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Year IV - *The University of Western Ontario***

Thomas J. Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the United States from 1889 to 1893, wrote in his first annual report on Indian policy:

The Indians must conform to 'the white man's ways,' peaceably if they will, forcibly if they must. They must adjust themselves to their environment, and conform their mode of living substantially to our civilization. This civilization may not be the best possible, but it is the best the Indians can get. They can not escape it, and must either conform to it or be crushed by it.¹

Morgan's sentiments reflect the government's rigorous efforts to obliterate the surviving remnants of indigenous culture and assimilate the aboriginal population into American society. Contemporaneous economic, technological, and social conditions, in particular the California Gold Rush, the construction of the transcontinental railroad, and widespread European

¹ Thomas J. Morgan, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1889*, in *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 177.

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settlement, precipitated violent conflicts over land rights between Indian nations and the United States government.² Those Native Americans who resisted eviction and rejected American expansionism provided the government with a propagandistic justification for implementing military violence against indigenous nations.³

The United States Army's horrendous massacre of the Lakota Sioux at Wounded Knee in 1890 ended the Indian Wars and made the American frontier available to European settlers.⁴ Furthermore, the Dawes Act of 1887 divided communal reservation lands by allotting distinct sections to each aboriginal inhabitant.⁵ A decade later, the Curtis Act undermined traditional native values by terminating national funding to tribal councils and ceasing to recognize indigenous laws.⁶ By the early twentieth century, Native Americans faced either assimilation at the cost of their cultural traditions or alienation as a result of racial segregation.

² Michael V. Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 161-2.

³ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁵ For information on the impact of the Dawes Act, I consulted Tara Browner, "'Breathing the Indian Spirit': Thoughts on Musical Borrowing and the 'Indianist' Movement in American Music," *American Music* 15, no. 3 (1997): 280. For the original text of the Dawes Act, I consulted the United States Congress, *General Allotment Act (Dawes Act)*, 1887, in *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 171-4.

⁶ For a summary of the Curtis Act, I consulted Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music*, 243. For the original text, I referred to United States Congress, *Curtis Act*, 1898, in *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Paul Prucha (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 197-8.

Despite social isolation and cultural suppression, Native American culture was frequently referenced in parlour songs, orchestral pieces, theatrical works, poems, novels, and operas in the early twentieth century.⁷ From 1910 to 1930, over twenty operas on Native American subjects were written in the United States.⁸ These artistic adaptations, however, were often founded on stereotypical conceptions of indigenous customs.⁹ Postcolonial scholars posit various reasons for this cultural phenomenon, known as Indianism.¹⁰ Edward Said proposes that Europeans formulate their identities by constructing differences between themselves and those “others” who are separated from them by race, religion, geography, language, or culture; that is, they define who they are by who they are not.¹¹ While in Said’s theory, Western constructs of the exotic are rooted in cultural identity and political domination, Victor Segalen focuses more on the escapist element of exoticism - exoticism as a tool “to protect contemporary life from the relentless banality wrought by the transformation of capitalism into mass-society imperialism and colonialism.”¹² Both Said and Segalen’s theories offer a valuable perspective on the ideological,

⁷ Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music*, 243-4.

⁸ Elise Kuhl Kirk, *American Opera* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 141.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁰ The following is a list of scholars who employ the term “Indianism” or “Indianist.” Browner, “Breathing the Indian Spirit,” 266. Kirk, *American Opera*, 151. Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music*, 167, 211.

¹¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 3.

¹² Harry Harootunian, Forward in Victor Segalen, *Essay on Exoticism*, trans. Yael Rachel Schlick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), vii.

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cultural, and historical background of the Indianist movement in early twentieth-century America.

The devastation of Native American ways of life encouraged numerous scholarly endeavours aspiring to record this vanishing culture for posterity. Roy Harvey Pearce writes that “the Indian, becoming the province of learned groups especially organized to study him, soon was a scholarly field in himself, just like a dead language.”¹³ Such “imperialist nostalgia” extended to the budding field of ethnomusicology.¹⁴ Theodore Baker, in his 1881 dissertation “On the Music of North American Savages,” revealed the multifarious nature of indigenous music to composers, musicologists, and ethnographers.¹⁵ Following Baker’s study, the most influential examination of Native American song was the 1893 *Study of Omaha Indian Music*, a collaborative project involving Alice Fletcher, who lived among the Omaha, Francis La Flesche, a leading Indian ethnologist, and John Fillmore, a music historian and theorist. The publication includes transcriptions of the monophonic chants and harmonized exemplars for the benefit of composers.¹⁶ The increasing academic interest in non-Western music provoked an

¹³ Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 129.

¹⁴ Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 71-2.

¹⁵ Alice Cunningham Fletcher, “A Study of Omaha Indian Music, Aided by Francis La Flesche. With a report on the structural peculiarities of the music by John Comfort Fillmore.” In *Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology* 1, no. 5 (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1893). For a summary of Fletcher’s study, I referred to Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music*, 170-1.

¹⁶ Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music*, 170.

unprecedented “pretext of ethnographic authenticity” among composers of this period.¹⁷

In the same year as the Omaha publication, Antonin Dvořák's “New World” Symphony premiered in New York City. Dvořák claimed that Native American melodies inspired the work: “I have simply written original themes embodying the peculiarities of the Indian music, and, using these themes as subjects, have developed them with all the resources of modern rhythms, counterpoint, and orchestral color.”¹⁸ The Czech composer believed that an American style of composition should rely on indigenous musical sources.¹⁹ The “New World” Symphony continues to prompt debate regarding the difference between incorporating indigenous themes as familiar, nationalistic tunes, and using such melodies to create a ‘different,’ exotic sound. Musical folklorists attempt literal borrowing with the intention of creating a distinct national school of composition.²⁰ In contrast, musical exoticists are less concerned with issues of authenticity and nationalism than they are with entertainment value and popularity, using stereotypical Indian idioms and characters to convey an exotic “other.”²¹ Most Indianist composers rested

¹⁷ Kirk, *American Opera*, 141.

¹⁸ Albert Steinberg, “Dvorak On His New Work,” *The New York Herald*, 15 December, 1893.

¹⁹ Antonin Dvořák, “Music in America,” *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 90, no. 537 (February, 1895): 433. The article is referenced in Beth Levy, *Frontier Figures: American Music and the Mythology of the American West, 1895-1945* (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 2002), 6.

²⁰ Levy, *Frontier Figures*, 33.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

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somewhere in between these two ideological extremes and “walked a fine line between sympathetically portraying Native American life and unsympathetically propagating racial stereotypes.”²²

Edward Hipsher, author of *American Opera and its Composers*, argues that Indianist opera composers tried

not so much to reproduce the actual music and words of the Indians as to create, through the use of figures of speech and of musical idioms, an art work which would interpret the Indian in his life and manner of thought, and at the same time to mold the work to the requirements of the operatic stage.²³

Later scholars present less favourable assessments of Indianist opera. Elise Kirk states that composers “failed to interpret the real-life tragedy and oppression of Native Americans.”²⁴ Michael Pisani describes the dichotomy between fictional portrayals of aboriginals and the harsh realities of Native American life: “While in the first decade of the twentieth century many Indian people were struggling to make a place for themselves in American society (or to be left alone), romanticized Indians flourished in the arts.”²⁵ Today, the idealized relationship between aboriginals and European Americans in Indianist operas seems offensive and absurd, but the modern audience is attuned to one-dimensional stereotypes of ‘the Indian’ and aware of the

²² Levy, *Frontier Figures*, 20.

²³ Edward Ellsworth Hipsher, *American Opera and its Composers* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1934), 342.

²⁴ Kirk, *American Opera*, 158.

²⁵ Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music*, 243.

exploitive incorporation of Native American culture within the Western artistic context.

Natoma, an Indianist opera by composer Victor Herbert and librettist Joseph D. Redding, premiered in Philadelphia in 1911. The work explores the interaction between Native Americans and Spanish and British settlers in California in 1820. Interviews with the composer and librettist, in addition to the text and music of the opera itself, suggest that the creators believed they had depicted Native Americans in a manner that was both realistic and respectful. In a *New York Times* article, Redding describes his titular character as follows:

...in *Natoma*, I have used real characters, I believe. Perhaps I have used poetic licence in making Natoma herself so noble, but there are a great many instances of Indian girls who have made wonderful sacrifices. And I think I have a right to make her character as beautiful as possible.²⁶

Herbert further discusses his musical characterization of Natoma: "I have composed all of Natoma's music, at least the greater part of it, out of fragments of Indian music, which I have collected and studied for some time past."²⁷ Natoma's nobility and complexity as protagonist suggest that sensationalism and exploitation were not the primary goals of the composer and librettist. Furthermore, the work's historical context and the issues it embodies make

²⁶ "Grand Opera Written by Americans to be Given Here," *The New York Times*: Jan. 22, 1911: SM13.

²⁷ Ibid.

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Natoma more than simply a tribute to authentic Native American culture or a distorted depiction of Indian life. The opera reflects the contradictory forces of social alienation and cultural assimilation that indigenous populations endured from European-American individuals and institutions in the early twentieth century. Despite the opera's historical setting, fictional plot, stereotypical characters, and exotic musical idioms, *Natoma* explores cultural and societal issues that were relevant in early twentieth-century America.

In his libretto, Redding addresses images of Indian otherness prevalent in contemporary American society, politics, and scholarship. According to James Parakilas, the libretto is structured on a "scheme of racial difference,"²⁸ recalling Said's postcolonial theory. Although most characters are one-dimensional, they are representative of the relationship between European Americans and aboriginals at the beginning of the twentieth century. Redding establishes a clear hierarchy in which white Americans enjoy a higher level of 'civilization' and respectability than Indians. These character classes can be subdivided into four groups: Anglo-Americans, represented by Lieutenant Paul Merrill, rank higher than Spanish Americans, such as Barbara and her father Don Francisco; below European Americans are Indians, who are either of complete aboriginal descent like *Natoma*, or, the lowest class in Redding's early America, the "half-breeds," represented by Castro. In addition, Redding presents three levels of exoticism: the Anglo-American is the embodiment

²⁸ James Parakilas, "The Soldier and the Exotic: Operatic Variations on a Theme of Racial Encounter, Part II," *The Opera Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (1994): 55.

of familiarity and Western civilization; the Spanish American, while upholding different cultural and linguistic traditions from the Anglo-American, is still European and Christian, and is therefore not entirely 'exotic;' finally, the Native American, who is not only a visible minority but also engages in customs foreign to the West, is the true exotic.²⁹

The dramatic functions of the characters are further indicative of their social status. Natoma, despite being the heroine of the opera, is not the romantic lead. She forms the weakest point of a love triangle with Paul and Barbara because her romantic feelings for Paul are unreciprocated.³⁰ In addition, Natoma's love for Barbara prevents her from competing for Paul's affections; instead, Natoma supports a union between the American soldier and the Spanish maiden by extolling Barbara's beauty to Paul before the two meet:

She is more beautiful than the fawn in springtime!
She is more lovely than the poppies on the hillside!
My Barbara!
Her eyes are like the stars in blue water.
Her lips are red berries in the dew
When you see her, you must love her.
Oh, Paul!
When you see her, you *will* love her!³¹

²⁹ Parakilas, "The Soldier and the Exotic," 55-8.

³⁰ Ibid., 57-8.

³¹ Ibid., 47-8.

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Natoma also encourages a romantic match between Barbara and Paul by rescuing Barbara from capture by Alvarado, a rival suitor. Due to the different levels of exoticism that Redding presents in the opera, Natoma herself is too exotic for Paul, which renders his attachment to the less exotic Barbara more acceptable to both the colonial society in the opera and the 1911 audience.³² Thus, Natoma's ethnic origins and actions pose no threat to European success.

Natoma's subservient position as a guide and servant further prevents the possibility of her union with Paul due to the social class disparity. Castro reproaches Natoma for her passive behaviour towards the colonists: "You, the idol of our people, the daughter of your father, to fetch and carry for these dogs!"³³ The European-American characters' treatment of Natoma is indicative not only of her low social standing but also of her isolation in this colonial society as an exotic other. Paul, who arrives in Carolina on the U.S. brig "Liberty," boasts of the supremacy and dominance of his own nation.³⁴ Although Paul is fascinated by Natoma, exclaiming, "Oh Natoma, 'tis you who casts a spell o'er my senses,"³⁵ and is interested in learning more about her people, his tone remains condescending; he calls her a "little witch"³⁶ and a "little wildflow'r."³⁷ Paul's treatment of Natoma reflects the rising interest in aboriginals in both academic and entertainment circles, as

³² Parakilas, "The Soldier and the Exotic," 57.

³³ Victor Herbert and Joseph Redding, *Natoma: An Opera in Three Acts* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1911), 80.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 264.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

well as the prevailing political and social expressions of European superiority and aboriginal segregation in the early twentieth century.

Natoma's own actions illustrate her position as an uprooted and isolated outsider seeking inclusion in American society. She laments the decline of her tribe and recognizes that Europeans are responsible for the extinction of her people:

In the old age of my father
All my brothers had departed,
Lost in battle with the stranger...
Vanished are my father's people.
Now the stranger comes as chieftain.³⁸

At the same time, however, Natoma, bereft and alone, yearns to be a part of the civilization that conquered her tribe. Natoma's desire for inclusion is evident in her intense attachment to Barbara and her reverence for Paul; when she comes to the realization that he will fall in love with Barbara, Natoma "falls at Paul's feet" and offers to serve him forever so that she can be near him: "Oh, Paul! Take me, beat me, kill me, but let me be your slave!"³⁹ Natoma is a conflicted character, torn between her past life and present realities. Wearing her father's amulet that marks her as the future leader and hope of her tribe, Natoma continues to practice her traditional religion "that thro' the ages has come down from ev'ry Chieftain to his people."⁴⁰

³⁸ Herbert and Redding, *Natoma*, 41-5.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 172.

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In Act II, she prays to the Great Manitou for guidance to suppress her feelings for Paul and protect Barbara from the evil schemes of Alvarado and Castro.⁴¹ Father Peralta urges Natoma to convert to Christianity, and although she realizes the possibility that “[f]ire and eternal torture shall be my lot, if I refuse,” she obstinately resists at first, preferring to remain loyal to the religion of her tribe.

Later in the act, Natoma succumbs to her ‘savage nature’ by indulging in a Dagger Dance with Castro. Spurred into action by the dance and by her instinctual defence of Barbara, Natoma “plunges her dagger into Alvarado,” who is in the midst of abducting the Spanish girl.⁴² As the angry Spanish mob surrounds Natoma for murdering one of their own, Paul and his soldiers restrain the crowd, and Father Peralta commands everyone to stop their aggression. Natoma, overcome with guilt and fear, “drops the dagger and falls at the feet of Peralta.”⁴³ Anglo-American society and Christian values rescue Natoma from her own savagery and from the wrath of the crowd.

In Act III, Natoma laments her ostracism from colonial society and her separation from her own people, singing “Lonely am I, lonely is my heart.”⁴⁴ She realizes that her attachment to the European settlement has undermined her personal identity and obscured her cultural loyalties. Natoma resolves to return to her tribe and to fight only for her people’s cause:

⁴¹ Herbert and Redding, *Natoma* 174.

⁴² *Ibid.*, ix.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 288.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 297.

False have I been, false to myself,
False to my father's teaching, false to my people's
faith.
Manitou! Hear me! Manitou! Hear me!
I have awakened!
I will go to my people.
The voice of my father is calling, "This land is
ours!"⁴⁵

Natoma's resolve, however, is short-lived. Father Peralta enters, entreating her once more to convert to Christianity and spend her remaining days in a convent. Peralta takes advantage of Natoma's vulnerability, emphasizing the love and acceptance she will enjoy if she becomes a Christian and reminding her that Barbara, the one she loves most, would want her to devote her life to God. Natoma submits, and utters her final words in the opera, after which Father Peralta, the voice of Christianity, speaks for her:

Love shall be repaid by love.
There is one I wish to make happy;
My love is my faith!
I will do thy bidding:
I have spoken!⁴⁶

With these words, Natoma surrenders her cultural past, her current identity, and her future as chief, losing her voice as a result. Natoma's isolation, in addition to her desire for the

⁴⁵ Herbert and Redding, *Natoma*, 305-6.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 317-8.

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love and approval of her conquerors, overpowers her allegiance to her own culture and sense of personal identity. The opera ends in the church where, amongst a choir of monks and nuns, Barbara and Paul prepare for marriage and Natoma removes her tribal amulet and “places it on Barbara’s shoulders.”⁴⁷ Natoma relinquishes her old way of life, in which she holds a position of power, and conforms to her subservient role in colonial society. Like many American aboriginals at the turn of the century, Natoma must assimilate into a society in which she has no authority. The scenarios of the opera may be improbable and many of the characters simplified stereotypes, but the emotions harboured by the protagonist are complex, and the implications of the opera’s themes were relevant in early twentieth-century America.

Similarly, Herbert communicates the conflicting forces of Natoma’s alienation and assimilation by juxtaposing traditional European opera styles with conventional Native American idioms. Herbert’s goal was, in his words, “to make every character sing differently.”⁴⁸ He explains his musical characterization in more depth in a *New York Times* interview: “In writing *Natoma*, I have followed the course which seems to be perfectly natural for any composer, that is, to supply certain themes or leit-motifs, to the characters and their feelings.”⁴⁹ Paul, the English imperialist, is often set to a “confident, military” style, which incorporates dotted rhythms, duple metres, repeated pitches, and arpeggiated leaps found in British and American marches.⁵⁰ Paul’s patriotic aria, “No country can

⁴⁷ Herbert and Redding, *Natoma*, 330.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁴⁹ “Grand Opera Written by Americans to be Given Here,” SM13.

⁵⁰ Kirk, *American Opera*, 150.

my own outvie," exemplifies this military musical style.⁵¹ Don Francisco, on the other hand, is often accompanied by Spanish guitar and broken pizzicato chords that suggest strumming.⁵² In addition, Herbert quotes the Spanish national anthem and traditional South American songs such as the *habanera* and the *panuelo*.

In contrast to Don Francisco and the general Spanish populace, Barbara sings in a "light operetta" style that distinguishes her from Spanish society, negates any exotic connection to her, highlights her similarity to Paul, and validates her union with the English soldier.⁵³ Her aria "I list the trill in golden throat" features a lilting, lyrical melody with a simple, lightly orchestrated accompaniment comprising block chords and legato ascending arpeggios.⁵⁴ Herbert emphasizes Father Peralta's role as the Christian leader of the community with homophonic, hymn-like settings, especially in the choral numbers "Te lucis ante terminum," "Sanctus," and "Hosanna" in the finale.⁵⁵ The musical motive that introduces Castro is jarring, percussive and sombre; marked *Allegro feroce*, the motive instantly identifies his threatening character and foreshadows his

⁵¹ Herbert and Redding, *Natoma*, 264-9.

⁵² Richard Aldrich, "Production of the English Opera 'Natoma' by Victor Herbert and Joseph Redding," *The New York Times*, 26 February, 1911: X7.

⁵³ Kirk, *American Opera*, 149. Parakilas, "The Soldier and the Exotic," 57.

⁵⁴ Herbert and Redding, *Natoma*, 246-52.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 320-6.

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villainous actions.⁵⁶ Herbert's music supports Redding's stratified cast system by associating each class with its own distinct style, texture, orchestration, and motivic character.

The most prominent musical idioms in the opera, however, are those associated with Natoma. Several factors contributing to the evolution of recognizable representations of the Native American merit close examination within the context of Herbert's opera. The abovementioned ethnographic studies, in addition to increased contact with aboriginals on the frontier and at world fairs and Wild West shows, contributed to European Americans' growing familiarity with indigenous music, which encouraged Western composers to mimic its 'exotic' rhythmic and melodic properties.⁵⁷ Minor modes, repeated descending melodic patterns, falling minor third motives, and "tom-tom fifths," which are repeated open fifths in the bass that mimic the sound of drumming, became recognized signifiers of the American Indian in Western music by the end of the nineteenth century.⁵⁸ Herbert and others also turned to various elements of European folk music to convey the perceived simplicity of Native

⁵⁶ A description of the motive is in Aldrich, "Production of the English Opera 'Natoma' by Victor Herbert and Joseph Redding," X7; To see the motive in context, refer to Herbert and Redding, *Natoma*, 11.

⁵⁷ Claudia Gorbman, "Scoring the Indian: Music in the Liberal Western," in *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, eds. Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 237. Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music*, 163-73.

⁵⁸ Michael V. Pisani, "'I'm Indian Too': Creating Native American Identities in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Music," in *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathon Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 218. Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music*, 118.

American life; such techniques included prominently scored woodwinds, drones, peasant dance rhythms of one long followed by two shorts, the iambic "Scottish snap" patterns, and modal scales.⁵⁹ Applied to settings of Indian music, pastoral features reinforce the Social Darwinist view of Native Americans as an 'inferior race.'⁶⁰

In order to convey a primitive, tribal atmosphere, thereby expressing the common contemporary belief that Native Americans were indeed at an earlier stage of societal development than Western civilization, composers borrowed techniques from the distant past, incorporating modes from ancient Greek music and Medieval chant and parallel fifths characteristic of organum and other early polyphonic genres.⁶¹ Indianist composers also referenced popular musical associations with other "foreign" cultures to convey a general sense of difference when depicting the Native American: from Turkish music they borrowed harmonic stasis, excessive ornamentation, emphatic duple meters, dramatic dynamics, and a large percussion section; also influenced by the Orient, they doubled melodies at the fourth, fifth, or octave, and used pentatonic, whole tone, and various other "gapped" scales in their melodies.⁶² Furthermore, the expanding musical language at the turn of the century led composers to denote the Indian through chromaticism, semitone relationships, diminished-seventh chords, unprepared dissonances, and non-functional

⁵⁹ Pisani, "I'm Indian Too," 221, 229-30.

⁶⁰ Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music*, 163.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁶² Pisani, "I'm Indian Too," 230.

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harmonies.⁶³ European interpretations of the Indian, although often based on generalizations and preconceived notions, were nevertheless multifaceted, and largely governed by the individual taste of the composer and the character-type of the Indian being portrayed.

Both Michael Pisani and Claudia Gorbman describe several musically-distinct evocations of specific Native American character types in early twentieth-century works. The ‘ignoble warrior savage’ is scored with a variety of musical signals, including wide melodic leaps, descending pentatonic and modal melodic lines, march-like duple meters, “tom-tom fifths,” motives involving a falling minor third, and iambic rhythms. In contrast, “noble” aspects of a Native American character, namely bravery, innocence, and harmony with nature, are typically expressed by pastoral music that incorporates lyrical modal melodies, sustained drones, and extended flute passages. Finally, the tragic, vanishing Indian, victimized by the inevitable course of Western progress, is represented by chromatic lines and frequent occurrences of diminished chords.⁶⁴ Gorbman and Pisani maintain that these exotic musical idioms are representative not of the complexities and diversities of Native American music but rather of the Western world’s artificial and generalized conception of indigenous peoples.⁶⁵ In the case of *Natoma*, these musical signals of

⁶³ Pisani, “I’m Indian Too,” 230. Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music*, 233-5.

⁶⁴ Gorbman outlines common musical settings of the “Indian on the warpath” and the “romanticized noble savage” in “Scoring the Indian,” 235. Pisani describes musical idioms of the “nature-loving pastoral,” the “virtuous and wronged Indian,” and the “warmonger” in *Imagining Native America in Music*, 118.

⁶⁵ Gorbman, “Scoring the Indian,” 235.

'otherness' highlight the titular character's difference, and emphasize her isolation in colonial society.

When Natoma tells Paul the ancient story of her people, she sings a disjunct melody featuring fourth, fifth, and octave leaps that alternate with repeated notes reminiscent of pastoral drones and Medieval chant. Each pitch of the melody has equal emphasis, regardless of its metrical position, evoking a sense of solemnity and primitivism.⁶⁶ Natoma's melody becomes more conjunct and chromatic, however, as she gets nearer to the end of her story, in which her tribe is conquered by European imperialists.⁶⁷ This chromatic style typical of the "dying Indian" reappears in Act III when Natoma laments her isolation in the aria "Lonely am I," which fluctuates uneasily between E major and C-sharp minor; repeated alternations between B-natural and B-sharp obscure any sense of tonal centre.⁶⁸ Natoma expresses her romantic feelings for Paul in her monologue "Oh, the wonder of his speaking," in the key of D-flat with a persistent C-flat accidental, which changes the mode to mixolydian.⁶⁹ In a parallel instance, she dreams of being with Paul in her aria "Within the hour," which features a pentatonic melody.⁷⁰ Parakilas observes that this "pentatonic duet with the flute suggests, along with her words, that her escapist dream would be to live the life of her own people, not his, with him."⁷¹ Later, as Natoma

⁶⁶ Herbert and Redding, *Natoma*, 34.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 36-45.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 297.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁷¹ Parakilas, "The Soldier and the Exotic," 59.

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prays to the Great Manitou, the orchestra evokes this primitive rite by rapid and repetitive leaps in fifths, parallel octaves, and the prominent beating of a kettle drum.⁷² These numbers highlight Natoma's exoticism and illustrate the vast cultural distance between her culture and that of the colonists'.

When Natoma unleashes her savagery in the "Dagger Dance," Herbert uses all of the conventional Indian war dance idioms available to him. The percussive tom-tom fifths in the bass provide an aggressive and ominous introduction and accompany the melody throughout. The melody is disjunct and the articulation detached in a highly accented duple meter. The disjunct melody, in combination with the rhythmic character and tom-tom fifth accompaniment, is a classic evocation of the ignoble, warrior savage. The first phrase consists of a descending line featuring a tetratonic scale, which, according to Pisani, sounds even more primitive than the pentatonic scale that comprises the second phrase.⁷³ In his analysis of the "Dagger Dance," Pisani claims that various Native American stereotypes are condensed into this dance number: "The 'Dagger Dance' vividly embodies a combination of tropes: lost majesty (the preponderance of minor sevenths), oriental primitivism (the parallel chords), and warmongering (the throbbing tom-tom)."⁷⁴ The climactic piece encapsulates various facets of Natoma's character that include Natoma the member of a vanishing race, Natoma the primitive, and Natoma the warrior. Through Indian, Spanish, military, and religious idioms,

⁷² Herbert and Redding, *Natoma*, 175.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 284.

⁷⁴ Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music*, 266.

Herbert conveys the theme of cultural segregation that was a reality for many Native Americans in the early twentieth century.

Natoma, however, is not always scored as an exotic other; she is the one character in the opera who sings in a wide range of styles, highlighting her complexity and confirming Herbert's desire to avoid casting his Native American protagonist as a one-dimensional stereotype.⁷⁵ Immediately following the "Dagger Dance," Natoma, frightened by her exotic outburst and violent behaviour, seeks asylum in the mission church and sings "Beware of the hawk, my baby," a gentle, triadic lullaby.⁷⁶ As Father Peralta urges Natoma to convert, a dramatic musical alternation between the solemn, homophonic church style and chromatic, abrasive Indian idioms highlights their ideological differences. Natoma loses her voice when she agrees to convert to Christianity, thus allowing the church style to prevail; in celebration of this Christian victory, a large choir enters singing parts of the Catholic Mass for the finale, drowning out any last trace of the exotic. Natoma's assimilation is complete.

In his book entitled *The American Musical Landscape*, Richard Crawford identifies two underlying motivations of all public musical performance in America: authenticity, which is unconcerned with popular appeal and "privileges works over occasions," and accessibility, which "seeks out the centre of the marketplace" and "privileges occasions

⁷⁵ Parakilas, "The Soldier and the Exotic," 58-9.

⁷⁶ Herbert and Redding, *Natoma*, 294.

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over works.”⁷⁷ On the surface, *Natoma* does not succeed in either respect. Pisani states that the work “failed to realize its promise as a ‘great American opera.’”⁷⁸ The opera enjoyed only short-lived popular success, and was never performed outside of the United States. While praising Herbert’s abilities as a composer, contemporary critics found his Indian-inspired music “monotonous,” complaining that the “rhythmic peculiarities begin to pall after a time.”⁷⁹ One reviewer attacked Redding’s libretto as a “singularly weak and conventional effort.”⁸⁰ The reviewer continued his condemnation as follows:

The prose in which much of it is written is bald and commonplace: the lyrics are in the most hopelessly conventional operatic style of the bad old kind. Improbability of the most typical operatic kind is at the basis of the whole action. The audience is asked to believe much at which reason balks, and is practically asked to surrender all sense of reality in an opera of realistic intention.⁸¹

To many at the time of its premiere, *Natoma* was both uninteresting and inauthentic. Today, the work has fallen into obscurity because both the music and the libretto are less relevant to modern audiences and either offensive or laughable to today’s globalized and politically-correct society.

⁷⁷Richard Crawford, *The American Musical Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 86-8.

⁷⁸ Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music*, 261.

⁷⁹ “‘Natoma’ at the Century,” *The New York Times*, 14 April, 1914: 11.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Despite the proliferation of stereotypes that seemingly degrade Native Americans, *Natoma* herself brings a certain degree of authenticity to the opera because she communicates her intense inner conflict through a wide range of musical styles. Kirk considers *Natoma* to be among the first American *verismo* operas because of the sincerity of the titular character.⁸² Herbert insists that the opera is “American in every respect.”⁸³ Indeed, both the words and music of *Natoma* express the contradictory forces of social alienation and cultural assimilation that aboriginals endured in the United States during the early twentieth century. As a symbolic representative of her race, *Natoma* ultimately “conform[s]” to the will of her colonizers and her personal and cultural identity is “crushed” by “the white man’s ways.”⁸⁴

⁸² Kirk, *American Opera*, 147.

⁸³ “Grand Opera Written by Americans to be Given Here,” SM13.

⁸⁴ Morgan, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, 177.

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