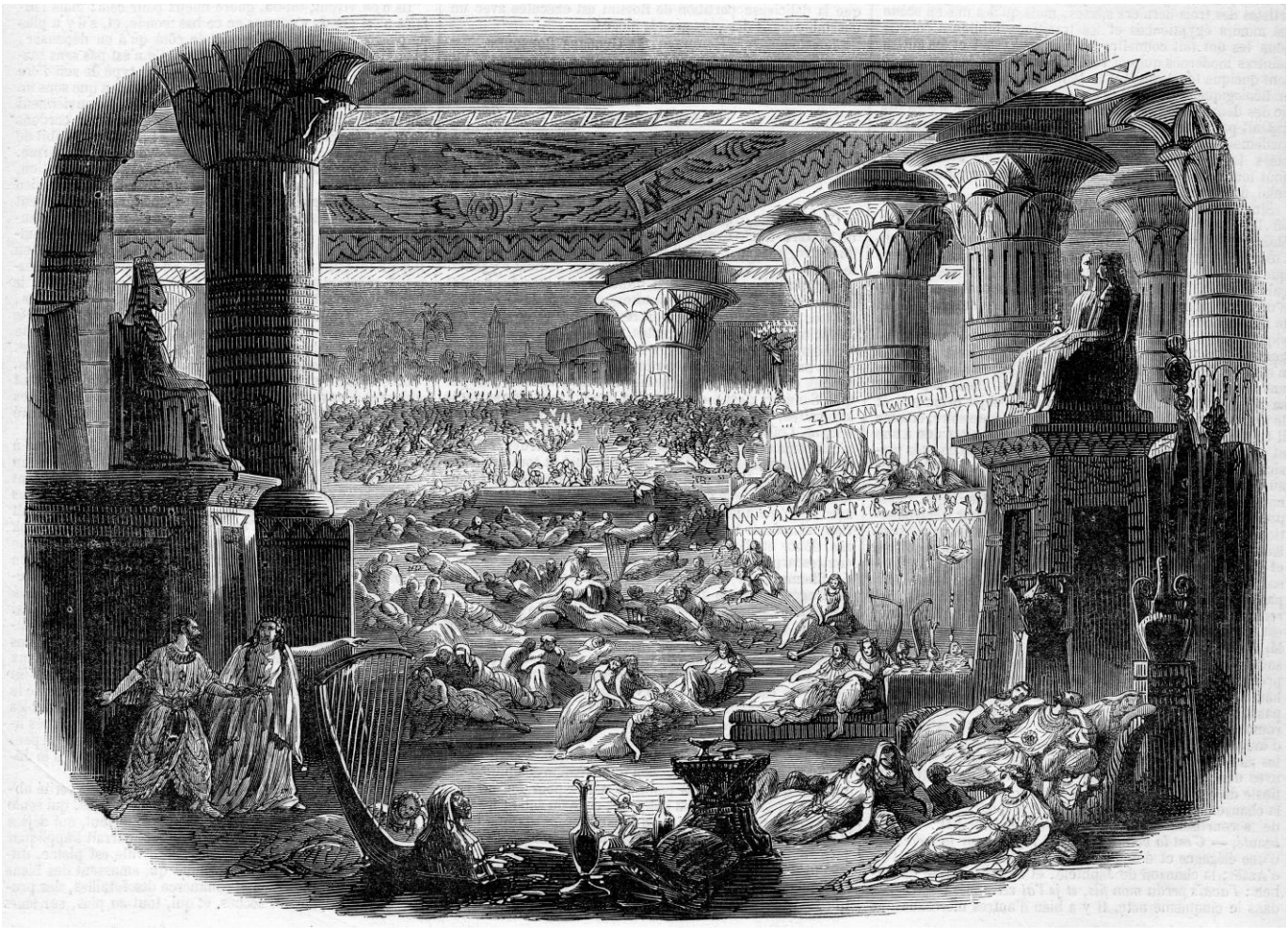


Figure 2: *L'Enfant prodigue*, opera by Daniel Auber, Théâtre de l'Opéra (Paris), 1850, Act 3: Scenery by Cambon et Thierry. Azaël played by M. Roger; Nephté, Mme. Laborde; Bocchoris, M. Obin; Lia, Mlle. Plunkett (reference unknown; author's private collection).

decorated, for La Scala in Milan, the *Cleopatra* of Joseph Weigl; and the next year, Jean-Baptiste Isabey pieced together a so-called palace of Cleopatra for the *Amours d'Antoine et de Cléopâtre*, an historical ballet by Rodolphe Kreutzer, choreographed by Jean-Pierre Aumer.

The Bible also offers subjects justifying the use of spectacular pharaonic scenery. One of the first, Gioachino Rossini's *Moïse* (1827), graced Paris with the sets of Auguste Caron, who was inspired notably by the temple of Philae in the *Description de l'Égypte*, and with that of Pierre L. C. Ciceri for the hall of Isis in act 2.[8] In 1850, Aubert's *L'Enfant prodigue* (Figure 2) was decorated by Edouard Desplechin,[9] Charles Cambon, Charles P. Séchan, and Joseph Thierry; the plaza of Memphis and the sanctuary of Isis, in particular, roused enthusiasm. Théophile Gautier, very much in admiration, offered a fine description: act 2 "uses a pattern of magnificent decoration. To the right stands the temple of Isis with the eternal and enormous character of Egyptian architecture. Colored hieroglyphs encircle columns as big as towers in motionless processions. The sparrowhawk opens its wings above the pediments; column capitals with the heads of women stare down with their slanted eyes, sphinxes extend their claws filled with enigmas, obelisks and stelae stand bedecked with symbolic inscriptions, everything is menace and mystery in this fearsome splendor, illuminated by a relentless sun that reflects off terraces of granite slabs."[10]

The composer Hector Berlioz, for his part, notes with ribald humor that the ornamental scenery distracts from the music: "I have never seen, myself, anything comparable to the colossal staircase of the temple of Isis, covered with priests, with disheveled women, gigantic torches lit in the middle of this cyclopean architecture between huge granite columns. This replicated, on a yet grander scale, the apocalyptic paintings of [John] Martin, *Belshazzar's Feast* and the *Destruction of Nineveh*. With such scenery [...] and



Figure 3: Poster by Jules Chéret for Offenbach's *Orphée aux enfers*, Paris, Théâtre des Bouffes Parisiens, 1858 (author's private collection).

the various beauties that I have just described in the score, it is impossible that *L'Enfant prodigue* does not draw the crowd to the Opéra."[11]

If, in this type of work, pursuit of realism remained fundamental, those based on fantasy stories led to more imaginative adaptations. The world of darkness was then associated with mysterious underground temples and pyramids and the realm of the dead, all of which would be included in the final scene of *Aida*. This is the case of *The Magic Flute*, in the scenery of Giovanni Pedroni for La Scala in Milan in 1816 and of Simon Quaglio at Munich in 1818, but above all that of Karl Friedrich Schinkel in Berlin in 1819, directly inspired by Piranesi's *Egyptian Fireplace* (an etching that appeared in *Diverse maniere d'adornare i cammini ed ogni altra parte degli edifizi*, 1769). A similar influence is notable in the scenery of Alessandro Sanquirico for *Thamos, King of Egypt*, staged in 1817 at La Scala in Milan.

Some now-forgotten works also involved elements from a fantasized Egypt, such as *Les Deux Salem* of Joseph Daussoigne (1824), where an alchemist's cave, by Pierre L. C. Ciceri, is covered with hieroglyphs and decorative pseudo-Egyptian elements. The same decorator, visibly inspired by ancient Egypt, used it again for Luigi Cherubini's *Ali Baba* (1833) and, that same year, for the *La Révolte au sérail*, a ballet by Filippo Taglioni. In 1858, it is an Egyptian column that identifies the underworld for the poster of *Orphée aux enfers* by Jacques Offenbach (Bouffes Parisiens; Figure 3), while Philippe-Marie Chaperon set the ballet of Cleopatra and the courtesans of antiquity, the second scene of act 4 of Charles Gounod's *Faust* (1858–1859), below an Egyptian colonnade. In the same period, in London, was staged Edward Fitzball's *Nitocris* (1855), a pantomime-drama set in ancient Egypt; the coronation procession, which is known from a contemporary



Figure 4: ***Nitocris: or, The Ethiope's Revenge*****, "an Egyptian drama" by Edward Fitzball; Drury Lane Theatre (London), 1855. Coronation procession (*Illustrated London News*, [20 October 1855]: 485; author's private collection).**

engraving[12] (Figure 4), shows how spectacular the sets were and explains the part they played in the great success it achieved.

Through these examples, the great diversity of scenery is evident; because at that time, making the sets was more often intended to evoke on stage a marvelous world rather than to reconstruct the architectural reality. It is with *Aida* that archaeology reasserted itself, and then it was a revolution: this questioning of habits came from the initiative of the French Egyptologist Auguste Mariette, who not only imagined the original scenario of *Aida*[13] but also assured the scenic realization for the world premiere in Cairo in 1871. Giuseppe Verdi's opera comprises three fundamental ingredients: a scientifically established scenario,[14] pictorial music, and scenic Egyptomania that strived to recreate and revive, through sets and costumes, all of ancient Egypt.

The sets of the premiere in Cairo were unanimously appreciated:[15] with the guidance of Mariette, the Parisian designers Rubé and Chaperon, Lavastre and Desplechin reconstructed temples and palaces. The latest archaeological discoveries were even used; thus the colossal statue of the sixth scene reproduced one of those from the first court of the temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, based on the restoration completed by the Egyptologist Prisse d'Avennes,[16] whom Mariette, for professional reasons, did not like, but by doing this Mariette acknowledged his merit.

Attempts to re-create the music of ancient Egypt are even more difficult.[17] Indeed, even if one knows the musical instruments used, ignorance of the sounds and rhythms remains because the Egyptians did not use written notation. Consequently Verdi was reduced to his own imagination and the guidance that the specialists whom he



Figure 5: *Aida*, opera by Giuseppe Verdi, Théâtre-Italien (Paris), 1876. Act 2: the triumph of Radames (*L'Univers illustré* 1101 [29 April 1876]: 280, author's private collection).

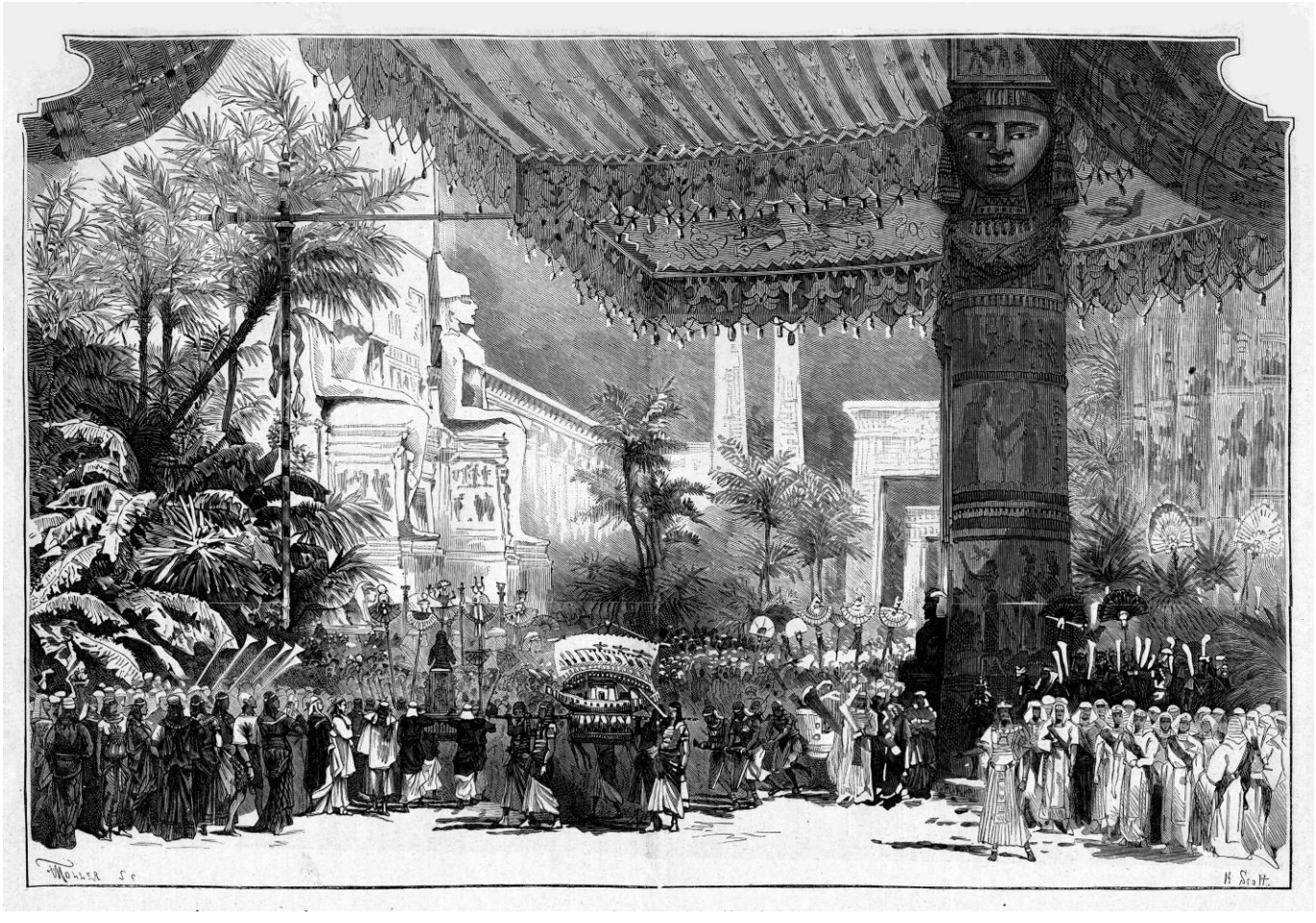


Figure 6: *Aida*, opera by Giuseppe Verdi, Théâtre de l'Opéra (Paris), 1880. Act 2, scene 2: the triumph of Radames on the avenue of sphinxes leading to the gates of Thèbes; (scene decorated by Lavastre jeune; drawing by Scott) (*Le Monde illustré* 1201 [3 April 1880]: 212; author's private collection).

asked—such as Mariette—could furnish. Camille Du Locle served as an intermediary and passed along information of this sort: "On the sacred dance of the Egyptians. This dance is performed in long robes and in a slow and solemn rhythm. The music that accompanied it was probably a kind of plainsong, consisting of a bass with very high-pitched singing above, performed by young sopranos (boys). The instruments accompanying the dances are 24-string harps, double flutes, trumpets, dulcimers, or drums, enormous castanets (rattles) and cymbals."[18] Having plunged into the *Histoire générale de la musique* of François Joseph Fétis, where he found the description of an Egyptian flute,[19] Verdi went with his friend Opprandino Arrivabene to the Egyptian Museum in Florence, only to discover a common "shepherd's flute"... a disappointment that remained long in his memory.

Despite his efforts, Verdi had to bow to the documentary deficiencies of the time; but he still tried to recreate ancient instruments, including trumpets (by the instrument makers Giuseppe Pelitti and, subsequently, Adolphe Sax). For the music itself, Verdi admits the impossibility of re-creating that of antiquity and to being inspired by more modern themes to achieve "local color; [...] a Turkish motif sent to him from Constantinople and a native melody on the flute that accompanied the gyrations of the whirling Dervishes [served him to create], with the one [...], the choir of Termuthis and priestesses of Vulcan in the interior of the temple of Memphis; [and] with the other [...], a sort of mystic dance."[20]

All these efforts notwithstanding, as early as *Aida*'s premiere at La Scala in Milan in 1872, a great backward step was taken. The decorations there were very little archaeological,[21] yet it was they that would accompany the orchestral materials published by the Casa Ricordi for many creations of the work around the world. During that in Paris in 1876 at the Théâtre des Italiens, the production, although very popular, showed merely the evocation of an Egypt of fantasy (Figure 5).[22] It is only for the occasion of



Figure 7: ***Cléopâtre*****, a drama in five acts by Victorien Sardou and Emile Moreau, stage music by Xavier Leroux, Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin (Paris), 1890. The terrace of the private apartments of Cléopâtre, played by Sarah Bernhardt (*****L'Univers illustré*** **1857 [25 October 1890]: 681; author's private collection).**

the creation at the Opéra de Paris in 1880 that one finds the rigor of Mariette, although he did not participate. The entrance of the city of Thebes for the triumph of Radames, with its avenue of sphinxes by Jean-Baptiste Lavastre, constitutes a reconstruction worthy of a Cecille B. DeMille epic (Figure 6);[23] likewise, the set of Philippe-Marie Chaperon for the second scene of act 4, with its two spaces superimposed according to Verdi's will, remains one of the most beautiful possible evocations of ancient Egypt.[24] Subsequently, *Aida* was performed outdoors, both in Roman venues (Arènes de Saintes in France, 1910,[25] Arena di Verona in Italy, 1913)[26] and that truly Egyptian one (before the pyramids at Giza in 1912):[27] the spectacular triumph of Radames had already overwhelmed the most intimate scenes of the work.

Enlivening the Scenery with Believable Costumes

The first costumes were of the utmost fantasy: already, for Lully's *Isis* (1677), there were dresses and other garments in the style of the late 17th century. Just over a century later, the basis remained the same for Joseph Weigl's *Cleopatra* (La Scala, 1808), in which Giacomo Pregliasco dressed the protagonists *à l'égyptienne* with fabrics decorated with pseudo-hieroglyphs.[28] The same type of costume is found, with some improvements, in the 1816 production of *The Magic Flute* at La Scala in Milan by Filippo Pistrucci and in those designed by Hippolyte Lecomte for Rossini's *Moïse* at the Opéra de Paris (1827).

It was with *L'Enfant prodigue* (Opéra de Paris, 1850) that, for the first time, genuine historical research



Figure 8: ***Cléopâtre*****, a drama in five acts by Victorien Sardou and Emile Moreau, stage music by Xavier Leroux, 1890. A concert for Cléopâtre (*L'Européenne illustrée* [October 1890]: 109 ; author's private collection)**

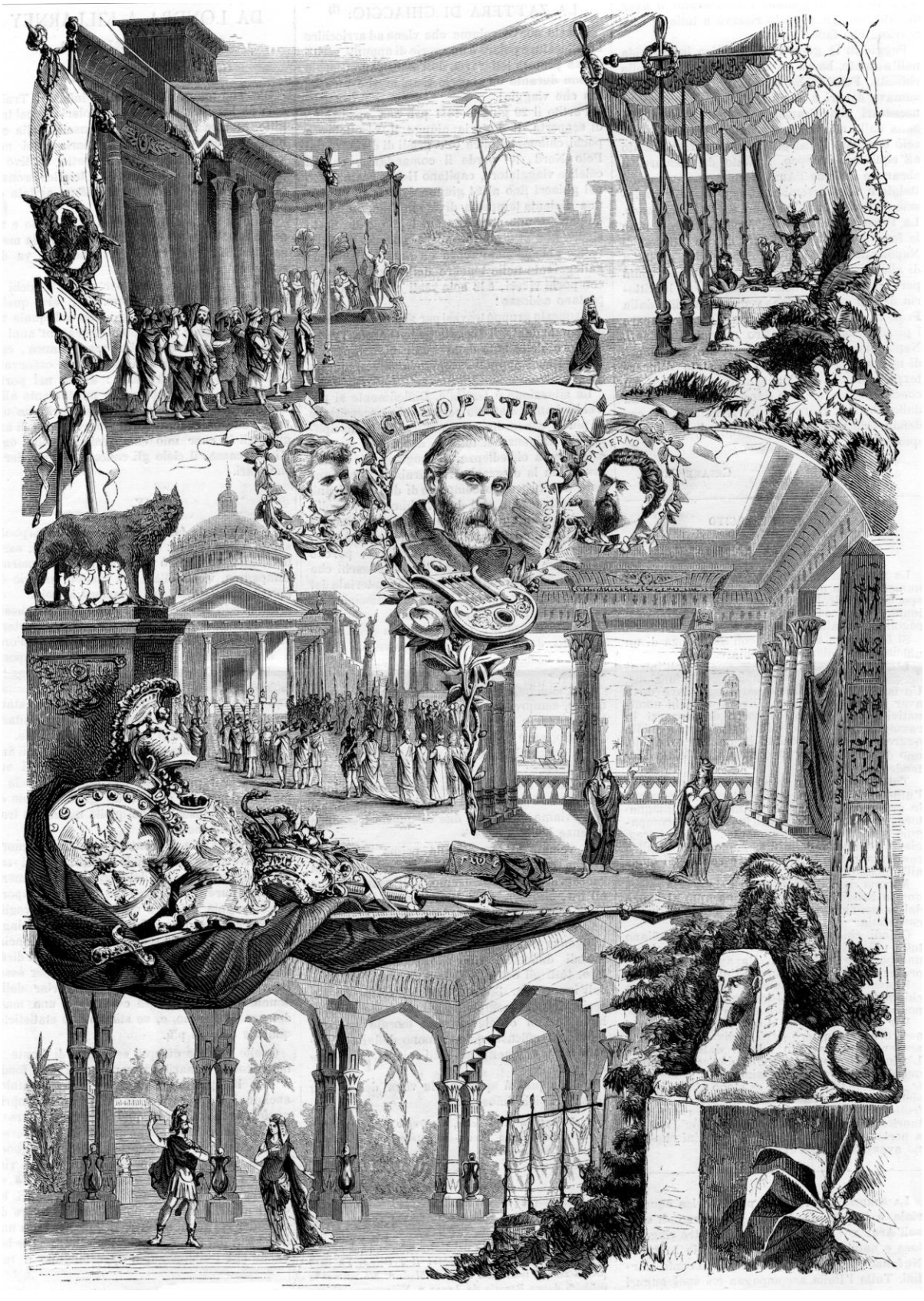


Figure 9: ***Cleopatra*****, an opera by Lauro Rossi, Teatro Regio de Turin, 1876. Designed by M. Bonamore after a sketch by de M. Poggio (reference unknown; author's private collection)**



Figure 10: ***Une nuit de Cléopâtre*****, an opera by Victor Massé, Opéra-Comique (Paris), 1885. Charmion (Mlle. Reggiani) singing before Cléopâtre (Mlle. Heilbron); drawing by Adrien Marie (*****Le Monde illustré*** **1467 [9 May 1885]: 317; author's private collection).**



Figure 11: *Une nuit de Cléopâtre*, an opera by Victor Massé, Opéra-Comique (Paris), 1885. Illustration of the first page of the sheet music (Paris: Léon Grus éditeur, 1885; author's private collection).

conducted. This was undertaken by Paul Lormier, who consulted the posthumous work of Jean-François Champollion and who was in particular inspired by it for the costume of the squire of the king of Egypt, and for those of the priestesses and of the fan-bearers.[29] Quantities of accessories were directly copied from archaeological finds, such as the war crown of the kings of Egypt and some standards. Undoubtedly Mariette did not know about this beautiful production when he later wrote about the preparation for the premiere of *Aida*: "It is especially in the costumes that we meet with difficulty. Making fantasy Egyptian like those usually seen in the theater is not difficult, and would it be the target, so I should not get involved in it at all."[30]

Even so, it was Mariette who would veritably institutionalize the Egyptological approach to theatrical costumes. And in this area there was much to do to fight against the habits of decades. "Marrying in fair measure the ancient costumes provided by the temples and the demands of the modern stage is a delicate task. A king can be beautiful in granite with an enormous crown on his head; but when it comes to dressing the flesh and making him walk, and making him sing, it becomes embarrassing and we must fear... inciting laughter."[31] To minimize these risks, Mariette himself undertook designs of the costumes, some of which were finalized by Jules Marre.[32] But between model and reality stretched a gap that presented many problems: "I have come across, in the entirely new subject of costumes, some difficulties that I did not foresee. The matter is serious because we must not fall into caricature, and, still and all, we must remain as Egyptian as possible."[33] Mariette feared, especially and rightly, that some of the singers would refuse to cut their beards and mustaches. "Can you see Naudin dressed as a pharaoh with a goatee like the Emperor Napoleon?" "Go to the Bulaq Museum and think about putting this appendage on one of our statues. You will see the effect that it would have."[34]

And indeed, many costumes that would have occasioned no reaction at that time today provoke laughter, whether those created by Henry de Montaut,[35] such as the one worn by Bernard Resky in the role of Amonasro (the Nadar studio), or those—so implausible—that overwhelmed many extras until 1968 during the celebrated performances of Leontyne Price's debut at the Opéra de Paris. The utter anachronism of ballet performances in tutus swirling among Egyptian colossi seems loudly



Figure 12: *Le Bœuf Apis*, a comic opera by Léo Delibes, 1865 (reference unknown; author's private collection).

laughable today; yet it was common in the 19th century to witness the scene of the portico of the temple of Isis from Rossini's *Moïse* in the set of Edouard Desplechin (1863).[36] Overall, costumes changed little throughout this period,[37] except for those created from a truly Egyptological point of view.

This was the case for those imagined by Eugène Lacoste for the creation of *Aida* at the Opera de Paris (1880). Their creator pointed out: "What I have sought above all is to bring to the theater the truth of the costume. My works are therefore a serious study of historical research."[38] He left preliminary sketches reproducing Egyptian works of art, teeming with references to Champollion and the remarks of the Egyptologist Gaston Maspero, which served as a basis upon which the seventy-two splendid designs for costumes preserved at the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra de Paris were then made.[39] As for theatre jewelry, which too was a Parisian specialty, they could not reproduce those of antiquity, which would not have been visible from afar; their excesses in size and stone were to enliven the costumes, to make them brilliant, and to evoke reputed ancient wealth.[40]

The Major Themes: Tragedy, Sex, and Comedy

The most profitable themes are those that are the most recurrent. The oft-told stories (Cleopatra, the Bible, love, jealousy, homeland...) are in fact little different, whether the framework is "exotic" or not. Myths (Cleopatra's barge) and redundant sexual adventures (Potiphar's wife) lead directly to comical variations to which Egyptomania was naturally predisposed.

Among all of these themes, Cleopatra seems to have remained a safe bet. The play by Victorien Sardou, premiered in Paris in 1890 with pharaonic designs (Figures 7–8), was performed in France and then worldwide by Sarah Bernhardt with tremendous success.[41] However, the late-19th-century operatic works based on episodes in the life of Cleopatra were less well received. That of Marco d'Arienzo, set to music by Lauro Rossi (1876; Figure 9), as well as that of Jules Barbier, set to music by Victor Massé (1885; Figures 10–11), were shunned by the public, as was that of Jules Massenet with a libretto by Louis Payen, completed in 1912, shortly before the composer's death. The loss of Massenet, and then the First World War, may

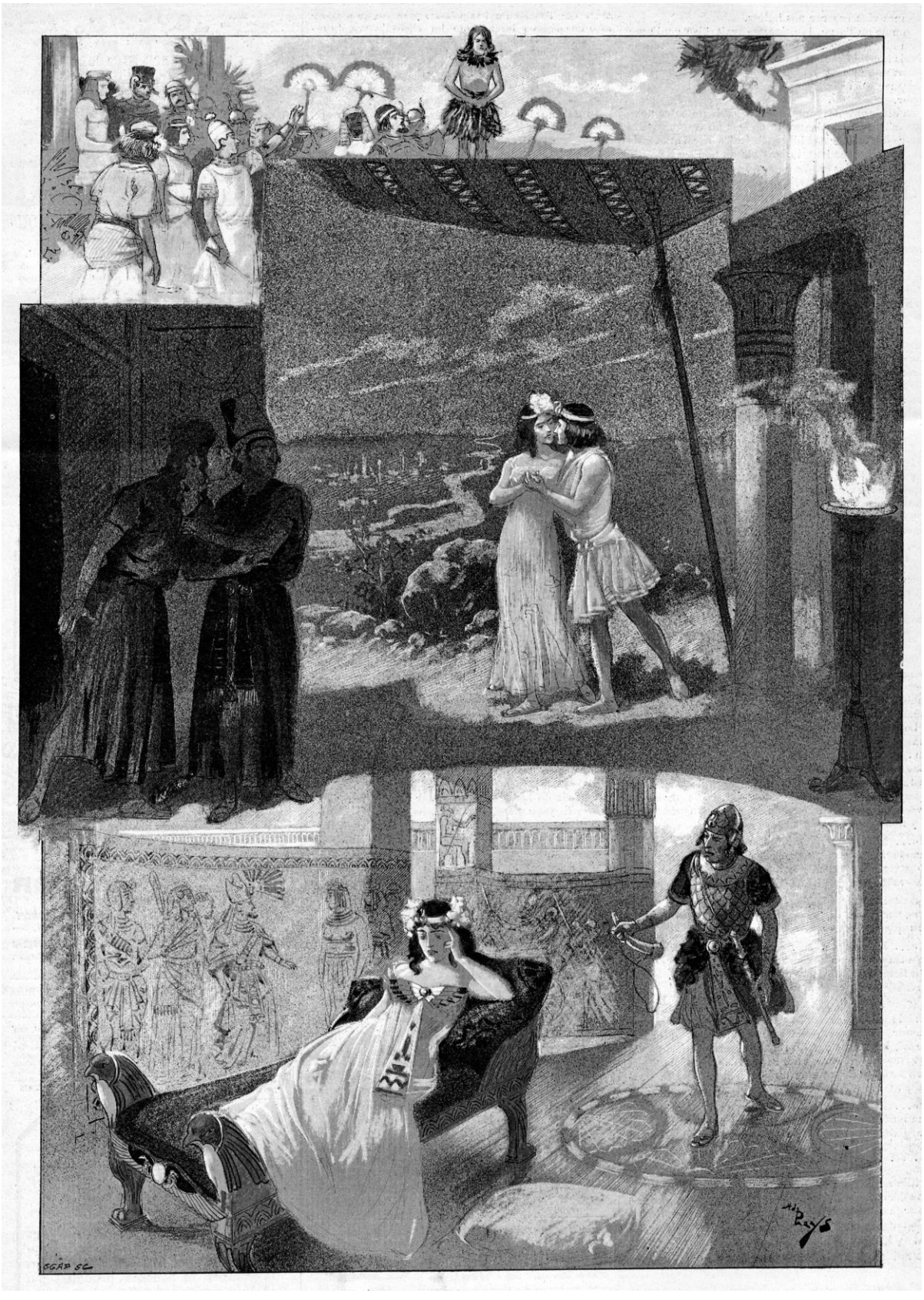


Figure 13: ***Madame Putiphar*****, operetta by Edmond Diet, théâtre de l'Athénée (Paris), 1897. Drawing by M. Parys (*****Le Monde illustré*** **2086 [20 March 1897]: 189; author's private collection).**

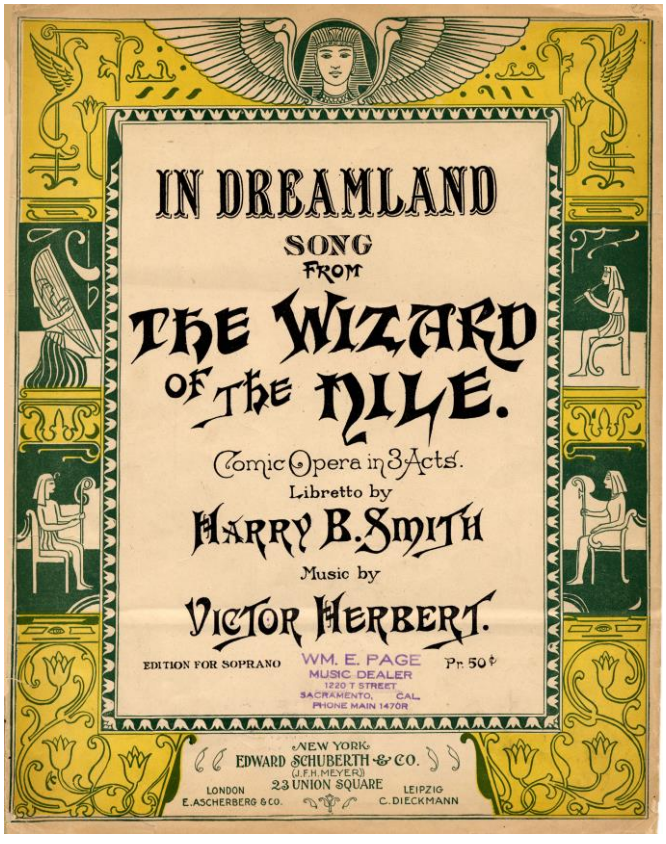


Figure 14: ***The Wizard of the Nile*****, a comic opera by Victor Herbert, 1895. Cover of the sheet music (New York: Edward Schuberth & Co., 1896; author's private collection).**



Figure 15: ***The Maid and the Mummy*****, a musical farce / comic opera by Robert Hood Bowers, 1904. Cover of the sheet music (New York: Witmark and Sons, 1904; author's private collection).**

explain the neglect of the work for nearly a century. Premiered in February 1914 at the Opéra de Monte-Carlo and in Paris only in 1919 by Mary Garden, it met little more success than that of Massé: this may be explained by, among other things, the blandness of the sets and costumes that, in one case as the other, are more like those of a bourgeois drama than an ancient epic. For the success of the other *Cleopatra*s at the time, such as that decorated by Léon Bakst for the Ballets Russes presented at the Châtelet in Paris in 1909, show what colorful creativity can bring to this eternal story.[42]

The comic, however, remains a safe bet. Already in 1865, a comic opera by Philippe Gille and Eugène Furpille, with music by Léo Delibes, *Le Bœuf Apis* (Figure 12), premiered in Paris with Désiré (Pharaoh XCIX) and Léonce[43] (Potiphar). Because of his ribald mishaps, the character of Potiphar was central to many humorous works of the time. In 1896, Ernest Depré and Léon Xanrof wrote the libretto of *Madame Putiphar*, set to music by Edmond Diet (Figure 13). The press was overcome, the audience likewise: "We must go far, far back, to the best days of the success of Offenbach and the triumphant evenings of operettas by Meilhac and Halévy, to find a success equal to that won the other night by *Madame Putiphar*, delightful operetta [...]. Spicy libretto, but still spiritual and fashionable, even in the most venturesome scenes; scrumptious score, exquisitely voluptuous [...]. Mr. Maurice Chariot has produced Mme. Putiphar with a luxury to which directors have long disaccustomed us. The sets and costumes are superb, of a richness and a perfect taste."[44]

The subject of this "Parisian" operetta was reused by Guillermo Perrin and Miguel de Palacios for their "biblical" *zarzuela* (comic opera) set to music by Vicente Lleó. *La Corte de Faraón* premiered in 1910 in Madrid.[45] Its considerable success in all Hispanic countries was due to the mixture of various ingredients: the misappropriated biblical inspiration, which doubles as a ribald light comedy in an Egyptian context that lent itself to every fancy. At the textual level, the innuendos are such that the operetta was prohibited under Francisco Franco and could not be performed again until 1975. It contains, of course, just as in Offenbach, a number of musical pastiches, the trumpets of *Aida*, *La Belle Hélène*, *Die lustige Witwe*, etc. In terms of the libretto, the *zarzuela*, which debuted soon after the clashes between the army and the Catalonian working classes that

came to be called the Tragic Week (25 July–2 August 1909), is also a satire of Spain in the early 20th century. The anticlerical aspect, marital infidelity, the rise of feminism, and the devaluation of the manly could only be welcomed by the popular audience, which equated Potiphar's return from war with the disastrous campaign in Morocco, and the decrepit pharaoh with Alfonso XIII!

On the other side of the Atlantic, Harry B. Smith conceived for Victor Herbert[46] the libretto of a burlesque operetta premiered in 1895, *The Wizard of the Nile*, which was also performed in Germany and England (Figure 14). A few years later, in 1904, the comic opera *The Maid and the Mummy*,[47] with a libretto by Richard Carle and music by Robert Hood Bowers, also met with great success (Figure 15). Finally there was premiered in London in 1906 *Amasis—An Egyptian Princess*, a comic opera in two acts by Frederick Fenn with music by Philip Michael Faraday: there one sees mishaps unfurl in a pharaonic court that seems very rigid but is in fact scarcely so... (Figures 16–17).[48] In 1923, just after the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb, there was a resurgence of theatrical Egyptomania with, in Austria, *Die Perlen von Cleopatra* by Oscar Strauss (1923) and in Paris *Le Mariage de Pyramidon* by Victor Larbey (1923, Figure 18), and the *Tout Ankh Amon* of Maurice Perez (1934).

Egypt, Reflection on Stage of the Society of the Times

One notes that the representation of ancient Egypt in operatic works is more archaeological for the subjects of historic and biblical operas, more "classic" with regard to Cleopatra, and more fanciful for subjects light and humorous. It seems that the general public likes to encounter its own vision on stage, with its problems, its emotions, and its fantasies, too: this is the stock in trade of the theater, and opera is no exception. But of course, even as Eugène Labiche and Georges Feydeau presented on the theatre stage, in a manner strong and direct barely masked by laughter, the failings of contemporary French society, so transposition to the failings of antiquity also allowed a clever detour of which Offenbach did not deprive himself through most of his operas (*Les Brigands, La Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein, La Belle Hélène*, etc.), which are all transpositions and critics of the political situation in France at the time. Would the representation of the struggle between civil and religious powers have been approved so well outside of *Aida* or *La Corte de Faraón*? Or the representation of the political and carnal power of a man or woman of the State if they were not acted out as Cleopatra? Or the representation of, yet again, scabrous sexual adventures beyond a biblical episode, as in *Madame Putiphar* or *La Corte de Faraón*?

In all cases, is Egyptian exoticism only a pretext—a pretext at the level of subjects and their reception, an excuse to meet the public's taste for an exotic change of scenery that creates a media event and influences fashion by its success, while responding to the fascination that ancient Egypt always exerts? Does this, transposed onto the stage, smack more of colonialism? Despite wars and their sets of prisoners and slaves that one notes especially in *Aida*, it seems not to be so, as all the stories told are essentially historical or fictional in basis, often embellished with the pretext of antiquity. Does this mean that it is any less exotic?

Despite ourselves, we bring an ethnological outlook to our own world, and ultimately it is our own idea of exoticism that, at any time, we like to find on stage. With Egypt, this exoticism is always mixed with dreams, fantasies, and laughter. Today, "in an era that regards theater with solid ideas, but gloomy, even tragic, ones,"[49] when the exotic is more social than geographical, the most recent productions of *Aida*, or Handel's *Julius Casear in Egypt*, show these works transfigured and increasingly outside of their antiquarian context.

Although some new operas have appeared, such as *Akhnaten* by Philip Glass (1984),[50] or the musical comedies *Les Dix Commandements* and *Cléopâtre*, ancient Egypt is scarce on stage, apart from a few revivals of *Aida* in the tradition of pharaonic dress (notably at Verona, Milano, Barcelona, and New York). The new productions of such operas focus on more timeless elements, jettisoning the more specific ancient-Egyptian elements. Thus many recent and updated productions of *Aida* emphasize such universal matters as the struggle between government and religious authority and the depredations of war (including the imprisonment and enslavement of "enemy" peoples).[51] Genuine exoticism is thus relegated to simple transpositions of time and social structure. From the more serious to the more frivolous, is the mirror that the theater of the exotic holds up to western society, camouflaged by the trappings of ancient Egypt, a device no longer needed?

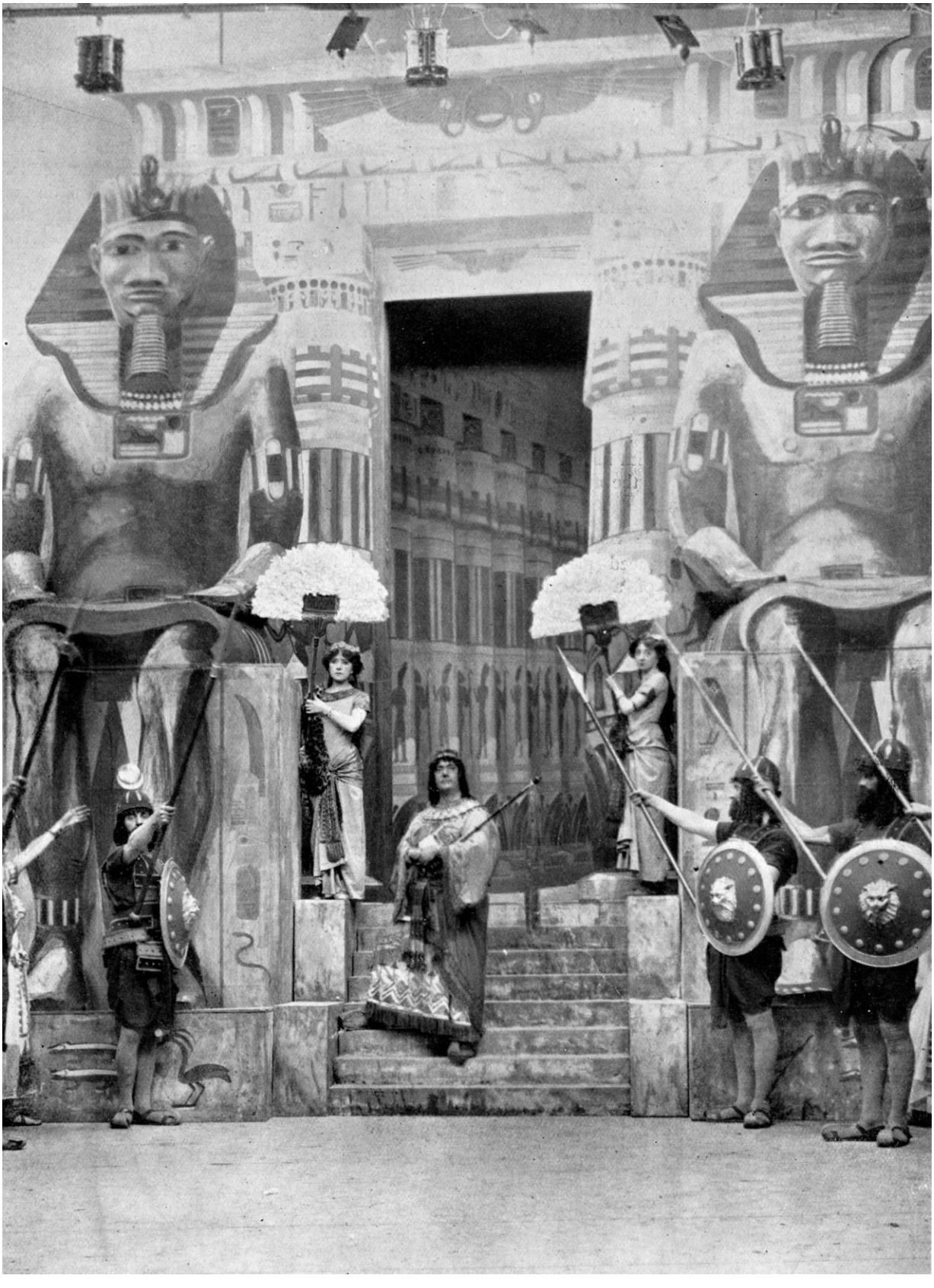


Figure 16: *Amasis*, a comic opera by Philip Michael Faraday, New Theatre (London), 1906. The entrance of Pharaoh, played by Rutland Barrington (*The Bystander* [22 August 1906]: 379; author's private collection).



Figure 17: ***Amasis*****, a comic opera by Philip Michael Faraday, New Theatre (London), 1906. (Top) Eight women singing, "Oh, you musn't really—you musn't look." (Middle row, left and right) Miss Ruth Vincent in the role of Princess Amasis. (Middle row, center) Miss Ruth Vincent as Princess Amasis and Roland Cunningham as Prince Anhotep. (Bottom) Miss Madge Vincent as Natis, with the Mummy Guards. Photographs by Dover Street Studios (*****The Sketch*****[22 August 1906; supplement]: 8; author's private collection).**

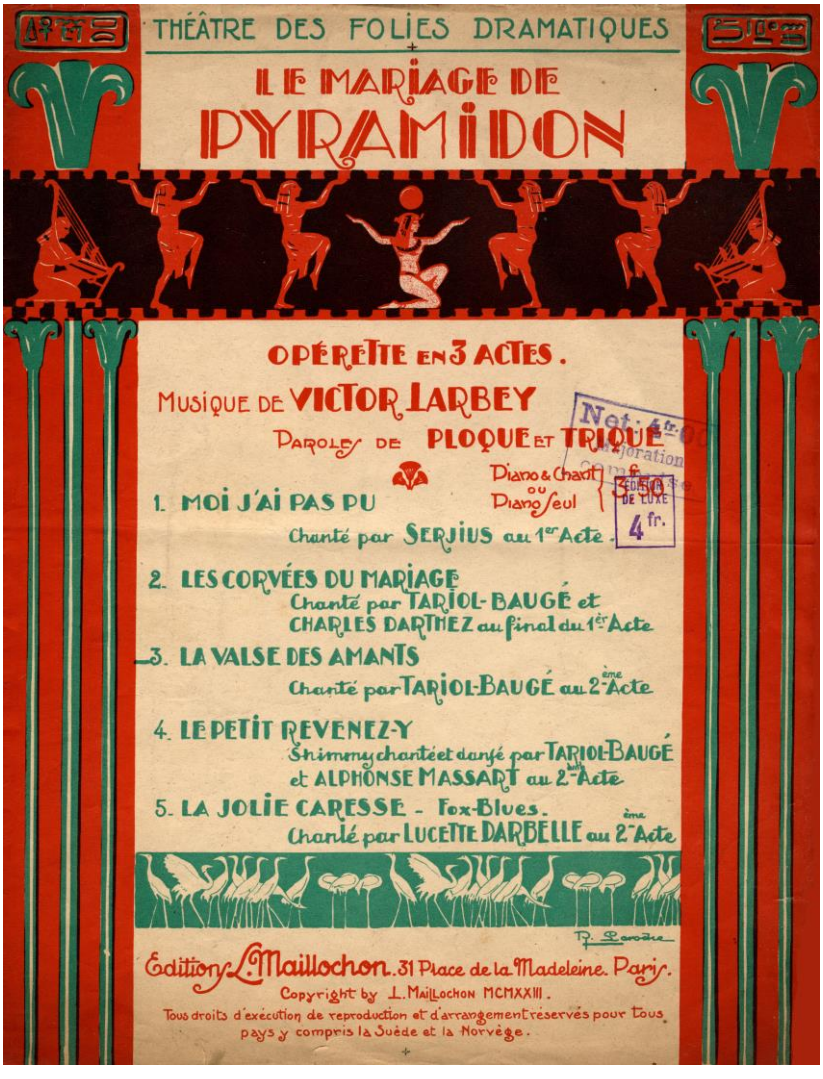


Figure 18: ***Le Mariage de Pyramidon*****, operetta by Victor Larbey, Cover of the sheet music (Paris: Éditions L. Maillochon, 1923; author's private collection).**

NOTES

1 Michel Dewachter, *L'Égypte et l'opéra, un imaginaire et ses interprètes de Jean-Baptiste Lully à Philip Glass, 1677-1983* (Lectoure: Editions Le Capucin, 2004).

2 See also other important books on the subject: Nicole Wild, *Décors et costumes du XIXe siècle I: Opéra de Paris* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1987); Catherine Join-Diéterle, *Les Décors de scène de l'Opéra de Paris à l'époque romantique* (Paris: Picard, 1988); Centre culturel de Boulogne-Billancourt, *Voyage en musique, cent ans d'exotisme, décors et costumes dans le spectacle lyrique en France* (Boulogne-Billancourt: Centre culturel de Boulogne-Billancourt, 1990); Nicole Wild, *Décors et costumes du XIXe siècle II: Théâtres et décorateurs, collections de la Bibliothèque-musée de l'Opéra* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1993); Edward Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); *The Opera and the Orient, La Scala, 1780-1930, Kunstschrift* 5 (2004); Stephen R. Edidin (ed.), *Staging the Orient, Visions of the East at La Scala and The Metropolitan Opera* (New York: Dahesh Museum of Art, 2004); Donald P. Ryan, "Ancient Egypt on Stage : A Brief Introduction to Two Splendid Operas," *Kmt* 18.3 (2007): 75–85 [*Aida* and *Akhnaten*]; Isabel Grimm-Stadelmann and Alfred Grimm, *O Isis und Osiris—welche Wonne! Alt-Ägypten im Musiktheater* (Munich: Staatliches Museum Ägyptischer Kunst, 2009); Robert C. Ketterer, "Caesar in Egypt," in Robert Ketterer (ed.), *Ancient Rome in Early Opera* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 106–131; Winton Dean and John Merrill Knapp, *Handel's Operas, 1704–1726* (Martlesham: Boydell and Brewer, 2009) [*Giulio Cesare*]; Ralph P. Locke, "Alien Adventures: Exoticism in Italian-Language Baroque Opera," *Musical Times* 150/1909 (2009):

53–69; Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism, Images and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Mathias Auclair et al., *L'Envers du décor à la Comédie-Française et à l'Opéra de Paris au XIX^e siècle* (Moulins: Gourcuff Gradenigo, 2012) ; Mathias Auclair, "Les Champollions de l'Opéra: Décors et costumes égyptiens à l'Opéra de Paris de 1789 à 1850," in Philippe Mainterot and Hélène Jagot (eds.), *Du haut de ces pyramides… L'Expédition d'Égypte et la naissance de l'égyptologie, 1798-1850* (Lyon: Fage éditions, 2013), 268–279; Florence Collin, "Présence de l'Égypte dans la musique savante européenne du XVII^e au XX^e siècle," in Philippe Mainterot and Hélène Jagot (eds.), *Du haut de ces pyramides… L'Expédition d'Égypte et la naissance de l'égyptologie, 1798-1850* (Lyon: Fage éditions, 2013), 280–295; Ralph P. Locke, *Music and the Exotic from the Renaissance to Mozart* (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

3 Cf. Jean-Marcel Humbert, Michael Pantazzi, and Christiane Ziegler (eds.), *Egyptomania: Egypt in Western Art, 1730–1930* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1994), 401–403 (nos. 243–244).

4 Cf. Jean-Marcel Humbert, *L'Égyptomanie dans l'art occidental* (Paris-Courbevoie: ACR, 1989); Jean-Marcel Humbert, "Égyptomanie et spectacles scéniques du XVIII^e siècle à nos jours: les raisons de la fréquente dichotomie entre les progrès de l'archéologie et l'interprétation qu'en proposent les artistes," in *Epoque moderne et contemporaine. Theatre et spectacles hier et aujourd'hui. Actes du 115e congres national des societés savantes, Avignon* (Paris: Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques, 1991), 485–495; Jean-Marcel Humbert, "L'Égypte sur scène," in Florence Quentin (ed.), *Le livre des Égyptes, savoirs et imaginaires* (Paris: Robert Lafont, 2013), 673–684.

5 Saint-Saëns likewise had a project for an opera *à l'égyptienne*, but he did not live to see it; cf. Jean-Marcel Humbert, "La musique égyptisante au XIX^e siècle, entre archéologie, exotisme et ethnomusicologie," in *Égypte, égyptologie, égyptomanie: un musée et ses collectionneurs* (Dieppe: Château-Musée, 1998), 61–63.

6 Jacqueline Razgonnikoff, "Le premier péplum: le renouvellement de la mise en scène tragique par Alexandre Dumas (*Caligula*, Comédie-Française, 26 décembre 1837)," in Mara Fazio and Pierre Frantz (eds.), *La fabrique du théâtre. Avant la mise en scène (1650-1880)* (Paris: Desjonquères, 2010), 175–186.

7 Cf. Nicole Wild, "Egypt at the Opera," in Humbert et al. (eds.) 1994, 392–396.

8 Gioachino Rossini, *Moïse et Pharaon* (DVD), Riccardo Mutti, Teatro alla Scala (Milan: Banca Intesa, 2004).

9 Cf. Jean-Maxime Lévêque, *Édouard Desplechin, le décorateur du Grand Opéra à la française (1802–1871)* (Paris: Harmattan, 2008).

10 L'Acte II "sert de motif à une magnifique décoration. À droite s'élève le temple d'Isis avec le caractère éternel et gigantesque de l'architecture égyptienne. Les hiéroglyphes coloriés tournent autour des colonnes, grosses comme des tours, en processions immobiles. L'épervier ouvre ses ailes sur les frontons; les chapiteaux à têtes de femmes regardent de leurs yeux obliques, les sphinx allongent leurs griffes pleines d'énigmes, les obélisques et les stèles se dressent chamarrés d'inscriptions symboliques, tout est menace et mystère dans cette effrayante splendeur, qu'illumine un soleil implacable, réverbéré par les dalles de granit des terrasses." (*La Presse* [9 December 1850], quoted in Wild 1987, 89.)

11 "Je n'ai jamais vu, pour ma part, quelque chose de comparable au colossal escalier du temple d'Isis, couvert de prêtres, de femmes échevelées, éclairés de flambeaux gigantesques, au milieu de cette architecture cyclopéenne, entre ces énormes colonnes de granit. Cela reproduit, sur une échelle plus vaste encore, les scènes apocalyptiques des tableaux de [John] Martin, *Le Festin de Balthazar* et *La Destruction de Ninive*. Avec un décor pareil […] et les beautés diverses que je viens de signaler dans la partition, il est impossible que *l'Enfant prodigue* n'attire pas longtemps la foule à l'Opéra." (*Le Journal des débats*, ["feuilleton" of 9 December 1850]: 1–2.)

12 *Illustrated London News* (20 October 1855).

13 Cf. Jean-Marcel Humbert, "Attribution à Auguste Mariette d'un scénario anonyme de l'opéra *Aïda*," *Revue de musicologie* 62.2 (1976): 229–255. See also Jean-Marcel Humbert, "Mariette Pacha and Verdi's *Aida*," *Antiquity* 59/226 (1985): 101–104.

14 Cf. Ralph P. Locke, "Beyond the Exotic: How 'Eastern' is *Aida*?" *Cambridge Opera Journal* 17 (2005): 105–139; Ralph P. Locke, "*Aida* and Nine Readings of Empire," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 3 (2006): 45–72; Jean-Marcel Humbert, "*Aïda*, de l'archéologie à l'égyptomanie," *L'Avant-Scène Opéra* 268 (2012): 70–77.

15 Mercedes Viale Ferrero, "*Aïda* à Milan. L'image de l'Égypte aux archives Ricordi," in Jean-Marcel Humbert (ed.), *L'Égyptomanie à l'épreuve de l'archéologie: actes du colloque international organisé au Musée du Louvre, par le Service culturel, les 8 et 9 avril 1994* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 1996), 531–550 ; Gabriele Dotto, *Celeste Aida: percorso storico e musicale tra passato e futuro* (Milan: Ricordi, 2006).

16 Émile Prisse d'Avennes, *Histoire de l'art égyptien d'après les monuments, Atlas I* (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1858), pl. 44.

17 Cf. Jean-Pierre Bartoli, "À la recherche d'une représentation sonore de l'Égypte antique: l'égyptomanie musicale en France de Rossini à Debussy," in Jean-Marcel Humbert (ed.), *L'Égyptomanie à l'épreuve de l'archéologie: actes du colloque international organisé au Musée du Louvre,*

par le Service culturel, les 8 et 9 avril 1994 (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 1996), 479–506.

18 "Sur la danse sacrée des Égyptiens. Cette danse s'exécutait en robes longues et sur un rythme lent et solennel. La musique qui l'accompagnait était probablement une sorte de plain-chant, formant basse avec un chant très aigu en dessus, exécuté par de jeunes soprani (garçons). Les instruments qui accompagnaient ces danses sont des harpes à 24 cordes, des doubles flûtes, des trompettes, des tympanons, ou tambours, des castagnettes énormes (crotales) et des cymbales." (Letter from Du Locle to Verdi, dated 9 July 1870; cf. Alessandro Luzio, "Come fu composta l'*Aida*," *Nuova Antologia* 1511 [1 March 1935]: 212 note 1.)

19 François-Joseph Fétis, *Histoire générale de la musique depuis les temps les plus anciens jusqu'a` nos jours I*, (Paris: Didot, 1869), 223, 224 fig. 62 (Musée de Florence no. 2688).

20 "Couleur locale; […] un motif turc qu'on lui a envoyé de Constantinople et une mélodie indigène qui accompagne sur la flûte les évolutions des derviches tourneurs [lui ont servi à faire] avec l'un […] le chœur de Termuthis et des prêtresses de Vulcain dans l'intérieur du temple de Memphis ; avec l'autre […], une sorte de danse mystique." (Ernest Reyer, *Notes de musique* [Paris: Charpentier, 1875], 186.)

21 Humbert 2012, "*Aïda*," 70–77.

22 Cf. *L'Illustration* 1731 (29 April 1876): 281 ; *Le Monde illustré* 994 (29 April 1876): 274 and 281; *L'Univers illustré* 1101 (29 April 1876): 280.

23 Cf. the design of H. Scott in *Le Monde illustré* 1201 (3 April 1880): 212.

24 Cf. Humbert et al. (eds.) 1994, 428 (no. 277).

25 Cf. Jean-Marcel Humbert, "Le péplum avant le péplum, les spectacles scéniques," in Hélène Lafont-Couturier (ed.), *Péplum, l'antiquité spectacle* (Lyon: Rhône le département, Musées gallo-romains Saint-Romain-en-Gal/Vienne, 2012), 35.

26 Cf. Jean-Marcel Humbert, "How to Stage Aida," in Sally MacDonald and Michael Rice (eds.), *Consuming Ancient Egypt* (London: University College London Press, 2003), 47–62 and figs. 3:2, 3:5, and 3:8 ; Jean-Marcel Humbert, "Mettre en scène *Aïda*," *L'Avant-Scène Opéra* 268 (2012): 92–99.

27 Cf. *Musica* (April 1912): 89–91.

28 Cf. Humbert et al. (eds.) 1994, 398–399 (no. 241).

29 Jean-François Champollion, *Monuments de l'Égypte et de la Nubie* (Paris: 1835–1845). Cf. Humbert et al. (eds.) 1994, 418–420 (nos. 266–270).

30 "C'est surtout dans les costumes que nous rencontrerons de la difficulté. Faire des Égyptiens de fantaisie comme ceux qu'on voit habituellement au théâtre n'est pas difficile et s'il ne fallait que cela je ne m'en mêlerais point." (Saleh Abdoun, "Genesi dell'Aida," *Quaderni dell'istituto di studi Verdiani* [Parma] 4 (1971): 4 [letter 5]; and see also 11 [(letter 13] and 74–76 [letter 103].)

31 "Marier dans une juste mesure les costumes anciens fournis par les temples et les exigences de la scène moderne constitue une tâche délicate. Un roi peut être très beau en granit avec une énorme couronne sur la tête; mais dès qu'il s'agit de l'habiller en chair et en os et de le faire marcher, et de le faire chanter, cela devient embarrassant et il faut craindre de… faire rire." (Saleh Abdoun 1971.)

32 Letter from Mariette to Draneht Bey, from Boulaq, 4 March 1872, cited in Saleh Abdoun 1971, 115.

33 "J'ai rencontré, dans le sujet tout nouveau des costumes, des difficultés que je ne prévoyais pas. L'affaire est grave car il ne faut pas tomber dans la caricature, et d'un autre côté, il nous faut rester aussi égyptien qu'il est possible." (Letter from Mariette to Draneht Bey, from Paris, 8 August 1870, cited in Saleh Abdoun 1971, 12.)

34 "Voyez-vous Naudin habillé en pharaon avec une barbiche, comme l'empereur Napoléon?" "Allez au musée de Boulaq et par la pensée mettez cet appendice à une de nos statues. Vous verrez l'effet que cela fera." (Letters from Mariette to Draneht Bey, from Paris, 15 July 1870 and 30 August 1871, cited in Saleh Abdoun 1971, 4 and 75.)

35 Paris, Bibliothèqe nationale de France, Département de la musique, Bibliothèque-musé de l'Opéra de Paris, D. 156. These sketches for costumes, which were pure fantasy, never had any part in the performance history of the work; cf. Jean-Luc Chappaz, "Mettre en scène Aïda," in *L'Egitto fuori dell' Egitto, dalla riscoperta all'Egittologia* (Bologna: Museo civico archeologico, 1990), 83–87; Jean-Luc Chappaz, "Petites notes sur *Aïda* ou l'égyptologie enchantée," *Bulletin du Cercle Lyonnais d'égyptologie Victor Loret*, 5 (1991): 4–24; Humbert et al. (eds.) 1994, 440–441 (no. 296).

36 Cf. the three-dimensional model of the set by Edouard Desplechin (1863), and the engraving of Godefroy Durand. See also the pastel of Jules Forain, *Thais* (?) (1894; c. 1901), cf. Humbert 1989, 286.

37 See, for example, the costumes of Fernand Francell for Méhul's *Joseph* (premiered at the Opéra Comique in 1807) at the end of the 19th century (Nadar studio), in Michel Dewachter 2004, no. 154, 127.

38 "Ce que j'ai cherché surtout, c'est de ramener le théâtre à la vérité du costume. Mes travaux ne sont donc qu'une étude sérieuse de recherches historiques." (Archives of the Bibliothèque de l'Opéra de Paris, C 380 [1] and [2]. Cf. Nicole Wild, "Eugène Lacoste et la première d'*Aïda* à l'Opéra de Paris," in Jean-Marcel Humbert [ed.], *L'Égyptomanie à l'épreuve de l'archéologie: actes du colloque international organisé au Musée du Louvre, par le Service culturel, les 8 et 9 avril 1994* [Paris: Musée du Louvre, 1996], 507-529.)

39 Bibliothèque de l'Opéra de Paris, D 216 vol. 31 (1) et (2). Cf. Wild 1987 and 1993.

[40] Cf. Humbert et al. (eds.) 1994, 434–437 (nos. 288–293); see also the necklace and tiara worn by Ms. Figuet in the role of Amneris (Nadar studio), c. 1876, in Michel Dewachter 2004, no. 159, 132.

[41] Cf. the scene of the first act (*Le Monde illustré* 1753 [1 November 1890]: 358–359 [can be seen in Le Monde Illustré Gallica]: design by Henri Meyer after the artwork of the decorative painters Rubé, Chaperon, and Jambon (*Le Journal illustré* 44 [2 November 1890]).

[42] Cf. the decor of Léon Bakst, in Humbert et al. (eds.) 1994, 447 (no. 303).

[43] Since 1856, Léonce had been one of the favorite singers of Offenbach's actors: he notably was among the cast of the premières of *Orphée aux enfers*, *Mesdames de la halle*, *Monsieur Choufleuri*, *Les Brigands*, *Le Docteur Ox*, *La Vie parisienne* and *La Périchole*.

[44] "Il faut remonter loin, bien loin, jusqu'aux plus beaux jours des succès d'Offenbach et aux triomphales soirées des opérettes de Meilhac et Halévy, pour trouver un succès équivalent à celui remporté, l'autre soir, par *Madame Putiphar*, ravissante opérette […]. Livret croustillant, mais toujours spirituel et de bon ton, même dans les scènes les plus hasardées; partition délicieuse, exquisément voluptueuse […]. M. Maurice Chariot a monté Mme Putiphar avec un luxe dont les directeurs nous ont, depuis longtemps, déshabitués. Décors et costumes sont superbes, d'une richesse et d'un goût parfaits." (*Le Grelot*, *journal illustré, politique et satirique* 1353 [14 March 1897].)

[45] Covadonga Sevilla Cueva, "Vicent Lleó's operetta: La Corte de Faraón," in Sally MacDonald and Michael Rice (eds.), *Consuming Ancient Egypt* (London: University College London Press, 2003, 63–75.

[46] Author notably of *Babes in Toyland* (immortalized by Laurel and Hardy), *Naughty Marietta*, and two operas, the first of which, *Natoma*, was created with Mary Garden in the original cast; the second premiered at the Metropolitan Opera.

[47] A former actor, now an antique dealer specializing in forgeries, sells his handyman, disguised as a mummy, to a charlatan who thinks he has discovered the elixir of life after said mummy is made to move.

[48] The story is based on the adoration that the ancient Egyptians had for the cat: sentenced to death for having sent a brick onto the head of a cat that would not stop meowing, the prince Anhotep is saved from execution by the princess Amasis, despite the guardian of the sacred crocodiles, Sobek, the evil head embalmer Ptolemy, and the scribe Cheiro, condemned to engrave the entire story in hieroglyphs on an obelisk.

[49] "En une époque qui se regarde dans un théâtre aux idées fortes, mais moroses, voire tragiques." (Noëlle Guibert, in Cécile Coutin and Noëlle Guibert, *Frédéric Pineau, décors et costumes* [Margès: G&T Art Éditions, 2012], 11.)

[50] John Richardson, *Singing Archaeology: Philip Glass's Akhnaten* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1999).

[51] Berlin, Deutsche Oper 2008 (Christopher Alden); Stuttgart 2008 (Karsten Wiegand); Bregenz 2009 (Graham Vick); Hamburg 2010 (Guy Joosten); Leipzig 2010 (Peter Konwitschny); Basel 2010 (Calixto Bieito); Cologne 2011 (Johannes Erath) and Berlin, Neuköllner Oper. Cf. Humbert 2012, "*Aida*," 98.