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Arcadia Undone:

Teresa Carreño’s 1887 Italian opera company in Caracas

‘How sad it is to leave the shores of the homeland!’ declared Venezuelan journalist-cum-travel writer Gonzalo Picón Febres in the winter of 1886, the first of a series of articles published in *La Opinion Nacional,* the leading liberal newspaper in Venezuela.[[1]](#footnote-1) Warming to his theme, Picón Febres outlined the reasons for his nostalgia since emigrating to New York:

You miss the air that descends from the distant mountain peaks, the clearing in the jungle in whose shadow you meditate for many hours, the walk in the orchard where you go late in the afternoon to enjoy the last aroma of the flowers and the last notes of the birds […] You miss the smoke rising from the peasant’s chimney, the abandoned ruins in which the swallow sings its eternal lament. You miss the guitar strumming to the reflection of the moon, the night song the farmer sings under the eaves of his cabin […] You miss, in the end, the splendour of your sky, the majesty of your mountains, the sounds of your river springs, the cadence of your breezes, the singing of your birds, the indescribable poetry which fierce nature contains within its fertile bosom.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Picón Febres evoked an alluring vision of Venezuela, in which sights, smells and (above all) sounds combine to form a sensuous landscape: nothing less, in fact, than a tropical Arcadia. The concluding reference to ‘fierce nature’ glances at a more violent alternative but otherwise nothing disturbs the musicalized idyll of the author’s vision. Picón Febres’s article was timely, both for its idealised portrayal of Venezuela’s musicality – with a final hint of menace – and its contrast of this with the urban environment of New York.

Only a few weeks later Teresa Carreño – Venezuela’s most internationally renowned musician – arrived in Caracas from New York, where she had emigrated nearly twenty years earlier as a child prodigy. This would be only her second visit to the country, following a highly acclaimed piano recital tour in 1885-6 at the government’s invitation. Rather than performing in concerts, however, Carreño this time arrived as the impresario of an Italian opera company organised with her New York-based husband, the Italian baritone Giovanni Tagliapietra. The troupe of around 55 soloists, dancers and chorus were scheduled to perform a wide range of repertory from March 1887, including the Venezuelan premieres of *Carmen*, *Les Huguenots* and *Mignon* alongside works by Verdi, Donizetti and Bellini (among others). Yet barely six weeks after opening the company folded with huge debts. Cancelled performances, dwindling audiences and even fears of a bomb made further productions impossible. Carreño never again returned to Venezuela. For her, it would seem, tropical Arcadia had instead revealed its dangerous side; Caracas’s sensuous harmony apparently resistant to an imported operatic soundscape.

Operatic failures seem often to have an irresistible appeal for the historian: the extravagant ambition, the miscalculated hopes, as though the entire elaborate edifice of opera had come crashing down on contact with reality. Yet few failures can have been more poignant than Carreño’s, occurring as it did during a period intended both to celebrate her multifaceted abilities and to elevate the operatic culture of Caracas – a city whose musical environment could hardly be considered equal to New York, Buenos Aires, London or Paris either in diversity or in artistic standards. It is little surprise, then, that Carreño’s two visits have become a regular episode in histories of Venezuela’s musical life as well as an inevitable hiccup in biographical studies of her by Marta Milinowski and Mario Milanca Guzmán.[[3]](#footnote-3) These accounts have attributed the company’s failure to a mixture of political and administrative problems, suggesting that Carreño’s associations with the national government made her operatic endeavour an obvious target for protest during a period of rising public discontent, and that the logistics of running an opera company were a step too far for a pianist-composer. But while these circumstances undoubtedly go a significant way in explaining the company’s closure, broader issues surrounding the opera company and its failure remain unexamined. Such an approach can also nuance familiar outlines of transatlantic operatic mobility, while providing a valuable corollary to recent studies of operatic failure in European environments.[[4]](#footnote-4) More than three quarters of Carreño’s ‘Italian opera’ troupe, for example, were recruited from New York, with only a few extras picked up by Tagliapietra in Milan in early 1887; the importation of Italian opera this time via the North. Such geographical mediation raises broader questions about the status of Italian repertory in Caracas, at a time when Italian opera was highly familiar and an established symbol of civilisation – at times even a perfection of nature – yet the Italian immigrant population was relatively small and other repertoires were arriving in greater numbers. More generally, this attention to operatic mobility within the Americas can elucidate the cultural work performed by Italian operatic activity by the late nineteenth century, when it was increasingly marked as an Italian national product yet susceptible to new forms of cultural and technological mediation.

To some degree, the movement of Italian opera from North to South America was not entirely new. Several US opera companies – including the Strakosch and Maretzek – had taken troupes to Central America during the 1850s and 1860s (to Mexico and Havana) and indeed Tagliapietra himself appears to have participated in such a transcontinental tour; the Maurice Grau company even travelled down to the Río de la Plata in the early 1880s, offering the first South American performances of *Carmen*.[[5]](#footnote-5) Yet these touring companies were, typically, brought over wholesale from Europe before travelling outside the USA and were in any case in sharp decline by the 1880s, as Italian-language opera companies in the USA diminished (and English-language opera boomed) in response to widening class divisions. The New York locus of Carreño’s company is thus significant and suggests a renewed attention to the Latin American market by North American entrepreneurs – including by Carreño herself.

Focusing on Italian opera in Venezuela can also shed further light on the broader history of the country at this time. Studies have long divided the country’s history into pre- and post-petroleum eras: from a minor agricultural economy to a global powerhouse almost overnight. More recently, though, historians have highlighted the continuity of political and economic structures from the late nineteenth century onwards, when Venezuela’s domestic and foreign policies began to crystallise.[[6]](#footnote-6) Italian opera’s endurance as a cultural practice throughout this period can further challenge this divide, even as the specific production model for staged opera in Caracas was undergoing its own shifts. My focus in what follows is therefore specifically on the period when Caracas’s global position was incipient but not yet defined; its economic and operatic potential, like its oil, still bubbling beneath the surface.

***Ariel Sings***

Teresa Carreño’s return to Venezuela had been long awaited. Born in Caracas in 1853 to a wealthy family closely connected to the political elite, Carreño emigrated to New York in 1862 and was soon introduced to pianist-composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk, her subsequent mentor.[[7]](#footnote-7) Unsurprisingly, her Venezuelan background prompted much discussion and furthered her public image as an ‘automatic genius’ produced by nature itself.[[8]](#footnote-8) Contrasts were regularly drawn between her onstage assurance and her childlike behaviour elsewhere, her abilities encouraging critics to reach for scientific terminology to convey a mysterious talent. For one, it was as though she had been possessed by the spirit of a long-dead performer; for another, as though she were moved by the unseen magnet of the telegram.[[9]](#footnote-9) Even with the USA in the grip of civil war, Venezuela’s turbulent political and geological histories were also much remarked upon, in particular the ongoing Federal Wars of 1858-63 that would kill nearly a quarter of Venezuela’s population. ‘Few would have supposed that the most gratifying entertainment of the season – the one capable of reviving from our hearts the nightmare of pain and apprehension, and of internecine war, under which our country withers – would come to us from far-off Venezuela’ commented *The Providence Daily Post* in January 1863:

Caracas – almost a synonym for civil discord, and sounding very much like those physical convulsions, by one of which, it was once destroyed – is the native place of the little sylph who comes upon the stage with wings of silk and in drapery of white [… her father] has brought to us from the mighty Orinoco and the shadows of the mighty Andes, a spirit and fascinating and beautiful as “Ariel” […] Her notes are echoes of her native land. The tourist in a fine extravagance said:- “See Naples and then die”, but *while dying* he would now pray to hear Teresa Carreño.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Such extravagant rhetoric doubtless reflected an unfamiliarity with prodigies, but it also confirmed perceptions of Venezuela as a distinctly problematic emblem of the ‘diapason of nature’: a land at once lusciously fertile and horribly prone to catastrophe. Carreño’s music-making could nonetheless offer an idealised representation of this ferment, her phrases growing ‘like the exuberant fruits and flowers of her native tropics – in flavour and colours, aroma and form alike delicious and symmetrical’.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The association of Caracas with Naples, which closed the quotation above, also gestured towards longstanding imaginative links between Venezuela and Italy, connections that would become even more prominent in succeeding decades. Venezuela’s name originally signified ‘little Venice’ – a reference to the coastal houses on stilts encountered in Maracaibo by early European visitors. US and British travel accounts throughout the nineteenth century had highlighted the country’s tropical scenery and alluring soundscape, anticipating much of the rhetoric found in Picón Febres’s articles (and typically indebted to earlier accounts by Humboldt and Darwin).[[12]](#footnote-12) William Eleroy Curtis’s *The Capitals of Spanish America* (1888) recorded a special affection for Caracas, which notwithstanding its history of earthquakes and its insufferable insects was still ‘one of the most delightful places of residence in the world’, and in a country that offered virtually every landscape known to man.[[13]](#footnote-13) For visitors from New York, Curtis argued, the nine-day boat journey to Caracas was ‘one of the most delightful in the world’, providing access to an alternative world enjoyed by their Spanish-American neighbours.[[14]](#footnote-14) The mobility of rhetoric surrounding *italianità* with regard to the Spanish Caribbean would be encapsulated by several US travel companies from the late nineteenth century onwards. The New York and Cuba Mail Steamship Company proclaimed the region ‘the lands of song and sunlight’, the rhetoric of De Stäel and Rousseau now conveniently transposed to the fringes of the Southern Hemisphere.[[15]](#footnote-15)

For the young and privileged Carreño, such exoticism was clearly an advantage. By 1865 she had given recitals throughout the US and soon headed to Cuba, Madrid, London and Paris to further her career, eventually settling in the French capital. Introductions to Rossini, Liszt and Gounod sealed her reputation as a musical wonder. Opera also played a major part in her career from her earliest performances. Thalberg’s *Norma* and *Moise* fantasias were regular warhorses alongside pots pourris inspired by *Ernani* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*. By the 1870s opera would take on an even more explicit role for Carreño as she reportedly stepped in as Marguerite de Valois for a performance of *Les Huguenots* in Scotland in 1872 organised by Colonel Mapelson, the impresario then running operatic seasons in London as well as managing Carreño; by the 1880s he also worked in New York and had significant relationships with transatlantic singers such as Adelina Patti and Italo Campanini. On Carreño’s return to New York in the mid-1870s, she experimented further on stage, performing Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* with the Maurice Strakosch company. Although she soon returned to the piano, Strakosch remained highly significant for Carreño’s career, arranging tours with a host of prominent North American singers. In line with practices of the period, Carreño regularly performed in mixed bills during the 1870s and 1880s all over the USA; occasionally she would even sing an aria herself at the end of her concerts. Several of her female collaborators – including Emma Abbott and Clara Louise Kellogg – were themselves distinguished operatic entrepreneurs and provided further professional models for Carreño, identifying opportunities for female impresarios unable to compete with men in original-language production within the USA.[[16]](#footnote-16)

The invitation to return to Caracas in 1885 thus arrived at a propitious moment in Carreño’s career. Established as a virtuoso of the first order, Carreño also enjoyed professional relationships with an exceptionally wide range of international musicians. By the 1860s she and Venezuela were closely linked in the US public imagination, the former mutating the latter’s dangerous forms into musical manna. Her divorce from her first husband, violinist Émile Sauret, had created a scandal but his successor, Tagliapietra, cemented Carreño’s relationship with the operatic world: born in Italy, he had emigrated to New York in the 1870s and was admired for his rich tone and sure technique. Caracas’s *Diario de Avisos* reported gossip in 1881 that Carreño, who had ‘conquered Europe and North America’ was considering a return to Venezuela with a concert tour and an Italian opera season.[[17]](#footnote-17) The postal invitation that arrived from interim President Joaquin Crespin in 1885 finally confirmed her visit: Ariel would soon return home.

***Caracas Before the Blowout***

Caracas was then in the midst of a promising new era. Following the victory of the Liberals in the Federal War, the city had enjoyed more than two decades of peace and relative prosperity shaped in large part by President Antonio Guzmán Blanco, who would rule the country for most of the 1870s and 1880s. An autocratic figure, Guzmán Blanco consolidated Caracas’s economic and political power within Venezuela and became known as ‘El ilustre Americano’. During three terms in office he pursued an ambitious programme of liberal economic and social reform, establishing a national currency, boosting international trade, sponsoring public education and sharply reducing the powers of the Catholic Church. Transport and communication infrastructures were also improved: the first railway line in the country opened in 1883 between Caracas and the nearby port of La Guaira, and a telegraph system with New York established. Within Caracas national progress was advertised via buildings such as the National Pantheon (1876) and the Teatro Municipal (1881), part of a significant programme of public works.[[18]](#footnote-18) Guzmán Blanco remained a controversial figure, however. Despite efforts to model himself after Simón Bolívar, he earned a reputation for snobbery and corruption and spent much of his time in Europe; having served as ambassador to both Spain and France between his presidential terms, he eventually retired to Paris.

Notwithstanding these visible signs of modernisation, Venezuela remained a largely agricultural economy. Coffee, sugar, cocoa and cattle were the country’s main exports and national infrastructural reforms were funded in large part by US and British investment; projects such as the Caracas-La Guiara railway were frequently built by US companies. This dependence on US finance and technology reflected both Venezuela’s modest population and the difficult terrain of parts of the interior, which had long impeded the movement of people and goods; Venezuela was the only South American country to enjoy a direct steamship service to the USA.[[19]](#footnote-19) As Judith Ewell has shown, however, Venezuelan consumers tended to favour European goods over North American ones and Venezuela enjoyed a significant trade surplus with the US, in spite of efforts by the government there to expand its economic empire in South America following the Civil War.[[20]](#footnote-20) By the 1880s, asphalt offered a further link in this delicate US-Venezuela economic partnership. The Guanoco Asphalt Lake had long been used by indigenous communities and Spanish settlers to mend shipping but the development of asphalt-paved roads in the USA during the 1870s led to massive increases in demand. The Venezuelan government signed a concession for the exploitation of the lake in 1883 that passed to the New York & Bermúdez company two years later; controversially, the profits largely went north. Exploration of the lake – the second largest in the world – confirmed suspicions of vast oil deposits under Venezuelan soil and their economic potential, even if major explorations would not take place until the 1910s. ‘Let us establish our industries’, declared *La Opinion Nacional* in January 1887 regarding a further exploration site near Lake Maracaibo. ‘Let us think upon the exploitation of our immense natural riches and dedicate ourselves to this work, that honours and exalts man’.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Opera had long played a role in this broader narrative of social progress. The Teatro Caracas was inaugurated in October 1854 (with Verdi’s *Ernani*) in response to frustration at the city’s poor performance spaces for visiting troupes; the local press acknowledged it was ‘not one of those magnificent [theatres] of Europe that attract the attention of travellers for their richness and elegance’, but it accommodated 1200 visitors and featured the first gas illumination system in Caracas.[[22]](#footnote-22) The earlier Teatro Coliseo had opened in 1831, with intermittent performances including the local premiere of *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in 1836, but it soon closed and was replaced with a variety of temporary venues. The years following 1863 witnessed an increasing number of Italian companies performing works by Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini and Verdi, as well as a number of French and Spanish troupes. Operatic seasons were typically brief, yet as Isabel Áretz and José Peñin have shown, companies brought over by (typically non-Italian) impresarios such as Bernabé Díaz gave audiences access to an expanding repertory of works and a ready supply of new European performers, while encouraging the production of homegrown zarzuelas.

Operatic reviews also appeared in the major newspapers, most notably *La Opinion Nacional,* the *Diario de Avisos* and *El Granuja.* These publications represented a range of political views but given Caracas’s size there was significant crossover in personnel, with *La Opinion Nacional* closely linked with the liberal establishment. *El Zancudo* (1867-8; 1880-3) and *La Lira Venezolana* (1882-3) were moreover established as the first quasi-musicological journals in Venezuela, featuring musical news from Europe and North America alongside piano transcriptions and critical studies of composers and works.[[23]](#footnote-23) Italian opera was a cornerstone of both publications, with authors drawing on long-established Romantic tropes to praise the ‘immortal Bellini’ and Verdi.[[24]](#footnote-24) *La Lira Venezolana* also aimed to improve Venezuela’s own ‘dejected’ musical culture, arguing for Venezuela’s innate artistic fertility in spite of its poor musical infrastructure. A country ‘prodigiously favoured by nature’, Venezuela was ideally positioned to transcend its natural state and approach the ideal, transforming the ‘dissonances’ and ‘tempests’ of the human soul into spiritual harmony.[[25]](#footnote-25)

By the early 1880s, opera was even more firmly linked to the state via the opening of the Teatro Municipal, an Italian-style theatre usually known as the Teatro Guzmán Blanco. The theatre enjoyed both a generous government subsidy and the regular presence of the President and his wife. The opening season featured more than ten works, while the 1883 Centenary Exposition brought another celebratory season headed by local star tenor, Fernando Michelena.[[26]](#footnote-26) Significantly, however, the theatre seated no more spectators than the Teatro Caracas, reflecting the unvaryingly modest population of the city – barely 55,000 by 1890.[[27]](#footnote-27) In that context, the opera house could offer not only familiar ideas of civilisation, but also the possibility of momentary respite from an isolated, tedious environment. ‘Where can one find more attractions than at the opera?’ asked *La Opinion Nacional* shortly after the Teatro Municipal opened:

It fills the eye and penetrates the heart with myriad profound impressions; it charms the gaze and transports the imagination to other times and places. And even putting aesthetic matters to one side, aren’t the social delights offered by the theatre still more delicate and expansive after the soul has refreshed itself in this oasis of art? […] In only a few days the company will leave us, and we will return to the usual monotony and the eternal complaint that we lack amusements and spots of solace where to rest and give solace and amusement to one’s spirit.[[28]](#footnote-28)

In spite of such complaints, however, Caracas still offered several other amusements. Bullfighting, theatre, dances and carnivals all attracted substantial audiences, while the Unión Filharmónica presented chamber and orchestral concerts including operatic arias. For frustrated opera lovers, Plaza Bolívar also provided evening recitals and military band performances, featuring a range of operatic extracts more varied than might be enjoyed at the theatre, from Rossini to Wagner’s *Lohengrin*. Listings published in local newspapers throughout the 1880s reveal the variety of operatic highlights performed in non-theatrical contexts, as well as their co-habitation with popular local dance forms. And for those who stayed at home, *La Opinion Nacional* ran updates on lyric activity elsewhere: from the global triumphs of Patti to the latest tenor rivalries at Madrid’s Teatro Real. The operatic premieres of Verdi and Gounod were keenly awaited news, even if the operas themselves remained unstaged in Caracas for years to come.

***Operatic Hopes, Operatic Horrors; or Sylphs and Earthquakes***

In this intermingled mood of aspiration and stasis, it is little surprise that Carreño’s operatic season was keenly awaited. Her 1885-6 concert tour across Venezuela had witnessed an outpouring of public interest, with massed crowds greeting her arrival and sonnets published in her honour. Carreño also knew how to please her public, organising gala concerts for the young and embarking on plans to establish a national conservatory. During her recitals she treated audiences to operatic excerpts, in at least one case singing a duet from *Il trovatore* with Tagliapietra.[[29]](#footnote-29) When she returned to New York in October 1886, her ambitions to visit Caracas a few months later with an opera company were welcomed: another triumph for Carreño, and for Caracas, surely beckoned.

The eventual composition of the troupe appears to have relied largely on Carreño’s and Tagliapietra’s extensive network of New York contacts. The two soprano prima donnas, Adela Aimery and Linda Brambilla, the two basses, Bologna and Ricci, and the prima ballerina, Maria Bonfanti, had all been recruited there by January 1887; according to *El Granuja*, 20 members of the chorus were also contracted from the Mapleson and Strakosch companies, with the orchestra and dancers likewise coming from New York, to be supplemented by a few Venezuelan and Italian musicians.[[30]](#footnote-30) Tagliapietra then travelled to Milan, bringing baritone Tomaso Noto, tenors Egisto Guardenti and Alessandro Passetti, mezzosoprano Clementina Prampolini and ballet conductor and cellist ‘Señor Cazorati’ directly to Caracas to round out the company.[[31]](#footnote-31) Carreño’s wing arrived in late February, Tagliapietra’s ensemble a few days later; an early report relayed the boast that it would be ‘the best and most complete that had ever come to Venezuela’.[[32]](#footnote-32)

A closer look at the ensemble suggests its soloists comprised a mixture of the promising, the established and those who had seen better days (Fig. 10.1). The sopranos, both young, were promoted via press clippings from Spanish and Italian newspapers. Aimery, the heavier-voiced of the two, had sung in Barcelona a few years earlier in the second cast of *L’Africaine* at the Liceu, alongside appearances in Rome; Brambilla, a lyric coloratura, had made her professional debut in 1885 (in Milan) before embarking on a concert tour of the US. Other performers were more experienced and indeed familiar in Caracas. In addition to Tagliapietra, Prampolini had sung in Venezuela and in other South American theatres on several occasions; she had been contracted by impresario Cesare Ciacchi to sing in Buenos Aires and Montevideo in 1886 and had previously ventured as far as Melbourne.[[33]](#footnote-33) The male singers were in general less highly touted, but Egisto Guardenti was also a regular on the South American circuit. Then in his late thirties, he specialised in spinto roles and appears to have been highly erratic in quality; he had sung with success throughout Italy but his appearances in *Norma* in 1882 in Buenos Aires were savaged by the Spanish-language press.[[34]](#footnote-34) The ballerina Maria Bonfanti was something of a coup for the company. Born and trained in Milan, she emigrated to New York and in 1885-6 acted as prima ballerina of the Metropolitan.[[35]](#footnote-35) As with several of her colleagues in the troupe, she was promoted as much for her North American experience as her European credentials, and returned to New York shortly after the company folded.

**Figure 10.1**

The decision to open the season on 5 March 1887 with Verdi’s *Un ballo in maschera* was widely praised. Verdi’s French-influenced work offered ample opportunities for Aimery, Brambilla, Prampolini, Guardenti and Noto to display their abilities, as well as featuring a fine dance interlude by Bonfanti and ‘Señor Chiadi’.[[36]](#footnote-36) Reviews acknowledged the difficulties of assembling a first-rate ensemble at short notice as well as stressing the high standards expected by audiences in Caracas; but they were initially welcoming. *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Il trovatore* followed, the former offering a showcase for the fresh-voiced Brambilla and lyric tenor Passetti; Brambilla was highly praised. *Faust*, *La traviata, Rigoletto* and *Aida* were then scheduled to fill up the rest of March, with the French premieres planned for April and May alongside *La sonnambula*, *Robert le diable*, *Ruy Blas*, *La favorita*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *L’Africaine* and *Norma*. For Caracas, this represented a musically ambitious programme, mixing Italian repertory staples with two lesser-known Meyerbeer works and three French novelties. The advertisement published in *La Opinion Nacional* is revealing both for the prominence given to the soloists (in comparison with the repertory), and the attention drawn to the new French works. The list of older repertory finishes inconclusively with “etc, etc”, suggesting that despite the sale of subscriptions at local department store La Competidora, the final details of the season were probably decided during rehearsals in Caracas.

As Milinowski and Milanca Guzmán have noted, however, problems quickly began to emerge. Aimery fell ill and was replaced by Brambilla for several performances of *Faust*.[[37]](#footnote-37) The musical director, local conductor Fernando Rachelle, then cancelled several performances in April and was substituted by the first violinist and then by Carreño herself, who conducted three different operas and even performed Liszt’s 6th Hungarian Rhapsody as an interlude. Initial public enthusiasm for the company’s singers also seems to have waned. By early April some had turned on Tagliapietra, penning letters to *La Opinion Nacional* criticising his diminished vocal estate in *Faust*. Rather than weather the storm, Tagliapietra withdrew from the rest of the season declaring that such hostility towards a veteran singer made his position untenable; a performance of *Rigoletto* was also cancelled.[[38]](#footnote-38) Guardenti and Passetti suffered from increasingly negative press, the latter being condemned as entirely inadequate. ‘This artist is not fit for Caracas’, lamented the *Diario de Avisos* in mid-Aprilafter *La sonnambula*. ‘And if the company persists in ignoring the displays of disapproval with which the public greets him, they are conspiring against their own success even more than their worst enemies’.[[39]](#footnote-39) Audiences eventually diminished and ticket prices were reduced. By the end of April the company closed with barely half of the scheduled operas performed and the French premieres all cancelled. Carreño’s debts were finally settled by the government; the sets and costumes brought over from Europe for the new works were bought by the theatre alongside Carreño’s piano.

Some of the factors that contributed to the company’s failure were clearly beyond their control – illness above all. Carreño was much praised for her contributions as a conductor and Brambilla had impressive vocal resilience; but rehearsing and performing a dozen challenging works in limited time was almost certain to lead to vocal exhaustion and cancellations, with compromises inevitable. Yet, seen differently, illness was also just the most obvious sign of the complex logistics of touring opera at this time and the challenges they posed to a rhetoric of civilisation. The operatic promise of social progress could only be achieved if everything went as planned; when the labour behind this man-made ‘oasis of art’ was successfully concealed.[[40]](#footnote-40) The weakness of some of the soloists exposed further challenges to such fantasies, highlighting the complexities of assembling a first-class ensemble to match the splendour of the Teatro Municipal. Constructing local monuments to urban progress in Caracas did not guarantee an appeal for foreign artists, nor a demand by local audiences; the architecture might endure but operatic troupes would need to be recalled each season, continually assessed against past and imagined operatic iterations, and potentially found wanting.[[41]](#footnote-41)

The reference in the *Diario de Avisos* to the company’s ‘worst enemies’ also hints at murkier reasons for its failure. Carreño’s celebrity and her links to the government would have made her an obvious target for political dissent, and certainly the diminishing coverage in *La Opinion Nacional* during the final weeks suggests embarrassment that this quasi-official venture was failing.[[42]](#footnote-42) Carreño’s own later correspondence with Guzmán Blanco blamed local opponents for the dwindling audiences, although her need to avoid censure and cover expenses were surely a factor here.[[43]](#footnote-43) By early 1887 elections were looming and Guzmán Blanco’s achievements in office were being hotly debated: supporters claimed that the Liberal party was responsible for all of the economic gains of the last two decades, yet inequality remained rife and the President’s approval ratings were in decline.[[44]](#footnote-44) The musical deficiencies of Carreño’s troupe at Guzmán Blanco’s theatre could thus serve as a metonym for wider disappointments: dreams of progress exposed as false promises, an ideal shattering as painfully as one of Passetti’s top notes.

Yet it is questionable whether any Italian opera company in Caracas could have fulfilled some of these elevated fantasies by the late 1880s, regardless of links with the government. Part of the difficulty was repertory. If the Carreño company could boast of offering the ‘best and most complete’ season Caracas had yet enjoyed, it was nevertheless one in which the majority of the Italian works were extremely familiar. Verdian warhorses had been performed across numerous seasons and the bel canto offerings were similarly hackneyed, individual arias frequently performed at the Plaza Bolívar.[[45]](#footnote-45) The effects of this familiarity were unpredictable. Repeated exposure might lead to boredom and a willingness to abandon the theatre, but it could also generate a legitimate sense of connoisseurship as performances of repertory works by one troupe were assessed against the previous year. This sense of routine or even staleness was presumably intensified by details of the operatic staging, since sets for the Italian works were owned by the Teatro Municipal rather than imported from the US or Europe with the troupe; opera here signalled not technological modernity but rather a reliance on the old. Any deficiencies in musical quality by the Carreño troupe were thus more (rather than less) likely to be noted by audiences and critics, even if they had not enjoyed first-hand exposure to operatic celebrities within Venezuela. Carreño’s troupe had nowhere to hide: this audience knew their repertory opera better than most.

The tensions surrounding Italian opera as a symbol of urban progress are suggested further by coverage of Verdi’s *Otello*, premiered in Milan exactly one month before the Carreño season opened. Reported on the front page of *La Opinion Nacional* via a correspondent in Madrid, Verdi’s opera was also covered through reprints from the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, drawing Venezuelan readers into an international network of music criticism. On the one hand, attention to Verdi’s latest work could indicate participation in a broader cultural moment, aligning readers with elites in Milan, Paris, London and Madrid (even if *Otello* would not arrive in Venezuela for several years). In light of the modest Italian immigrant population in Venezuela – barely 3000 by 1891 – Verdi’s work could to some degree be attended to as a cosmopolitan symbol of progress, however closely linked it was to Italian culture.[[46]](#footnote-46) Intermittent newspaper coverage of Italy in Venezuela at this time focused primarily on the Vatican and on Italy’s colonial wars in Africa, alongside adverts for Italian food and fashion. It seems clear, then, that for Venezuelan readers Italian opera could operate as part of an international aesthetic canon largely separate from the latest Italian political developments.

At the same time, however, Italian opera was clearly bound up with local Venezuelan politics. Chosen to open key operatic seasons in 1881, 1883 and 1887, Verdi’s operas functioned as part of an official soundtrack to the Guzmán Blanco era, omnipresent in elite Caracas society. To some degree this is hardly unusual, yet Verdi was in many ways an ideal musical figurehead for Guzmán Blanco’s government. By the 1880s the composer was typically portrayed in the Venezuelan press as a conservative, establishment figure: a composer who may have kept abreast of international musical trends, but who was primarily associated with his operas from the 1850s as well as his supposed involvement with the Risorgimento; a political period now nearly as distant as Venezuela’s own Federal Wars.[[47]](#footnote-47) Rather than a symbol of revolutionary populism or of a nascent avant-garde, Verdi represented a once ‘revolutionary’ figure now firmly linked to the liberal state. Given Guzmán Blanco’s emulation of Bolívar, Verdi was thus a perfect symbol: *Il trovatore* and *Ernani* represented not political ferment but the established political order. Seen in those terms, the Italian repertory chosen by the Carreño company was not only musically familiar (probably *too* familiar) but came freighted with years of official association: ideas even far superior artists removed from the Guzmán Blanco administration would have struggled to shake off.

It may appear, then, that Carreño’s Italian opera company was doomed from the start – her singers overworked, her repertory old. Yet reports from initial performances suggest that official narratives of progress were only part of the story for Venezuelan audiences, and that Italian staples could elicit significant public approval – albeit not always in the ways demanded by critics. Alongside positive commentary, several reviews expose tensions between critical aspirations and the public’s expectations, ones that complicate Italian opera’s political associations. The revival of *Aida*, for example, appears to have been coolly received by audiences with the exception of the slave dances, a matter of serious consternation for the *Diario de Avisos*:

Was it because of the faces the little black people made? We believe so and we sincerely condemn it […] The magnificent conclusion of this [second] act, this magnificent piece of contemporary art, was performed without any errors yet the public didn’t offer a moment of applause to celebrate it. How do you explain such a thing? Encoring the dance of the blacks and yet not having a clap for the grand finale![[48]](#footnote-48)

Critical ire is directed here both at insufficiently elevated audience values and at pleasure in black dancing: the public’s values worryingly out of kilter. The racial politics of late nineteenth-century Venezuela are crucial in this context, since while racial democracy had been promoted by the government since the 1860s (recognising Venezuela’s exceptional ethnic blend and distinguishing it from countries such as Brazil), efforts to whiten the population by European immigration (including Italian) were actively encouraged.[[49]](#footnote-49) Criollo waltzes and indigenous music were likewise sanctioned; but Italian opera remained the government soundtrack. Even if Italian opera staged ethnic difference, then, it was also marked by critics as a whitened space of social progress: a ‘perfection of nature’ that actual operatic performances and audiences threatened to undo.[[50]](#footnote-50) A subsequent revival of *La traviata* exposed similar tensions, with reviews stressing the opera’s morally edifying tale of redemptive love while noting that the matadors’ chorus and dancing were especially applauded.[[51]](#footnote-51) In both cases, racialised ideas of progress on the part of critics could only be sustained so far; the performing body dragged fantasies of the ideal back down to earth.

In this context, it seems especially unfortunate that Carreño should have scheduled her French works – especially the Meyerbeer operas, with their rich opportunities for ballet – for the abandoned second half of the season. The decision to bring a dance ensemble to Caracas was clearly one of Carreño’s wisest moves, given the popularity of dances such as the Venezuelan waltz and joropo: the local premiere of *L’Africaine* in 1883 even featured Andalusian songs and dances in Andalusian dress during the second interval.[[52]](#footnote-52) More generally, however, it is clear that critical and public excitement were by the 1880s increasingly directed towards French and Spanish works: Meyerbeer’s and Gounod’s operas being acclaimed as the height of theatrical spectacle and artistic ambition. The Teatro Caracas – sidelined for elite occasions by the Teatro Municipal – was regularly used by zarzuela and opéra bouffe companies and attracted enthusiastic crowds; *La Opinion Nacional* also reported on Madrid’s zarzuela premieres, assessing the extent to which recent works were progressive or stylistically different from opera. Such discussions both allowed for the self-consciously advanced, work-centred criticism increasingly hard to sustain in relation to older Italian operas, and encouraged consideration of the future of musical composition in Venezuela, at a time when diplomatic relations with Spain were rekindled across South America. Progress, when desired, could thus come from many places. If Caracas did not enjoy the best performers, citizens might at least hear the latest works from Italy, Spain, France or elsewhere as ‘civilisation’ itself was refashioned.

***Taming Arcadia***

The collapse of the company was the humiliating end of Carreño’s career as an impresario. ‘Hissed by the Venezuelans’ declared the *New York Times*, reporting that the audience had booed in ‘regular earthquake fashion’ from the outset.[[53]](#footnote-53) Italian publications passed over the company in silence: a further reflection of the almost exclusively North American profile of the troupe. 45 members eventually returned to New York with only seven going to Milan; Aimery and Brambilla stayed on in Caracas for several months, giving recitals and offering singing lessons before making their way North. The stresses of the experiment also appear to have put an insurmountable strain on Carreño’s and Tagliapietra’s marriage. The couple divorced soon afterwards: Carreño relocated to Berlin, Tagliapietra eventually settling in the US to become a respected singing teacher.

Carreño’s failure was far from the end of Italian opera in Caracas, even if the arrival of successful new works in the 1890s – by Mascagni, Leoncavallo and Puccini – would be delayed by the outbreak of civil war in 1892. But expectations were tempered by the company’s failure, with subsequent seasons witnessing a shift towards more French and German repertory: *Carmen* premiered later in 1887. And for North American operatic entrepreneurs, Carreño’s humiliation could serve as a stark reminder of the challenges of such a human enterprise, in which a reliance on repertory opera simply brought an alternative set of challenges to performing unknown newer works. If Italian opera was an emphatically international industry by the 1880s – one in which American-based performers could credibly compete with European ones – then the Italian repertory carried its own, complex, local histories, from favourite singers to political appropriations – histories that any visiting troupe would need to negotiate. Progress or civilisation were not guaranteed outcomes, nor were they even audience goals; the terms of local success were frequently unknowable in advance.

The company’s breakdown might be examined, then, from a variety of theoretical perspectives, each underlining in different ways the challenges the troupe faced. Carreño’s ambivalent position as a female entrepreneur (albeit one enjoying significant social, economic and cultural capital) certainly echoes difficulties encountered by other female impresarios, in her case intensified by her standing both as a divorcée and a national celebrity.[[54]](#footnote-54) And while her venture was widely anticipated and her contributions praised, her husband was nonetheless advertised as ‘director and administrator’, the established gender roles weakening when Tagliapietra withdrew. What is more, from a musical and technological viewpoint the troupe’s shortcomings also reveal tensions between Italian opera’s global mobility and the changing aesthetic expectations in Venezuela, a familiar repertory clashing with heightened theatrical aspirations. Carreño’s failure might even appear a significant way station on the broader decline of ‘adequacy’ as a meaningful artistic standard during the late nineteenth century: her celebrity was insufficient to compensate for performances failing to enchant.[[55]](#footnote-55)

Above all, a postcolonial (or post-occidental) lens can help to clarify the ideological stakes surrounding Italian opera in Venezuela throughout this period. Following Walter Mignolo and others, one needs to focus on the dynamics of cultural dependency revealed by the troupe’s failure, ambitions to align Caracas’s operatic culture with metropolitan examples exposing it (and Carreño) to ridicule – even as it also demonstrated the operatic sophistication of Caracas’s audiences in ways that challenge ideas of centre and periphery.[[56]](#footnote-56) The unwillingness of audiences to conform to ‘modern’ standards of behaviour also offers a revealing instance of ‘misplaced ideas’: Italian operatic practices reconceptualised in Venezuela to critical disappointment.[[57]](#footnote-57) In this context, however, it is crucial to underline the shifting status of these geographies and dynamics of dependency for Caracas: in particular with the US now an increasingly vital economic and cultural link. From a North American perspective, too, Venezuela was both a crucial site of neo-colonial expansion and a tantalising imaginative space, echoing representations within Venezuela itself: a place of natural bounty teetering between arcadia and the apocalypse.

In this context, perhaps it is no surprise that as US and European companies moved in to exploit the oil resources of Venezuela in the 1910s and 1920s – made instantly famous by the blowout at Barroso 2 in Cabimas in 1922 – the US gramophone industry also started to enter the Venezuelan musical marketplace.[[58]](#footnote-58) The extractive economy of Venezuelan petroleum could be coupled with the mixed model of the recording conglomerate, Venezuelan music now recorded and resold to Caracas’s elites alongside discs of Italian opera. There was, surely, no trouble in paradise when Caruso or Tetrazzini were played on the gramophone; the risks of human failure had already been expunged in recording sessions in Camden, New Jersey. Opera might now be enjoyed on the exclusive patios of Caracas, amid the cultivated tropical plants and imported French furniture. As a contemporary photograph suggests, the arcadian lushness of the local landscape could even be tamed and brought indoors: a European winter garden ready for a winter that would never arrive (Fig. 10.2). And as Italian operatic voices harmonised with the ‘natural’ music of birds, breezes and rivers in Venezuela, perhaps too – in the distance – were heard the sounds of oil extraction, the earth’s riches plundered with earthquakes thoroughly man-made. Liberal progress, in the operatic sphere or elsewhere, thus carried its own complex legacy of failures, re-imagined ambitions and tales of nature vanquished; civilisation, in Caracas as elsewhere, painfully intertwined with the voices of destruction and loss.

**Figure 10.2**

1. I would like to thank Juan Francisco Sans, Cristina Schnell, Linda Gill and Dylan Joy for help in Venezuela and at the University of Texas at Austin, and above all Hugo Quintana for his indispensable archival assistance in Caracas. Thanks also to Benjamin Walton, Roger Parker and Matthew Head for their comments on earlier versions of this chapter.

 28 December 1886, *La Opinion Nacional*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Marta Milinowski, *Teresa Carreño, “By the Grace of God”* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940); Mario Milanca Guzmán, *Teresa Carreño: Gira Caraqueña y Evocación (1885-7)* (Caracas: Lagoven, 1987); also Milanca Guzmán’s ‘Dislates en la obra Teresa Carreño, de Marta Milinowski’, *Revista de música latinoamericana* 8/2 (1987), 185-215. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Gundula Kreuzer, *Curtain, Gong, Steam: Wagnerian Technologies of Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 215-38; and Benjamin Walton, ‘Technological Phantoms of the Opéra’, in David Trippett & Benjamin Walton (eds.), *Nineteenth-Century Opera and the Scientific Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 199-226. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. John Rosselli outlines the main Latin American circuits for European troupes earlier in the century in ‘Latin America and Italian Opera: A Process of Interaction, 1810-1930’, *Revista de Musicología* 17/1 (1993), 139-145. These included one covering New York, New Orleans and Havana, and a separate Central American circuit across Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica and Guatemala that could also extend to Venezuela. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. John V. Lombardi, *Venezuela: The Search for Order, the Dream of Progress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); and Judith Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. On Carreño’s training, see Laura Pita, ‘Teresa Carreño’s Early Years in Caracas: Cultural Intersections of Piano Virtuosity, Gender and Nation-Building in the Nineteenth Century’ (PhD dissertation, University of Kentucky, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. On eighteenth-century ideas of genius and the mechanical, see Annette Richards, ‘Automatic Genius: Mozart and the Mechanical Sublime’, *Music and Letters*, 80/3 (1999), 366-89. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Boston Post*, 5 January 1863 (Teresa Carreño Special Collections, Vassar College, Scrapbook 1; henceforth TCSC, S1; *Providence Daily Post*, 19 January 1863 (TCSC, S1). *The Commercial Advertiser*, New York, 16 December 1862 (TCSC, S1) likewise remarked on the ‘magic of genius’ which transformed the ‘young tropical bird’ into an adult at the keyboard. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Providence Daily Post*, 19 January 1863. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Examples include Robert Semple, *A Sketch of the Present State of Caracas* (London, 1812) and John Hawkshaw, *Reminiscences of South America from two and half years’ residence in* *Venezuela* (London, 1838). Semple was born in Boston in 1766 and published travel accounts of Spain, Italy, Germany and Sweden before working as a governor under the Hudson Bay Company. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. William Eleroy Curtis, *The Capitals of Spanish America* (London, 1888), 265. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid., 257. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. New York Historical Society, Bella C. Landauer Collection, Series II, Box 121. The company operated under the abbreviation the ‘Ward Line’ from the 1840s until the 1930s; the clipping is undated but strongly suggests the late nineteenth century. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See Katherine K. Preston, *Opera for the People: English-Language Opera and Women Managers in Late 19th-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. ‘Teresa Carreño’, *Diario de Avisos*, 4 October 1881. Carreño’s cousin Manuel lived in Caracas and facilitated discussions with the local government. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Arturo Almandoz, ‘The Shaping of Venezuelan Urbanism in the Hygiene Debate of Caracas, 1880-1910’, *Urban Studies*, 37/11 (2000), 2073-89. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Judith Ewell, *Venezuela and the United States: From Monroe’s Hemisphere to Petroleum’s Empire* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 71-2. The preference for the USA was motivated both by geography and by a long-running territorial dispute with Great Britain. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Ewell, *Venezuela: A Century of Change*, 18. According to the 1894 *Anuario Estadístico*, Venezuela’s population was 2,444,816. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. ‘Petróleo refinado en Venezuela’, *La Opinion Nacional*, 15 January 1887. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. ‘Teatro de Caracas’, *Diario de Avisos*, 24 October 1854, cited in Pita, ‘Teresa Carreño’s Early Years in Caracas’, 468. Valuable overviews of Caracas’s operatic seasons are offered by Isabel Áretz, ‘Le avventure del melodrama in venezuela (1783-1914)’, inAnna Laura Bellina (ed.), *Il Teatro dei Due Mondi: L’opera italiana nei paesi di lingua iberica*, (Treviso: Diastema, 2000), 219-36; and José Peñin, ‘Venezuela y la ópera: una pasión decimonónica’, in Alvaro Torrente, Sánchez-Guisande & Emilio Francisco Casares Rodicio(eds.), *La ópera en España e Hispanoamérica: una creación propia*: *Vol. 2.* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2001), 237-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Hugo Quintana offers an overview in ‘Otros cincuenta años de crítica y de recepción musical en Caracas (1861-1911)’, *Revista anual del instituto nacional de musicología Carlos Vega* 24 (2016), 19-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Salvador Llamózas, ‘Bellini: 1’, *La* *Lira venezolana*, 1 February 1883. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Salvados Llamózas, ‘Lira venezolana’, *Lira venezolana*, 28 October 1882; this was the magazine’s first issue. Ramón de la Plaza, prominent Venezuelan intellectual and contributor to *La Lira venezolana*, published a seminal volume in 1883 entitled *Ensayos sobre el arte en Venezuela*, in which he drew upon Rousseau’s *Essai sur l'origine des* *langues* to argue for the suitability of Spanish for music drama. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. José Antonio Calcaño, *La ciudad y su Música* (Caracas: Conservatorio Teresa Carreño, 1958), 309.Michelena pursued a US career from the mid-1880s, singing regularly with the Emma Abbott company. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. The lighting system was imported from New York: see ‘Teatro Guzmán Blanco’, *La Opinion Nacional*, 4 January 1881. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. ‘Revista Teatral’, *La Opinion Nacional*, 14 March 1881. The author was responding to performances of *Il trovatore* and *Ruy Blas*. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. See *La Opinion Nacional*, 11 January 1886. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. ‘Opera italiana’, *El Granuja*, 5 February 1887. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. ‘Opera italiana’, *Diario de Avisos*, 1 March 1887. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. ‘Correspondencia: De la Guaira’, *Diario de Avisos*, 28 February 1887. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. See *La Opinion Nacional*, 30 April 1886. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. *Gaceta Musical*, 30 July 1882; cited in John Rosselli, ‘The Opera Business and the Italian Immigrant Community in Latin America 1820-1930: The Example of Buenos Aires’, *Past and Present* 127 (1990), 155-82; 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Maria Bonfanti’s personal papers are now held at the Jerome Robbins Dance Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. See *La Opinion Nacional*, 7 March 1887. *Un ballo in maschera* had also been performed in the Teatro Municipal’s first season, the press emphasising its popularity in spite of Verdi’s aggressive vocal writing: *La Opinion Nacional*, 11 January 1881. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Milanca Guzmán also points to tensions between Aimery and Carreño later in the season, citing a letter published in *El Siglo* on 16 April 1887 announcing Aimery’s departure from the troupe: *Teresa Carreño*, 55-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *La Opinion Nacional*, 1 April 1887. The *Diario de Avisos* also defended Tagliapietra in a review of *La traviata*: ‘Opera italiana’, 4 April 1887. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. ‘Opera italiana’, *Diario de Avisos*, 16 April 1887. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. On similar tensions earlier in the century, see Benjamin Walton, ‘*L’italiana* in Calcutta’ in Suzanne Aspden (ed.), *Operatic Geographies: The Place of Opera and the Opera House* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 119-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. These issues are outlined in reviews by references to previous performers such as tenor Francisco Mazzoleni. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. In her (highly anecdotal) biography of Carreño, Milinowski suggests Rachelle’s cancellations were related to fears of a bomb in the theatre. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. See Jesús Eloy Gutiérrez, ed., *Teresa Carreño: Cartas y documentos: Compilación documental* (1863-1917) (Caracas: La Campana Sumergida, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Guzmán Blanco would retire in 1888 but his successor was a close associate. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. *La Opinion Nacional* described *Il trovatore* as the opera most familiar to Caracas’s audience: ‘Opera italiana’, 16 July 1883. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. On Italian immigration, see Susan Berglund, ‘Italian Immigration in Venezuela: A Story Still Untold’, *Center for Migration Studies* 11/3 (1994), 173-209. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. The review of *Ernani* at the Teatro Municipal in *La Opinion Nacional*, 2 July 1883 is typical. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. ‘Opera italiana’, *Diario de Avisos*, 29 March 1887. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Winthrop R. Wright, *Café con leche: Race, Class, and National Image in Venezuela* (Austin; University of Texas Press, 1990). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. For more on these tensions elsewhere, see Naomi André, *Black Opera: History, Power, Engagement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. ‘Opera italiana’, *Diario de Avisos*, 4 April 1887. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. *La Opinion Nacional*, 26 March 1881. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. ‘Hissed by the Venezuelans’, *The New York Times*, 4 April 1887. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. See Susan Rutherford, ‘The Prima Donna as Impresario: Emma Carelli and the Teatro Costanzi, 1911-1926’ in Hilary Poriss & Rachel Cowgill (eds.), *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 272-89. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. On the decline of ‘adequacy’, see Emily Dolan’s review of Kreuzer’s *Curtain, Gong, Steam* in *Music and Letters*, 100/3 (2019), 560-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Walter Mignolo, *Local Designs/Global Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Roberto Schwarz, *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture*, trans. John Gledson (London: Verso, 1992), 19-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. For a recent study, see Sergio Ospina Romero, ‘Recording Studios on Tour: The Expeditions of the Victor Talking Machine Company through Latin America, 1903-1926’ (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-58)