

**Music in the Urban Amazon:
A Historical Ethnography of the
Manaus Opera House**

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Abstract

This thesis presents a historical ethnography of the Teatro Amazonas, an iconic opera house in Brazil's Amazonian city of Manaus. Often referred to as the 'opera house in the jungle', the Teatro is overtly indexed through its broad geographical setting – a setting that has both garnered global attention and stoked fervent contention at a time of anxiety about climate change. Today, conservationist fervour means that many people the world over have become invested in the vast Amazon region not changing over time. This thesis responds to this state of affairs and to recent scholarship that draws critical attention to which parts of the globe have their human histories widely recognised and which do not. It analyses select moments from throughout the Teatro's lifespan (1897 to the present), exploring the opera house's changing relationship with its uniquely important geographical setting.

The five chapters proceed in chronological order but leave gaps and cover time periods of varying lengths. Chapter One (1850-1896) explores the 'opera house in the jungle' epithet by examining the historical context out of which the Teatro came to be built. Chapter Two (1897-1907) nuances the common depiction of the Teatro's initial decade as a 'golden age' of abundance and progress. Chapter Three (1937-1971) crafts a musical history of the mid-twentieth century (supposedly a fallow period at the Teatro), preceded by an ethnography of the opera house's archive as it stood in 2017. Chapter Four (1997-2017) scrutinises an ongoing cultural project based at the Teatro, arguing that, from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century, opera in Amazonia changed from an ephemeral status symbol to a productive stimulus for diverse local musics. Chapter Five (2017) explores the entangled urban and rainforest settings that surround (and permeate) the Teatro today, and argues that the opera house has become a potent catalyst for negotiations of Amazonian geographies. Finally, the conclusion reflects on the endeavour of writing a long history of an Amazonian opera house.

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Notes on the Text

Archival Citations:

In this thesis, I draw on material from the on-site archive of the Teatro Amazonas. It is uncatalogued, but many of the items are sorted into boxes and folders labelled with the year in which they were produced. For in-text citations, I use 'TAA' to signify Teatro Amazonas Archive and give the year with which the box or folder is labelled. The archive is kept in two separate rooms above the Salão Nobre, one at the north and one at the south side of the building. I use 'n' to designate an item stored in the north-facing room, and 's' to designate an item stored in the south-facing room. I then add 'b' if the item is stored in a box, and 'f' if it is stored in a folder.

For example,

TAA 1976nb = the box labelled 1976 in the north-facing room of the Teatro archive.

TAA 1946sf = the folder labelled 1946 in the south-facing room of the Teatro archive.

I also provide a brief description of each document in the bibliography.

Material in this archive is occasionally moved around. Thus, although this system was accurate at the time of research, future researchers may find items in different locations.

Naming Conventions:

In Brazil, it is customary to refer to certain well-known individuals by their first name rather than their surname after first mention. I have followed this custom in the text. For example, after first mention, I refer to the historian Mário Ypiranga Monteiro as Mário Ypiranga.

Brazilian Demonyms:

amazonense = a person from the state of Amazonas.

campineiro/a = a person from the city of Campinas.

carioca = a person from the city or state of Rio de Janeiro.

cearense = a person from the state of Ceará.

manauara = a person from the city of Manaus.

maranhense = a person from the state of Maranhão.

paraense = a person from the state of Pará.

paulista = a person from the state of São Paulo.

paulistano/a = a person from the city of São Paulo.

piauiense = a person from the state of Piauí.

Terminology Regarding Amazonian Regions:

Amazonas = the Brazilian state of that name.

The Amazon (region) = the area covered by the Amazon basin, including parts of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela.

The Brazilian Amazon = the area covered by the part of the Amazon basin that is in Brazil.

Amazonia = used interchangeably to mean either of the above, more often the latter.

Legal Amazonia = an area that comprises the northern Brazilian states of Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Pará, Rondônia, Roraima, and Tocantins, plus part of Mato Grosso and most of Maranhão.

Translations and Portuguese Orthography:

All translations from Portuguese in the text are my own. I have maintained original spellings when quoting from primary sources; spellings vary because no significant attempts were made to homogenise Portuguese orthography until late in the twentieth century. When

quoting from oral interviews, I reproduce the original speech as far as possible, except for sometimes omitting speech disfluencies for ease of reading.

Anonymisation:

With the exception of prominent public figures, whom I interviewed in their public capacity, I have anonymised all of my interviewees. In some cases, I have attributed pseudonyms for ease of reading.



Fig. 1. Map of Brazil.

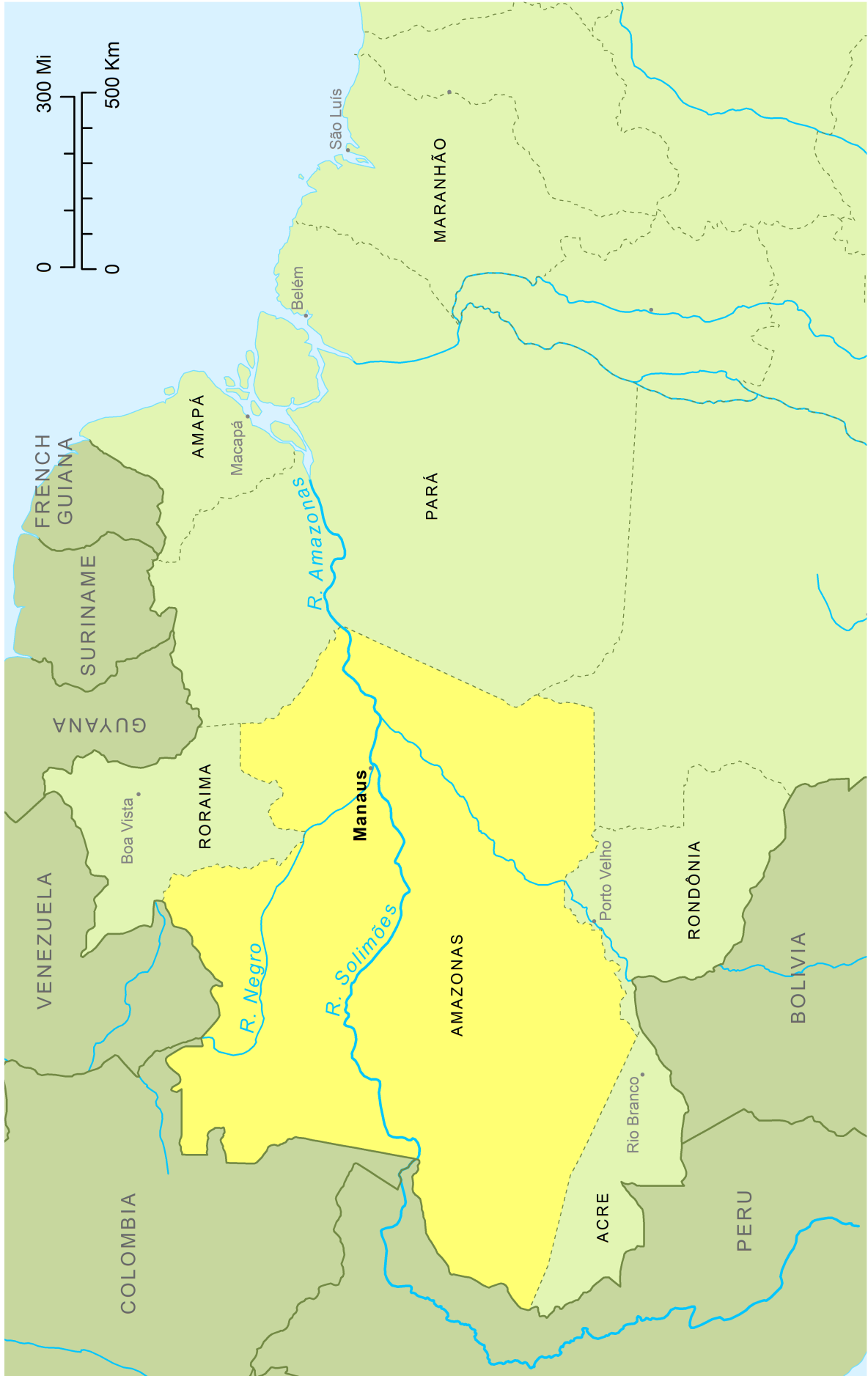


Fig. 2. Map of northern Brazil.

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Introduction

This thesis presents a historical ethnography of the Teatro Amazonas, an iconic Belle Époque opera house in Brazil's Amazonian city of Manaus.¹ In both musicology and popular culture, opera in the Amazon is perhaps most commonly encountered through Werner Herzog's 1982 film *Fitzcarraldo*, in which it is rendered as the crazed dream of the eponymous protagonist.² Early on in the film, raving atop a church tower while frenziedly ringing its bell, Fitzcarraldo repeatedly cries, 'I want my opera house! I want my opera house! I want my opera house!' (*Fitzcarraldo* 1982) But opera houses had spread to the Amazon long before the early twentieth century, the period in which the film is set: the city of Belém do Pará, located at the mouth of the Amazon River, already had one in the eighteenth century, and its current edifice was inaugurated in 1876; Macapá and São Luís, both also coastal Amazonian cities, had opera houses in 1775 and 1817, respectively.³ Following on, the Teatro Amazonas hosted its first opera season in 1897.

Often called 'the opera house in the jungle', the Teatro is overtly indexed through its broad geographical setting – a setting that has both garnered global attention and stoked fervent contention at a time of anxiety about climate change.⁴ Although the Amazon has traditionally been depicted as a 'land that time forgot', an unparalleled haven for biodiversity, or a kind of opaque, impervious nature that can overwhelm human endeavours, such depictions now compete with a newer portrayal of it as primarily an absorber of carbon dioxide.⁵ Drawing on Michel Foucault's notion of biopower, Luiz Fernando Souza Santos

¹ The Research Ethics Approval (CUREC 1A) Reference Number for the research presented in this thesis is: R50345/RE001.

² Scholarly examinations of music and the representation of opera in *Fitzcarraldo* include Dolkart 1985; Eidt 2012; Hillman 2005, 140-146; Kühl 2017; Leppert 2007; Rogers 2004.

³ Eighteenth-century Brazilian *casas de ópera* did not necessarily host European opera, which only became widespread with the arrival of the Portuguese court in Rio de Janeiro in 1808. Nevertheless, they were indoor venues that hosted music-theatre productions and had boxes, stage backdrops, and lighting (Budasz 2019, 157-161).

⁴ Brazil's current president, Jair Bolsonaro, has come under severe scrutiny for encouraging mining and logging in the region. A recent BBC news article (2 July 2019) captured the severity of the situation with the emotive headline "'Football pitch' of Amazon forest lost every minute".

⁵ For an insightful study of 'visions of the Amazon' changing through time, see Slater 2002; see also Watson 2018.

refers to this new discourse as a process of *ambientalização* (environmentalisation): the Amazon is no longer primarily regarded as nature, but rather as environmental resource (Santos 2007; see also Foucault 1998). As such, in the context of climate change, the vast and varied region is frequently reduced to a utilitarian function.

Without ignoring the important concerns of an international community invested in the Amazon at a remove, it remains essential to explore the interests of those living, working, and making music in the region. Contrary to many sensationalist news reports, these individuals comprise not only indigenous peoples ‘hunting and gathering amid the trees’,⁶ but also a large urban population. The Teatro’s immediate setting, Manaus, is currently home to over two million urbanite Amazonians. Moreover, now that *most* Amazonians live in cities, John Browder and Brian Godfrey assert that, ‘Despite the region’s long-standing image as a rural environment of receding rainforests, Amazonia has been predominantly urbanized since at least 1980’ (Browder and Godfrey 1997, 1-2). This thesis aims to move beyond the antagonistic discourse of conservation versus development often adopted by international stakeholders, to develop a more nuanced account of Amazonian life.⁷

The Teatro provides a particularly interesting case study through which to address this aim. Opera houses have long been prominent geographical reference points within urban environments: they are still carefully designed (often at great cost); they function as physical traces of history, or *lieux de mémoire*; and their ongoing social and political relevance is demonstrated by how commonly they are still used as sites of protest (Aspden 2019; Brooks

⁶ This particular phrase was used in the BBC article mentioned above, but the same sentiment is also expressed in numerous pieces of journalism (‘“Football pitch” of Amazon forest lost every minute’ 2019).

⁷ Candace Slater encapsulates the issues surrounding external interest in the Amazon, commenting on a documentary about the region: ‘My problem with the IMAX movie was not just that it was simplistic. It also was that the movie’s presentation of exotic plants and animals together with a select group of “natural” people encouraged outsiders to follow a long tradition of seeing the Amazon as a realm of nature that it was their mission or their right – and not the mission or right of Amazonians – to protect’ (Slater 2002, 3-4). Although news reports on the Amazon often focus on either the rainforest or on the region’s indigenous peoples, academic scholarship on the urban Amazon is increasing. Several works explore the region’s rubber boom of the late nineteenth century and Manaus’s subsequent urban reforms (e.g. Barham and Coomes 1997; Dean 1987; Dias 1999; Fernandes 2010; Mesquita 2006; 2009; Resor 1977; Santos 1980; Tully 2011; Weinstein 1983). Others focus on the effects of the free trade zone established in Manaus in the 1960s (e.g. Araújo 2009; Despres 1991; Moura et. al. 1993; Seráfico 2011).

2019).⁸ Indeed, the ‘city study’ approach to opera studies has proliferated in recent years, with numerous works examining the relationships between opera (or opera houses) and local society (Bentley 2018, 14). The society local to the Teatro is a diverse and complex one (ethnically, economically, culturally, and so on). Treating the opera house as a societal lens can help to bring some of the strands of this diverse population into focus, given the extent to which opera houses overtly symbolise power – particularly European power – thereby potentially disrupting or intensifying various frictions present within this postcolonial society (Aspden 2019, 6-7).⁹

Heated environmentalist debates about the Amazon have another troubling effect: because the type of human activity in the region most frequently reported by the international media is deforestation, those of a broadly conservationist mindset are provided with a strong incentive *not* to want the Amazon to have, or to display, significant signs of human activity. Amid fervent discussion focused on climate change and humanity’s impact on the planet, the region is frequently envisaged as a final frontier; in this and other ways, it provides a remarkably persistent case of what Johannes Fabian famously termed the ‘denial of coevalness’ (Fabian 2014; see also Kawa 2016; Watson 2018).¹⁰ In other words, the world at large is invested in the Amazon not changing over time. Yet recent scholarship has drawn critical attention to which parts of the globe get to have history (or to change over time), and which do not. Drawing on Dipesh Chakrabarty’s work, Martin Stokes succinctly explains why it is important to remain alert to such discrepancies: ‘The West certainly has deep habits of ascribing timelessness, or history-lack, to Others, raising their mystique, as well as

⁸ Moreover, my focus on an opera house helps to tackle a concern recently raised by Anja Schwanhäußer, who argues that urban anthropology has a tendency to focus on the ‘underside of city life’ – that is, working class or marginalised communities – and that this tendency can end up romanticising or exoticising urban society (Schwanhäußer 2016, 10-11; see also Fox 1972; Sanjek 1990, 152; but for a more pragmatic approach, see Hannerz 2010.) Focusing on the Teatro, or ‘studying up’, helps to assuage misplaced romanticisation of the urban context (Nader 1972).

⁹ Following Anna Tsing, I employ the term ‘frictions’ to imply varied social interactions, both positive and negative, rather than simply social or cultural ‘clashes’ (Tsing 2005).

¹⁰ For an expanded version of Fabian’s concept, which also addresses its gendered aspects, see McClintock 1995, 36-42.

facilitating their subjugation and exploitation’ (Stokes 2018, 8; see also Chakrabarty 2000).¹¹ Moreover, musicologists and historians local to Manaus often lament the extent to which *amazonenses* lack local historical awareness (Monteiro 2003, 17-18; Páscoa 2000, 17-19). It is largely for these reasons that I have chosen to present this thesis as an institutional ethnography in the form of a long history, focusing on select moments from the lifespan of the Teatro.¹²

In response, then, to Suzanne Aspden’s assertion that opera houses have too rarely been examined in terms of their interactions with their ‘physical settings’, this thesis explores the ways in which the Teatro’s relationship with this uniquely important region has changed over time (Aspden 2019, 1). Furthermore, by analysing select moments from throughout the opera house’s 122-year lifespan, it explores the musical history of a region often represented as (or perhaps wished to be) bereft of significant human history. In short, it explores the question: over time, how does the Amazon affect the opera house, and the opera house the Amazon?

A Brief History of the Teatro Amazonas

Chapter One of this thesis provides substantial introductory historical material, particularly concerning opera’s initial spread to Brazil and the politics and geography of Manaus prior to the opening of the Teatro at the end of the nineteenth century. Chapters Two to Five also

¹¹ It is also worth noting that Latin America more generally has long struggled to attain a significant place in Anglophone global history books (Besse 2004).

¹² Although Keith Howard referred in 2014 to a ‘recent’ historical turn in both ethnomusicology and anthropology, historically aware (or even led) ethnomusicology is not a new pursuit, and criticisms sometimes levelled at the discipline for being historically unaware are, as Stokes convincingly argues, little more than straw men (Howard 2014; Stokes 2008, 214; 2018, 8). Georgina Born and Vlado Kotnik also strongly advocate combining synchronic institutional ethnography with historical outlines, the latter drawing on the tradition of historical anthropology associated with the French Annales School (Born 1995; 2004; Kotnik 2010, 30-31). There is, nevertheless, a potential danger in crafting a long-reaching history for the Amazon region. As Barbara Weinstein argues, the historian who undertakes such a task can easily be criticised for assuming the role of omniscient narrator. She equally recognises, however, that there is a strong nostalgia (in social and cultural history) for overarching historical narratives that take responsibility for the arcs they trace (Weinstein 2005). Although this thesis covers a broad historical sweep, I have chosen my focal points carefully, attempting not only to remain alert to the issue of history’s *where* (which geographical places have their human histories widely recognised), but also to its *when* (bearing in mind Paul Ricoeur’s observations on points in time that might suffer too much remembering, forgetting, or abuse of either of these things) (Ricoeur 2004, xv-xvii). The disjunctions between my chapters are inevitable, but I have carefully and deliberately selected the points at which they occur.

provide extensive historical detail, but each focuses on a select episode of the Teatro's past between its inauguration and 2017 (when I conducted fieldwork and archival research there). The following brief history summarises the historical episodes discussed in Chapters One to Five, bridges the inevitable gaps in the chronology that these chapters present, and situates the opera house's timeline within a broader context of Brazilian history.

Although it was founded in 1669, Manaus remained an insignificant town throughout Brazil's colonial period and after independence in 1822, until it was made the capital city of the newly created Province of Amazonas in 1850. When Brazil then transitioned from a monarchy to a republic in 1889, its provinces became states and gained substantial power over their own spending. These events coincided, in Amazonia, with a boom in exports of natural rubber, which precipitated a substantial increase in the region's wealth. Owing to its central location in the Brazilian Amazon, Manaus became an important hub for the rubber trade, attracting growing numbers of economic migrants both from other parts of Brazil and from Western Europe. The city's population grew from 8,500, in 1852, to around 50,000 by the 1890s, by which point a substantial urbanisation project was underway (Dias 1999, 38; Weinstein 1983, 57).

Following these developments, the city opened its new opera house, the Teatro, on 31 December 1896. Touring European performers began to make it a stopping point on their transatlantic journeys and it was swiftly filled with the sounds of Italian and French opera. Yet, while cultural activity and Europhilia in Manaus had developed to such an extent that opera might have been expected to prosper, the Teatro quickly began to struggle to put on operas owing (among other things) to problems with their cost and popularity. Only six full opera seasons took place in the Teatro's first decade (from 1897 to 1907), and they were interspersed with zarzuelas, variety shows, operettas, cinema screenings, and dramatic works, put on by both foreign and Brazilian companies (Páscoa 2009a, 219-246). This period has, nevertheless, been historicised as a 'golden age' for the Teatro and Manaus, both in the

tourism industry and in academic scholarship. After 1907, there was a ninety-year hiatus before opera was again heard in Manaus: the local economy crashed when cheaper Asian plantation rubber entered the international market, taking with it the resources to sustain the genre.

Although opera in the Teatro stopped abruptly in 1907, the local economic decline occurred more gradually, and other kinds of performance continued relatively unabated until the start of the First World War (Burns 1965, 400).¹³ Certain signs of change did, however, become apparent around this time. One indication of the ensuing economic depression was the departure of prominent figures from the city, including (among many others) the well-known Brazilian author Alberto Rangel (1871-1945) and the comedic actor Renato Viana (1894-1953) (Daou 2014, 23-25). Concurrently, new technologies had an impact on the entertainment produced and consumed in the city: the arrival of Victor and Edison gramophones in 1906 was soon followed by the growing popularity of cinema during the 1910s, for which cheap tickets began to lure audience members away from more expensive live venues (Vale da Costa 1996, 48-49, 63-74). The outbreak of war in 1914 then made it increasingly difficult for ships to travel between Europe and the Amazon; although gaps left in the Teatro's programme were sometimes filled by local amateur performances or

¹³ There is a discrepancy between the year in which opera performances stopped and the year in which rubber prices peaked (1910), but it seems that locally based impresarios continued in their attempts to contract opera companies after 1907 and perhaps even for some time after 1910 (the precise reasons for their lack of success are not clear, but I highlight some of the general difficulties in contracting European opera companies in Chapter Two). The 6 December 1911 edition of the local newspaper *Correio do Norte* went so far as to report that the impresario Juca Carvalho had recently *succeeded* in contracting an opera company in Italy, and that this company was already *en route* to Manaus (*Correio do Norte*, 6 December 1911). A week later, the *Jornal do Commercio* also announced this company's impending arrival in the north of Brazil and noted that its cast numbered seventy (*Jornal do Commercio*, 14 December 1911). Curiously, though, I have found no further mention of this company in either the *amazonense* or the *paraense* press; given the unlikelihood of seventy opera singers going missing without trace, their arrival may on this occasion have been but a rumour in the press. Mário Ypiranga Monteiro also mentions a failed attempt to contract an opera company that was performing in São Paulo in 1910. He cites the 9 January 1910 edition of the newspaper *Amazonas*, which I have been unable to locate, and I have not found any other records of this incident (Monteiro 2003, 443). Like opera, films were rarely shown at the Teatro after 1907, albeit for a different reason: increasing regulations in Europe caused touring cinema companies to fall out of vogue by around 1910. Consequently, purpose-built cinema venues became the norm. Manaus's first permanent cinema – the Casino Teatro Julieta – opened in 1907 (Costa 1996, 51-53).

conferences, the opera house mostly remained closed and unused during wartime (Costa 1996, 95-101; Monteiro 2003, 444-467).

In the interwar years, Manaus made attempts to rebuild its economy, turned its attentions away from Europe and inward to Brazil, and began increasingly to look to Rio de Janeiro (the nation's capital until 1960) as its new model for fashion, entertainment, and elite culture. By that stage, however, national Brazilian politics and economics were firmly dominated by the powerful states of Minas Gerais and São Paulo (known as the *café com leite* alliance); as southern and south-eastern Brazil industrialised and developed during the 1920s and 30s, the northern state of Amazonas remained forgotten and continued to stagnate.¹⁴ Nevertheless, cultural activity in Manaus did not cease entirely: among other things, a major building project was carried out on the Teatro between 1926 and 1929. Although this meant that the opera house was closed for several years, amateur drama, solo recitals, and other small-scale performances were subsequently reinitiated (Costa 1996, 95-106; Monteiro 2003, 456-473; Souza 2010, 158-161).

The 1920s building project changed the opera house considerably, both structurally and in terms of internal design and decoration. Among other things, the layout of the auditorium was altered, with boxes removed from the upper two tiers of seating in order to make room for a balcony. Removing the boxes meant that more seats could be fitted in and more income secured from ticket sales. Many of the interior furnishings were also removed or replaced (Monteiro 2003, 445-456). These extensive reforms have been strongly criticised by local historians including Robério Braga and Mário Ypiranga Monteiro, who lament the loss of fealty to an original design and claim that the opera house was drastically damaged, both in terms of layout and acoustics (Braga 2014, 79; Monteiro 2003, 453).

In contrast to the reputation that the Teatro's first decade (1897-1907) has accrued as a 'golden age', one subsequent period of its history has been dismissed entirely: Mário

¹⁴ For more information on society and politics during the First Republic of Brazil (1889-1930), see Fausto 1989, 257-307.

Ypiranga labels the years 1937-1971 a period of *crise cultural* (cultural crisis) (Monteiro 2003, 479). During these years, the urban population decreased, newspapers stopped circulating, and the city's electricity supply became unpredictable (Souza 2010, 165-166). Despite Manaus's destitute state, however, this period did see a number of amateur and professional performances at the Teatro. The city even experienced a brief economic resurgence between 1942 and 1945 in the form of its main engagement with the Second World War. Although Brazil's dictatorial president Getúlio Vargas (1882-1954, president of Brazil 1930-1945, 1951-1954) had maintained close ties with Nazi Germany, he was ultimately pressured into siding with the Allies, and Brazil entered the war on 22 August 1942. By that point, the Allies were in need of new rubber supplies, as many of their plantations were located in parts of Asia occupied by Japanese troops. The United States initiated a project with the Brazilian government to use Amazonian rubber, and US forces consequently maintained a presence in Manaus until the war ended (Garfield 2013, 49-85; Souza 2010, 167). Notably, however, performances at the Teatro (of any kind) did *not* proliferate during these few years. Instead, the opera house was temporarily turned into office space for the American Rubber Reserve Company (*Jornal do Commercio*, 14 February 1943; 2 January 1944).

After the Second World War, Manaus's economy continued to languish until the late 1960s. These post-war years can be described as another 'inter' period for Brazil: between war and a military dictatorship, which was ushered in with the ousting of President João Goulart (1918-1976) in 1964, and which lasted until the mid-1980s.¹⁵ Performances at the Teatro resumed during these 'inter' years, with amateur dramatic companies often taking the stage. The most prominent amateur company of the period was the Teatro Escola Amazonense de Amadores, which lasted from 1944 to 1967. Funded by the local government, the Teatro Escola mostly performed nationally successful dramas by playwrights from

¹⁵ On a national scale, many cultural projects were initiated or consolidated under military rule; indeed, several scholars have observed a correlation between state interest in culture and periods of authoritarian rule in Brazil (Barbalho 2007; Calabre 2014, 140; Rubim 2013, 226).

Brazil's south-east, and was criticised in some corners for not displaying an interest in regionalism, or for capitulating to nation-building populism (Costa and Azancoth 2001, 11-21; Souza 2010, 244). The Teatro also housed piano and vocal recitals (amateur and professional); amateur choral performances, notably from the Coral João Gomes Junior;¹⁶ and one visit from a national operetta company to celebrate the Teatro's fiftieth anniversary in 1946 (TAA 1946nb).

In 1966, the Teatro was listed as a National Historical Site. The following year, the military government established a free trade zone in Manaus, in an attempt to integrate Amazonia more fully into the national sphere (Moura et. al. 1993, 7; Souza 2010, 180-181). The free trade zone boosted the local economy and re-instigated rapid urbanisation, with the city's population rising from approximately 100,000 in the mid-1960s to over 1.5 million by the early 2000s (Araújo 2009, 36; Souza 1984, 11). With the new wealth, the Amazonas government partnered with the national institution DPHAN (Diretoria do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional, Directorate of National Historical and Artistic Heritage) to undertake a second substantial renovation of the Teatro. It had fallen into a state of disrepair since the building works of the 1920s and several major faults were identified, including a lack of fire safety mechanisms, exposed electrical cables, and a lack of running water. Besides modernising some equipment, the renovation primarily restored the Teatro to the state and layout it was in before the controversial 1920s reforms. It was carried out by the Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht between 1972 and 1974 (Valladares 1974, 108-125).¹⁷

Performances resumed swiftly after the second renovation. Alongside solo recitals and amateur music making, a resident professional orchestra was formed for the Teatro in 1975,

¹⁶ The Coral João Gomes is still in operation and currently Manaus's oldest musical ensemble. I discuss it in more detail in Chapter Three.

¹⁷ More recently, Odebrecht was at the centre of the notorious *Lava Jato* (Operation Car Wash) corruption scandal. The company filed for bankruptcy (the biggest bankruptcy ever recorded in Latin America) in June 2019 (*The Wall Street Journal*, 18 June 2019).

and a resident choir in 1979 (TAA 1976nb; 1996nb).¹⁸ A second amateur theatre group, the Teatro Experimental do SESC (or TESC), also featured prominently in the opera house's programme. In contrast with the Teatro Escola of the 1940s-60s, TESC was fiercely regional, primarily performing works based on indigenous Amazonian myths or on local history, several of which were written by *manauara* author and intellectual Márcio Souza (b. 1946). TESC was also critical of the military dictatorship, as a result of which its works were censored and its members subjected to intimidating police behaviour (Souza 1984).

The Teatro was listed as a Historical Site of Amazonas State in 1980, and the following year served as the location set for the opening scene of *Fitzcarraldo* (Herzog 2009, 274). The film, which stars Klaus Kinski (1926-1991) in the lead role, is an important work in cinema history. Set in the Amazon in the rubber boom era, it presents the story of the driven and somewhat unhinged Brian Sweeney Fitzgerald (nicknamed Fitzcarraldo) and his outlandish schemes to obtain wealth in order to build his own Amazonian opera house (said schemes famously include dragging a steamship, intact, over a mountain) (*Fitzcarraldo* 1982). The film was nominated for several awards, and won both the German Film Prize in Silver for Best Feature Film and Best Director Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1982.

On 27 February 1996, the Teatro's centenary was celebrated with a high-profile concert starring the famous tenor José Carreras, accompanied by the Orquestra Sinfônica Brasileira. Although the concert was widely publicised both in Brazil and abroad, it was not until the following year that Manaus again became a point of international musical convergence on a large scale, through a new state-sponsored cultural project primarily based in the opera house. 1997 saw the institution of a new opera festival, organised by the German violinist Michael Jelden (b. 1971), who had allegedly been inspired by the actions of Herzog's fictional Fitzcarraldo. While Jelden's operatic project took shape, a new in-house orchestra was also established, comprising musicians from Brazil, Bulgaria, Belarus, the

¹⁸ Manaus already had at least one orchestra – the Orquestra Sinfônica do Amazonas – in the 1960s. I have been unable to establish whether this was an earlier incarnation of the orchestra established in 1975 or a different ensemble altogether (*A Crítica*, 23 March 1997; TAA 1966nb).

Czech Republic, the United States, Venezuela, and Uruguay (Medaglia 2017). It was swiftly followed by the creation of a new chorus and other resident ensembles ranging from a big band to a ‘folkloric ballet’ group. More festivals were also established: of theatre (2003), film (2004), jazz (2006), and dance (2009). All of these festivals and ensembles were initiated and run by the local government’s Secretaria de Cultura (Cultural Secretariat).

When I visited Manaus in 2017, most of these ensembles and festivals were still running, and the Teatro staged a performance almost daily. Given the chronic lack of continuity in cultural policy in Brazil, the fact that this project has lasted for over twenty years almost uninterrupted is commonly cited as a notable achievement (Vieira and Kamlot 2017, 150-152). The annual opera festival is still treated as the most significant event of the opera house’s programme and as an anchor for the Secretaria’s other projects. Nevertheless, the Teatro also sustains an eclectic programme alongside opera. The only ensemble that has a fixed weekly slot is the resident symphony orchestra, but many other performers also use the opera house and are financially encouraged to do so: I learned from a senior member of the Teatro’s administrative staff that local musicians are not required to pay for the venue at all, and that performers from outside Amazonas are only required to donate 10% of their box office takings. As a result, a wide range of ensembles performs a wide range of music, from ballet to rock and the carnivalesque regional music *boi-bumbá*.¹⁹ Today, enmeshed in a uniquely charged entanglement between conservation and development, urbanity and nature, the Teatro provides varied musical performances to varied audiences.

Situating ‘Music in the Urban Amazon’ and Conducting the Research

The Teatro has not, until now, found a place in Anglophone musicology.²⁰ The small amount of existing scholarship on it is mostly written by Amazonian scholars and tends to focus on

¹⁹ For an English-language description of *boi-bumbá*, see Watson 2018. I also discuss this genre in Chapter Five.

²⁰ This observation applies to both historical and ethnomusicology. Indeed, although a small body of ethnographic works has emerged since the 1970s critiquing classical music institutions and practices, opera houses have rarely been placed under the ethnographic lens (Baker 2014, 11-12). So far, preference has rather

architectural details, treating the Teatro as an historic monument rather than as a functional performance venue.²¹ Nevertheless, this thesis comes at a time when musicological interest in opera in Latin America is growing significantly.²² Moreover, despite the paucity of scholarship on the Teatro itself, a few important studies have been carried out. The most significant are the works of historian Mário Ypiranga and musicologist Márcio Páscoa. The former's *Teatro Amazonas* (2003) comprises a detailed chronology of the institution, covering the period from its construction (begun in 1884) to the start of the twenty-first century. Including photographs and transcriptions of numerous primary sources (such as contracts and newspaper columns), the book is invaluable given the current state of disrepair of many of Manaus's archives. Nevertheless, the narrative it weaves is heavily weighted toward certain time periods. For example, while Mário Ypiranga spends some 250 pages covering the years 1897-1908, the period from 1937 to 1971 receives only a single paragraph (Monteiro 2003, 479). The lack of coverage results from a corresponding lack of interest on the part of the author, who is unapologetic about the value he assigns to professional classical music and opera over amateur or popular music. I aim partially to redress this imbalance in this thesis, by examining amateur and popular music performances alongside professional opera productions, and by allotting a chapter specifically to the period 1937-1971. *Teatro Amazonas*

been given to ethnographic studies of music education and symphony orchestras (e.g. Bull 2019; Cottrell 2004; Kingsbury 1988; Nettle 1995; Ramnarine 2011). Despite this imbalance, however, opera has recently been examined by two ethnographers: Paul Atkinson (2006) and Vlado Kotnik (2010; 2016).

²¹ Such works include Derenji 1996; Mesquita 2006; 2009; Valladares 1974. Augusto Corrieri (2016) displays a comparable take (in English) on the Teatro, examining what occurs in it when it is 'empty'; that is, when no performance is taking place. By adopting this approach, he aims to move focus from the human element of theatres onto the buildings themselves. The book, however, includes several factual errors, such as Corrieri's assertion that only one complete opera was ever staged at the Teatro, and that hiring European opera companies was unaffordable in its early years (Corrieri 2016, 140). Sarah J. Townsend (a professor of Spanish and Portuguese) is also currently planning an English-language book on the Teatro, provisionally entitled *Opera in the Amazon: Culture, Capital, and the Global Jungle* ('Sarah J. Townsend').

²² The increasing interest in the topic is evidenced by a recent spate of publications in English, including Budasz 2019; Magaldi 2004; 2009; Walton 2012; 2019. Several conferences have also recently been held on the topic: an international symposium on opera in Brazil held at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro in 2010 resulted in a bilingual publication (Volpe 2010). The Leverhulme-funded international network Re-imagining italianità held a conference in Campinas in 2018, entitled Re-imagining italianità: Opera and Voices on the Move. In June 2019, the University of Cambridge hosted a conference entitled The Operatic Century: European Opera in Latin America in the Long Nineteenth Century (1789-1914). Recent scholarly works on the topic in Spanish and Portuguese include (to mention just a few) Cetrangolo 2015 [on Argentina]; Hammeken 2018 [on Mexico]; Kühl 2016 [on Brazil]; Manzino 2010 [on Uruguay]. Concerning Brazil specifically, studies of opera flourished briefly in the 1960s and, following an extended hiatus, reemerged from the early 2000s to the present (Budasz 2019, xvii).

is, moreover, primarily based on official documents and therefore tells a ‘top-down’ history. The limited range of historical sources means that this approach is unavoidable for certain periods; however, by also addressing the opera house’s more recent history, I introduce new methods that enable a wider range of narrative viewpoints. Furthermore, I introduce a critical stance toward historicising processes, most overtly through an ethnography of the Teatro’s archive (in Chapter Three).

Páscoa has written extensively about opera in Amazonia (both in Manaus and in Belém do Pará) during the Belle Époque (Páscoa 1997; 2000; 2006; 2009a; 2009b). *Ópera em Manaus* (2009a), his most relevant work to this thesis, explores the opera seasons at the Teatro Amazonas and the Éden Teatro (an earlier *manauara* venue) as well as commenting on artists, cultural agents (such as directors, funders, and impresarios), public reception and criticism, and the relationship between these two venues and the local urban context. The book moves from a brief explanation of Manaus’s late-nineteenth-century urbanisation to a section about musical life in the city, then to one about the Éden Teatro, and finally to one about the Teatro Amazonas itself. Although Páscoa, like Mário Ypiranga, mainly relies on official historical documents, his work is nevertheless a vital resource for understanding the Teatro and its local and international relationships during this period, as it meticulously details when and where events took place. In this thesis, I build on Páscoa’s foundational work on Belle Époque Manaus (primarily in Chapter Two), nuancing the common representation of this period as the Teatro’s ‘golden age’ by exploring some of the intricate cultural negotiations that were involved in producing music at the opera house during its initial decade. In particular, I consider the activities of the period in relation to Benjamin Walton’s assertion that nineteenth-century Latin American cities sought access, through opera, to a ‘global fantasy of civilisation’ (Walton 2012).

Besides these scholarly works, the Teatro has also been represented in fiction. *Fitzcarraldo* is probably the most famous fictional work that features the opera house; other

examples include Ann Patchett's best-selling novel *State of Wonder* (first published 2011), and Eva Ibbotson's *Journey to the River Sea* (first published 2001) and *A Company of Swans* (first published 1985).²³ In contrast to the nonfictional accounts of the Teatro, some of these works are very well known and widely circulated. For example, besides *Fitzcarraldo*'s nominations for various awards, Herzog himself is a towering figure both in and beyond the film world: in 2009, *Time Magazine* named him one of the hundred most influential people in the world (Ebert 2009).²⁴ Because these fictional works form such a prominent portion of the extant literature about the Teatro, they constitute, to use Cormac Newark's term, part of the 'wider creative imagination' of it (Newark 2011, 5; see also Evans 1999, 12). Although I do not discuss fiction extensively in this thesis, I do selectively draw on these works at various points. For example, I discuss (in Chapter Four) the relationship between *Fitzcarraldo* and the institution of the Teatro's new opera festival in 1997.

I gathered most of the data presented in this thesis during a six-month stay in Brazil, between April and October 2017, which involved both ethnographic and archival research. Although I was primarily based in Manaus, I also undertook briefer visits to Belém do Pará and São Paulo, where I conducted interviews and visited each city's main opera house. In the case of Belém do Pará, I also consulted materials in the Theatro da Paz archive, the library of the Conservatório Carlos Gomes, the Biblioteca Arthur Viana, and the Museu da Universidade Federal do Pará. I supplemented this main research trip with a briefer visit to

²³ Also the animated film *Rio 2* (2014); the Brazilian television series *Amazônia, de Galvez a Chico Mendes* (2007); the opera *Florencia en el Amazonas* (first performed 1996); James Hamilton Paterson's novel *Gerontius* (first published 1989); Márcio Souza's comedic novel *Galvez, imperador do Acre* (first published 1976); a historical novel by *manauara* author Rogel Samuel, simply called *Teatro Amazonas* (2012); and a number of novels by *manauara* author Milton Hatoum as well as his short story 'A ninfa do Teatro Amazonas' (first published 1996).

²⁴ Patchett's *State of Wonder* also has an impressive readership: it has been translated into at least twenty languages and was nominated for several major awards, including the Wellcome Trust Book Prize and the Orange Prize for Fiction ('Overseas Success' 2013; Patchett 2012). A 2013 *Curtis Brown* article recorded over 700,000 copies sold in the US alone by that date, and noted that the title stayed on the *New York Times* best-seller list for sixteen consecutive weeks ('Overseas Success' 2013). Ibbotson's *Journey to the River Sea* won the Nestlé Gold Award and was runner up for the Whitbread Children's Book of the Year and Guardian Children's Fiction Prize; *A Company of Swans* is similarly well known, and has had three print runs to date (Ibbotson 2014; 2015). A recent article in *The Journal*, furthermore, claims that Ibbotson's worldwide base of readers numbers in the millions (*The Journal* 2013).

São Luís in September 2018, where I visited the Teatro Artur Azevedo opera house and the Biblioteca Benedito Leite.

The main archive that I consulted in Manaus was the Teatro's on-site one (which I discuss in detail in Chapter Three, both in terms of its contents and its institutional workings). I also explored materials in the Biblioteca Pública, the library of the Universidade do Estado do Amazonas, the Museu Amazônico, and the Instituto Geográfico e Histórico do Amazonas. The city's main public archive, however, was closed for refurbishment during my stay in Manaus.²⁵ Besides this library-based and archival study, I observed rehearsals and attended over 50 performances at the Teatro (as well as several at other nearby venues). These performances ranged from opera to classical chamber music, popular regional music, a guitar orchestra, a Linkin Park tribute band, indigenous Amazonian rituals, a Beatles tribute band, a pop musical, choirs (both amateur and professional), jazz, hip-hop, drama, and comedy acts. I also spent a substantial amount of time on site with members of the Teatro's permanent staff, having casual conversations and observing the opera house's daily life.

Besides making observations and engaging in informal discussions, I conducted 44 formal interviews with individuals involved with the opera house. These included members of several of the Teatro's resident ensembles: the Amazonas Filarmônica (a symphony orchestra), the Amazonas Jazz Band (a big band), the Orquestra de Violões (a guitar orchestra), the Orquestra de Câmara (a chamber orchestra), and the Coral do Amazonas (a choir). I also spoke with resident and visiting conductors, visiting singers for the 2017 opera festival, audience members, a scenographer, a producer, a costume designer, and members of the Teatro's administrative staff, as well as with local musicians, university students, and academics less directly involved with the Teatro. I furthermore conducted a small amount of

²⁵ The public archive is, in any case, difficult to negotiate: it is uncatalogued and many of the materials have been severely damaged (Dias 1999, 20-21; Monteiro 2003, 176). On one occasion, I was also able to consult materials from the collections of the Secretaria de Cultura. These collections seem to be nominally public, but information about them is very difficult to obtain, and individuals are required to solicit the permission of the Secretary of Culture in order to consult them. For further details, see Chapter Three, 85-89.

online audience research (which I discuss briefly in Chapter Five, 152-153) by emailing questionnaires to members of the Teatro's mailing list.

Chapter Outline

The following chapters comprise an institutional ethnography in the form of a long history, analysing select moments from (and preceding) the Teatro's lifespan (1897 to the present): the first two address the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century; the central chapter covers the years 1937-1971; and the last two chapters focus on a more recent period, 1997-2017. Chapters One and Two primarily analyse historical texts. Chapter Three serves a pivot function: it examines the Teatro's mid-twentieth-century history, but also prefaces this historical account with an ethnography of the opera house's archive. Chapters Four and Five draw on contemporary written sources; however, as the period they cover is within living memory, I complement these sources with both oral history and observations I made during fieldwork.²⁶

Chapter One explores the 'opera house in the jungle' epithet often assigned to the Teatro by examining the historical context out of which it came to be built. It essentially provides a 'pre-history' for the thesis, focusing primarily on the period from 1850 (when Amazonas was created as a province) to 1896 (the year in which the Teatro was inaugurated). After beginning with an overview of opera's arrival in Brazil, I discuss the urban development of Manaus in the late nineteenth century, explaining how and when it came to be a city capable of constructing its own opera house. Continuing to narrow the focus, I then discuss physical aspects of early performance venues in Manaus. By identifying specific

²⁶ The period 1937-1971 is, of course, also in living memory for some people. In this instance, however, I follow Ann Stoler's approach of reading 'along the archival grain' rather than against it, in order to develop a sense of institutional workings and to probe the ways in which the Teatro's past is 'officially' historicised (Stoler 2009). As such, I diverge from the anthropological approach to archives promoted by John and Jean Comaroff: 'A historical ethnography, then, must begin by constructing its own archive. It cannot content itself with established canons of documentary evidence [...] As anthropologists, therefore, we must work both in and outside of the official record, both within and beyond the guardians of memory in the societies we study' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, 34). By going beyond the 'official record' in Chapters Four and Five, however – using techniques such as observation and interviews – I still confront the overall imbalance of approaches to studying the Teatro.

features of theatres that preceded the Teatro, I map a changing attitude toward the role of such buildings, particularly in terms of their relationship with the surrounding rainforest. Finally, I examine the physical structure of the Teatro itself.

My second chapter focuses on the initial decade of musical performances at the opera house, 1897-1907. Although this period is often represented as a ‘golden age’ of abundance and progress (in such varied contexts as academic scholarship, tourist brochures, films, and novels), this portrayal is misleading in some ways. I therefore seek to nuance the standard historical narrative, exploring some of the intricate cultural negotiations that were involved in producing music at the Teatro during these years. Building on Walton’s interpretation of opera in nineteenth-century Latin America in terms of a ‘global fantasy of civilisation’, I discuss the effects that local outbreaks of disease had on the opera house during these years, exploring the ways in which persistent tropes about the tropics affected musical production (Walton 2012). This discussion also provides insight into another side to the historical narrative, engaging with views of the Teatro in Europe. Finally, I examine some of the ways in which elite *manauaras* sought to balance local, national, and international concerns at the Teatro, both through opera and through revues focused on Amazonian themes.

Chapter Three investigates select events from the Teatro’s supposedly fallow years of 1937-1971 through a detailed analysis of five documents I came across in its on-site archive. Using these documents as an entry point, I begin to construct a remedial musical history of this period. (I also, however, caution against being over-optimistic about the scope of such remedial projects.) I preface my account with an ethnography of the archive in order to reflect on the conditions under which I constructed it. Relevant characteristics of the archive include: a lack of cataloguing, humidity levels of over 70%, and the intermittent rearrangement of many of the materials. Moreover, securing access is a complex matter, and the limitations placed on who can see these materials affect not only *how* histories of the Teatro can be constructed, but *who* can construct them. I argue that issues concerning access, combined with

the archive's particular material conditions, obscure the events of 1937-1971, effectively emptying them out of content.

In Chapter Four, I scrutinise the ongoing state-run cultural project that was stimulated by Jelden's new opera festival in 1997. Today, musicians and other cultural agents in Manaus often describe the innovations of the late 1990s as forming the central point of a 'cultural spiral', in which the opera festival (which is still running) provided impetus for the development of local musical ensembles across an increasingly wide variety of genres. After analysing the parallels drawn in the local and international press between Jelden and Fitzcarraldo, I consider the validity of a spiral metaphor that implies smoothness and question the value of opera as a cultural import in this context. I argue that, from the Belle Époque to the late twentieth century, opera's value in the Brazilian Amazon essentially changed from that of an ephemeral status symbol to that of a productive stimulus for diverse local musics. I also contend, however, that this development is complicated by the fact that the opera festival instituted in 1997 is imbued with higher prestige than the projects it has inspired.

Chapter Five narrows the temporal focus to 2017 and revisits the relationship between the Teatro and its physical setting, exploring the entangled urban and rainforest geographies that surround (and permeate) it. I open with an ethnographic vignette, situating the reader in Manaus and bringing them into the folds of a concert at the Teatro. I then discuss the opera house's place in the urban fabric, both in terms of its iconic status and of the tone of exclusivity that inheres in a nineteenth-century opera house. I also examine such details as urban infrastructure and its effects on who can access the Teatro. I then refer back to the concert introduced in my vignette – a CD launch by local indigenous singer Djuena Tikuna. I discuss the ways in which her performance brings complex negotiations of the geographies that surround the Teatro into its auditorium. Finally, I introduce two further examples of instances in which Amazonian geographies are negotiated through the opera house: the promotion of the annual opera festival by local politicians, and a concert of *boi-bumbá*.

This thesis is the first substantial English-language study of the Teatro Amazonas. Besides presenting a significant amount of information about this little-known opera house, it also makes two broader contributions to music studies. First, it foregrounds and exploits the Teatro's rich potential for understanding the role of opera houses in varied geographical settings. Second, it provides an example of how history and ethnography can productively be brought together to study opera and its associated institutions. In particular, it demonstrates some ways in which an ethnographic approach can delve beneath the official rhetoric that often surrounds large, complex establishments. More generally, the thesis seeks to combat the tendency to reduce the Amazon region to a utilitarian function: by examining the Teatro's activities, past and present, it moves beyond an antagonistic discourse of conservation versus development, presenting a critical examination of music in the urban Amazon.

Chapter One

The Opera House in the Jungle

The Teatro Amazonas is often called ‘the opera house in the jungle’. In a literal geographical sense, the moniker is difficult to argue with, although adding a qualifier might be appropriate in some instances – Augusto Corrieri has suggested that the modern day Teatro might better be described as the ‘opera house *in the city* in the jungle’ (Corrieri 2016, 124-125). The label does, however, conjure up connotations that go beyond geographical location. In particular, a sense of incongruity is often emphasised. Corrieri also suggests that the predominant image of the Teatro is ‘based on a certain romantic myth, a nature-culture binary, in this case the opposition between tropical rainforest and theatre building’ (Corrieri 2016, 124). In fiction, the novelist Anne Patchett similarly portrays the Teatro as a bastion of civilisation jarring with the surrounding forest: ‘There was no real explanation for how such a building was conceived for such a place [...] Surely without the opera house the vines would have crept up over the city and swallowed it whole’ (Patchett 2012, 125-133). Holly Rogers succinctly sums up the implication: that ‘culture and human history are what the forest is not’ (Rogers 2004, 81; see also Dolkart 1985, 125; Plumwood 2002, 1-5). The suitability of these images to today’s Teatro is, however, questionable: both Corrieri and Jacob-Ivan Eidt argue that the image of the opera house directly clashing with nature constitutes nothing more than a pernicious extension of colonial-era myth making. Indeed, following Manaus’s designation as a free trade zone in the 1960s, numerous large companies developed bases on its outskirts. The Teatro, far from being threatened by encroaching vines, is today separated from the rainforest by multinationals including Samsung, Honda, Sony, and Shell (Corrieri 2016, 121-125; Eidt 2012).

This chapter explores the ‘opera house in the jungle’ epithet by examining the historical context out of which the Teatro came to be built. Challenging some of the outlooks mentioned above, Mário Ypiranga Monteiro argues that the Teatro’s construction was not at all incongruous, but completely in keeping with Manaus’s developments in the preceding

years (Monteiro 2003, 24). I would contend, however, that the story is more complex than Mário Ypiranga would have us believe – that historical occurrences that reveal the logic of the Teatro's presence in Manaus do not necessarily negate a sense of abnormality.

The chapter does not consider musical performances in detail, but rather focuses on the Teatro as a physical building, and on various inter-related factors that contributed to its construction. I look primarily at the period from 1850, when Amazonas was created as a province, to 1896, the year in which the Teatro was inaugurated.²⁷ First, I present a brief overview of opera's arrival in Brazil. Second, I contextualise the urban development of Manaus in the late nineteenth century, explaining how and when it came to be a city capable of constructing its own opera house. A large factor in this extensive urbanisation was the region's sudden boom in wealth from its exportation of natural rubber, but political developments were also important, as will be discussed. A further significant factor was the geographical location of Manaus, and the ways in which it came to be made less remote (figuratively speaking) from other parts of Brazil and the international sphere during this period (1850-1896). My third and fourth sections discuss, respectively, early performance venues in Manaus, and the physical structure of the Teatro. By identifying specific features of theatres that preceded the Teatro, I map a changing attitude toward the role of such buildings in the city, particularly in terms of their relationship with the surrounding rainforest.

Opera Arrives in Brazil

Brazil's early colonists introduced various forms of European theatre, beginning in the sixteenth century with religious plays produced by Spanish and Portuguese Jesuits in settlements lining the stretch of coast from Bahia to São Paulo (Budasz 2019, 8).²⁸ By the eighteenth century, increasing numbers of *casas de ópera* (a generic term for theatre

²⁷ Some of the building work, including much of the interior design, was completed only in the years after the inauguration (Daou 2007, 52).

²⁸ Bahia's main city, Salvador, served as capital of Brazil until 1763, when this role was taken over by Rio de Janeiro.

buildings) were being constructed in coastal towns, including Salvador, Olinda, and Recife in the north-east; Rio and São Paulo in the south-east; and Belém do Pará in the north (Azevedo 1956, 18; Brandão 2012; Mariz 1983, 35-36). Belém's early role as a theatrical centre is particularly worth noting, as it was later to have an important effect on the construction of the Teatro in Manaus, to which it is directly connected by the Amazon waterways.²⁹

Italian opera's initial spread to Brazil occurred gradually, between the mid and the late eighteenth century, and was influenced by the Portuguese monarchy's passion for Italian music. During this period, Metastasio dramas circulated in Brazil in Portuguese translation, and scattered performances of Italian opera also took place; works staged in Rio, for example, included Giuseppe Millico's *Pietà d'amore* (probably in 1786) and Domenico Cimarosa's *L'italiana in Londra* (Cranmer 2016, 50; Magaldi 2004, 40).³⁰ Opera became much more prevalent, however, after 1808, when Portugal's prince regent, Dom João VI, transferred his court to Rio to escape Napoleon's invasion of his home country (see Walton 2012, 461-462). With Rio as the new seat of the monarchy, extensive cultural developments were initiated, including the establishment of schools, libraries, museums, banks, and a free press (Brandão 2012; Schultz 2001, 1). Moreover, whereas Brazil had traded exclusively with Portugal throughout its colonial period, on arriving in Rio the prince regent opened the ports to wider international trade (Mariz 1983, 46).

Among the composers to spend time at the court in Rio were the Brazilian José Maurício Nunes Garcia (1767-1830), the Portuguese Marcos Portugal (1762-1830), and the

²⁹ Until the 1610s, what is now northern Brazil was split into two captaincies: Maranhão (which later became a state in itself) and Grão-Pará (which later broke into the provinces and then states of Pará and Amazonas). Combined, they formed a vast region that directly answered to Lisbon, whereas the rest of Brazil was governed from Salvador (Salles 1994, 3). From the early seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century, the greater part of the Brazilian Amazon was incorporated into the province of Pará, of which Belém was the main city. Amazonas did not exist as a separate entity until 1850, and so references to Pará from earlier periods include the geographical region that is now the state of Amazonas. (Although Amazonas technically became a province in 1850, the designation was only put into effect on 1 January 1852, with the arrival in Manaus of its first president, João Baptista de Figueiredo Tenreiro Aranha) (Mesquita 2006, 29-30).

³⁰ More commonly performed during this period, however, were a number of musical puppet dramas written by Brazil-born librettist Antônio José da Silva. Often referred to as *o judeu* (the Jew), Silva (1705-1739) moved to Portugal as a child, only to be put to death at a young age at the hands of the Portuguese Inquisition. The music for at least some of his works was composed by Antônio Teixeira (1707-17??), a Portuguese composer who studied in Rome under a royal scholarship from Dom João V (Brito 2001; Budasz 2019, 63-70).

Austrian Sigismund Neukomm (1778-1858) (Kiefer 1977, 50-52). In 1813, a large new theatre, the Real Teatro São João, was inaugurated, with Portugal installed as its director (Schultz 2001, 104). With this venue, writes Cristina Magaldi, ‘Rio de Janeiro’s residents could brag about possessing the venue necessary to transplant across the Atlantic one of the most imposing symbols of European (elite) culture: opera’ (Magaldi 2004, xvii).

After the flurry of cultural activity accompanying Dom João VI’s arrival in Brazil, opera clung on tenaciously for much of the nineteenth century (albeit with a hiatus in the 1830s owing to political instability) (Magaldi 2004, 40-42).³¹ While other art forms in Brazil suffered as a result of the political and economic turmoil caused by the country’s independence in 1822, opera remained relatively unscathed; indeed, José Maurício Brandão refers to an ‘avalanche’ of Italian operatic repertory in Brazil around the years of independence (Brandão 2012). Similarly, Renato Almeida writes that, ‘the only musical concern of this period [1822-1860] was Italian opera’ (Almeida 1942, 353).³² From 1808 until the mid-nineteenth century, many famous European singers performed in Rio, including the French mezzo-soprano Rosine Stoltz (in 1852 and 1853), the Italian soprano Emma La Grua (in 1855 and 1856), and the Italian tenor Enrico Tamberlik (in 1856) (Azevedo 1956, 61).

The penchant for Italian opera cultivated in Rio later spread to Brazil’s other major towns, with many new performance venues constructed in the mid-nineteenth century. The list below, adapted from Almeida’s history of Brazilian music, shows the names of venues, their locations, and the years in which they opened (Almeida 1942, 354):

³¹ A political vacuum and succession crisis was created in the 1830s by the abdication of the Emperor Dom Pedro I when his son was only five years old. Four separate regency governments filled the gap until Dom Pedro II came of age; without clear leadership, however, significant strife developed in the provinces, many of which were critical of the degree to which power was centralised in Rio. For more on the regencies, see Schwarcz and Starling 2018, 267-294. For more on some of the individuals involved in opera performances in eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Brazil, see Budasz 2019, 224-296.

³² A única preocupação musical desse período foi o teatro lírico italiano.

In Rio de Janeiro:
Teatro da Praia de Dom Manoel (1834)
Teatro São Francisco (1847)
Teatro Lírico Fluminense (1852)

In Niterói:
Vila Real da Praia Grande (1827)

In Bahia:
São Pedro de Alcântara (1837)
Santa Tereza (1842)
São Salvador (1845)
São Pedro (1865)

In Recife:
São Francisco (1839)
Nacional (1848)
Santa Isabel (1850)

In Porto Alegre:
Teatro São Pedro (1858)

In Paraná:
Teatro de Curitiba (1869)

In São Luís do Maranhão:
Teatro União (1817)

In Belém do Pará:
Theatro Nossa Senhora da Paz (1878)

By the 1850s, Italian opera had become so prominent in Brazil that a national academy was established to compete with the vogue by encouraging singing in Portuguese and promoting the use of Brazilian history as subject matter for musico-dramatic works. The Imperial Academia de Música e Ópera Nacional (somewhat ironically, directed by a Spaniard) opened in March 1857.³³ Although it lasted only a few years, it provided an important training ground for Brazil's most famous opera composer, Antônio Carlos Gomes (1836-1896), who composed two Portuguese-language operas while based there: *A noite do castelo* (premiered 4 September 1861) and *Joana de Flandres* (premiered 15 September 1863) (Almeida 1942, 356-359; Brandão 2012). The project ended in 1864: lacking historical roots and capable Brazilian singers, it stood little chance against Italian opera, which, as Bruno Kiefer puts it, 'formed a part of the *carioca*'s mental structure' (Kiefer 1977, 82). Moving on from its

³³ The Academia was managed by the Spaniard Don José Amat, about whom little is known; it was supported by the royal court (Brandão 2012).

tentative beginnings in eighteenth-century Brazil, then, Italian opera performances and venues proliferated by the mid-nineteenth century. Most operatic venues, though, remained along the Atlantic coastline, with Rio inhabited by a European court and dominating the South American scene.

Changing Times: Export Economics and Urbanisation

When the German biologist Johann Baptist von Spix (1781-1826) visited Manaus in 1819 on a research expedition, the town was known as Barra do Rio Negro or Fortaleza de São José do Rio Negro, having originally been established as a fortress town by the Portuguese in 1669 when colonial boundaries with Spain were still much disputed (Browder and Godfrey 1997, 137). Around the town were various settlements of indigenous tribes, including the Aroaquis, Banibás, Barés, Juris, Passés, and Manáos (Mesquita 2006, 23). The area was then part of the vast province of Pará: it had taken Spix (and his academic and travelling companion Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, 1794-1868) three months to arrive there from Belém. Spix estimated the settlement's population at up to 3,000, although most were based outside the town and only entered for parties or to attend church (Spix and Martius 1938, 212, in Daou 2014, 71-72). The pace of life was slow, the town essentially an undeveloped provincial backwater.

Ten years later, the English naval lieutenant Henry Lister Maw (1801-1874) gave a description of Manaus (or Barra) similar to Spix's, and the development of the town regressed during the 1830s owing to the nation's political instability (Maw 1829, 305-312; see also Daou 2014, 71-72). During the early part of the nineteenth century, Manaus's role was essentially that of a frontier town, which helped Brazil envisage its national territory (Brazil currently borders seven countries in its Amazon region) (Daou 2014, 69-72; see also Souza 2010, 10). Indeed, Manaus had primarily acted as a geopolitical marker since 1669. In 1844, however, a patent was taken out in Springfield, Massachusetts, that was to shape the

development of Amazonia and of Manaus in particular, to the point of moulding it into a bustling city eager to build an imposing opera house: Charles Goodyear had discovered how to vulcanise rubber (Weinstein 1983, 8-9).

Until Goodyear's discovery, rubber's utility was limited and it was only a minor export product for Brazil (whose economic identity had long been that of an exporter of raw materials). Prior to independence, sugar had been by far the most important product, mostly exported from Pernambuco and Bahia (Kiefer 1977, 13-14). The eighteenth century also saw the large-scale extraction of gold and diamonds in the centre-south, mostly in Minas Gerais. By the 1830s and 40s, 75-80% of Brazil's exports comprised three products: coffee, sugar, and cotton. Most of the coffee plantations were located in the south-east, whereas a large proportion of the sugar plantations were in the north-east (Bethell and Carvalho 1989, 84-85; Dean 1987, 36; see also Dean 1989, 218). Noting the locations of the significant export centres is important, as it partially explains why certain parts of the country were more or less unified at different periods. For example, the central-southern regions – Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul – had been relatively well integrated economically since the gold rush of the early eighteenth century. In contrast, the northern Brazilian regions remained economically isolated both from one another and from the centre-south (Bethell and Carvalho 1989, 48).

Prior to 1844, Belém had been the only northern Brazilian city to be integrated into the international economy, but rubber was to put Amazonia more firmly on the economic radar of both Brazil and the wider world (Barham and Coomes 1994, 103). Although one type of natural rubber from the Americas, *caucho*, had already been introduced into international trade by the mid-eighteenth century, global demand for the product increased exponentially with Goodyear's discovery, which made the material suitable for industrial purposes (Weinstein 1983, 8). Britain, for example, imported 211 kilogrammes of natural rubber in 1830 and 58,710 kilogrammes in 1874. Although natural rubber is also native to parts of Asia

and Africa, Amazonian rubber was considered to be the best quality, meaning that, throughout the nineteenth century, most of the rubber traded globally was extracted from the Amazon (Dean 1987, 4-9; 1989, 225). As a result, Manaus became a vital hub, being centrally located within the region and connected to the port city of Belém by the Amazon waterways.

As the nineteenth century progressed, the use of rubber increased. Besides being used for products such as medical gloves, condoms, shoes, and raincoats, it was exhibited in the 1876 Paris Exposition as a material for the tyres of horse-drawn vehicles (Daou 2000, 19). Exports from the Amazon only boomed significantly, however, in the 1890s with the surge in popularity of the bicycle, and in the early twentieth century, when rubber came into high demand for automobile tyres; the years 1880-1910 are generally regarded as the 'golden years' of the Amazon rubber cycle (Weinstein 1983, 8-9, 37). From the mid-nineteenth century on, the increasing demand for the raw product resulted in an unprecedented growth in wealth for both Manaus and Belém: per capita incomes in the Brazilian Amazon rose 800% during the boom years (Barham and Coomes 1994, 73).

The new wealth had two main results in Manaus: it enabled substantial urban reforms, and it attracted large numbers of Brazilian and foreign immigrants harbouring visions of financial gain from the trade (Barham and Coomes 1994, 95). The city's population grew from 8,500 in 1852 to 50,300 in 1890, with international arrivals predominantly coming from Portugal, Spain, Italy, Britain, France, and Germany (Dias 1999, 38; Weinstein 1983, 57). In the early 1890s, the governor of Amazonas, Eduardo Ribeiro (1862-1900, governor 1890-1891, 1892-1896), instituted an urbanisation project inspired by European ideals of modernity, chiefly Haussmann's Paris. The project pre-dated the large-scale urban reforms of Rio by a decade (Dias 1999, 32-33, 46; Knauss 2009).

Ribeiro's government aimed to modernise and beautify Manaus in order to encourage still more immigration, capital, and consumption, and the changes made were significant.³⁴

³⁴ Weinstein has cautioned, however, against exaggerating the opulence of Manaus during this period. She discredits stories about the excesses of the local elites – of them sending clothes to be laundered in Europe and

Tramlines were installed in 1894 and electric lighting in 1896. New roads were built, *igarapés* (creeks) were filled in, telegraph networks were installed, public buildings and schools were constructed, and cleanliness and hygiene became major preoccupations (Daou 2014, 125-126; Dias 1999, 19; Monteiro 2003, 36-37; Páscoa 2000, 39). Foreign involvement in these reforms was substantial, particularly by the British who owned the tram company, built the floating docks still in use today, and worked to develop the water supplies and other urban services. The period is still referred to by some locals as the *época dos ingleses* (era of the English) (Daou 2014, 49; Dias 1999, 50).

Changing Times: Politics and Intellectual Currents

When Amazonas was formed as a province in 1850, Manaus (then still known as Barra do Rio Negro) became its capital city.³⁵ As such, it became a key site for the construction of new government buildings and received an influx of bureaucrats (Daou 2000, 33). The British explorer Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913), having visited Manaus before it became a provincial capital, returned there on 17 May 1852 and was struck by the increase in bustle and population (Wallace 2010, 373-374). Nonetheless, becoming a capital city was not in itself sufficient stimulus for Manaus to urbanise on any significant scale. Until the 1880s, it remained a sprawl of modest houses; streets were intersected by rivulets; business was only conducted on a small scale; and the local inhabitants remained peripatetic, often spending much of the year living in the surrounding forest to hunt and gather (Avé-Lallemant 1961, 58; Daou 2000, 34-35). Even the newly formed local government earned scepticism from Wallace, who recalled, ‘The city was now full of fashionably-dressed young men, who received the public money for services they did not know how to perform. Many of them

watering their horses with champagne. Rather, she asserts, ‘the vast majority of the rubber merchants appear to have been judicious and sensible businessmen who if anything could be faulted for excessive caution’ (Weinstein 1983, 86-87; see also Monteiro 2003, 455-456, for problems with mythologising Eduardo Ribeiro).

³⁵ The new province was created again for geopolitical reasons: as a province, it was thought that Amazonas would be able to act as a better ‘watchtower’ for imperial Brazil, essentially guarding its far northern borders (Páscoa 2000, 29).

could not fill up a few dozen words in a printed form without making blunders, or in a shorter time than two or three hours; their contemplations seeming scarcely to rise beyond their polished-leather boots and gold watch-chains' (Wallace 2010, 373-374; see also Avé-Lallemant 1961, 58). His comment implies that, while the semblance of an energetic administrative centre had been established, little lay below the surface. Nevertheless, the façade imbued Manaus with the potential for urban development, to which the wealth of the rubber trade later provided impetus.

The creation of the new province became more significant in 1889 when the Brazilian Republic arrived, ushered in by an all but bloodless conspiracy that united elements of the military with members of the Republican Party from São Paulo and Rio (Costa 1989, 203).³⁶ The decentralisation instituted under the republic turned the provinces into states and gave them more control over their own finances (previously, the court in Rio had exercised considerable control over provincial administration and funds); each state now owned the public land within its territory and was able to take out loans abroad and to levy export duties (Daou 2000, 14-16; Dean 1987, 42; Weinstein 1983, 100-101). As envisaged by the Brazilian Republican Party Manifesto of 1870, which included the phrase *centralização – desmembramento; descentralização – unidade* (centralisation – division; decentralisation – unity), the institution of the republic increased the autonomy of Amazonia, paradoxically decreasing its isolation from both national and international economic spheres (Carvalho 2011, 149).

The transition from monarchy to republic, and the intellectual currents swirling around it, had other impacts on Amazonas besides increasing its financial autonomy. Even after becoming independent in 1822, Brazil's connections with Europe had remained unusually strong, with its very declaration of independence made by an heir to the House of Braganza, Dom Pedro I (1798-1834, Emperor of Brazil, 1822-1831). For much of the nineteenth

³⁶ For more information on Brazil's transition from monarchy to republic, see Schwarcz and Starling 2018, 324-354.

century, Brazilian society continued to model itself on European influences, although the 1870s and 80s were decades of substantial change: the growing desire to break from the European-style monarchy existed alongside ideas from Comtean Positivism, Spencerism, and Social Darwinism; electoral reform was instituted in 1881; and slavery was abolished in 1888 (Costa 1989, 161; see also Magaldi 2004, xvii-xviii). Positivism was particularly popular among republicans, as it implied republicanism's superiority to monarchism in its systematisation of social evolution into theological, metaphysical, and positive stages (Carvalho 2011, 154; see also Lins 1967, 315-354). Its influence was so strong, in fact, that the motto *ordem e progresso* (order and progress) was inscribed upon the new flag of the republic. Yet, even in its desire to break away from its Braganza-descended monarch, Brazil still looked to Europe for inspiration, with the intellectual currents that led to the growing republican sentiment largely imported from across the Atlantic. Tobias Barreto, a Brazilian intellectual of the 1870s and 80s, commented, 'We are consumers, not producers of ideas' (Costa 1989, 186). Europe remained symbolic of the progress sought in the new positive age.

Changing Times: Location and Transportation

Although Manaus is geographically distant from all other significant urban centres in Brazil, its location, at the confluence of the two largest tributaries of the Amazon River, is a crucial factor in opera having arrived there. Starting out their lengthy journey in the Andes, the Amazon waterways flow across great distances, bisecting northern Brazil and eventually surging into the Atlantic Ocean. This vast river network provides natural transportation routes, meaning that, despite its remoteness, Manaus has been physically accessible, both from other parts of South America and from the Atlantic Ocean, since it was constructed in 1669. Besides being linked by water to the wider international sphere, Manaus is also connected directly to Belém, which sits at the Amazon's mouth and acts as a gatekeeper city through which transatlantic goods and people pass. As already mentioned, Belém was one of

Brazil's early theatrical centres. From the early nineteenth century, it was also one of the country's best-connected towns: when Dom João VI opened the ports to international trade in 1808, his action was met with strong opposition from certain Portuguese elements in Rio and Lisbon. In consequence, foreign trade was limited to five Brazilian ports: Rio, Bahia, Recife, São Luís, and Belém (Bethell 1989, 18). From early on, then, Belém was one of the five Brazilian cities most connected with the transatlantic world.

Despite the rivers connecting Manaus and Belém, the cities are over 800 miles from each other; as mentioned, the journey from Belém to Manaus undertaken by Martius and Spix in 1819 took three months (Spix & Martius 1938, 212, in Daou 2014, 71-72). Thirty years later, Wallace described the journey as still taking two to three months in the rainy season. He visited Manaus in 1849 and commented on the problems caused by its isolation – especially given its reliance at that time on imported goods from Pará:

No vessel had arrived from Pará for five months, and all supplies were exhausted. Flour had been long since finished, consequently there was no bread; neither was there biscuit, butter, sugar, cheese, wine, nor vinegar; molasses even, to sweeten our coffee, was very scarce; and the spirit of the country (cachaça) was so nearly exhausted, that it could only be obtained retail, and in the smallest quantities: everybody was reduced to farinha and fish, with beef twice a week, and turtle about as often. This state of destitution was owing to there having been a vessel lost a month before, near Barra, which was coming from Pará; and at this time of the year, when the river is full, and the winds adverse, the passage frequently takes from seventy days to three months, – having to be performed almost entirely by warping with a rope sent ahead in a canoe, against the powerful current of the Amazon. It may therefore be well imagined that Barra was not the most agreeable place in the world to reside in, when, joined to the total absence of amusement and society which universally prevails there, the want of the common necessities of life had also to be endured (Wallace 2010, 375).

Travel time was not only problematic between Manaus and Belém, but more generally between Brazil's northern provinces and the populous south-east: for much of the nineteenth century it was quicker to travel from Belém or Maranhão to Lisbon than to Rio (Bethell and Carvalho 1989, 48; Weinstein 1983, 57). Not long after Wallace's experience in Manaus, though, the challenges of distance were partially overcome with the introduction of the steamship to northern Brazil in the 1850s (around the same time as railway lines began to be installed in the north-east and south-east) (Graham 1989, 129-130; Weinstein 1983, 61).

When the biologist (and student of Martius and Spix) Louis Agassiz (1807-1873) travelled in the Amazon in 1865, he made the same journey in under a week and in much altered conditions:

The perils and adventures which attended the voyages of Spix and Martius, or even of more recent travellers, like [Francis de Laporte de] Castelnau, [Henry Walter] Bates, and Wallace, are no longer to be found on the main course of the Amazons [...] these days of Romantic adventure and hair-breadth escapes are over; the wild beasts of the forest have disappeared before the puff of the engine; the canoe and the encampment on the beach at night have given place to the prosaic conveniences of the steamboat (Agassiz 1868, 145, 442-443).

Even with the increased speed brought by steam in the 1850s, imperial policies left the Amazon waterways largely untraversed until the following decade (Daou 2000, 12). It was only in 1867 that the region's main rivers (the Tapajós, Madeira, Tocantins, and Amazonas) were opened to international commercial travel – a development that Agassiz predicted would ‘immensely accelerate the development of civilization in these desert regions’ (Agassiz 1868, 191). It certainly improved the Amazon's commercial relations, particularly with its main foreign trading partners – France, the United States, and the United Kingdom – to the extent that a shipping line was set up in the 1870s to run directly between Manaus and Liverpool (Daou 2000, 13-14; 2014, 46). The growing number of international merchant ships docking at Manaus and Belém brought with them the tastes of the Europeans and Americans on board, and both cities began to adopt these influences, looking particularly to the capital cities of Europe as symbols of advancement (Daou 2000, 16).

Besides bringing traded goods to the Amazon, the steamship industry also brought Europeans in search of employment. Many of them became involved in the rubber trade, but among the new arrivals in Belém were growing numbers of musicians and singers. The performers were increasingly attracted to the city from 1878 on, by a new opera house that had been built with the wealth from the rubber economy. The Theatro da Paz (Theatre of

Peace, so named in reference to the end of the Paraguayan War in 1870)³⁷ was constructed between 1869 and 1874 and opened its doors in 1878 (almost twenty years before the Teatro Amazonas) (Silveira 2010, 22, 83). Although Belém had a theatre in the eighteenth century, it was only a very small building. Little is known about it besides the fact that it was designed by the Italian Antonio Giuseppe Landi (1713-1791), an influential architect throughout northern Brazil who introduced the European neoclassical style to the region. It can be seen on maps of the city dating from 1783 and 1791 (Derenji 1996, 9-10; Páscoa 2009a, 16-17).

After this theatre closed in 1812, Belém tried to construct a new public performance venue in the 1820s, but lacked the manpower (Derenji 1996, 10; Silveira 2010, 73). A private theatre, the Teatro Providência, existed from at least 1835, but it seems not to have been particularly impressive: one local politician described it as *construído de madeira, acanhado, mal pintado* (made out of wood, meagre, badly painted) (Raiol n.d., 43, in Páscoa 2009b, 19). The new wealth that accrued in the city from the mid-century enabled much grander plans for a theatre, and when the venture was made possible in the 1860s, its completion both reflected and contributed to changes in the cityscape and in local habits. Although it continued the trend of neoclassical architecture introduced by Landi, it was more imposing and luxurious than his buildings, with interior furnishings imported from Europe (Derenji 1996; Silveira 2010, 97).³⁸

Belém had been a stopping point on a transatlantic opera circuit since at least the 1850s, with performances at the Teatro Providência by companies also visiting Rio, Recife, and São Luís (Páscoa 2009b, 19-23).³⁹ With the opening of the Teatro da Paz, opera

³⁷ In the Paraguayan War (1864-1870), the alliance of Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay, fought against Paraguay in the bloodiest inter-state war in South American history. For more information, see Schwarcz and Starling 2018, 324-334.

³⁸ Some critics, however, complained about the extent to which the construction deviated from classical norms; one even lamented that its lack of elegance caused it to resemble more closely a train station than an opera house (Derenji 1996, 38).

³⁹ The northern coastal city São Luís's Teatro União was inaugurated in 1817, its construction having been funded by private wealth amassed during the region's cotton boom. It later received some of the same Italian touring opera companies that visited Belém's Teatro da Paz and Manaus's Teatro Amazonas. Renamed the Teatro Arthur Azevedo in 1922, the venue is the second oldest Brazilian opera house still standing (Silva Filho 2017, 27-45).

performances became increasingly regular: Márcio Páscoa estimates that Belém became the most visited location by European opera singers in the north and north-east of Brazil (Páscoa 2006, 17, 25-26). The impresarios who procured the singers included the Italian baritone Giuseppe Dominici (dates unknown), who became director of the Teatro Amazonas in 1897; the *paraense* composer José Cândido da Gama Malcher (1853-1921); the *campineiro* conductor and pianist Joaquim Franco (c.1858-1927); and even the renowned Carlos Gomes, who lived his last years and died in Belém in 1896 (Páscoa 2009b, 33-37). The programmes of the early years at the Teatro da Paz primarily featured international repertory operas of the day: a solid Verdian base was seasoned with a generous helping of Donizetti and topped with Bellini's *Norma* and Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Occasional supplementary works included Gounod's *Faust* as well as operas by Carlos Gomes and by local *paraense* composers Henrique Eulálio Gurjão (1834-1885) and Gama Malcher (Páscoa 2009a, 41-49; 2009b, 379-383).

Early Manaus Venues

The rubber trade did not flourish overnight: following Goodyear's discovery, demand increased only gradually. Consequently, wealth accumulated in Manaus slowly at first. Yet, although large-scale urban reforms were only carried out in the 1880s and 90s, subtler markers of urbanisation pre-date these transformations. Such markers include a number of local performance venues that were built before the Teatro Amazonas. Four appear to have been the most significant: the Teatro Feito de Palha (under construction in 1859), the Teatro Variedade Cômica (built in the 1860s), the Teatro Beneficente Portuguesa (built in the 1870s), and the Éden Teatro (built in the 1880s) (Villanova 2008).⁴⁰ Identifying some specific features of these theatres can help to map a changing attitude toward the role of such

⁴⁰ Páscoa has also alleged the existence of several other theatres, including the Teatro Fênix and the Teatro Recreio Oriental, although no further details beyond their names are known (Páscoa 1997, 123).

buildings in Manaus, particularly in terms of their relationship with the surrounding rainforest.

The Teatro Feito de Palha (Theatre of Straw) may have been the earliest theatre building in Manaus (owing to the sparsity of source material, it is difficult to know for sure).⁴¹ It was mentioned in the writings of the German explorer Robert Avé-Lallemant (1812-1884) who, having visited the city in 1859, gave the following description:

Whoever in July 1859 risked crossing the completely ruined bridge that leads from the Bairro da Matriz, below, to Remédios across the tranquil creek, and climbing the hill to the church, could, before arriving at it, see to the right of the path the erection of a singular building, eyecatching by its size, its material, and still more by its purpose. Upon high pillars, which surrounded a large space, had been placed a thick roof of dried palm leaves [...] The walls were being made bit by bit out of plaited palm leaves, without any kind of window at all visible. And when I learned to what dark powers would be dedicated this monstrous porcupine – for that was what it most closely resembled – they told me that it would be a theatre. I thought without meaning to of the German amateur theatre in Porto Alegre. An ideal, compared to that horror of Manaus. And yet, this one was infinitely more in keeping with Nature (Avé-Lallemant 1961, 148-149).⁴²

Two parts of this text are of particular note. First, Avé-Lallemant's comparison of Manaus's 'monstrous porcupine' with the amateur German theatre of Porto Alegre (Brazil's southernmost capital city) reveals his perception of intense contrast between the far north and the extreme south of the country. His sense of Manaus's architectural and cultural development lagging behind that of Porto Alegre is unsurprising, given the lack of funding directed toward the northern province by the Brazilian Empire (Villanova 2008, 22). Second, Avé-Lallemant describes the theatre as in keeping with its surrounding nature: this theatre did not overtly contrast with the rainforest. It is of course important to bear in mind the eyes through which he viewed the Amazon setting, eyes probably influenced by the works of his

⁴¹ Selda Vale da Costa claims that the earliest theatre in Manaus was called the Teatro Providência, but does not give any evidence for her assertion. She may have confused it with the building of that name in Belém (Costa 1996, 13).

⁴² Quem em julho de 1859 se arriscasse a atravessar a ponte inteiramente arruinada, que leva do Bairro da Matriz, em baixo, aos Remédios, através do tranqüilo igarapé, e subisse o outeiro para a igreja, podia, antes de chegar a esta, ver à direita do caminho a ereção dum edifício singular, dando nas vistas pela sua extensão, seu material e ainda mais pelo seu destino. Sobre altos pilares, que cercavam um grande espaço, tinham pôsto um grosso telhado de fôlhas sêcas de palmeira [...] As paredes estavam sendo feitas, aos poucos, de fôlhas de palmeiras entrançadas, sem que se pudesse ver janela alguma. E quando me informei a que potências tenebrosas seria dedicado o monstruoso porco-espinho – pois a construção com o que mais se parecia era com isso – disseram-me que ia ser o teatro. Pensei sem querer no teatro alemão de amadores em Pôrto Alegre. Um ideal, comparado com aquê horror de Manaus. E, contudo, êste estava infinitamente mais conforme com a Natureza.

predecessor, Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), who saw equatorial South America as a unique site at which to observe ‘Nature’s ancient communion with the spiritual life of man’. Nowhere, wrote Humboldt, ‘does she [Nature] more deeply impress us with a sense of her greatness, nowhere does she speak to us more forcibly’ (Humboldt 1850, 154).⁴³ Perhaps, then, Avé-Lallemant would have been predisposed to identify the ‘communion’ of the theatre with its surrounding nature, as opposed to seeking a sense of rupture or opposition.

Despite the supposed uniqueness of this equatorial site, however, the use of locally sourced, naturally occurring materials was not especially unusual: materials such as straw, paxiúba palm, and other native woods were commonly used for construction in various parts of Brazil during the nineteenth century, and their use did not come to be considered ‘regressive’ until later. Toward the end of the century, straw was prohibited as building material in Manaus, by that point seen as a distasteful reminder of a ‘past’ best forgotten – the ‘past’ of indigenous cultural influence. Having said that, the European style of buildings that came into vogue did not convince all the locals. In the 5 July 1883 edition of the local newspaper *Jornal Amazonas*, one resident complained, ‘We live in a country of 36 [degrees] centigrade and have houses and attire as if we lived in lands of 15 degrees below zero!’ (Villanova 2008, 84-86)⁴⁴

Sources are scarce that mention the second of these four venues, the Teatro Variedade Cômica, but the *Jornal do Rio Negro* announced its opening on 23 April 1868.⁴⁵ Indeed, two years earlier, growing demand for a new performance venue was already being voiced. On 30 September 1866, an edition of the local newspaper *Amazonas* published a column signed ‘Baré Manao’, emphasising the ‘necessity’ of a new theatre in Manaus:

⁴³ For further detail on the significance of Humboldt’s writings to widely held perceptions of South America, see Pratt 2008, 109-140.

⁴⁴ Vivemos em um paiz de 36 centigrados e temos casas e vestuários como se habitassemos terras de 15 grãos abaixo de zero!

⁴⁵ An earlier edition of *Jornal do Rio Negro*, dated 7 March 1868, also announces a performance for that night under the heading ‘Variedade Cômica’; it could also have been the name of a performing company in Manaus.

The theatre [...] is without question a great element from which emanates light, only light, which enlightens all and with it brings good habits and civilisation [...] On this very day took place the solemn opening of the Provincial Assembly, and praise the heavens that its members cast their visions to the building of a theatre, whose necessity is as great as that of a sacred temple, where we would raise our most fervent prayers to the Creator (*Amazonas*, 30 September 1866, in Daou 2014, 165).⁴⁶

Based on this text, it appears that the Teatro Feito de Palha no longer existed by this point. Furthermore, the column published on the Variedade Cômica's inaugural night commented, 'For a long time Manáos has needed a theatre, where its population can have real recreational time, and, in the more moral examples that it offers us, can study the vicissitudes of the intimate pictures of life' (*Jornal do Rio Negro*, 23 April 1868).⁴⁷ Unfortunately, the architectural details of the Variedade Cômica are unknown, although a comment in the following day's copy of the *Jornal Rio Negro* suggests that the public did not consider it a stable construction (*Jornal Rio Negro*, 24 April 1868). Perhaps it was built out of palm leaves, wood, and straw, like its predecessor. A notable change, however, was the increased number of performances within it. In particular, productions by a travelling company directed by the impresario José Lima Penante were frequently well attended (Páscoa 1997, 121; Villanova 2008, 104, 132).⁴⁸

The Teatro Beneficente Portuguesa opened in 1875, established by a local institution that aimed to build a hospital in Manaus for Portuguese immigrants. It was a small, circular pavilion with a central column, affectionately referred to as the *chapéu de sol* (sun hat) (Villanova 2008, 141). Originally intended to hold auctions to raise money for the hospital, it became the city's main theatre for a time, hosting musical and theatrical performances as well as dances (Villanova 2008, 149). Little is known about the construction of the Beneficente

⁴⁶ O teatro [...] é sem constatação alguma um grande elemento donde dimana luz, só luz, que a todos ilumina e consigo arregimenta os bons costumes e a civilização [...] Neste mesmo dia teve lugar a abertura solene da Assembleia provincial, e praza aos céus que seus membros lancem suas vistas para a construtura de um teatro, cuja necessidade é tão grande como a de um templo sagrado, onde vamos erigir as nossas mais fervorosas preces ao Criador.

⁴⁷ Ha muito, que Manáos precisava de um theatro, onde a sua população tivesse verdadeiras horas de recreio e nos exemplos da mais san moral, que elle nos offerece, fosse estudar as peripecias dos quadros intimos de nossa vida.

⁴⁸ The actor and impresario Lima Penante was born in Pará in 1841 and ran a successful dramatic company that travelled through northern Brazil, visiting Manaus, Belém, and São Luís relatively often. The date of his death is unknown and little biographical information is available (Villanova 2008, 97, 103, 112).

besides the fact that wood and clay tiles were used, and that it had fallen into disrepair when it closed down in the late 1880s, with tiles rotting and termites in the woodwork. Both Páscoa and Simone Villanova assert, however, that a Russian engineer called Alexander Wagg was involved in the building project (Páscoa 1997, 122; Villanova 2008, 141-142).⁴⁹ The use of a foreign engineer shows a partial move away from local traditions of construction, even though the main materials may still have been locally sourced. However, not all the locals admired Wagg's creation. One commented that, despite the elegant simplicity of the decoration, the theatre's adornments were not sufficient to distract from the imperfect construction of the building (*Jornal Amazonas*, 23 November 1877).

Leaving aside its physical attributes, the Beneficente seems to have been the first venue in Manaus to host opera. An article from a 1907 edition of the local music magazine *A Platea* recalled a performance of opera extracts there in 1885, with mezzo-soprano Adele Naghel (c.1856-1891) and baritone Giuseppe Dominici accompanied by Joaquim Franco on the piano. All three of these performers were later to become important figures in the nascent opera scene in Amazonas (*Diário de Notícias*, 16 April 1891; Páscoa 2006, 50-51). In fact, the author of the article (with the benefit of hindsight) identified this performance as the initial step on the path toward the construction of the Teatro Amazonas:

I remember that in one of the intervals of this group's debut performance, a friend, praising the merit of the artists in my presence, declared with simple sincerity that he had thought them excellent, for the simple reason that it was the first time he had seen opera. Little did he know that he was witnessing the launching of the first stone of an edifice that would later be a worthy monument to the other factors of civilisation in this auspicious land (*A Platea*, 16 April 1907).⁵⁰

Several years after this initial operatic moment at the Beneficente, opera became a regular feature at the Édén Teatro, with full seasons held for the first time in 1890 (Páscoa 2009a,

⁴⁹ I have been unable to establish Wagg's dates or any other biographical information.

⁵⁰ The columnist's reference to the 'first stone of an edifice' is presumably metaphorical. If meant literally, his tale would be flawed: as I explain below, the foundation stone of the Teatro Amazonas had already been laid on 14 February 1884.

Lembro-me que em um dos intervallos do espectáculo de estréa d'esse grupo, um amigo extasiando-se em minha presença sobre o mérito dos artistas, declarara, com singela sinceridade, achal-os excellentes, pela simples razão de que era a primeira vez via o lyrico. Mal sabia elle que estava testemunhando o lançamento da primeira pedra de um edificio que mais tarde seria o monumento condigno dos demais factores da civilização n'esta futura terra.

45). The venue was inaugurated on 3 May 1888 with the full title *Éden de Pariz*, overtly referencing the *manauara* view that the French capital was the high point of art and culture (Páscoa 2009a, 41-42; Villanova 2008, 206).⁵¹ Physical descriptions of the *Éden* are largely unavailable, although it seems to have been considered a great improvement on its predecessor: the *Jornal do Amazonas* described it as having ‘much better facilities than the Teatro da Beneficente Portuguesa, which must be abandoned because it is out of date’,⁵² and it had electric lighting installed shortly after its inauguration (*Jornal do Amazonas*, 2 April 1888, in Páscoa 2009a, 41-42). There is, though, also evidence that the *Éden* failed to reach the apex of luxury. Two columns in the *Diário de Manaus* from 1893 show complaints about the facilities and regular disturbances. In ‘Chronica Burgueza’, a fictional *folhetim* (serial) based on the actual lives of Manaus’s elites, the author Francisco Barroso complained of the venue being uncomfortable, with mud at the exit: ‘It is a true irony to say that harmony and good taste were to nestle together in the *Éden* Teatro’ (*Diário de Manaus*, 26 February 1893).⁵³ Writing around the same time, the pseudonymous ‘binocolini’ (a columnist for *Amazonas* from 1890 to 1893) also commented on the mud, but approved of the recent construction of a ramp to allow audience members to avoid it elegantly. He moreover commended the recent improvements to the electric lighting, but was unimpressed by the use of fireworks to announce the debut of an opera company, and by the presence of dogs in the theatre (*Diário de Manaus*, 21 February 1893).

The *Éden*’s operatic life was short-lived, with seasons only taking place regularly between 1890 and 1893. Although performances continued semi-regularly and the building survived into the twentieth century, opera production stalled after 1893 and the local press lost interest. State funds and local attention had been redirected to the building of a new venue

⁵¹ Mário Ypiranga dates the *Éden* to 1869, but does not cite any sources. There may have been an early theatre of the same name, but Villanova notes that she has not found any evidence of this. Furthermore, Mário Ypiranga confuses other details from this period, such as stating that the *Thalia* was the name of a theatre, when in fact editions of the newspaper *Amazonas* show that it was the name of a dramatic company (*Amazonas*, 9 January 1867; 6 February 1867; Monteiro 2003, 21; Villanova 2008, 187-188).

⁵² muito melhores acomodações do que o teatro da Beneficente Portuguesa, que é preciso abandonar-se por estar fora de atualidade.

⁵³ É uma verdadeira ironia dizer se que no *Eden-Theatro* foi aninhar-se a harmonia e o bom gosto.

that, once opened, came to dominate the performance scene in Manaus: the Teatro Amazonas (Páscoa 2009a, 52-57; Villanova 2008, 190-208).

Bricks, Mortar, and Steel

The idea of building an opera house in Manaus was first proposed on 21 May 1881 by the local politician Antônio José Fernandes Júnior. He argued that a purpose-built venue was needed to house musical and theatrical performances, which he regarded as *incontestavelmente de utilidade publica* (incontestably of public utility). He furthermore asserted that the province had accrued sufficient resources for such a project to be carried out, and that it would advance the *civilização e embelezamento* (civilisation and beautification) of the city (*Annaes da Assembléia Legislativa Provincial do Amazonas 1880-1881* 1885, 77-103, in Mesquita 2006, 206). Following Fernandes Júnior's initial proposal, however, issues with the design and budget delayed the laying of the foundation stone until 14 February 1884; even once building work began, it proceeded slowly owing to problems with a small workforce and continual disagreements over contracts. Only in 1893 did the pace of construction pick up, when the new governor, Ribeiro, took the decision to import the necessary workforce from other Brazilian states (Mesquita 2006, 206-212; Monteiro 2003, 51).

The opera house was eventually inaugurated on 31 December 1896. Many of the materials used in its construction were imported from across the Atlantic, and a number of the artists employed to work on the interior design were European. Among them was the Italian Domenico de Angelis (1853-1900), who had previously worked on Belém's Teatro da Paz.⁵⁴ The new edifice significantly differed from its predecessor venues: whereas earlier structures were usually made out of wood and palm leaves taken from the surrounding rainforest, the Teatro was built of stone and steel, much of which was imported from Europe. The tradition of using local materials had gone, along with the inclination to view human culture and nature

⁵⁴ See Mesquita 2006, 227-228; 2009, 201; Monteiro 2003, 51, 174-176; Silveira 2010, 226; Tocantins 1963, 132.

in communion. Otoni Mesquita, among others, considers it the most significant Belle Époque building in Manaus, both because of the expense and labour that went into it, and because of what it symbolised: ‘victory of man over the jungle, financial prosperity, and the alleged artistic-cultural effervescence’ (Mesquita 2006, 205-206).⁵⁵

Although the Teatro is today surrounded by numerous high-rises, it towered over the buildings that surrounded it at the end of the nineteenth century. Its basic shape is a symmetrical oblong, with two outdoor balconies protruding from the longer sides. Its frontal façade extends into a portico topped by a curved pediment with the date 1896 and two reclining female figures inside the tympanum, probably allegories of Music and Theatre (Mesquita 2006, 226). Despite some allusions to classicism (such as the inclusion of a portico), both Mesquita and Jussara Derenji describe the building as eclectic, contrasting it with Belém’s Teatro da Paz, which conformed more closely to the classical style in its early years (Derenji 1996, 58, 62-63; Mesquita 2006, 216).⁵⁶

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the Teatro is its dome, made from latticed iron and decorated with vitrified tiles of yellow, green, blue, and red (Daou 2014, 189). By imitating the colour scheme and design of the Brazilian flag, the dome provided a blatant icon of the *ordem e progresso* of the new republic.⁵⁷ The dome has no practical function: unlike opera houses modelled after the Parisian Palais Garnier, the interior ceiling of the auditorium sits lower than the dome’s base and is not itself rounded, so it does not serve to affect the acoustic (see Beranek 1962, 237-241; Daou 2014, 183-184; Derenji 1996, 23). Rather, it

⁵⁵ vitória do homem sobre a selva, a prosperidade financeira e a pretensa efervescência artístico-cultural

⁵⁶ Eclectic decorative features were also added to the Teatro da Paz, but only in 1905, 27 years after it opened. In contrast, such elements were worked into the Teatro Amazonas from its initial construction (Derenji 1996, 63).

⁵⁷ Despite its symbolic significance, the dome appears to have been an afterthought. A picture from an album dated 1893, entitled *The City of Manaus and the Country of Rubber Tree*, shows the front façade of the Teatro with no dome, and, according to Mesquita, the archives of the Teatro have a document comprising plans for a metallic dome, dated 1894 (Mesquita 2006, 214-215). (I did not come across this document during my time working in this archive.) The basic design of the imperial Brazilian flag did not change substantially when the country became a republic. Today, it is often claimed that the green shows Brazil’s natural flourishing, and the gold its natural wealth; however, in the imperial flag, green was the colour of the Portuguese house of Braganza and yellow of the Austrian house of Habsburg. Drawing on Homi Bhabha’s work on mimicry, Lilia Schwarcz labels this symbolic reworking an ‘original copy’, and observes that it is ‘typical of Brazil’s process of cultural development’ (Schwarcz 2004, xix-xxi; see also Bhabha 2004, 121-131).

exists purely as an ostentatious feat of engineering comparable to that of the Eiffel Tower, also constructed out of latticed iron around a decade earlier (Daou 2014, 189; Valladares 1974, 19-20).⁵⁸ The dome was not popular in all corners, however: objections arose from members of the local elite who felt that its resemblance to the Brazilian flag valued national over regional interests.⁵⁹ The contemporary newspaper *Amazonas* summarised some of the criticisms:

In fact, it was not a purely aesthetic question, and the dome was severely criticised less for its structural weight than for its symbolic weight, expressed in terms of eccentricity of form, of bizarre polychromy, and of high costs. We have written much about this formidable cripple of architecture and perennial sorcery of public and state funds, demonstrating its uselessness and inconvenience (*Amazonas*, 28 February 1898, in Daou 2014, 185).⁶⁰

Perturbing to some of the local elites, then, the multicoloured dome both symbolised the Brazilian nation and imitated a sense of French architectural daring, a sense brought directly back to Manaus by the 500 representatives from Amazonas who visited the Paris Exposition of 1889.⁶¹ Besides the dome, iron shipped from Glasgow was also used prolifically for structural support throughout the building; it is mostly hidden from view, but can be seen in some of the interior staircases and bannisters, the railings of the boxes in the auditorium, and the benches in the foyer (Mesquita 2006, 212-213; Monteiro 2003, 51, 174).

The Teatro's main interior spaces are the auditorium and the Salão Nobre, a sumptuously elegant room kept for the social activities of the elite. The auditorium follows

⁵⁸ The dome is such an arresting accomplishment that Márcio Souza was inspired to feature as a character in his comedic novel *Galvez, imperador do Acre* an eccentric Englishman who espouses its undeniable extra-terrestrial origins (Souza 2001, 102-103).

⁵⁹ As Daou points out, the dome was installed only shortly after the Federalist Revolution between 1893 and 1895 in the southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, in which disillusioned federalists fought the recently established republic for greater governmental decentralisation (Daou 2014, 187). In this sense, local controversy over the dome reflects the more general dispute over the powers of individual states in Brazil.

⁶⁰ De fato, não se tratava de uma questão puramente estética e a cúpula foi severamente criticada menos por seu peso estrutural que pelo seu peso simbólico, aqui expresso no apelo à excentricidade da forma, da policromia bizarra e dos elevados custos. Sobre este formidável aleijão de arquitetura e perene sorvedura dos dinheiros públicos e do estado muito temos escrito, demonstrando sua imprestabilidade e inconveniência.

⁶¹ In advance of the Exposition, Henri Coudreau (a French professor and explorer of the Amazon, 1859-1899) compared the journey to be made by these representatives of Amazonia with a 'pilgrimage to Mecca', from which they would bring back 'our latest school books, the latest productions of our scholars, the latest masterpieces of our industry, the latest ideas of our progressive democracy': 'J'en connais au moins cinq cents dans l'Amazonie qui, dès maintenant, commencent à faire des économies pour venir passer six mois à notre grand Exposition de 1889; et alors, quand ils auront fait leur pèlerinage de la Mecque, ils remporteront comme souvenirs nos derniers ouvrages scolaires, les dernières productions de nos savants, les derniers chefs-d'œuvre de notre industrie, les dernières idées de notre démocratie progressiste' (Coudreau 1887, 14).

the typical Italian design: a lyre or horseshoe formation with four tiers of boxes, the lowest of which is only slightly elevated from the stalls. The decoration is ornate, with brass and stucco rococo ornamentation and red velvet upholstery. The stage is framed by a typical high proscenium arch, from which hangs a drop-curtain probably painted by Brazilian artist Crispim do Amaral (1858-1911), who had previously worked on the Teatro da Paz (Mesquita 2006, 221-222; Silveira 2010, 217-218).⁶² The curtain displays an allegorical depiction of the Meeting of the Waters, a geographical phenomenon that occurs close to Manaus in which the two differently coloured main tributaries of the Amazon River meet but do not mix for many miles (Mesquita 2006, 221-222). The artwork on the ceiling is partitioned into four sections, with the section immediately above the stage depicting the famous Carlos Gomes being crowned with a garland by a winged figure. Lining the horseshoe around the stalls are twenty-two ionic columns supporting electric lights. Each column also bears an identical Greek theatre mask and the name of an artist: Racine, Rossini, Mozart, Gil Vicente, Wagner, [Pedro] Calderón, Corneille, Antônio José [da Silva], [João Baptista da Silva Leitão de Almeida] Garrett, Metastasio, Lope de Vega, [Vittorio] Alfieri, Schiller, Aristophanes, Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Molière, Beethoven, Goethe, [Gotthold Ephraim] Lessing, [Luís Carlos Martins] Pena, and Verdi (Mesquita 2006, 221-222). Notably, only two Brazil-born artists – playwright Martins Pena (1815-1848) and librettist da Silva – feature among these giants of Western European and Ancient Greek music and theatre.

The Salão Nobre was not completed when the Teatro was inaugurated at the end of 1896; its rococo decoration was begun in 1897 and completed in 1901.⁶³ The decorative works were carried out by de Angelis and several of his art students (Derenji 1996, 69;

⁶² Amaral seems to have been a multi-talented character: a sometime resident of Paris, he was an actor, musician, scenographer, and decorator of the Comédie Française. Between 1886 and 1890, Amaral lived in Rome, and was connected with the San Luca Academy, an institution at which a number of the artists and architects working in the north of Brazil (and specifically on the Teatro da Paz and the Teatro Amazonas) trained (Derenji 1996, 7, 64; Monteiro 2003, 68). For more detail on the influence of Italian architecture in the north of Brazil, see Derenji 1998. For preservation purposes, Amaral's curtain is now rarely used.

⁶³ Mesquita gives 24 June 1901 as the inauguration date for the Salao Nobre; according to Daou, it happened on 29 July 1901 (Daou 2007, 65; Mesquita 2006, 223-225). For a 360-degree view of the Salão Nobre, visit https://cartola.org/panoramas/20130621-Teatro_Amazonas-Salao/.

Silveira 2010, 217-221). The parquet flooring is made of Amazonian woods of different shades, placed in an artistic design of star shapes; columns of imitation marble line the room, with chandeliers hanging between them;⁶⁴ mirrors on opposite walls create a sense of openness and space; double doors open onto an outdoor balcony; and a gallery runs around the top of the room. Eight busts also encircle the Salão: in contrast to the columns in the auditorium, they are all of noted Brazilian figures, including Carlos Gomes, the novelist José de Alencar (1829-1877), and the Romantic poet Antônio Gonçalves Dias (1823-1864) (Mesquita 2006, 224). The plafond depicts a blue sky filled with Greek Muses and other allegorical figures; at the shorter edges of the rectangular painting, verdant Amazonian palms creep up toward the Muses (Daou 2007, 65-66; Monteiro 2003, 87; Valladares 1974, 42).

The walls are adorned with paintings depicting scenes from Amazonian nature and daily life, including a jaguar hunting, electric blue butterflies, a pair of storks, and a man punting a canoe along a creek (Daou 2007, 66). Two paintings are of particular note: the first is of a steamship travelling along a river, a plume of black smoke billowing in its wake. It symbolises the opening of the Amazon waterways to international travel in 1867, an act that served to connect the region with the wider world and to stimulate trade (because of its vast size, ocean-faring steamliners can travel up the Amazon River as far as Manaus) (Daou 2007, 61-63). The second important painting is worth discussing in more detail. It shows a scene from *O Guarany*, a novel by José de Alencar later adapted into an opera by Carlos Gomes, in which the indigenous Peri saves the Portuguese Ceci from her father's burning castle. Peri has just abandoned his indigenous gods and converted to Christianity in order to win the hand of Ceci. Of all the pictures in the Salão Nobre, this is the only one that depicts an indigenous Amazonian, so that the one nod to indigeneity in fact alludes to Christianity prevailing over indigenous beliefs.

⁶⁴ There is much confusion concerning the material of these columns, with many believing them to be genuine Carrara marble. They are in fact made of stone and cement and painted to resemble marble (Monteiro 2003, 87).

Although the painting was mounted in the Salão Nobre in the early 1900s, the opera that inspired it was composed in the 1860s (premiering at Milan's Teatro alla Scala in 1870) and Alencar's original novel was published in 1857. These earlier dates fall within the golden age of Indianismo, an artistic and literary genre that coalesced following Brazil's declaration of independence in 1822 (when a desire for national affirmation permeated the cultural sphere) and peaked between 1850 and 1865. Indianismo involved the technique of adopting indigenous peoples to symbolise the 'authentic Brazilian', owing to perceived problems with the other potential options: the Portuguese were seen as foreign colonisers, the Africans as foreign slaves, and those of mixed racial heritage as products of inappropriate sexual relations (Brookshaw 1988, 9, 33-34; Driver 1942, 41-42).

Numerous contradictions inhered in Indianismo; for example, while celebrating indigenous customs, it praised Christian missionaries who imposed their faith on tribes. Furthermore, the romanticisation of indigeneity in art and literature contrasted with the actual treatment of indigenous communities during that time: many tribes were either eradicated or coerced into wretched working conditions. In Manaus, the undesired indigenous presence was either made invisible, through the displacement of indigenous communities to the outskirts of the city, or assimilated into the urban population through the socialisation of 'orphaned' indigenous children at state-run educational establishments (Soares 2014, 59-62).⁶⁵ To cope with these contradictions, Indianist writers tended to embrace the attitude that 'progress' was inevitable, and that indigenous casualties were merely collateral damage on the path to it (Brookshaw 1988, 37-47; Guzmán 2013, 67-68; Treece 2000, 3). The *Guarany* painting is typical of Indianismo, portraying the stylised Brazilian 'Indian' rather than dealing with the reality of indigeneity.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Despite the use of the term 'orphan', indigenous children were often taken from their parents to be placed in these institutions (Soares 2014, 59).

⁶⁶ The painting post-dates the high point of Indianismo, and its placement in the Salão Nobre thirty years after the premiere of Gomes's opera in fact coincided with the entrenchment in Brazil of new ideas concerning race and ethnicity. These ideas culminated in a project of *branqueamento*, essentially a branch of eugenics aimed at whitening the population. As a result of this project, European immigration to Brazil was increasingly

Besides the structural ironwork, much of the interior design and furnishing of the Teatro was also crafted in Europe, a large portion of it provided by the Koch Frères Company in Paris (Monteiro 2003, 62, 80-82, 103). At one point, the customs house in Manaus was so full of furniture for the opera house that it was unable to make room for other goods, as demonstrated by this notice to the customs inspector published in the city's official daily newspaper:

Sr. Inspector of the Customs House of Manaus,
In response to message no. 105 of the third of this month, in which you asked to be made available, of this Customs House, one of the compartments of the warehouse '15 de Novembro' owned by the State, in order to collect about two thousand volumes of merchandise in transit to Peru, I declare that it is not possible to accede to your request, because presently stored in this warehouse is a great quantity of telegraph wire, large boxes with furniture of the Palácio do Governo and Teatro Amazonas, disassembled iron fences for planting trees throughout the city, and more, and the [revenue authorities] will require a large space for the rubber that should come in from the interior this month (*Diário Oficial*, 24 August 1894).⁶⁷

An announcement from the same newspaper a year later shows the customs house reclaiming from the government duties paid for the importation of materials specifically for the Teatro, between May 1894 and March 1895. It lists the following items:

1 barrel containing furnishings
81 boxes containing furnishings
3 boxes of mirrors
5 boxes of large mirrors
5 boxes of ropes
62 boxes containing 792 iron chairs
7 boxes of varnished cast iron works
2 boxes of linen rugs
2 barrels of tableware
66,740 plain clay tiles
(*Diário Oficial*, 12 March 1895)

It was not only large amounts of material that were shipped to Manaus from Europe, however.

Many of the skilled workers on the project had to be imported, as there was a lack of local craftsmen and artists. A law passed on 21 September 1892 granted free third-class travel

encouraged as the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth (Guzmán 2013, 90-91, 238; see also Soares 2014, 42).

⁶⁷ Sr. inspetor da Alfândega de Manaus, Em resposta ao ofício no. 105 de 3 do corrente, em que pedis para pôr a disposição dessa Alfandega, um dos compartimentos do Trapiche '15 de Novembro' de propriedade do Estado, afim de serem a elle recolhidos cerca de dous mil volumes de mercadorias, em trânsito para o Perú, declaro-vos que não é possível aceder ao vosso pedido por achar-se presentemente armazenada n'aquelle trapiche, grande quantidade de fios para telegrapho, caixões com mobília do Palacio do Governo e Theatro Amazonas, cercas de ferro desmanchadas para arborisação da cidade e mais volumes, e necessitar a Recebedoria Estadual de grande espaço para a borracha que deve entrar do interior neste mez.

tickets to skilled labourers willing to take up residence in Manaus (carpenters and stonemasons were particularly encouraged). Mário Ypiranga estimates that hundreds of people took advantage of this law, coming both from abroad and from neighbouring Brazilian states (Monteiro 2003, 65-67; see also Valladares 1974, 24-25).

The materials used in the construction of the Teatro, and their manipulation by an imported workforce, show the keenness of the appetite for the European in fin-de-siècle Manaus. As such, the Amazonian city participated in a broader South American phenomenon in which the importation of goods from Europe boomed exponentially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a trend described by Benjamin Orlove and Arnold Bauer as ‘a fervor, approaching in some cases an insatiability’ (Orlove and Bauer 1997, 18). The Teatro reproduced faithfully the model of the European opera house, preserving its main characteristics and symbolism; as Leo Beranek put it in 1962, ‘The European opera house has been the most stable space for music ever designed [...] Ubiquitous is the circular, tiered opera house’ (Beranek 1962, 51; see also Bereson 2002, ix, 5-6). In an attempt to align itself with the leading urban centres in Europe and the United States, Manaus’s new Teatro functioned as a showcase of local wealth and progress.

The prosperity brought by the rubber trade was not to last, however: after peaking in 1910, the price of Brazilian rubber crashed spectacularly. The events that led to this crash, though, took place much earlier. A carefully orchestrated project, initiated in the 1850s, resulted in the removal in 1876 of large quantities of rubber seeds from the Amazon by an Englishman named Henry Wickham (1846-1928). The seeds were transported first to Kew Gardens in London, and from there to plantations in Asia (Burns 1965, 400; Dean 1987, 7).⁶⁸ Rubber trees planted in Ceylon began to flower in 1881, and the British-run plantations in South-East Asia became increasingly successful during the 1890s, from which point their rubber was introduced into the world market (Burns 1965, 418-419; Dean 1987, 30). On the

⁶⁸ Several scholars have examined in detail other factors in the collapse of the rubber trade and its failure to generate more sustained development in Amazonia. See, in particular, Barham and Coomes 1997; Weinstein 1983.

behaviour of the British in this matter, Warren Dean comments, ‘They went ahead, not against the desires of the Brazilian government, but for all the world as though the Brazilian government did not exist and the only authorities in that quarter of the world were British consuls’ (Dean 1987, 20). Thus, continuing a long-established habit of interfering in Brazilian affairs, Britain essentially broke the Amazonian monopoly on globally traded rubber, causing the local economies of Manaus and Belém to collapse.⁶⁹ The Teatro, however, remained stubbornly standing.

Conclusion

During Brazil’s colonial period, Manaus’s isolated inland location prevented it from adopting the nascent operatic practices that burgeoned along the country’s Atlantic coastline. Only with its designation as the capital of the province of Amazonas in 1850 did its situation begin to change. Subsequently, and coupled with the new powers granted to the region when it became a state in 1889, came a surge in wealth and international immigration precipitated by the rubber trade. From that point on, Manaus’s links with the region’s vast river networks made it possible for luxury goods and cultural forms including opera to travel up-river from Belém, facilitated by the introduction of steamships to the region. Thus, despite being located approximately 800 miles inland, Manaus became (if only figuratively speaking) part of a transatlantic operatic sphere.

Although theatres existed in Manaus since at least 1859, much changed from the time of Avé-Lallemant’s ‘monstrous porcupine’ to the days of the Teatro in the 1880s and 90s. In newly republican Brazil, with a strong desire for *ordem e progresso*, the local theatre in Manaus no longer blended in communion with its natural surroundings, but contrasted with them. Communion had turned to rupture and, at least from some quarters, a sense of inappropriateness. Underlying the positively spun narrative of conquering nature, however,

⁶⁹ For more information on the British influence in nineteenth-century Brazil, see Graham 1972.

were darker implications: besides the complaints about European-style buildings in a tropical climate, Wallace's wry observation about the superficiality of the new bureaucratic structure suggests that the political and status symbols adopted had little actual substance. Indeed, Márcio Souza would much later refer to Belle Époque Manaus as little more than a *caricatura de civilização* (caricature of civilisation) (Souza 2010, 127). Owing largely to the transient and unstable character of the rubber boom, fin-de-siècle Manaus did not break out of its liminal status between provincial town and international centre of commerce. A sense of tension remained between the opera house and its Amazonian location.

Chapter Two (Opera) Fever in Belle Époque Manaus

The Teatro Amazonas was inaugurated by local officials, seemingly with little pomp or circumstance, on 31 December 1896.⁷⁰ A week later, its auditorium was filled with the sounds of Amilcare Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*, transported across the Atlantic to Manaus by Brazilian impresario Joaquim Franco's Companhia Lírica Italiana.⁷¹ Even though opera had already been heard in Manaus in various guises, the opening of the Teatro – a conspicuous, expensive work of architecture – still marked a turning point for the city, reflecting its newly crafted identity as a wealthy, sophisticated urban centre. This period of Manaus's past, which lasted until the rubber economy crashed around 1910, has subsequently been historicised as a 'golden age' in such varied contexts as academic scholarship, tourist brochures, films, and novels. As João Pacheco de Oliveira puts it,

The city of Manaus at the peak of the rubber boom is thought of as if it were a point of light confronted with the darkness of the forest, like an oasis of civilisation amid the desert of history and the primacy of nature. This is exactly why it has been repeated and obsessively described, remembered, criticised and interpreted by dozens of scientists, travellers, administrators, intellectuals and artists (Oliveira 2014, 16).⁷²

In parallel, the Teatro's first decade of activity has been elevated to a privileged status in local music histories. Márcio Páscoa, for example, primarily focuses his studies of musical Manaus on this period (Páscoa 1997; 2009a).⁷³ Furthermore, besides dedicating almost half of his history of the Teatro to this initial decade, Mário Ypiranga Monteiro depicts the inaugural opera performance of 1897 as a unique occurrence: 'a night of splendour, of living, of paroxysms. A night such as we may never again have in this land' (Monteiro 2003, 164-

⁷⁰ Mário Ypiranga Monteiro comments on how little press coverage there was of the event (Monteiro 2003, 155-159).

⁷¹ Franco's date of birth is not known, but Márcio Páscoa estimates it as either 1858 or 1859. He died in 1927 (Páscoa 1997, 94-95).

⁷² A cidade de Manaus no apogeu da borracha é pensada como se fosse o foco de luz confrontado com a escuridão das matas, tida como o oásis de civilização em meio ao deserto de história e ao primado da natureza. É exatamente por isso que ela é repetida e obsessivamente descrita, recordada, criticada e interpretada por dezenas de cientistas, viajantes, administradores, intelectuais e artistas.

⁷³ In *Cronologia Lírica de Manaus*, though, he covers the opera festivals of 1997-1999 in addition to describing the Teatro's activities during the Belle Époque (Páscoa 2000).

165).⁷⁴ In his historical novel *Teatro Amazonas*, Rogel Samuel conjures up images of splendour when he describes the arrival of the audience members on this same opening night:

when Erico de Aguiar Picanço arrived, everyone watching let out an ‘oh!’ of surprise and admiration, for Esmeralda Picanço carried her famous emeralds. The necklace and earrings of emeralds and diamonds, renowned in Manaus high society, were highlighted by the beautiful neck and the black silk dress of their owner [...] And so arrived the guests, who were the elite of the north of Brazil [...] In the Salão Nobre, Veuve Clicquot champagne was served in crystal glasses (Samuel 2012).⁷⁵

In a similar vein, the opening scene of Werner Herzog’s *Fitzcarraldo* shows horses outside the Teatro being watered with champagne; and Márcio Souza’s *Galvez, imperador do Acre* tells the story of ‘an adventurer who actually witnessed those cigars being lit by one-hundred-dollar bills’,⁷⁶ with Souza cynically describing fin-de-siècle Manaus as ‘[a place where] the dissipation of acquired wealth was carried out with such prodigious ostentation that there was not enough imagination left to overcome its monotony’ (*Fitzcarraldo* 1982; Souza 2001, 13, 16).⁷⁷

Elsewhere, in various travel blogs and tourism websites, the conflation of this period with opera crystallises in the myth that the Teatro was constructed in order to entice the famous tenor Enrico Caruso (1873-1921) to perform in Amazonia (‘Teatro Amazonas in Manaus’). Although Caruso never actually sang in Manaus, the myth did suffice to lure another famous tenor there in 1995: Luciano Pavarotti. The opening shot of the 2019 documentary *Pavarotti*, which depicts the front of a canoe on the muddy Amazon River, is followed by a clip of the opera star singing to a private audience of a few friends inside the Teatro. In a voiceover, flautist Andrea Griminelli recalls that the trip to Manaus had been a ‘pilgrimage’ for Pavarotti, who had wanted to sing on the stage that Caruso had sung on a

⁷⁴ uma noite de esplendor, de vivência, de paroxismos. Uma noite como talvez nunca mais tenhamos nesta terra.

⁷⁵ quando apareceu Erico de Aguiar Picanço todas as pessoas que assistiam a entrada exclamaram um ‘oh!’ de surpresa e admiração, pois Esmeralda Picanço portava as suas famosas esmeraldas: era um colar e brincos de esmeraldas e diamantes famosos na alta sociedade manauara, realçados pelo belo pescoço e o vestido de seda preta de sua dona [...] E assim foram chegando os convidados, que era elite do Norte do Brasil [...] No ‘Salão Nobre’, em taças de cristal, servia-se o champanha La Grand Dame Veuve Clicquot.

⁷⁶ [u]m aventureiro que assistiu às notas de mil-réis acenderam os charutos

⁷⁷ a dissipação da riqueza se fazia com ostentação e disso não havia imaginação que livrasse da monotonia.

century earlier (*Pavarotti* 2019). The documentary, moreover, does not set the record straight, and the Caruso myth is accordingly perpetuated.

The Teatro had, though, been built specifically to host European opera: with its lavish interior furnishings, horseshoe auditorium, orchestra pit, tiered boxes, and proscenium arch, its intended purpose could not be misconstrued.⁷⁸ Yet, although it hosted Italian and French opera companies during its early years, it did so only sporadically: opera seasons took place in 1897, 1901, 1902, 1906 and 1907, and were interspersed with performances of revues, zarzuelas, variety shows, and dramatic works. Many of these other productions were performed by Brazilian and Portuguese companies, and a few by Spanish, Japanese, and North American groups. This portion of the Teatro's history is in fact, therefore, only partially about opera: other genres were also important, as were the ways in which local audiences responded to the array of entertainment on offer.

This chapter examines the Teatro's musical activity from 1897 to 1907. The literature mentioned above provides some accurate information on this period; for example, Manaus was wealthier at this time than for most of its history, and more opera was performed in these years than for the remainder of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the portrayal of the period as an age of opulence and excess is, in some ways, misleading. As Barbara Weinstein points out, 'any boom economy will produce stories of fortunes earned and spent overnight' (Weinstein 1983, 86-87). I therefore seek to nuance the common representation of this period as the Teatro's 'golden age', exploring some of the intricate cultural negotiations that were involved in producing music there during this time.

The chapter proceeds in four sections. I begin by sketching a profile of the Teatro, which includes: outlines of the city's population and the Teatro's audiences, ticket prices, when seasons took place, the main impresarios involved, and the repertory performed. I then

⁷⁸ In this sense, it contrasted with a number of other Brazilian opera venues, which were designed to be more multi-purpose. Even Rio de Janeiro's main opera house, the Teatro Lírico (inaugurated in 1871), was designed to host both opera and circus performances (and was, as a result, treated with disdain by visiting Parisians) (Magaldi 2004, 46; Needell 1987, 77, 263).

consider musical activity at the opera house in relation to Benjamin Walton's assertion that nineteenth-century Latin American cities sought access, through opera, to a 'global fantasy of civilisation' (Walton 2012). In many ways, the 'fantasy' theory fits: there was often a gap between the idea of opera in the Amazon and the practicalities of it, but not enough of a gap to weaken substantially the rhetoric of opera's civilising qualities (see Walton 2019, 132). Next, I discuss the effects that local outbreaks of disease had on the opera house during these years, exploring the ways in which persistent tropes about the tropics affected musical production. This discussion also provides another angle on the historical narrative, engaging with views of the Teatro in Europe. Finally, I examine some of the ways in which *manauaras* sought to balance local, national, and international concerns, both through opera and through revues focused on Amazonian themes.

Setting the Scene

Estimates of Manaus's population at the turn of the twentieth century range between 35,000 and 60,000 (Dias 1999, 38; Gonçalves 1904, 87). With its indigenous inhabitants displaced (or assimilated) by that point,⁷⁹ this population comprised Brazilians of mixed European and indigenous heritage, foreign immigrants, Brazilian immigrants, and a small number of Afro-Brazilians (Dias 1999, 36-37).⁸⁰ The labour force was primarily made up of *cearenses* who had moved to Amazonia to escape the droughts of their home state in the north-east. They performed manual labour while waiting to go into the rainforest to tap rubber, constructing the city's new roads and buildings (Dias 1999, 142).⁸¹

There are no extant official figures regarding the city's foreign contingent, but it seems to have been substantial: a Portuguese encyclopedia published in 1901, for example, asserted

⁷⁹ See Chapter One, 45.

⁸⁰ In having a small Afro-Brazilian population, Amazonia differed notably from Brazil's north-east and south-east, both of which had large African populations until slavery was abolished in 1888. The Amazon was distant from the main slave trade routes throughout the colonial period. Moreover, although the Brazilian government omitted to enforce the ban on the trade in 1831, persistent transatlantic smuggling was still prevented from reaching the north of Brazil by British naval ships stationed in the Caribbean (Weinstein 1983, 11, 44).

⁸¹ In 1883, approximately 60,000 *cearenses* were recorded as residents of the Amazon region (mostly outside Manaus) (Mesquita 2006, 129).

that foreigners counted for two-fifths of Manaus's population (Mesquita 2006, 147). The largest foreign group was the Portuguese, who were heavily involved in overseeing the rubber trade alongside British, French, German, and North American migrants. Spanish, Italian, Syrian, and Lebanese communities ran other businesses in the city, and a smaller number of Sephardic Jews were employed by Belém's *aviador* houses to work as itinerant peddlars across Amazonia (Weinstein 1983, 50-58).⁸² In his 1904 book *O Amazonas: esboço histórico, chorográfico e estatístico até o ano de 1903*, the *maranhense* lawyer and politician Augusto César Lopes Gonçalves (1870-1938) includes a list of the nationalities of Manaus's hotel guests between 1898 and 1902. Although many of these would have been visitors rather than permanent residents, the list does give a sense of the varying prominence of different national groups during this period:

Portuguese: 2,407
Spanish: 1,105
Italian: 951
Peruvian: 592
French: 485
Russian: 350
German: 263
English: 225
Bolivian: 130
Austrian: 98
Colombian: 77
Arab: 67
Hungarian: 57
Argentine: 44
Belgian: 30
Moroccan: 17
Swiss: 17
Chilean: 16
Uruguayan: 10
Dutch: 8
Venezuelan: 7
Chinese: 2
Turkish: 2
Paraguayan: 1
Japanese: 1
Swedish: 1

(Gonçalves 1904)

⁸² The term *aviador* refers to an individual who hires rubber tappers and supplies them with goods on credit (Ridings 2004, 128-129).

Only a relatively small portion of this diverse population made up the Teatro's audiences: containing just 700 seats, its auditorium could accommodate 1-2% of the populace on any one night.⁸³ Throughout this period, tickets to opera performances cost between 35\$000 *réis* (for the best boxes) and 3\$000 *réis* (for the cheapest single seat); the seats were much dearer than those at the Éden Teatro earlier in the 1890s, when the most expensive box cost 16\$000 *réis* (Monteiro 2003; Páscoa 2009a).⁸⁴ To put these prices into perspective: members of the Amazonas government received a daily stipend of 60\$000 *réis*, judges earned a monthly salary of between 500\$000 *réis* and 1:500\$000 *réis*, and a room at the Italian-owned Hotel Cassiano (where the Teatro's top performers were put up) cost 15\$000 *réis* per night (Ferruggia 1901, 365; Gonçalves 1904, 81-83; Mesquita 2006, 149). In contrast, social housing for labourers was rented out at a cost of between 50\$000 *réis* and 70\$000 *réis* per month (Dias 1999, 140).

Like most nineteenth-century opera houses, the Teatro was an institution for the elite, which, in Manaus, comprised two strata: an established political group made up of Brazilians educated abroad, and the largely foreign *nouveau riche* of the rubber trade (Daou 2014, 207-216). The local press, however, rarely mentioned foreign names in relation to the Teatro: foreigners and rubber barons may have attended events, but the venue was primarily depicted (at least journalistically) as a place for cementing the social ties of the resident political class.⁸⁵

⁸³ In contrast, Montevideo's Teatro Solís (opened in 1856) could hold a surprising 12-25% of the city's population (Walton 2012, 467).

⁸⁴ Brazil's currency at this time was called *mil-réis* (literally meaning one thousand *réis*). Two *mil-réis* was written 2\$000 *réis*. The sum of one thousand *mil-réis* was called a *conto*. One *conto* was written 1:000\$000 *réis*. It is difficult to provide a concrete currency conversion for this period because exchange rates fluctuated constantly. Weinstein estimates that one *conto* was worth around US\$300 (approximately £60) in the 1880s, well under US\$200 (approximately £40) in the 1890s, and somewhere in between these extremes from 1900 to 1910 (Weinstein 1983, xi).

⁸⁵ Ana Daou speculates that the richest rubber barons, foreign or Brazilian, would probably have attended events at the Teatro when present in the city, even though their names do not appear in the press (Daou 2014, 211). Furthermore, a report in *Amazonas* dating from 5 May 1898 reports that three different flags – one Brazilian, one Portuguese, and one of a varying third nationality – were often hung at the Teatro (Monteiro 2003, 235). It is not clear, however, whether the flags marked the nationalities actually present in the opera house on any given night, or whether they simply symbolised cosmopolitan pretensions. Magaldi points out that the middle classes of Rio frequently attended the opera, but without being mentioned in the press; the same may have been true of Manaus (Magaldi 2004, 38).

Unlike in other parts of South America, this audience enjoyed musical and dramatic entertainment of all varieties all year round. The southern hemisphere's winter of course corresponds with summer in the northern hemisphere, when the musical calendar becomes significantly lighter in European and North American cities. During the late nineteenth century, many European opera performers took advantage of this fact, travelling during their local off-season to perform winter seasons in South American cities, including Rio and Buenos Aires. As John Rosselli puts it, 'singers could shuttle between the two, like the Italian harvest-workers nicknamed *golondrinas* (swallows)' (Rosselli 1990, 169). Manaus, though, does not share a climate with either Rio or Buenos Aires. Being close enough to the Equator not to have distinct summers or winters, it instead has a long rainy season (November to July) and a shorter dry season (August to October). In parallel with the lack of distinct meteorological seasons, the Teatro's musical and dramatic seasons also remained irregular; the only notable pattern was that fewer performances took place between late August and the end of October, when temperatures were (and are) significantly hotter than the rest of the year (Páscoa 2009a, 219-246).

Given the irregularity of the seasons, it is tempting to assume that these performers were not of the highest quality: rather than being committed to performances in Europe for half the year, they were available to travel to the Americas all year round. That may be partly true, but at least some of the performers in Manaus during this time were internationally well known and held in high regard. For example, the opening performance of *La Gioconda* in 1897 featured the Italian soprano Libia Drog (1857-?) in the title role. Drog had previously sung in various locations including Havana, St Petersburg, and London, and had performed at the Metropolitan Opera in New York in 1894-5 (Páscoa 2009a, 61). Similarly, Esmeralda Cervantes (1861-1926), who performed at the Teatro in October 1901, was considered one of the best harpists in the world at the time; besides being a prolific international activist and

philanthropist, she had performed at the royal courts of Brazil, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Turkey, and Greece (Monteiro 2003, 312-313; Peña 2016).

The impresario behind any given season was, more often than not, either the Brazilian Joaquim Franco or the Portuguese José Fernandes ('Juca') de Carvalho (1865-1948) (*Jornal do Commercio*, 4 August 1948). Between them, these two entrepreneurs maintained extensive transatlantic networks that allowed them to source musicians in Europe (and occasionally North America) for seasons in Manaus. Little is known of Franco's early life, besides that he was born in Campinas in the state of São Paulo and probably studied music at the Colégio Imperial (Páscoa 1997, 94-100). He at some stage left Brazil for Rome to study to become a lawyer, but instead became a conductor (Salles 1980, 351). It was presumably during this period of study abroad that he established connections he later used to assemble the Italian opera companies that he brought to Brazil. There are records from the 1880s of Franco performing at Manaus's Teatro Beneficente Portuguesa,⁸⁶ and he furthermore became involved with two significant musical institutions in that city: the Associação Lyrica Amazonense, and the Academia das Belas Artes. The former organisation, established and privately funded by a handful of local music enthusiasts and businessmen, was responsible for the first full opera season to take place in Manaus, commissioning Franco to source a company to perform at the Éden Teatro in 1890. The latter institution, created in 1898, taught both art and music, with Franco as its director and teacher of piano, harmony, and choral singing (*Diário de Manáos*, 9 June 1892; Páscoa 1997, 93-94; 2009a, 45-50).

Even less is known about Juca, other than that he sourced many of the companies that performed at the Teatro after Franco's 1897 opera season. He was born in Portugal, but moved to Brazil at the age of 7, and later acted as impresario for Rio's Teatro Fênix. As early as 1897, the *carioca* press referred to him as a *conhecido empresario* (well-known impresario) (*Jornal do Commercio*, 20 July 1897; Páscoa 2009a, 29). He appears to have been

⁸⁶ See Chapter One, 37-38.

a successful and well-liked businessman who capitalised on his Portuguese connections, frequently bringing musical and dramatic companies from Lisbon to Manaus (*A Platea*, 7 May 1907; Monteiro 2003, 287-323).

The amount of opera these impresarios brought was relatively small, with only four Italian companies (in 1897, 1901, 1902, and 1906) and two French companies (in 1906 and 1907) appearing during this period.⁸⁷ Verdi was the composer most featured in the Italian seasons, his contribution mainly topped up with other international standards such as Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana*, Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, and Puccini's *La bohème*. More old-fashioned *bel canto* operas were also performed, including Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and Bellini's *La sonnambula*. The two French seasons then introduced French Grand Opera (alongside a selection of operettas), featuring works such as Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine*, Halévy's *La Juive*, and Gounod's *Faust*. The most distinguishing feature of these programmes, however, was the frequent inclusion of Antônio Carlos Gomes's 1870 opera *Il Guarany*.

Despite the small size of Manaus's Italian population (especially in comparison with other operatic South American cities such as Rio and Buenos Aires), the presence of Italian (and French) repertory there is unsurprising. Brazil as a whole saw high levels of European immigration around the turn of the twentieth century, with quantities peaking in the decade 1890-1900. Most of these migrants arrived from Italy (followed by Portugal and Spain), many of them going to work in Brazil's coffee plantations aided by subsidies from the Brazilian government, which needed to replenish a workforce depleted by the abolition of slavery in 1888.⁸⁸ The Italian government, plagued by economic crisis during the 1880s and 90s, concurrently sponsored emigration to Brazil (Dean 1989, 236-240; Fausto 1989, 260-261). French culture also had a powerful presence in Brazil throughout the nineteenth century,

⁸⁷ For a more complete chronology of opera and other performances at the Teatro during these years, see Monteiro 2003; Páscoa 2000.

⁸⁸ Boris Fausto provides the statistics for immigration from these countries to Brazil between 1884 and 1933: 1.4 million from Italy, 1.1 million from Portugal, and 577,000 from Spain (Fausto 1989, 260-261).

particularly influencing fashion, theatre, literature, and architecture.⁸⁹ The French language was taught in schools in Manaus from as early as 1848, and the city even nicknamed itself ‘Paris of the tropics’ (Gonçalves 1904, 92-93; Páscoa 2009a, 188-189).

Notable in its complete absence throughout the Amazon, however, was German opera: only one (failed) attempt was made to stage a Wagner opera during this period, when *Lohengrin* was advertised on the 1900 programme at Belém’s Teatro da Paz. Yet, although the Belém performance never took place, a latent enthusiasm for Wagner undoubtedly simmered among the Amazonian press. Two of Manaus’s music critics adopted the pseudonyms ‘Wagner’ and ‘Lohengrin’, and the pseudonymous ‘binocolini’ had called for Wagner operas to be performed in Manaus before the Teatro was even built (Páscoa 2009a, 187-188).

The pattern of moving from Italian or French works to Wagner would have mirrored the operatic sequence that took place in imperial Rio, which, in its turn, imitated European tastes. Although Wagner’s initial reception in Rio (in 1883) was a cold one, his operas became increasingly popular once European music criticism began to proliferate in the city. At that point, homegrown critics transferred their allegiance and began to predict the downfall of Italian repertory (Magaldi 2004, 48-50). The Italian (or French) to German sequence was so fully recognised, in fact, that it was much later parodied by the Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez in his famous magical realism novel *Love in the Time of Cholera*. On Juvenal Urbino’s introduction of opera to the novel’s unnamed Colombian town, the narrator wryly comments, ‘it never reached the extremes Dr. Urbino had hoped for, which was to see Italianizers and Wagnerians confronting each other with sticks and canes during the intermissions’ (Márquez 2007, 52).

The *opéras-comiques* and operettas performed at the Teatro (usually in Italian translation) included internationally popular works by Robert Planquette, Franz von Suppé,

⁸⁹ For an insightful study of the French influence on turn-of-the-century Rio, see Needell 1987.

Daniel Auber, and Jacques Offenbach. Occasional zarzuela companies from Spain performed such works as *La Gran Via*, by Federico Chueca and Joaquín Valverde, and *La Tempestad*, by Ruperto Chapí. Portuguese and Brazilian companies also provided operettas and revues in the Portuguese language. The Companhia Silva Pinto, for example, travelled to Manaus from Rio in 1898, 1903, and 1906, performing classic Portuguese revues such as *Tim-tim por tim-tim*, by Antônio de Souza Bastos and Plácido Sticchini. The company also performed Brazilian revues that were popular in Rio at the time, including *Capital Federal*, the text of which was written by the renowned *maranhense* playwright Artur Azevedo (1855-1908) (Páscoa 1997, 134).

On occasion, the Teatro's audiences also listened to Shakespeare, admired acrobatic feats, or watched a 'pygmy company' of talented diminutive siblings performing ventriloquist acts (Monteiro 2003, 210, 270, 327-329). In 1904, the opera house hosted a touring cinema that charged cheaper ticket prices (the best boxes cost around 15\$000 *réis*), perhaps attracting a different audience (Monteiro 2003, 346-347). Several of the Brazilian and Portuguese companies also performed new revues, written by residents of Manaus, which dealt with Amazonian themes. They included *O Senhor Especial* (performed in 1899), *O Regedor* (in 1901), *Acre* (in 1903), *Chico Francisco* (in 1903), and *Manaus em revista* (in 1906). Even though they were few in number, the incorporation of these revues into the Teatro's repertory shows that the local population did not exclusively consider it a venue to be passed through by travelling works and companies: efforts at locally grounding activities took place, albeit on a small scale.

Fantasies of Global Civilisation

The impresario Franco's name first began to appear in the Amazonian newspapers in the mid-1880s, when he was praised for his conducting skills: 'The *maestro*, Senhor Joaquim Franco, is indefatigable; a highly distinguished teacher, he works miracles with the small forces at his

disposal. It is impossible to demand more from such a microscopic orchestra!’ (*Diário de Belém*, 11 July 1884).⁹⁰ When he later drew on his transatlantic networks to bring opera companies to Manaus’s Éden Teatro, it was important that he undertook the required journeys in person. On one occasion, he was unable to do so, and instead telegraphed instructions to the Vittorio Delliliers theatrical agency in Milan regarding the kinds of performers he wanted (Páscoa 2009a, 53).⁹¹ His instructions were not followed accurately, however, and his irate comments on the resulting confusion appeared in the newspaper *Amazonas*:

It is easy to assess how much this deplorable abuse by the agency in Milan frustrated the programme I had planned for this season. Deprived of a dramatic soprano as well as a dramatic tenor with the ability to sing dramatic operas, it was therefore impossible for the company to stage *Norma*, [*La*] *forza del destino*, [*Il*] *trovatore*, *Ruy Blas*, [*Un*] *ballo in maschera*, *Poliuto*, [*La*] *Gioconda*, *Jone*, [*I due*] *Foscari*, the two last ones not yet heard, and for all of which that same agency sent me costumes, scenery and sheet music, as I can prove (*Amazonas*, 10 March 1893, in Páscoa 2000, 94-95).⁹²

This misfortune was just the beginning of a string of difficulties that Franco faced. The opera company that he sourced in 1896 had originally been due to inaugurate the Teatro Amazonas on 5 September that year (the date commemorating Amazonas’s designation as a province), but its debut was postponed by several months owing to delays in the major building works on the opera house. Being already *en route* to Amazonia, travelling from Le Havre on the English steamship *Obidense*, the company managed to arrange an extra stop in Belém, where it put on some performances at the Teatro da Paz in the meantime (*Folha de Norte*, 4 October 1896; 27 October 1896; Páscoa 2009a, 61). Based on local press reports, however, the company’s season there was not entirely successful: ‘Franco’s company was infelicitous in its farewell to the *paraense* public, staging a performance of *Un ballo in maschera* in which only Senhores [Vincenzo] Maina, [Francesco] Bonini, [Maria] Peri and [Ettore] Conti

⁹⁰ O maestro, sr. Joaquim Franco, é infatigável; distinctíssimo professor, faz milagres com o pequeno pessoal de que dispõe. É impossível exigir-se mais de uma orchestra tão microscópica!

⁹¹ Rosselli has written in detail about how, from the mid-nineteenth century, Italian theatrical agencies would often put together ‘operatic package deals’ to send to both Italian and foreign locations, including the Americas (Rosselli 1984, 147-152).

⁹² É fácil avaliar quanto esse deplorável abuso da agência em Milão contrariou o programa que eu havia traçado para a presente estação. Privado de um soprano dramático assim como de um tenor dramático com capacidade para cantar óperas dramáticas ficava portanto impossibilitada a empresa de levar à cena *Norma*, *Forza del Destino*, *Trovatore*, *Ruy Blas*, *Ballo in Maschera*, *Poliuto*, *Gioconda*, *Ione*, *Foscari*, as duas últimas ainda não ouvidos e para todas as quais aquela mesma agência remeteu-me guarda-roupa, cenários e partituras, como posso provar.

saved themselves. Everything else was a shipwreck, including the rather depleted orchestra [...] To the impresario, Senhor Joaquim Franco, we wish fewer infelicities in the theatre of Manaus' (*Folha do Norte*, 28 December 1896).⁹³

From this point on, Franco's difficulties only increased. Two days after his company's 1897 debut in Manaus, the Amazonas government decided to lower the ticket prices for the remainder of the season; the decision suggests that the opening night was not well attended (*Diário Oficial*, 9 January 1897). In fact, the whole season may have been badly attended, judging by the complaints made by Franco about his financial straits in the following months (*Diário Oficial*, 13 November 1897).⁹⁴ There were also issues with performances finishing late at night, frequent repetition of repertory, last-minute changes of programme, and performers being paid late (*Diário Oficial*, 4 April 1897; 25 April 1897; Monteiro 2003, 171-187). It may have been this glut of impresarial ineptitude that prompted the governor of Amazonas, Fileto Pires Ferreira (1866-1917, governor 1896-1898), to refuse to offer financial support to the next Italian opera company due to perform at the Teatro, the Companhia Raphael Tomba. The decision would subsequently be reversed, but, at the time, Fileto Pires declared that the local government would no longer subsidise opera companies, instead allocating funds only to groups performing operettas or dramas (Monteiro 2003, 173-180).⁹⁵ Italian opera had, if temporarily, fallen out of favour in the Amazon.

Following Franco's inaugural season, a theatrical group, the Brazilian Dias Braga Company, took the Teatro's stage under similarly dubious performance conditions. A writer for the *Amazonas Comercial* complained about the continuous presence of dogs in the theatre

⁹³ Foi infeliz a empreza Franco na sua despedida ao publico paraense, levando á scena o 'Baile de Mascaras', onde apenas salvaram-se os srs. Maina, Bonini, Peri e Conti. Tudo mais naufragou, inclusive a orchestra, bastante desfalcada [...] Ao sr. Joaquim Franco, empresario, desejamos menos infelicidades no theatro de Manaus.

⁹⁴ It is impossible to know for certain, however, as records of attendance were only kept between 1898 and 1899; furthermore, opera was relatively often a loss-making business for nineteenth-century impresarios (see Rosselli 1984, 13-15).

⁹⁵ Mário Ypiranga does not cite this decision by Fileto Pires, and I have been unable to find the original record of it; however, a note in the *Diário Oficial* from 11 August 1897 supports his claim. It reads: 'Guelfo Poltroniere e Raphael Tomba, propondo-se a fazer funcconar n'esta Capital de 20 de Novembro em diante uma companhia de opera lyrica e operetas italiana. Indeferido.' (Guelfo Poltroniere and Raphael Tomba, proposing to put on in this capital from 20 November onwards an Italian opera and operetta company. Rejected.)

(previously a concern in the Éden Teatro), and a poet who signed himself ‘Zezinho’ derided the quality of both the actors and their accompanying orchestra:

Ó seu Dias já não posso	Mr Dias, I cannot
Por mais tempo suportar	Support for any longer
O tal <i>ministro</i> espanhol	That Spanish <i>minister</i>
Que você persiste em dar	That you persist in presenting
À platéia toda a noite,	To the audience every night,
Em que vai o <i>Bendegó</i> ,	That <i>Bendegó</i> is performed, ⁹⁶
Como se já não bastasse	As if that accursed orchestra
A maldita orquestra só.	Were not bad enough.

(*Amazonas Comercial*, 9 October 1897, in Monteiro 2003, 215; *Commercio do Amazonas*, 16 October 1897, in Monteiro 2003, 216-217)

The frequent references in the Amazonian press to ‘shipwrecks’ of performances and ‘depleted’, ‘microscopic’, or ‘accursed’ orchestras imply that there was some tension between the grandiose Italianate Teatro and the resources with which it was filled. The operatic ideal perhaps did not quite fit with the reality. This circumstance was far from unique to Manaus, of course: there are many similarly deflating reports from travellers (usually European) observing opera around the globe during the nineteenth century. The Frenchman Victor Jacquemont (1801-1832), for example, wrote of the ‘detestable company’ and ‘still more execrable orchestra’ at the Rio opera in 1828; in 1836, the English novelist Emily Eden (1797-1869) complained that a contralto in Calcutta was ‘immensely fat, with a cracked voice’; and a visitor to Buenos Aires in the 1850s commented that the opera house ‘might be put on a footing with one of the most inferior establishments of London’, denouncing its performers as ‘perhaps a trifle above mediocrity’.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, neither disparagement from visiting Europeans nor any of the deficiencies perceived by the local critics managed to erode the degree of confidence in opera’s civilising qualities.

On 9 April 1907, the pseudonymous columnist ‘Nano’, writing in the local music magazine *A Platea*, referred to opera in terms of the *educação espiritual de um povo* (spiritual

⁹⁶ *Bendegó* was a popular Brazilian theatrical revue by Oscar Pederneiras and Figueiredo Coimbra, which premiered in Rio in 1889. It was about the Bendegó meteorite (found in Bahia), so named after it fell into the Bendegó riverbed during an attempt to move it in 1784 (Ferreira 2009, 36-38).

⁹⁷ Bonelli 1854, 312, in Walton 2012, 464; Eden 1872, 107, in Walton 2019, 124; Jacquemont 1835, 70, in Walton 2012, 464.

education of a people); later in the same column, he mentioned his admiration for Franco's 'enviable tenacity in the pursuit of the civilising work he began many years ago' (*A Platea*, 9 April 1907).⁹⁸ As mentioned in Chapter One (38), a columnist writing under 'Nemo' in the following week's edition referred to the Teatro as 'a worthy monument to the other factors of civilisation in this auspicious land' (*A Platea*, 16 April 1907).⁹⁹ Such rhetoric hints at the extent to which opera was conflated with civilisation in the Amazon, no matter how inadequately it was performed (see Walton 2019, 124-125). Of course, part of the job of the *A Platea* columnists was to dictate taste for their readership, a readership that primarily comprised the Teatro's regular attendees. As one of its editions humorously stated, '*A Platea* is the most widely circulated newspaper... inside the Teatro Amazonas' (*A Platea*, 20 April 1907).¹⁰⁰ It is therefore unsurprising that its columnists wholeheartedly promoted the familiar image of opera as a civilising force.

Opera in the Time of Yellow Fever

The contrast between the temperate and the tropical is one of the most enduring themes in the history of global imaginings [...] tropicality has frequently served as a foil to temperate nature, to all that is modest, civilized, cultivated (Driver and Martins 2005, 3).

Following his initial 1897 season, Franco did not bring another opera company to the Teatro until 1906, instead remaining in Manaus to focus on his pedagogical role at the Academia das Belas Artes (Páscoa 2009a, 68). In the interim years, a space opened up at the opera house for touring companies of various musical styles and genres. The remainder of 1897 saw the arrival of Tomba's Italian company (which put on a season despite the state governor's short-lived misgivings), performances by a varieties company from North America, and the Dias Braga Company's dramatic season (Monteiro 2003, 207-213). The last of these groups prompted a mournful response from the Amazonian poet Thaumaturgo Vaz (1869-1921), writing under the pseudonym 'Júlio Clemente'. In a poem published in the local newspaper *O*

⁹⁸ invejável tenacidade no prosseguimento da obra civilisadora há tantos anos iniciada

⁹⁹ monumento condigno dos demais factores da civilização n'esta futura terra.

¹⁰⁰ *A Platea* é o jornal de maior circulação... dentro do Teatro Amazonas.

Rio Negro on 20 August 1897, he commented on a production of Louis Péricaud's and Gaston Marot's 1889 stage play *Jack the Ripper*:

Seu Dias Braga o que faz Com a sua companhia... Pois então você nos traz O pranto em vez da alegria?	Mr Dias Braga, what are you doing With your company... Why do you bring us Weeping instead of joy?
Não bastam essas tristezas Que temos fora de cena? Guerras, intrigas, vilezas E mortes que causam pena?	Are these sorrows not enough That we have offstage? Wars, intrigues, villainy And deaths that cause suffering?
[...] E desculpe o meu afoite De favores lhe pedir... Mas eu chorei toda noite Careço agora de rir.	[...] And excuse my urge To ask you favours... But I cried the whole night long I need now to laugh.

(*O Rio Negro*, 20 September 1897, in Monteiro 2003, 213)

It is unclear whether the poet's call for more cheerful productions was motivated by specific melancholies, but there was certainly reason for sorrow 'offstage' that year: a smallpox epidemic affecting Amazonas and various other parts of Brazil. Boats arriving in Manaus were quarantined and disinfected before disembarkation, and disinfectant was also applied to the opera house in an attempt to combat the disease (*Diário Oficial*, 7 August 1897; Monteiro 2003, 209). It is understandable that local residents, including the poet Vaz, might have wanted the Teatro to serve as an avenue for escapism during this time, rather than as a reminder of the mounting death toll.

Tomba's 1897 season was a success. Besides receiving praise in the *amazonense* press, the company's conductor waxed lyrical in the Milanese magazine *Le Quinte* on his return home: 'The evening in Pernambuco was exciting, that of Pará magnificent, that of Manaus delirious' (*Le Quinte*, 1897, in Monteiro 2003, 242).¹⁰¹ The following year, on 8 October, the Manaus newspaper *A Federação* published the upcoming programme for the company's imminent return visit. Several weeks later, however, Tomba's secretary attended the newspaper's offices to explain why the company had failed to arrive for the advertised season: on receiving warning by telegram from a contact in Pará, the performers had become

¹⁰¹ La serata da lei fatta a Pernambuco fu emozionante, quella del Pará magnifica, quella di Manaos delirante.

terrified of the risks they ran travelling to a region so ravaged by disease, and had elected to travel instead to Rio (Monteiro 2003, 242-245).

Three years later, one of Juca's companies was disastrously afflicted by another disease during its season at the Teatro, one of the most feared ailments in South America at that time: yellow fever (Oldstone 2010, 102). His Calil & Aprea Companhia Italiana de Operettas suffered fourteen deaths from the virus while in Manaus, including the loss of its conductor. The remaining performers cut their season short and returned to Italy in light of the tragedy (Monteiro 2003, 295-297). The occurrence was soon reported on (and sensationalised) by the musical press back in Europe, with the Parisian *Le Monde Artiste* taking care to emphasise the *côté dramatique de la situation* (dramatic side of the situation). After pointing out that the fever's *ravages* had begun following a masked ball, its column recounted members of the company being *pris subitement de peur* (suddenly seized with fear) and reported that a feverish prima donna had died from haemorrhaging after biting her tongue in a fit of hysteria (*Le Monde Artiste*, 20 May 1900).¹⁰²

A further three years on, another company of Juca's – this time a dramatic group from Portugal, the Companhia do Teatro Príncipe Real – suffered two deaths during its residence at the Teatro: the 34-year-old José Batista and the 39-year-old José Roxanes Ramalhete both succumbed to yellow fever. In response to the tragedy, the company ended its season early and travelled instead to Rio (Monteiro 2003, 335). Shortly after, several members of a *carioca* company, the Companhia Dramática do Teatro São Pedro de Alcântara, cancelled their scheduled performances at the Teatro, once again owing to fear of yellow fever (Monteiro 2003, 336-338).

These examples are just a small selection of the many instances of companies cancelling performances in Manaus in response to reports of epidemics. It is impossible to

¹⁰² *Love in the Time of Cholera* similarly promulgates the idea that there is a connection between disease and the dramatic (or operatic), but invokes the metaphor the other way round: 'Without a doubt it was Dr. Urbino's most contagious initiative, for opera fever infected the most surprising elements in the city and gave rise to a whole generation of Isoldes and Otellos' (Márquez 2007, 52).

know how many more companies were put off ever arranging to travel to the city in the first place. It is indisputable, of course, that there were deaths from various diseases during this period; however, this state of affairs was not restricted to the Amazon. Yellow fever, for example, was widespread throughout Brazil, including in Rio (Monteiro 2003, 242-245, 335; Needell 1987, 251). Although disease caused real concerns, then, it is worth questioning why companies were more willing to perform in Rio than in Manaus despite the fact that yellow fever was prevalent in both cities.

The explanation (at least, one explanation) is that a number of European publications during this period contended that the Amazonian climate was inherently unhealthy (see Mesquita 2006, 184-185). In 1901, for example, the Italian Gemma Ferruggia (1867-1930) had her Amazonian travelogue published in Milan. In it, she reports her encounters with yellow fever in Manaus in vivid terms, describing the chilling screams of a compatriot struck by the disease in the Italian-owned Hotel Cassiano. Filled with *terrore, una nervosità*, and *un'angoscia* (terror, nervousness, and anguish), she is then relieved to behold an Italian steamship, the *Re Umberto*, arriving at the docks ready to take her home: 'Incapable of joy, and incapable of tears, I remained for a long time, motionless: I stared at our flag, and I do not know what beneficent wave of tears came to me from the sight of those blessed colours unfurling in the wind – greeting and salvation' (Ferruggia 1901, 397-398).¹⁰³

The powerful *paraense* intellectual Frederico José de Santa-Anna Nery (1848-1901) sought to counteract the negative images that Ferruggia and others cultivated of the Amazonian climate. In 1899, he had his book *Le Pays des Amazones* published in France; it was also published in Italian translation in Genoa in 1900, and in English in 1901 (*L'Amazzonia*, 15 January 1900; Mesquita 2006, 184-185).¹⁰⁴ In it, he complains that, 'Emigrants from Europe have avoided Amazonia because of the generally spread prejudice on

¹⁰³ Incapace di gioia, e incapace di lagrime, rimasi a lungo, immobile: fissai la nostra bandiera, e non so quale benefica onda di pianto mi venne dalla vista di quei colori benedetti spiegati al vento – salute e salvezza.

¹⁰⁴ The first French edition of the book was published in 1884, but the 1899 edition was substantially rewritten (Nery 1901, ix).

this side of the Ocean which regards these beautiful lands as uninhabitable, or, at least, very dangerous to foreigners. Ignorance has attributed to them an unbearable temperature, and an atmosphere laden with pestilent miasma' (Nery 1901, 53). In an attempt to assuage this 'prejudice', he declares that Europeans too often view all hot countries in the same light, and have probably confused Amazonia with its neighbouring French Guiana (which, he muses, probably deserves its 'evil reputation') (Nery 1901, 55). He then proceeds to explain away the high mortality rates in Manaus during 1897:

The year 1897 was one of exceptional mortality for Manáos, for that town was struck at the same time by an epidemic of small-pox, imported by a steamer, and by an outbreak of malaria, principally due to the removal of earth occasioned by the great public works then being undertaken. Notwithstanding that, the report presented by Dr. Gouveia, the Director of Hygiene, is still reassuring. The number of deaths during that year (1897) rose to 1,323 in a population which is no less than 45,000. The death-rate was therefore 29.4 per 1000, but if from this number we deduct 232 deaths from small-pox, there remains only a death-rate of 24.25, which may be regarded as the annual average death-rate of [Rio] [...] At the Portuguese hospital there were during that same year 576 patients under treatment and only 39 deaths. That is at the rate of 6.6 per cent. Amongst these patients were yet to be counted, however, individuals of all nationalities not yet quite acclimatised: Portuguese, French, Italians, Spaniards, Peruvians, Venezuelans, Arabs, etc. (Nery 1901, 55-56)

Santa-Anna Nery's efforts to promote the Amazon, however, were not especially successful. For one thing, mortality rates rose significantly shortly after 1897, with yellow fever proving particularly destructive in 1900, the year in which Juca's Italian operetta company was so disastrously afflicted. Gonçalves's 1904 book includes a table of mortality rates in Manaus in the years 1898-1902, which clearly shows the spike in 1900:

1898				1899				1900				1901				1902			
Sex.		Nationality.		Sex.		Nationality.		Sex.		Nationality.		Sex.		Nationality.		Sex.		Nationality.	
Male.	Female.	Brazilians.	Foreigners.	Male.	Female.	Brazilians.	Foreigners.	Male.	Female.	Brazilians.	Foreigners.	Male.	Female.	Brazilians.	Foreigners.	Male.	Female.	Brazilians.	Foreigners.
1,148	642	1,486	304	1,179	570	1,417	332	1,781	735	1,927	589	871	437	1,116	192	989	562	1,321	230
1,790				1,749				2,516				1,308				1,551			

Table 2.1. Mortality rates in Manaus in the years 1898-1902 (Gonçalves 1904, 69).

Even seven years later, during Manaus's 1907 opera season, several columns in *A Platea* emphasised the continuing difficulties involved in securing European companies to perform at the Teatro: 'The struggle that must be waged in Europe to organise a company bound for the extreme north of Brazil is incalculable. Unfortunately it is still believed there that the

foreigner comes to these shores only to die' (*A Platea*, 13 April 1907; see also 9 April 1907).¹⁰⁵ Throughout its initial decade, then, the Teatro faced a constant obstacle in its efforts to attract touring companies to a region consistently viewed as disease-ridden.

To an extent, those Europeans who believed that their compatriots went to Amazonian shores only to die had a point. In the early twentieth century, prior to the development of an effective vaccine, yellow fever was often deadly for Europeans exposed to it abroad.¹⁰⁶ It is very rarely lethal when it affects children, and persons who survive it become immune for life. Therefore, those who had grown up in the region surrounding Manaus (or in other parts of Brazil that also had the disease) were much less likely to die from it than were itinerant foreigners like those of Juca's unfortunate Italian company in 1900. Furthermore, in order for an epidemic of yellow fever to occur, a high concentration of non-immune humans is required, meaning that it was probably the very presence of Europeans and other immigrants in Belle Époque Manaus that caused the epidemics in the first place (McNeill 2004, 349, 352-353).¹⁰⁷

The musical and theatrical companies' reaction to yellow fever and other diseases in Manaus can be read on two levels. On one level, the threat to life was real, as proved by the mortality rates provided by Gonçalves; on another, the depiction of a city plagued by epidemics plays into larger tropes regarding disease in the tropics (see Mahony and Endfield 2018; Mukherjee 2014).¹⁰⁸ As Jessica Howell has shown, by the end of the nineteenth

¹⁰⁵ A luta que é preciso travar para, na Europa, organizar uma companhia com destino ao extremo-Norte do Brasil, é incalculável. Desgraçadamente ainda se acredita lá fora que o estrangeiro vem para estas plagas apenas para morrer.

¹⁰⁶ The disease is restricted to tropical regions because its carriers (*A. aegypti* mosquitos) require temperatures of over 10 degrees Celsius to survive and over 24 degrees Celsius to thrive (McNeill 2004, 349).

¹⁰⁷ The transmission cycle of yellow fever was poorly understood until at least the 1910s; these Europeans would therefore not have been aware that their presence in Manaus could trigger epidemics (McNeill 2004, 361).

¹⁰⁸ Tropes of the tropics have long served both to justify colonial practices and to control colonised regions. Yellow fever's presence in Manaus was a direct result of colonial practices: the disease was brought to north-east and south-east Brazil from West Africa with the slave trade in the mid-seventeenth century (McNeill 2004, 345). Other imported diseases – especially smallpox and measles – decimated much of Brazil's indigenous population from the first contact in the sixteenth century (Hemming 2004a, 139-160, 419). As Martin Mahony and Georgina Endfield observe, 'European travellers and settlers struggled against diseases to which the local population appeared to have an inherent immunity, while the converse destruction of many local populations upon European arrival, though occasionally attributed to the cruelty and savagery of the invaders, by the 17th

century, many European travellers had honed the technique of blaming disease contracted in tropical regions on climate. Although this technique was invoked for a wide range of reasons – sometimes to encourage imperial expansion, sometime to discourage it, sometimes to emphasise the heroism of the individual writer’s endeavours, and so on – it was nevertheless invoked persistently, even after scientific experiments had begun to show that many ‘tropical diseases’ were *not* directly contracted from the surrounding environment (Howell 2014, 1-23). Although Manaus’s elites considered their city and its opera house to be participants in a global civilisation, Italian (and French) musicians and journalists regarded and portrayed it as a dangerous place. Local narratives of progress that adopted opera – perhaps Italy’s most famous cultural export – as their pennant were undermined from overseas by inhabitants of the very nation that furnished this imposing icon of civilisation.¹⁰⁹

Sifting the Local, the National, and the International

When the impresario Franco reemerged on the Manaus opera scene in 1906, he did so by way of Paris, where he had managed to source his first French opera company. Prior to its arrival, the company’s upcoming season was enthusiastically publicised in *Amazonas*:

We will very shortly have a splendid theatrical season. Maestro Franco, who, as we know, left for Europe to organise a French company of opera and operetta, was able to gather in Paris elements of the first order [...] The artists have an established reputation and many of them have already worked at the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique of Paris, the two best opera houses in France (*Amazonas*, 27 May 1906, in Monteiro 2003, 370).¹¹⁰

century was seen as a divine act, clearing the way for European colonization of tropical lands’ (Mahony and Endfield 2018, 3).

¹⁰⁹ Opera and disease have a further connection, with disease serving as a staple of many operatic plots. The diseases most often represented in opera tend to be those with particular social connotations – specifically, Linda and Michael Hutcheon argue, those that can be associated with sexual desire and anxiety, or those that can provide devices for depicting dramatic (and erotic) deaths onstage (Hutcheon and Hutcheon 1996, 14). The classic example, tuberculosis, was not only the characteristic sickness of the nineteenth century, but also had strong associations with artistic proclivities and the Bohemian lifestyle (Sontag 1978, 32-36). Yellow fever, in contrast, was not represented in European opera during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It neither had any cultural associations with artistic creativity nor affected Europeans at home. Its symptoms, moreover, made it less than ideal for dramatising or eroticising death on the stage: its nickname ‘the black vomit’ results from the fact that its dying victims vomit coagulated blood (McNeill 2004, 346). In short, it did not belong with opera, either in its plots or afflicting its performers.

¹¹⁰ Vamos muito em breve ter uma esplêndida temporada teatral. O maestro Franco que, como sabemos, partiu para a Europa a fim de organizar uma companhia francesa de ópera e de opereta, conseguiu reunir em Paris elementos de primeira ordem [...] Os artistas têm reputação firmada e muitos deles já trabalharam na Grande Ópera e na Ópera Cômica de Paris, os dois primeiros teatros líricos da França.

While neither the means by which Franco managed to secure this company in Paris nor his motivations for switching from Italian to French performers and repertory are entirely clear, he certainly had a network of personal contacts that reached as far as Paris. The French conductor Edouard Boni (dates unknown), for example, had conducted Franco's 1897 Italian company, having previously worked with numerous French orchestras from Cherbourg to Marseilles (*A Platea*, 9 April 1907). Franco furthermore organised several concerts in both Manaus and Belém with the *maranhense* violinist and composer Elpídio Pereira (1872-1961), who studied at the Paris Conservatoire from 1890-1892 and 1898-1903 (Páscoa 2009a, 145-154; Pereira 1957). This link with the Parisian institution had another significant outcome: the second and last of Franco's French opera companies, which put on a season from 30 March to 29 May 1907, performed Carlos Gomes's *Il Guarany* in a new French translation that had been made by Jules Algier, reportedly a professor of voice at the Conservatoire.¹¹¹ This 1907 performance was the first time that the opera had ever been put on in French, a feat that *A Platea* described as 'a victory for Maestro Franco and for his company' (*A Platea*, 7 May 1907).¹¹²

The most famous of Carlos Gomes's operas (he wrote eight), and the only one to have retained a foothold in the international repertory until the present day, *Il Guarany* was also the only one of his works performed at the Teatro in its early years. This was the case despite the personal connections the composer had with the Amazon, having lived his last years in Belém. That city's Teatro da Paz did not programme many more of his works, adding only productions of *Salvator Rosa* in 1882 and *Fosca* in 1895 (Páscoa 2006, 62, 124). Franco's opera companies therefore (if perhaps unconsciously) treated Carlos Gomes's works as though their value lay solely in *Il Guarany* – the only one to premiere at Milan's Teatro alla Scala (in 1870), and the only one that had achieved renown in Europe.

¹¹¹ Although Algier (18??-1933) certainly gave singing lessons in Paris, the Conservatoire has no records of him in its archive (*L'Œuvre*, 12 December 1933; *Le Petit Journal*, 12 December 1933). It is possible that the Amazonian press claimed he taught there in order to imbue him with higher status.

¹¹² uma victoria para o maestro Franco e para a sua companhia

Adapted from José de Alencar's novel *O Guarani*, the opera is set in sixteenth-century colonial Brazil, and tells the story of the love of Peri (chief of the indigenous Guarani tribe) for Ceci (the daughter of a Portuguese nobleman, Don Antonio). Their romance is overlaid onto an ongoing conflict between the Portuguese and the local Aimoré tribe, which is complicated by the treachery of a group of Spaniards residing in Don Antonio's house. The opera ends with a dramatic explosion, as Don Antonio blows up his own home, killing himself and taking the enemy Aimorés and the duplicitous Spaniards with him. Moments before carrying out his suicide mission, Don Antonio allows Peri, who has at this point converted to Christianity, to flee the castle with Ceci in his charge.¹¹³

The world premiere of this new translation took place at the Teatro on 13 May 1907, on which day a special extended edition of *A Platea* was circulated in homage to Carlos Gomes. Two weeks earlier, the magazine had already been stoking the enthusiasm of the Manaus audiences, commenting, 'If things go well and no unexpected difficulties hinder the good will of *Maestro* Franco, the performance of [*Le*] *Guarany* will be, without doubt, the centrepiece of this opera season'.¹¹⁴ The article went on,

And Manaus must pride itself on this privilege – the masterpiece of our ever mourned Carlos Gomes, for the first time sung in the language of Victor Hugo, in this beautiful theatre, thanks to the State Government, the only one in Brazil today that aspires to educate public taste through the most beautiful of the Fine Arts, and to our tireless *maestro* Joaquim Franco [...] who spared neither efforts nor sacrifices to fulfill his promise – to bring, among the repertory of the company he was organising, *Le Guarany*, sung by French artists in their own language (*A Platea*, 30 April 1907).¹¹⁵

It is worth considering the 'tireless *maestro*'s' motivations for committing his efforts and making sacrifices to commission this translation of the opera from its original Italian into French. His French company might naturally be expected to sing in French much better than

¹¹³ It is this scene that is depicted in the painting hung in the Teatro's Salão Nobre. See Chapter One, 44-45.

¹¹⁴ Si as cousas correrem bem e nenhuma dificuldade de momento vier estorvar a boa vontade do maestro Franco, será, certamente, a representação do *Guarany*, o *clou* da presente temporada lyrical.

¹¹⁵ E Manaus só terá de se orgulhar deste privilegio – a obra prima do nosso sempre chorado Carlos Gomes, pela primeira vez cantada na lingua de Victor Hugo, no seu formoso teatro, graças ao Governo do Estado, o unico hoje, no Brasil, que tem o espirito de querer educar o gosto do publico por meio da mais bella das Bellas Artes, e ao nosso incansavel maestro Joaquim Franco [...] que não poupou esforços, nem sacrificios para poder cumprir a sua promessa – trazer, no repertorio da empreza que ia organizar, o *Guarany*, cantado por artistas francezes na sua propria lingua.

in Italian, but he could have left this work for Italian companies to perform, or commissioned a Portuguese language edition. As with the change from Italian to French companies, it is impossible to know what was in Franco's mind when he made this decision. It is possible, however, to glean something from the reactions to it displayed in the local musical press. A further extract from *A Platea* demonstrates the peculiar sense of patriotism associated with this performance of *Le Guarany*:

All those who had the unforgettable pleasure of watching the elegant *soirée* on Monday – the most brilliant artistic event Amazonas has had – observed the beauty of the work of J. Algier, who knew how to sift the verse with perfection [...] The house was full. There vibrated Art and Patriotism. *Guarany* is very national: its music has ferocious roars and subtleties of feeling [...] And, to finish this article, we will make on behalf of the *amazonense* audience a request that we consider fair. It desires, it wants, it asks through us, that the next performance of *Guarany* be conducted by Maestro Joaquim Franco. Nothing more reasonable. And Maestro [Edouard] Boni [...] cannot be offended, for we have not spared him applause. It is a question of patriotism; the people wish that, for just one night, *Guarany*, [composed] by a Brazilian *maestro*, should also be conducted by a Brazilian *maestro* (*A Platea*, 18 May 1907).¹¹⁶

This strident assertion of the opera's national character must be unpacked: it was of course written by a Brazilian composer, but a Brazilian composer who spent most of his professional life in Milan. It was furthermore composed to premiere at the Teatro alla Scala, to an Italian libretto, and in a Verdian musical style adorned by Donizettian flourishes in the part of Ceci.¹¹⁷ The opera's plot, admittedly, tells of Brazil, and Maria Alice Volpe has gone so far as to argue that it symbolises the origins of Brazilian history through its depiction of miscegenation (Volpe 2002, 180-187). Beyond that, though, the extent to which it could be described as Brazilian remains a complex question.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Todos aqueles que tiveram o prazer inesquecível de assistir a *serata* elegante de segunda-feira, – a festa artística mais brilhante que o Amazonas tem tido – notaram a beleza do trabalho de J. Algier que soube joeirar o verso com primor [...] A casa estava repleta. Vibrava ali a Arte e o Patriotismo. O *Guarany* é bem nacional: a sua musica tem rugidos de fêra e subtilezas de sentimento [...] E, finalizando este artigo, vamos fazer em nome da platêa amazonense um pedido que consideramos justo. Ella deseja, ella quer, ella pede por nosso intermedio, que a proxima recita do *Guarany* seja regida pelo maestro Joaquim Franco. Nada mais razoavel. E o maestro E. Boni [...] não pode se melindar, pois nós não lhe temos regateado applausos. E' uma questão de patriotismo; o povo deseja que, apenas numa noite, o *Guarany*, dum maestro brasileiro seja regido por um maestro tambem brasileiro.

¹¹⁷ Carlos Gomes prioritised examining Verdi scores when he studied in Rio (Bettencourt 1940, 17-19).

¹¹⁸ Questions about what constitutes *brasilidade* (Brazilianness) circulate prolifically in scholarship on Brazil. For a concise review of the literature on varying manifestations of *brasilidade* in the early twentieth century, see Weinstein 2011, 222-223.

There is, then, a strategic handling of local, national, and international interests underlying the *A Platea* extract: this 1907 performance of *Le Guarany* was an instance of the Teatro attempting to promote its local artistic credentials by channelling the successes of a national musical hero through the measuring system of European standards. Furthermore, its supposed educational function was espoused by another columnist of *A Platea*, who humorously construed the new translation as a necessary relief from the deluge of Italian opera with which Manaus had been assaulted up to that point (albeit a ‘deluge’ of only six seasons, including those that took place before the Teatro was built). He wrote, ‘And Maestro Franco, perceiving the symptoms of this aural gastralgia, undertook to cure it by way of periodic applications of French remedies’.¹¹⁹ He then proceeded on a more serious note, though, to clarify his opinion: that one could not *really* ever get bored of Italian opera, as Verdi alone provided enough variety to satisfy even those with the most eclectic tastes. Even so, he was adamant that, ‘the spiritual education of a people cannot be established with [exposure to] only one school, only one style’ (*A Platea*, 9 April 1907).¹²⁰ Admittedly, this is the opinion of only one journalist, but it perhaps gives the license to interpret the shift from Italian to French opera as a striving for the *variety* desired by an urban elite concerned with their city’s improvement and aiming to compete with the urban and cultural centres of Europe. Seen in this way, the *Le Guarany* premiere provided a means for the Teatro to sift and combine two foreign operatic influences in pursuit of local aggrandisement. The Italian and the French were not interchangeable – it was not the case that either would do as a representation of Europeanness – but they were valuable cumulatively.

It was not only Europe, however, with which Manaus sought to compete. According to a later edition of *A Platea*, an article published in the São Paulo newspaper *Le Messenger de São Paulo* had shown the jealousy felt by the *paulistas* in response to Manaus having had the opportunity to hear the French *Le Guarany*. ‘So’, reported *A Platea*, ‘our State is not one of

¹¹⁹ E o maestro Franco, percebendo os symptomas d’essa gastralgia auricular empreheudeu cural-a por meio de applicações periódicas de récipes francezes.

¹²⁰ a educação espiritual de um povo não se pôde confirmar n’uma só escola, n’um só estylo.

the most backward in Art [...] And our social world that is intelligent, our audience that is enlightened, almost all or all the *habitués* of the Teatro Amazonas have already been to Europe or to Rio de Janeiro, – day by day becoming more cultured, consolidating their artistic credentials’ (*A Platea*, 7 May 1907).¹²¹ As well as reacting to European artistic standards, then, Manaus also found itself contending with Brazil’s south-eastern centres of Rio and São Paulo.

Other genres besides opera also played a part in the negotiation of cultural values at the Teatro. On 16 September 1899, a revue entitled *Senhor Especial* was performed; it was, in the words of the *Commercio do Amazonas*, ‘the first revue that deals with *amazonense* affairs’ (*Commercio do Amazonas*, 17 September 1899).¹²² Consisting of a single act with four scenes, it was put on by the Companhia Portuguesa de Operetas e Revistas de Tomaz del Negro (one of the touring companies brought by Juca from Portugal to Manaus) and was the last performance of a two-month season of operettas and revues at the Teatro before the company embarked on the steamship São Salvador for Belém (Monteiro 2003, 290). *Senhor Especial* was written by Eduardo Simões Ferreira (a resident of Manaus about whom little is known), with music composed by the company’s conductor del Negro. Little information about this revue has survived, but we do know that the title of the piece referred to a locally renowned man, Senhor Maia, who was nicknamed ‘Senhor Especial’ (Mr Special) because of his popularity among the inhabitants of Manaus (Monteiro 2003, 291). Ending his (frustratingly) brief piece on the locally themed review, the *Commercio do Amazonas* columnist mused, *Vamos a ver se péga...* (Let us see if it catches on...)

It did, if only on a small scale. Although revues focused on local themes did not turn into a substantial trend, four more were written and performed at the Teatro during this decade. The second was performed toward the end of 1901. It was entitled *O Regedor* (The

¹²¹ Assim, o nosso Estado não é dos mais atrazados em Arte [...] E o nosso mundo social que é inteligente, a nossa platéa que é ilustrada, quasi todos ou todos os *habitués* do Theatro Amazonas já foram á Europa ou ao Rio de Janeiro, – hade dia a dia se tornar mais culta, firmando o seu credito artistico.

¹²² a primeira revista que faz de coisas amazonenses

Mayor), with text again written by Simões Ferreira, and music by Alfredo Santos (about whom equally little is known). It premiered at the Teatro on 7 December 1901 with a cast of 53 people, with sketches including: ‘Aventuras de um seringueiro’ (Adventures of a Rubber Tapper), ‘Manaus por dentro’ (Inside Manaus), and ‘Viva o Amazonas’ (Long Live Amazonas). Some of the sketches referenced other performing companies and individuals involved with the Teatro. One, for example, represented Juca; another made reference to Senhor Maia (the ‘Senhor Especial’ of Simões Ferreira’s previous revue); and a third ridiculed the *perus* of the Teatro – the male devotees of popular female singers. In a clear attempt to mock the English (the most influential foreign group in the city), one of the characters was called John London Beef (Monteiro 2003, 316-320). *O Regedor* was highly successful. Like *Senhor Especial*, it was performed by a Portuguese company (although Mário Ypiranga conjectures that the cast could possibly have included some locals) (*Commercio do Amazonas*, 22 April 1900; Monteiro 2003, 316-319). Both of these revues were also rehearsed (but not performed) by another visiting company in 1903 (Monteiro 2003, 335).

The third revue, *Acre*, was performed in July 1903 by the Companhia Dramática do Teatro São Pedro de Alcântara (at least, by those of its members who were not too afraid of yellow fever to travel to Manaus). Comprising a prologue, three acts, and two scenes, it included 32 musical numbers, and required a cast of 120 (Monteiro 2003, 336-338). The revue’s theme was topical and would have been of interest to local audiences: since 1899, Brazil had been involved in a border dispute over the western Amazonian region of Acre, which then belonged to Bolivia. Later in 1903, the dispute came to an end with the Treaty of Petrópolis, through which Bolivia ceded Acre to Brazil in exchange for territory taken from the state of Mato Grosso plus additional financial compensation (Sá 2006, 13).¹²³ The fourth *amazonense* revue, *Chico Francisco*, was performed at the Teatro in January 1904 by Silva

¹²³ It is this series of events that Souza parodies in his novel *Galvez, imperador do Acre*, mentioned above (51).

Pinto's Companhia de Operetas, Revistas e Mágicas. The first revue written by the local theatre critic Correia Mendes, it was received apathetically by his fellow critics, who thought it badly written, insufficiently politically engaged, and poorly rehearsed (Monteiro 2003, 342-345).

June 1906 saw the performance of the fifth and final local revue of the period, *Manaus em revista* (Manaus in Review), put on by a Brazilian theatrical company contracted from Rio (see *Correio do Norte*, 25 April 1906; *Jornal do Commercio*, 28 April 1906). The *Jornal do Commercio* noted that the *peça hilariante* (hilarious piece) was written by two Amazonian journalists under the pseudonyms 'Bicho Cacau' and 'Folha Miúda' (one of whom was in fact the poet Vaz, mentioned above), with music provided by the *paulista* composer and conductor Nicolino Milano (1876-1962). Juca again featured as a character, as on this occasion did Franco. The newspaper reported the interest in the show that resulted from its references to local characters and events: 'we can state in advance that the verses are beautiful and amusing. The *maestro* must pardon us the indiscretion, but we believe justifiable our desire to inform [our readers] on a topic that is of interest because it concerns an essentially *local* revue' (emphasis mine, *Jornal do Commercio*, 4 June 1906; 7 June 1906; 10 June 1906; 18 June 1906).¹²⁴ A comment printed in *Amazonas* furthermore suggests that the revue may have attempted to portray overtly the changing times the city was facing: 'The work [...] depicts from the first to the last scene the confrontation between the old Amazonas (an old man with a white moustache) and the modern Manaus, a cheerful girl with a Panama hat in the middle of her head and a little cane in her hand...' (*Amazonas*, 15 June 1906, in Monteiro 2003, 373-374).¹²⁵ The Panama hat was much the new vogue in early 1900s Manaus, as can be seen in photographs from the era (see, for example, Schoepf 2000).

¹²⁴ podemos adiantar que os versos são lindos e engraçados. O maestro que nos perdoe a indiscreção, mas é justificável a nosso desejo de bem informar n'um assumpto, que interessa por se tratar de uma revista essencialmente local.

¹²⁵ In early-twentieth-century Manaus, the Panama hat was referred to as the *chapéu-do-Chile* (Chilean hat) – a little confusing, given its Ecuadorian origins (see Miller 2017).

Even though they were few in number, the incorporation into the Teatro's repertory of these locally themed revues, written by residents of Manaus, shows that the city's residents did not exclusively consider it a venue to be passed through by travelling works and companies; efforts at locally grounding activities did take place, if only on a small scale. Moreover, the revues probably exhibited a discerning treatment of European culture. In Rio, revues usually included arrangements of European songs (often extracted from operas or operettas) that were already familiar to the local public (Magaldi 2004, 119-124). It is likely that the same practice was adopted in Manaus. In contrast to the touring opera performances at the Teatro, then, these revues did not simply reproduce productions from abroad, but incorporated and probably parodied European culture. An awareness of the performance and composition of these revues (as well as other types of non-operatic performance), furthermore, helps to challenge the narrative of a 'golden age' at the Teatro followed by decline. The twentieth century, often ignored in histories of the opera house, saw various amateur and professional performances of musics other than opera; but, as this chapter has shown, many of these musical forms were already being performed in its initial decade.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to nuance the common depiction of the years 1897-1907 as a 'golden age' by exploring the complex processes underpinning musical production at the Teatro. Embroiled in historical precedent and patterns of migration, the personal transatlantic networks established by a Brazilian and a Portuguese impresario encouraged the Amazon's adoption of Italian (and briefly French) opera at the turn of the twentieth century. (Moreover, given that there had been calls for Wagner to be staged in Manaus from as early as the 1880s, it seems likely that the Teatro would have gone on to present a greater diversity of European

A peça [...] há desde a primeira à última cena o confronto entre o Amazonas antigo (um velho de bigodes brancos) e a Manaus moderna, uma rapariga alegre, de chapéu-do-Chile ao meio da cabeça e bengalinha na mão...

opera in the early twentieth century, given the opportunity.) The political elite for which the opera house functioned was so eager to engage in their idea of global civilisation that, no matter what went wrong in practice – from ‘shipwrecks’ of performances to ‘microscopic’ orchestras – the rhetoric of opera’s civilising qualities largely held strong. The 1907 premiere of *Le Guarany*, in particular, provided an opportunity for Manaus to sift regional, national, and international cultural standards for the sake of local prestige.

The view of the Teatro from Europe, however, was another matter, and the spate of local epidemics comprised a major obstacle to attracting European performers. Although the threat to life was real, French and Italian publications also dramatised the situation, demonising the tropics in time-honoured fashion such that local narratives of civilisation were partially undermined from abroad. In some ways, then, no matter how hard local music critics and operagoers worked to assert Manaus’s sophistication, the Teatro remained mired in European constructions of tropicality.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, the presence of several Amazonian revues on the opera house’s programme demonstrates that the venue was, in any case, not exclusively treated as a place for touring European companies to pass through. Indeed, many genres other than opera – performed both by foreigners and by Brazilians – played their part in negotiations of cultural values. Shortly after the *Le Guarany* premiere of 1907, the local economy crashed, taking with it the resources to sustain opera for the next century. Rather than remain dormant, though, the Teatro continued to host music and other events of various kinds (albeit sporadically) throughout much of the twentieth century.

Chapter Three

Archival Excavations: Peepholes into the Lost Years, 1937-1971

More than on its ability to recall, the power of the state rests on its ability to consume time, that is, to abolish the archive and anaesthetise the past (Mbembe 2002, 23).

The archives do not necessarily tell the truth, but, as Michel Foucault would say, they tell *of* the truth (Farge 2014, 29).

In contrast to the reputation that the Teatro's first decade has accrued as a 'golden age', another part of its history has been unreservedly dismissed: Mário Ypiranga Monteiro labels the years 1937-1971 the 'greatest cultural crisis of this kind in Amazonas',¹²⁶ and numerous other sources similarly deny that any significant activity took place at the Teatro during the mid-twentieth century. One website, for example, claims, 'There wasn't a single performance in [the] Teatro Amazonas for 90 years, excepting its cameo appearance in Werner Herzog's movie *Fitzcarraldo*' ('Teatro Amazonas in Manaus'). Likewise, a recent article in Britain's *Guardian* asserts that the Teatro was 'rarely opened to visitors, usually only for guided tours' during the twentieth century (*Guardian*, 14 April 2015). Beyond the opera house, the tendency is the same: to write off this period of Manaus's history as one of stagnation and inactivity (Costa and Azancoth 2001, 13).

By some measures, the mid-twentieth century certainly *was* a time of decline: Manaus's urban population dwindled; newspapers stopped circulating; various technologies installed during the Belle Époque, including generators and a tram system, finally broke down; and the city's electricity supply became precarious (Souza 2010, 165-166).¹²⁷ Ediney Azancoth describes a sense of destitution, recalling times when the city's lights went out because of the lack of electricity: 'In the 1940s and 50s, we learned to live with the darkness. We became a generation of bat-men who, as we walked through the darkness of the night, only lit our lanterns when we sensed the presence of a nearby lamp post with its light out or the steps of another bat-man walking the other way' (Azancoth 2010, 87-89; see also Souza

¹²⁶ [a] maior crise cultural que já se registou [sic] nessa ordem de coisas no Amazonas (Monteiro 2003, 479).

¹²⁷ On the history of Amazonas from the end of the Belle Époque to the creation of the free trade zone in the 1960s, see Souza 2010, 157-182.

2010, 165).¹²⁸ Despite the slump, however, these years did see a number of amateur and professional performances at the opera house. Mário Ypiranga's lack of coverage results, at least in part, from his corresponding lack of interest: he is unapologetic throughout his book about the value he allots to professional classical music and opera over amateur or popular music (Monteiro 2003). The broader lack of awareness concerning this period is worth investigating.

In this chapter, I aim to shed light on the supposedly fallow years of 1937-1971, drawing particularly on archival documents held at the Teatro. Before discussing the events of these years, I provide an ethnographic account of the opera house's archive as I found it during fieldwork in 2017. In so doing, I engage with broader issues concerning the construction of musical history in Manaus.¹²⁹ Relevant features of the archive include: a lack of cataloguing; the regular rearrangement of many of the sources; and frequent indoor temperatures of over 30 degrees Celsius, with humidity levels of over 70%.¹³⁰ Moreover, securing access to the archive is a complex matter, and restrictions concerning who can see these materials affect not only how histories of the Teatro can be told, but also who can tell them. Following my examination of the archive, a discussion of a sample of its contents will offer peepholes into a forgotten period of the opera house's past.

The chapter comprises four sections. The first two explore the politics of accessing the Teatro's archive; the third discusses its physical properties and the consequences of its Amazonian location. I argue that exclusive access systems combine with the Teatro's material conditions in order to obscure the events of 1937-1971, effectively emptying them out of content. The fourth section analyses five historical documents that I encountered in the archive, all of which date from the period under consideration. The first document is a

¹²⁸ Nos anos quarenta e cinquenta, aprendemos a conviver com a escuridão. Nos tornamos uma geração de homens-morcegos que, ao caminhar pela escuridão da noite, só acendíamos as lanternas ao pressentirmos a presença próxima de um poste de ferro com seu lampião apagado ou os passos de outro homem-morcego que caminhava em sentido oposto.

¹²⁹ In taking an ethnographic approach to reading archives in the first three sections of this chapter, I follow Ann Stoler's approach of focusing on 'archiving-as-process rather than archives-as-things' (Stoler 2009, 20).

¹³⁰ In contrast, the British Library aims to store its physical items at between 14 and 21 degrees Celsius, and at humidity levels of 30-60% ('Caring for British Library Physical Collections').

programme from a concert performed at the Teatro on 19 January 1939 entitled ‘Hora do Estado Novo’ (TAA 1939nb); the second is a copy of a speech given by Brazilian president Getúlio Vargas in October 1940 (TAA 1940nb); the third is a programme from a theatrical piece called *Dona Xepa*, which was performed for the 1960 season of the Teatro Escola de Amadores (TAA 1960nb); the fourth, dating from 26 June 1969, contains historical information on the Coral João Gomes Júnior (TAA 1969sf); and the fifth is the programme from the Coral’s debut concert in 1956 (TAA 1956nb). This section essentially comprises a remedial history, in as much as I excavate neglected documents in order to counteract the widespread lack of knowledge concerning this period. Ferdinand de Jong recently argued that interventions that involve returning to the (post)colonial archive are often motivated by an emancipatory (or decolonising) agenda: a desire to ‘conceptualize the hidden histories and counter-memories that have been suppressed by screen memories’ (Jong 2016). In concluding, however, I caution against being over-optimistic, suggesting that it is unwise to put too much faith in the emancipatory potential of archives.

Archive Stories: Gatekeepers and the Politics of Access

I arrived in Manaus on a Wednesday in April 2017 to conduct fieldwork. The following day, I made my way along the Avenida Sete de Setembro to the Palácio Rio Negro. Formerly the lavish private residence of Karl Waldemar Scholz (Manaus’s Austrian-Hungarian consul during the Belle Époque), the Palácio now functions as a museum and also houses the offices of the Secretaria de Cultura (Cultural Secretariat) of Amazonas. On arrival, I was asked to sign some documents that I barely had time to read, and was then ushered into a meeting room with two members of the management team from the Teatro and two members of the Secretaria; one of them was the lawyer and local politician Robério Braga (b. 1952), at that time Secretary of Culture for Amazonas. Maintaining a formal but not unfriendly attitude, Robério discussed my project with me while the others remained quiet, notionally attentive,

and un-introduced. He asked me a few questions: what were the main focus areas for my research? How was I going to approach it? What were my plans for it later? He seemed ambivalent about my answers (which I gave in competent but not especially sophisticated Portuguese) but nevertheless declared that he was happy that someone from outside Amazonas was studying the Teatro, professing his belief in the value of criticism from a range of angles. He then scrawled a signature alongside mine on those mysterious documents, and the meeting was over.

Later that week, I began exploring the opera house itself, at first shown around backstage by a member of the administrative staff and then accompanying a public tour of the building. I mentioned my meeting with Robério to the tour guide, who encouraged me to arrange to speak further with him so that I might access his extensive private library. Over the next few days, as I continued to meet people and to find my way around the Teatro and its environs, I discovered the significance of the documents Robério had signed in our meeting: I appeared to have undisputed access to everything, and I could come and go into the venue when I pleased. Everyone came to know who I was – the doormen, the security and fire staff, the administrative and managerial staff, the university students who worked part-time as ushers and tour guides, the box office staff, the café staff, and the resident musicians. I became *da casa* (of the house). Robério's signature carried weight beyond the opera house too: I was told that, whenever I wanted to visit a museum or a library run by the Secretaria de Cultura, I had only to say so and I would be put in touch directly with the manager of the relevant institution. On every front, it seemed, my work was being willingly facilitated. I also had unlimited access to the Teatro's on-site archive and was permitted to browse the materials at my leisure and unaccompanied, collecting the key when I liked and taking off shelves whatever I wanted.

Setting aside its obvious convenience, my unfettered use of the opera house's resources was problematic in as much as local scholars do not enjoy the same degree of

access. A week after arriving in Manaus, I met with a professor at one of the local universities. Following a detailed discussion of my project, she kindly provided me with several books that she thought might be of use and helped me to register to use the university library. She told me frankly that I should make the most of my various resources (the opera house's facilities, its archive, and the people involved with the institution), as local scholars are not permitted such open access to them. She also explained that one of her colleagues had recently seen an article about my research project, and I remembered that a member of the Secretaria had taken a photograph 'for the press' during my meeting with Robério.

Following my conversation with the professor, I found an online blog post about my research, entitled 'Teatro Amazonas será tema de doutorado em Oxford' (The Teatro Amazonas Will Be the Topic of a Doctorate in Oxford).¹³¹ I subsequently found that nobody – university professors, members of the Secretaria, musicians, or other interlocutors of mine – tiptoed around the fact that I had received permission to carry out my research, at least in part, because it allowed Robério to capitalise on my attendance at a prominent university for the sake of his own publicity.

Archives can, of course, be notoriously difficult to access, and are often guarded by several layers of gatekeepers and official or unofficial bureaucratic procedure (Ghosh 2005, 29; Sahadeo 2005, 54-55). As Ann Stoler cuttingly puts it, 'Transparency is not what archival collections are known for' (Stoler 2009, 8). Despite the state of affairs being a common one, however, it remains important to interrogate issues of access in specific contexts. Jacques Derrida highlights the relationships between archival control and political power: 'Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation' (Derrida 1995, 11). Levels of participation in the Teatro's archive are low, especially among local scholars. I, on the other hand, was granted access because my enrolment at a well-known foreign university resulted

¹³¹ This blog post may or may not have been the same article to which the professor's colleague referred; the Secretaria may have sent a press release to several outlets.

in positive press for the archive's main gatekeeper. Thus was conferred on me the role of what Derrida calls a 'legitimate hermeneutic authority', complete with access to archival collections and the opportunity to interpret them (Derrida 1995, 10). The bestowal of this status on a foreign researcher in the Global South is furthermore not unique: Durba Ghosh has described the elision in some Indian archives between the concepts of 'professionalism' and of 'foreign historian[s] who could bring international attention to the [research] topic' (Ghosh 2005, 41). In the case of the Teatro, the considered selection of 'hermeneutic authorities' is particularly striking given Robério's professed desire for criticism from a range of viewpoints. While his rhetoric might suggest 'effective democratisation', then, the strict limits placed on who can participate in the archive give the lie to it.

Archive Stories: Down the Circuitous Rabbit-hole

Despite the influence he held, Robério was not the sole gatekeeper of the Teatro's archive: my access to sources, although ostensibly open and comprehensive, was in practice often secured through convoluted routes and chance encounters. One instance of having to tread such a route came about following an interview that I conducted with Abi, a violinist in the Teatro's resident orchestra, the Amazonas Filarmônica. Once I had turned off my recording device, Abi announced that she knew of a book that might be useful for my research. She could not remember the title, but knew the author. 'You know Victor, don't you?', she asked. I shook my head. 'Yes. You know Victor', she declared. I denied it for a second time. 'Victor!', she insisted. When I still did not know Victor (who seemed only to have a first name) after several minutes of this repetitious questioning, Abi tried another approach: 'You know Beatriz?' I did not know Beatriz either. Eventually, however, I gleaned that Victor had previously worked at the Secretaria de Cultura, and had compiled into a book a collection of newspaper clippings about the Amazonas Filarmônica published between 1997 and 2003. On leaving his post there, he had been asked to leave his work product too, but instead took it

with him and later tried to sell it back to the Secretaria. The Secretaria (unsurprisingly) did not accept, and the book's location had since become a mystery.

Several days after this somewhat surreal exchange, I met Abi outside a church near to where I was living so that she could give me a lift to a gathering with some local musicians. As I approached her car, I saw that she was leaning out of it, talking to a lady who seemed to work or volunteer for the church. They finished their conversation as I arrived, and I got into the car. Once we had closed the doors and the lady had gone back into the church, Abi turned to me: 'She knows where the book is'. 'She', it turned out, was called Tânia and worked for Robério. Tânia was sure that the book *had* made its way back to the Secretaria, and she had suggested to Abi that I make a request, in person, to consult it there.

Feeling unsure about how best to undertake this task, I gladly accepted when Abi offered to accompany me. On the day that we visited the Secretaria, we walked straight past the receptionist and up to Robério's waiting room. Employing the technique of confident bluster, Abi persuaded the man on the desk to let us speak with Tânia. We spoke, and she disappeared into an adjoining room. Presently, two substantial tomes were brought to us; one was Victor's book. I was then told, however, that I would need to write a formal solicitation to Robério in order to consult it. I duly made the solicitation, but neither Abi nor Tânia was optimistic that the Secretary would give the permission. As a back-up option, Abi contacted Victor directly (having obtained his phone number that morning). He did not have a copy of the book, but claimed still to have the original materials he used to make it. He asked me to contact him about it in several days time, and also invited me to a gig that his amateur rock band was to play that weekend. Abi advised me to go: showing my face, she explained, would go a long way with Victor.

That weekend, I went to Victor's concert; it was an open-air event with an audience of hundreds. The band was onstage when I arrived, but I did not know which one of them was Victor. Once they finished their set, I made my way backstage to try to find this man whom I

had never seen before. By chance, I heard him respond to somebody calling his name. I introduced myself, but he did not seem particularly keen to stop and chat. Nevertheless, he greeted me warmly and told me to enjoy the concert. I had, at least, shown my face.

Several days later, however, I learned that Robério had, unexpectedly, given his permission for me to consult Victor's book at the Secretaria. I arrived there on the morning of 17 August 2017 hoping to do so, but failed: there was apparently not enough space for me to study the book there. A member of the administration team, though, offered to have it sent to the Biblioteca Pública (Public Library) for me to consult. I was told that it would arrive the following day and that I should ask at the library for Bruno. Dutifully, I arrived at the library the next day and explained the situation. I was promptly led down into the depths of the offices in the basement and instructed to work in Bruno's office, on the desk of which was placed Victor's compilation of newspaper cuttings, a book that furnished much of the data presented in Chapter Four of this thesis.

In spite of my sanctioned role as 'legitimate hermeneutic authority', then, I still encountered difficulties concerning particular sources. Although this experience is probably ubiquitous among archival researchers, two aspects of this specific case are, nevertheless, worth probing in more detail. First, although the above anecdote introduced several new gatekeepers, much of it still revolved around Robério. Second, as I learned from the tour guide at the Teatro, the Secretary also keeps an extensive *private* library. The extent of his influence can be interpreted with recourse to Susan van Zyl's work on the figure of the patriarch in archival processes. As she points out, Derrida's Freudian interpretation of the Western historical archive writ large identifies two co-existing concepts of truth. The first, in van Zyl's words, is 'founded on the demand for objective evidence as represented in documents'. The second is 'backed by personal authority represented by the word of the patriarch' and manifests 'in the psyche of the archivist' (emphasis mine, van Zyl 2002, 43-44). Although van Zyl's theory entails an acceptance of the Freudian concept of deferred

obedience, however (it is the *archivist* who displays obedience to a patriarchal figure that is no longer present), the case of the Teatro requires no such psychoanalytic step. Rather, in this instance, the ‘word of the patriarch’ *is* that of Robério Braga. It is through his personal authority that truths are told and their telling facilitated. Moreover, my construal of Robério as patriarch in this sense is strengthened by the following observation: as well as being a professional lawyer and politician, he has published several historical studies of Manaus and the Teatro.¹³² Not only, then, does he house documents in his private library, enjoy immediate access to them, and possess the hermeneutic authority to interpret them, but he also plays the role of primary gatekeeper to the notionally public (which is not necessarily to say open or accessible) collections held at the Teatro and the Secretaria.¹³³

This point about archival collections that are notionally public but not necessarily accessible is important (see Derrida 1995, 11). It is particularly noteworthy in this case, given that a contrasting situation can be found relatively close at hand in the on-site archive of Belém’s Teatro da Paz, which I also visited during fieldwork. There, a trained historian acting as an archivist is available to accompany researchers, ask them about their requirements, and retrieve relevant materials. Without requiring the permission of local politicians, individuals are free to consult documents without prior appointment, and frequently do so (at least, according to the in-house historian). The contrast between the archives of the Teatro Amazonas and the Teatro da Paz shows that this issue is a localised one, and that it is not necessarily symptomatic of a wider practice across Amazonia.

Although acquiring access to the Teatro’s archive is difficult – and particularly so for local scholars – information about the institution and its history *can* be gleaned from published scholarship. As I have identified, however, the existing scholarship primarily focuses on the Teatro’s ‘golden age’ and in some cases very deliberately avoids the period

¹³² For example, Braga 2011; 2012; 2014; 2015.

¹³³ Despite multiple attempts, I was unable to speak with Robério after our first meeting, and therefore unable to discuss any of the issues I raise here. I made several appointments to meet with him, all of which were cancelled (one after I had waited for over two hours in his office lobby).

1937-1971. As a result, systems of archival access essentially keep the Teatro's 'lost years' lost. Moreover, by obscuring the events of these years – by 'anaesthetis[ing] the past', as Achille Mbembe puts it – the archive helps the cultural project that Robério initiated in 1997 (discussed further in Chapter Four) to appear especially striking (Mbembe 2002, 23). It gains significance when juxtaposed with a blank history and a general sense of inactivity regarding the mid-twentieth century. Removing the intermediate time period also diverts attention back toward the 'golden years' of 1897-1907, such that the 1997 project can more easily be historicised as a second remarkable, turn-of-the-century phenomenon.

Archive Stories: Material Conditions and Systems of (Dis)organisation

The physical properties of an archive – the organisation of its collections, the material state of its documents, its location, its layout, its architectural dimensions, its climate control, and so on – significantly affect the ways in which researchers navigate and interpret the documents therein.¹³⁴ Yet, in 2005, Ghosh pointed out that the extent to which archival conditions shape research remained 'a largely inadmissible secret' (Ghosh 2005, 27). While scholarly discussions about archives frequently cite Arlette Farge and Mbembe on materiality, these researchers' observations could productively be complemented by more ethnographic exploration of the topic.¹³⁵ In her well-known book *The Allure of the Archive*, Farge is vividly descriptive about the physical characteristics of documents, but she does not develop her descriptions into analyses (e.g. Farge 2014, 15). Furthermore, although Mbembe has called for attention to be paid to the 'architectural dimension' of archives, he makes no reference to specific examples when discussing this idea (Mbembe 2002, 19; see also Burton 2005, 8-9; Jong 2016, 11). Given these points, and given the extent to which the Teatro's history could be inflected by the physical workings of its archive, it is constructive to move beyond Farge's

¹³⁴ For examples, see Ballantyne 2005, 100-103; Burton 2005, 8; Farge 2014, 56-57; Ghosh 2005, 38-39; Stoler 2009, 33.

¹³⁵ Although archival researchers have rarely explored the physical attributes of archives through an ethnographic lens, for an exception, see Yunhwa Rao 2017.

descriptions and Mbembe's theorisations in this instance: to analyse, ethnographically, the ways in which physical archival conditions affect histories of the opera house.

The Teatro's archive is housed on site in two rooms located on the mezzanine level that runs around the Salão Nobre. It contains newspaper clippings, programmes from events at the opera house, architectural plans, official telegrams and other communications, DVDs, VHS tapes, CDs, and promotional material. The collections are not catalogued, but they are arranged in roughly chronological batches and, to an extent, by type (for example, the newspaper documents are mostly grouped together in one cabinet and the DVDs are shelved together). Each set of documents is labelled by year and is either piled up in a cabinet or stored in a cardboard box. I was told at one point that a large-scale cataloguing and digitalisation project was underway, but this project appeared to stagnate during my time in Manaus. Furthermore, one staff member explained to me that the digital materials were so disorganised that I would in any case find it easier to browse the physical documents. Even so, staff members frequently rearranged those physical documents (with no explanation either proffered or forthcoming when solicited), making it difficult to negotiate them efficiently.

Although this archival disorder hindered the swift location of documents relevant to any *specific* topic, it also forced me to sort omnivorously through as much material as I could. Rather than allowing myself to be led through the collections by carefully crafted labels and catalogues, or to be directed to certain sources by archivists, I was relatively free to read the archive however I chose. A lack of order can significantly slow research down, but it can also increase the likelihood of making *unexpected* discoveries. Moreover, as Ghosh points out, carefully arranged and labelled archives can 'produce silences' just as effectually as haphazard ones can (Ghosh 2005, 38-39). A meticulously catalogued archive would not necessarily have been more open to me; it would simply have obscured its materials in a different way. Admittedly, my attempts at omnivorosity in the Teatro's archive were partially undermined by the regular rearrangement of the materials. On the other hand,

photographing and scanning documents was permitted and even encouraged (as is the case in many Brazilian archives and libraries). Moreover, the fact that I was able to take items directly off shelves meant that archivists did not screen any documents out. In this sense, then, there was an active effort on the part of the archivists *not* to allow the archive to conceal its own contents.¹³⁶

When considering physical archival attributes in the context of the Teatro, climate is also a crucial factor. Tropical climates can, of course, contribute to rapid material deterioration of both paper documents and the buildings in which they are stored; expensive air conditioning units are often required for preservation. Both rooms of the Teatro's archive, however, are oppressively hot and humid. One of them does not have *any* climate control; the other has three wheezy and ineffective air conditioning units, one of which leaks into the offices below. The latter room has a thermometer in it that, during my time there, regularly recorded temperatures of over 30 degrees Celsius and humidity levels of over 70% even with the air conditioning switched on. Besides increasing the rate of material decomposition, the hot and humid conditions also create a challenging environment for both researchers and archivists to work in. Moreover, staff members frequently leave documents out on desks overnight (when the air conditioning is switched off), further increasing the levels of humidity to which they are exposed. Instructions for handling materials are also erratic: on some occasions, a member of staff insisted that I wore a mask and gloves while consulting the documents; on other occasions they told me that I could touch the materials directly. The brightness and arrangement of the lighting in the archive meant that I did need to handle many

¹³⁶ I am not the first person to address the complexities of working in an archive in Manaus: local scholars Edineia Dias, Mário Ypiranga, and Márcio Páscoa all lament the conditions of the local institutions, noting the severe extent to which historical collections are often physically damaged (Dias 1999, 20-21; Monteiro 2003, 176; Páscoa 1997, 7). Páscoa glosses the result as a shameful loss of local musical memory, and its replacement by a series of unsubstantiated legends that roll from the imaginations of various individuals (Páscoa 2000, 17-19). To some degree, his construal can also be applied to the case of the Teatro, but with greater specificity: combined with the complex issues concerning access, material archival machinations serve to obscure the events of 1937-1971.

of the documents directly, removing them from plastic wallets in which they were stored in order to read and photograph them.¹³⁷

Given that one result of the lack of widespread access to the Teatro's archive is the concealment of its mid-twentieth-century history, it is important to question the extent to which this outcome may be deliberate. The main gatekeeper, Robério, had at least one motive for making the archive inaccessible: as mentioned, keeping the 'lost years' lost helped to make his 1997 cultural project appear particularly impressive. However, once I had secured his signature in our initial meeting, I found that he did not have a close oversight of the archive's day-to-day operations. Moreover, the combination of disorganisation and my liberty to consult any items I chose gave me relatively free reign over its contents. In August 2017, Robério asked me to start sending him monthly reports on my research; yet he only requested these reports late on in my fieldwork, suggesting that any desire for control was not urgently felt. Although he regulated archival access at an overarching level, his input did not go any deeper. Obscuring the 'lost years' of 1937-1971, then, is probably not a *deliberate* result of the archive's inaccessibility and material conditions. Nevertheless, the restrictions on who can participate in the archive mean that only certain people are able to tell its stories.

Peeholes into the Lost Years: A Remedial History

The following section examines five historical documents from the Teatro's archive dating from the period 1937-1971. I mostly discuss them in chronological order, but do not attempt to present a complete chronology of events; rather, I treat the documents as entry points into a

¹³⁷ In order to avoid the trap of geographical determinism by attributing these characteristics to the Amazonian location or to Amazonian cultural attitudes, it is worth briefly returning to the archive at the 'neighbouring' Teatro da Paz. While the Teatro da Paz's collections appear to be less extensive than those of the Teatro Amazonas (they include programmes, administrative records, and a selection of newspaper cuttings, but the cuttings only date back to 1940), the archive has efficient air conditioning and most of the documents are in good physical condition. In contrast to the Manaus opera house, that of Belém has invested in the technology to counteract equatorial heat and humidity in order to preserve its historical documents. There could be various explanations (none of them mutually exclusive) for this distinction: perhaps the Secretaria de Cultura of Pará has a higher budget for physical maintenance than that of Amazonas; perhaps the archivist there is more alert to such details; perhaps there is a greater culture of conservation and a more widespread interest in local history in Belém.

broader discussion of uses and views of the opera house during these years. As well as taking some initial steps toward a construction of the Teatro's history during this period, then, I hope also to provide new insights into the ways in which opera houses might respond to changing political and economic contexts.

The first two archival documents both date from a period in Brazilian history known as the 'first Vargas regime' (1930-1945). Having lost a presidential election in 1929, Getúlio Vargas staged a coup to become Brazil's president in 1930. In 1937, he essentially overthrew his own government in order to run the country as a dictator until the end of the Second World War, under an authoritarian-nationalist regime called the Estado Novo (New State). (He was subsequently re-elected as president democratically in 1951 and served until 1954, when he committed suicide in office.) The first document (TAA 1939nb) is a programme from a performance that took place at the Teatro on 19 January 1939. In reference to Vargas's relatively new regime, the invitation-only event was entitled 'Hora do Estado Novo' (Time of the New State). It comprised the following items:

Overture from *Il Guarany*

Carlos Gomes

Performed by the bands of the Military Police and the 27th Hunters Battalion¹³⁸

Song (title not given)

Performed by Senhorinha Heloisa de Miranda Leão

Violin piece (title not given)

Performed by Senhora Almira Neves Azpilicueta

Grand Fantasy on the National Anthem

Louis Moreau Gottschalk

Performed by Senhorinha Lila Borges de Sá

*Lecture on 'The New Politics of Brazil', written by His Excellency President Getúlio Vargas, delivered by the Federal Interventor Alvaro Maia*¹³⁹

The National Anthem

Performed by the bands of the Military Police and the 27th Hunters Battalion

¹³⁸ In the Brazilian army, the term *caçador*, literally meaning 'hunter', is used to refer to a member of the cavalry or light infantry.

¹³⁹ During the Estado Novo, federal interventors essentially governed at the state level. They answered directly to the national government in Rio and exercised complete executive and legislative powers in their states (Skidmore 2007, 13-14, 37).

Even without knowing the titles for all of the musical pieces performed, the nationalistic character of the programme is blatant (the *Il Guarany* overture had, by this stage, essentially become a second national anthem for Brazil). The use of police and military bands is also notable: their inclusion might perhaps have resulted from a lack of other local ensembles available to perform, but it also cannot but serve as a ‘metaphor of war’ of the kind that Daryle Williams argues was pervasive during Vargas’s presidency (Williams 2001, 5-10). It is also important to note that this event was not unique: other similar events celebrating the Vargas regime took place at the Teatro between 1930 and 1945 (albeit not frequently).¹⁴⁰

The second document (TAA 1940nb) does not relate directly to music or performances at the Teatro, but it does give some sense of the attitudes toward Amazonas publicly displayed (although perhaps not actually held) by the central Brazilian government. It is a leaflet printed in 1941 by the Manaus Public Press that includes a copy of a speech given by Vargas during his official visit to the city on 10 October the preceding year. The speech was given in the Salão Nobre of the Ideal Clube (a building adjacent to the Teatro) and addressed to 212 selected members of the political and social classes of Manaus. (A commemoration of the occasion was held in the Teatro in 1941) (*A Manhã*, 1 October 1941; *Jornal do Commercio*, 9 October 1940).

In the lengthy speech, subsequently referred to as the ‘Discurso do Rio Amazonas’ (Rio Amazonas Speech), Vargas stressed a pressing need for development in Amazonia and expounded his desire to reunite the region economically with the rest of Brazil. He identified difficulties historically faced by the region, particularly emphasising the extent to which its much-maligned climate had hindered immigration from other parts of the country. He firmly dismissed, however, any suggestion that Brazil’s equatorial territories were inherently unsuited to civilisation, presenting Manaus as an example of the claim’s falsity: the city, he announced, was an instance of *victory* in the centuries-old quest to ‘conquer the earth,

¹⁴⁰ For some examples, see *Jornal do Commercio*, 7 November 1943; 13 August 1944.

dominate the waters, [and] subjugate the forests' of the Amazon.¹⁴¹ He furthermore proclaimed that harnessing the resources of the vast region was the biggest task facing the process of civilisation in the twentieth century (he did not specify whether he meant national or global civilisation, but his consistent nationalist ideology suggests the former) (Garcia 2009, 615; see also Skidmore 2007, 37, 45). He conceded that the immensity of unpopulated geographical space remained a major obstacle to progress, but declared that this obstacle could be overcome simply by extracting raw materials more efficiently, including by replacing the nomadic lifestyles of immigrant north-eastern rubber tappers with properly fixed agrarian complexes. With such efforts, Vargas proclaimed, Amazonia could start to play a vital role in the national economy.

Vargas's rhetoric of progress and civilisation struck a similar tone to that of the Amazonian positivists of the late nineteenth century, touched on in Chapter One (29-30). There was, however, a notable difference: by this stage, opera and opera houses had fallen out of the equation. The reasons behind this change are multiple: on a regional scale, Amazonas's on-going economic slump was prohibitive as far as large-scale productions or lavish building projects were concerned. On a broader scale, Brazil had undergone substantial changes in its attitudes toward culture in the preceding years. Bryan McCann argues convincingly that a nascent obsession with nationhood and *brasilidade* (Brazilianness), which germinated with the Modernist Movement of the 1920s and flowered under Vargas's centralist and homogenising cultural policies during the 1930s, was played out in the realm of popular music much more so than in that of classical music, or even cinema or sport (McCann 2004, 1-13; see also Hertzman 2013, 195). Nevertheless, opera was not entirely absent from discussions of *brasilidade*, even if it was often included in such discussions as a point of contrast – as a metonym of the 'old order'.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ conquistar a terra, dominar a água, sujeitar a floresta

¹⁴² São Paulo's 1922 Modern Art Week, for example, produced a famously scathing essay by Oswald de Andrade that pitted the nineteenth-century Antônio Carlos Gomes against the modernist composer Heitor Villa-

Despite its rhetorical flamboyance, the ‘Discurso do Rio Amazonas’ provoked little actual change. Two years after Vargas delivered it, Amazonas *was* presented with a new opportunity for economic development, but it resulted from the ongoing Second World War rather than directly from Brazilian initiatives. In 1942, the Allied Forces (with whom Vargas had by then aligned Brazil, despite his earlier admiration of European fascist nations) urgently needed to replenish their rubber stocks, as many of their Asian plantations were in areas occupied by Japanese troops. Consequently, the United States initiated a project with the Brazilian government to restock its reserves, maintaining a presence in Manaus until the war ended. The US presence precipitated a brief local economic boom between 1942 and 1945 (Garfield 2013, 49-85; Souza 2010, 167). Notably, however, performances at the Teatro (of any kind) remained sporadic and did *not* proliferate during these few years (*Jornal do Commercio*, 14 February 1943; 2 January 1944).

In part, the lack of large-scale or international productions (such as opera) during this brief boom period can be attributed to the difficulties in contracting European performers to travel to Brazil during wartime (although Rio de Janeiro’s Teatro Municipal circumvented this obstacle by importing singers from the New York Metropolitan Opera).¹⁴³ More importantly, the Teatro Amazonas was closed to the public for much of 1942 and 1943 to enable substantial reforms to be carried out. Furthermore, although it briefly reopened at the end of 1943 with performances by the Brazilian Hollywood actor Raul Roulien (1905-2000), the Teatro was primarily put to a new use during these years: with the instigation of the new rubber project, it was turned into office space for the American Rubber Reserve Company (*Assembleia Legislativo do Estado do Amazonas 1943*, 20; *Jornal do Commercio*, 14 February 1943; 2 January 1944).

Lobos (1887-1959). It began bluntly with the announcement, *Carlos Gomes é horrível* (Carlos Gomes is horrible) (Rodrigues 2011, 139-141).

¹⁴³ On rare occasions, the Municipal did successfully contract a singer from Europe, but the significant difficulties in transport and communication between the two continents prohibited this practice from being undertaken frequently. See *Diário de Notícias*, 31 January 1942; 12 March 1942; 19 May 1942; 24 May 1942.

These two documents show that the Teatro produced propagandistic events during the Estado Novo without receiving much attention (financial or otherwise) in return from Brazil's central government. Márcio Souza is highly critical of the deference shown to Vargas at this time by Manaus's elites, describing them as putting on a farce for the dictator during his 1940 visit rather than acknowledging the poor economic state their city was in (Souza 2010, 168-169). Vargas's rhetoric regarding Amazonas may have focused on development, progress, and civilising processes, but the only obvious improvement that occurred at this time was a short-lived economic one that relied on the opera house for its base of administrative operations, thereby prohibiting rather than facilitating cultural production. Of course, the situation could have been worse: even though it was temporarily used to house the American Rubber Reserve Company, the Teatro at least remained physically intact throughout the Second World War, thus faring notably better than many European opera houses (Snowman 2009, 347-351).

My third document (TAA 1960nb) is a programme for a performance of the three-act comedy *Dona Xepa*, written in 1952 by the prolific Brazilian playwright and novelist Pedro Bloch (1914-2004) and performed by the Teatro Escola de Amadores as part of the group's 1960 season.¹⁴⁴ The Teatro Escola, mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis (8-10), was an amateur theatre group funded by the Amazonas government; it was active in Manaus between 1944 and 1967 (with a hiatus between 1955 and 1959) and sometimes performed at the Teatro (Costa and Azancóth 2001, 15; Souza 2010, 244). *Dona Xepa*'s plot revolves around the domestic life of a widow who works on a market stall. Through hard work, she has managed to provide opportunities for her adult son and daughter that she did not have in her own life. The son studies science in the US and becomes an inventor back home in Brazil. The daughter, a social climber, is ashamed of her mother's poor origins, and begins dating a wealthy diplomat. Through melodrama and comedy, the play explores familial relationships and social class tensions (Bloch 1977).

¹⁴⁴ *Dona Xepa* has been remade several times in Brazil: as a film (in 1959), and three times as a telenovela (in 1977, 1990, and 2013). The 1990 telenovela changed the title to *Lua Cheia de Amor*.

The *Dona Xepa* programme includes a cast list that names the artistic director as Gebes de Mello Medeiros. A locally well-known lawyer, Medeiros (1915-2003) had close links with many members of the Amazonas government and was one of the Teatro Escola's original founders. When Vargas committed suicide in 1954, Medeiros departed for Rio along with Maia (the federal interventor) and a number of other politicians; but he returned to Manaus and to his involvement with the Teatro Escola several years later. For two weeks before the first performance of *Dona Xepa* (on 26 March 1960), the newspapers of Manaus printed numerous reports on the preparations, and the tickets quickly sold out (Costa and Azancoth 2001, 117-118).¹⁴⁵

Besides providing the cast list, the *Dona Xepa* programme also includes a number of comments on the previous piece the company had performed: *O Auto da Compadecida*, a comedy written in 1955 by the Brazilian playwright Ariano Suassuna (1927-2014), who was from the north-eastern state of Paraíba.¹⁴⁶ It was with Suassuna's play that the Teatro Escola's performances had restarted after a four-year interval, on 19 July 1959. The performance included additional music written by the local composer Nivaldo Santiago (b. 1929; he also played the role of Jesus Christ in the production) (Costa and Azancoth 2001, 104-107). Unlike *Dona Xepa*, *O Auto da Compadecida* has a specific setting that is important for its plot: it takes place in Brazil's dry north-east, in a desert-like hinterland known as the *sertão*. It focuses on the daily lives of João Grilo and Chicó – two impoverished, but witty and resourceful, young men – and on their interactions with several corrupt representatives of the Catholic Church. When João Grilo dies in an attack by the local bandit Severino de Aracaju, the Virgin Mary judges him at the gates of Heaven. After being judged, the corrupt members of the local clergy (who were also murdered by Severino) are sent to Purgatory; Severino

¹⁴⁵ The contrast with the poor attendance at the Teatro's inaugural performance in 1897 is of note, given the tendency to eulogise its early history and to proclaim cultural stagnation during this later period (see Chapter Two, 62).

¹⁴⁶ *O Auto da Compadecida* was made into a film in Brazil in 2000 (its English title is *A Dog's Will*).

himself ascends into Heaven; and João Grilo is permitted to return to Earth to try to lead a better life (Suassuna 2005).

The north-eastern setting and authorship of *O Auto da Compadecida* is important.¹⁴⁷ As touched on in the Introduction to this thesis (8-10), the Teatro Escola primarily performed nationally successful dramas by playwrights from Brazil's south-east, as opposed to works by authors closer to home. As a result, the group was sometimes criticised for not promoting regionalism, or for capitulating to nation-building populism (Costa and Azancoth 2001, 11-21). Yet this performance shows that the Teatro Escola included at least one regionalist work in its repertory, albeit one from outside the Amazon. It thus demonstrates that the question of Amazonian and *manauara* identity formation during this period did not only function in terms of a relationship to a unified national sphere, but also involved a range of regionalist cultures. The Teatro Escola did not allow itself to become trapped into representing *either* Amazonian *or* Brazilian cultural forms; there were other nearby sources the group was able to draw on.¹⁴⁸

A sense nevertheless remained, among the members and followers of the Teatro Escola, that Amazonia was distinctly separate from the rest of Brazil and needed to prove itself. A column in the *Jornal do Commercio* reported, 'There is also talk of the [Teatro Escola's] departure for Fortaleza, São Luiz, and Belém. That this season should be performed in other capitals to show that Amazonas, too, has art and high theatre' (*Jornal do Commercio*, 19 April 1960).¹⁴⁹ A second column related, 'the Teatro Escola's new rehearsal director, speaking to our *Jornal*, affirmed that he found in the Teatro Escola's cast individuals capable

¹⁴⁷ Out of Brazil's regionalist cultural forms, that of the north-east is probably the best known. It often depicts the arid geography of the *sertão* and the effects of that environment on those who live there. Most of the famous examples of north-eastern regionalist literature date from the 1930s-50s. They include José Américo de Almeida's *A Bagaceira* (1928), Rachel de Queiroz's *O Quinze* (1930), Graciliano Ramos's *Vidas Secas* (1938), and João Guimarães Rosa's *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (1956). For a recent study on the role of the north-east in twentieth-century conceptions of Brazilian nationhood, see Blake 2011. For an insightful examination of ways in which regional difference was 'racialised' in twentieth-century Brazil, see Weinstein 2003. Weinstein also emphasises that regionalism and nationalism are not 'antithetical tendencies' (Weinstein 2003, 240).

¹⁴⁸ North-eastern cultural forms had, in any case, long been prominent in Amazonia because of high levels of north-east to north migration, including the movement of large numbers of *cearenses* during the rubber boom.

¹⁴⁹ Fala-se tambem da ida do T.E. até Fortaleza, São Luiz e Belem. Que realiza-se essa temporada em outras capitais para mostrarmos que tambem no Amazonas, tem arte e alto Teatro.

of facing any southern stage without concern' (*Jornal do Commercio*, 26 January 1960).¹⁵⁰ In June 1963, the lawyer-director Medeiros wrote one of his regular Sunday columns, 'Coluna Theatro & Theatro'. Noting that the Brazilian actor and film director Anselmo Duarte (1920-2009) was planning a film version of *O Auto da Compadecida*, he wrote,

We are almost certain that if Anselmo Duarte attended the staging of *Compadecida* in Manaus, Alfredo Fernandes, Aldemar Bonates, Geraldo Xavier and Carlos Araújo [all actors in the Teatro Escola production] would be invited to work on the film. In many Brazilian states, the play was staged by various groups of amateurs and professionals, but we are not afraid to say that, in authentic production, none surpassed the achievement of the Teatro Escola. But, we are so far from Brazil... (*O Jornal*, 2 June 1963, in Costa and Azanchoth 2001, 111-112).¹⁵¹

These commentaries (Medeiros's in particular) show a clear sense that Manaus remained isolated from the broader national sphere, even though its local theatre groups performed numerous nationally popular works and at least one regionalist one. Even after the end of the Estado Novo, then, performers at the Teatro displayed some desire to participate in a national sphere, but continued to receive little attention or recognition in return.

Among the comments about *O Auto da Compadecida* that appeared on the *Dona Xepa* programme was one written by the governor of Amazonas, Gilberto Mestrinho de Medeiros Raposo (1928-2009, governor 1959-1963, 1983-1987, 1991-1995). It reads, 'The rebirth of our Teatro Escola, with the magnificent performance of *Auto da Compadecida*, is an affirmation that it is not only materially that Amazonas is being reborn. Rather, that the spirit also flies high, glimpsing the NEW AMAZONAS that we dream of today, and which tomorrow, by the work of our people, will be a radiant reality'.¹⁵² The mayor, Lóris Cordovil (dates unknown), similarly referred to '[t]wo things that are reborn at the same time. The

¹⁵⁰ o novo ensaiador do Teatro Escola, falando ao nosso Jornal, afirmou que encontrou no elenco do Teatro Escola gente capaz de enfrentar qualquer palco sulino sem maiores preocupações.

¹⁵¹ Temos quase certeza absoluta de que se Anselmo Duarte assistisse à encenação da *Compadecida* em Manaus, Alfredo Fernandes, Aldemar Bonates, Geraldo Xavier e Carlos Araújo seriam convidados para trabalhar no filme. Em muitos Estados brasileiros foi encenada a peça por diversos grupos de amadores e profissionais, mas não temos medo de afirmar que em montagem autêntica nenhuma sobrepujou o feito do Teatro Escola. Mas, nós estamos tão longe do Brasil...

¹⁵² O renascimento do Teatro Escola de nossa terra, com a magnífica apresentação do *Auto da Compadecida*, é uma afirmativa de que não apenas materialmente o Amazonas está renascendo. Mas, que o espírito também se lança em vôos altos, no vislumbrar o NOVO AMAZONAS com que sonhamos hoje e que amanhã, pelo trabalho de nossa gente, será uma radiosa realidade.

Teatro Escola and the gala nights of our Teatro Amazonas'.¹⁵³ A third critic suggested that the Teatro Escola was rejuvenating local taste for live theatre amid the competition of radio, cinema, and television. The reappearance of the Teatro Escola, then, was framed as a cultural rebirth for Manaus, just as the opera festival of 1997 would be nearly 40 years later.

According to Selda Vale da Costa and Ediney Azancoth (the latter of whom was present at the 1959 *O Auto da Compadecida* performance), 1950s Manaus can be divided into two distinct historical moments: pre-1955, when economic depression continued; and post-1955, when a wave of optimism emerged under the new populist governor Plínio Ramos Coelho (1920-2001, governor 1955-1959, 1963-1964).¹⁵⁴ Drawing on rhetoric promulgated by Coelho's successor, Gilberto Mestrinho, local historians even refer to the latter half of the 1950s as the time of the 'New Amazonas' (Costa and Azancoth 2001, 101-102; Souza 2010, 172). During these years, electricity was restored throughout much of Manaus and urban works were recommenced; it was essentially a time of transition between the long depression and economic recovery (Souza 2010, 173).

My fourth document (TAA 1969sf) dates from 26 June 1969 and comprises the following parts: a history of a local amateur choir called the Coral João Gomes Junior; a biography of the choir's conductor, Fulgêncio Monacelli; a list of the choir's members; a repertory list for a performance that the choir was to give in an upcoming music festival; and a cover letter typewritten by Carlos Alberto da Encarnação (a bass singer and the choir's president) and addressed to Moacir Couto de Andrade, Manaus's Director of Museums. The history of the choir explains that it was founded on 19 March 1956 with approximately 57 members under the conductor Santiago (who composed the additional music for *O Auto da Compadecida*). Its debut performance, on 13 July 1956, took place in the Teatro; accompanied by the local pianist Maria José, it included the following repertory:

¹⁵³ Duas cousas que renascem ao mesmo tempo. O Teatro Escola e as noites de gala do nosso Teatro Amazonas.

¹⁵⁴ In part, the optimism stemmed from the election of Coelho, who ran against Maia (the federal interventor during the Estado Novo). While Maia symbolised dictatorship and economic hardship, Coelho provided an image of change and a new political order (Souza 2010, 171-173).

‘As Tuas Mãos’ (Your Hands), by Oscar Lorenzo Fernandez
 ‘Cabocla Bonita’ (Beautiful *Cabocla*), an Amazonian festival song, by A. Pereira¹⁵⁵
 ‘Moreninha’ (Little Brunette), a Brazilian song, by Georgina Erismann
 ‘Ave Maria’, by Jacques Arcadelt
 ‘Psalm XVIII’, by Benedetto Marcello
 ‘Pilgrim’s Chorus’ from *Tannhäuser*, by Richard Wagner

The history goes on to recount that the choir subsequently performed in varied venues and locations, including small rural towns in the interior of Amazonas. In 1963, it travelled further afield to perform in larger cities in the north and north-east, including Belém, Fortaleza, São Luís, and Recife, where it recorded an album that was broadcast on several Brazilian and foreign radio stations. That same year, Santiago was replaced as the choir’s conductor by the *piaiense* musician Dirson Costa (1923-2001). Costa collaborated with the Amazonas government to establish a music conservatoire in Manaus (named after Joaquim Franco, one of the impresarios discussed in Chapter Two), with which the Coral João Gomes Junior became associated. This association was, however, short-lived: when the conservatoire became amalgamated with the University Foundation of Amazonas, the choir lost its institutional support and again became independent, only managing to survive by the good will and dedication of its members. The history ends by noting that the choir currently has only 27 members and is conducted by Monacelli, a Capuchin Friar.

The main repertory list included in this document shows the pieces that the choir was to perform at an upcoming choral festival, held to mark the 300th anniversary of the founding of Manaus:

‘Ave Maria no Morro’ (Ave Maria on the Hill), by Herivelto Martins
 ‘Eu Te Darei Sem Mais’, by Paul Francis Webster¹⁵⁶
 ‘Green Fields’, by Terry Gilkyson, Richard Dehr, and Frank Miller
 ‘Bôto do Rio’ (River Dolphin), an indigenous Brazilian song
 ‘Moreninha’ (Little Brunette), a Brazilian song, by Georgina Erismann
 ‘Foi Bôto Sinhá’ (It Was the Dolphin, Madam), an Amazonian festival song, by Waldemar Henrique
 ‘La Montanara’ (The Mountain Song), an Italian folksong
 ‘Dia de Festa’ (Day of Celebration), a popular song, by Cagnacci¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ I have been unable to establish exactly who A. Pereira was (or is). It is possible that the programme listing included the wrong initial, and that it in fact referred to the Brazilian composer Pedro de Sá Pereira (1892-1955), who composed a song in 1923 called ‘Caiubi (Canção da Cabocla Bonita)’ (Severiano and Mello 2006, 67). The term *caboclo/a* refers to a Brazilian of mixed indigenous and European heritage.

¹⁵⁶ This song appears to be listed incorrectly. Although the composer is given as Paul Francis Webster, the song was probably Moacyr Franco’s ‘Eu Te Darei Bem Mais’ (I Will Give You Much More), released in 1966.

‘Steal Away’, a Negro Spiritual
 ‘A Virgem Imaculada’, by Giuseppe Verdi¹⁵⁸
 ‘Torna A Vir’ (Come Again, Sweet Love Doth Now Invite), by John Dowland
 ‘Melhor Sofrer’ (Más Vale Trocar), a madrigal, by Juan del Encina
 ‘Vozes’ (Voices), by Dirson Costa, with lyrics by Luiz Bacelar
 ‘Berceuse’, by Johannes Brahms
 ‘Invocação em Defesa da Pátria’ (Invocation in Defence of the Homeland), by Heitor
 Villa-Lobos

As with its debut concert in 1956, the choir’s repertory for this festival was eclectic in terms of genre, period, and the music’s geographical origin. The English and Spanish Renaissance music of John Dowland and Juan del Encina, juxtaposed with Brahms and Verdi, complemented a predominance of folk and popular music from North America, Italy, and Brazil. The finale, Villa-Lobos’s ‘Invocação em Defesa da Pátria’, is an explicitly patriotic work, composed for choir and solo soprano in 1943. In his cover letter, the bass singer Encarnação suggests to the Director of Museums that, in the performance, this piece should be preceded by a speech given by a distinguished intellectual. This intellectual ought, he advises, to discuss the festival’s main theme (by which he presumably means Manaus’s 300th anniversary), since the choir also intends to represent each of Brazil’s federal states by its respective flag and with members of the armed forces.

This document is important for two reasons: first, choral singing has long been one of the most commonly undertaken participatory musical activities in Manaus; the Coral João Gomes is still running in 2019 and is now one of the city’s oldest musical ensembles (Silva 2011, 9). Second, large-scale choral performances became a national trend in 1930s and 40s Brazil as part of an educational project run by Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) (Appleby 2002, 101-115). This nationwide project, I suggest, had an enduring effect on the Coral João Gomes, traces of which show up in this 1969 programme. In order to probe this suggestion, I will begin by discussing the two Brazilian composers whose songs bookend the choir’s 1956 and 1969 performances: Oscar Lorenzo Fernandez (1897-1948) and Villa-Lobos.

¹⁵⁷ There are many songs with this title; I have been unable to identify who Cagnacci was or to find out any further details about this particular song.

¹⁵⁸ ‘A Virgem Imaculada’ was probably ‘La Vergine Degli Angeli’ from *La forza del destino*. There was presumably a soprano soloist available to perform it, given that ‘Invocação em Defesa da Pátria’ also requires one.

During the first Vargas regime, Villa-Lobos oversaw a far-reaching state project involving orpheonic singing (large-scale amateur choral singing). The project's notional aim was to educate Brazilian schoolchildren not only musically but also socially – to turn them into model citizens (see Oliveira 2011, 57-63). From 1931, it became compulsory for children in primary and secondary education to participate in regular choir rehearsals, and days of civic celebration began to feature amalgamated choirs of thousands of schoolchildren singing patriotic songs composed by Brazilians. Numbers of participants would sometimes reach the tens of thousands, and performance logistics often became akin to military operations. Gabriel Ferraz argues that these events were musically educational in no evident sense, but rather overtly served as propaganda for Vargas (Ferraz 2013, 163-164, 181-185; see also Garcia 2009; Kiefer 1986, 83). Parallels can be seen with the cultural practices employed by contemporaneous authoritarian states in Europe in order to 'discipline' the minds and bodies of their citizens (Gray 2013, 21). As Thomas Garcia puts it, 'One cannot help but think of European fascism and the spectacles in Germany and Italy, used to the same purpose of instilling patriotism and garnering support of the regime. Brazil embraced many of the trappings of European fascism, including all the pomp and pageantry' (Garcia 2009, 629).

'*Invocação em Defesa da Pátria*' was frequently performed at these mass choral events; its lyrics contain allusions to prosperity and glory, and plead for Brazil to be kept safe from the horrors of war (the country having entered the Second World War in 1942). With a simple melody moving in narrow intervals and slow moving four-part chords, it is designed to be sung by enormous amateur groups. One of the musicians invited by Villa-Lobos to help to run this choral project was Lorenzo Fernandez (Ferraz 2013, 183). Likewise strongly involved with national music making, Lorenzo Fernandez directed the Conservatório Nacional de Música (later renamed the Conservatório Brasileiro de Música) from 1936 until his death in 1948. He and Villa-Lobos were also close personal friends (who, according to Bruno Kiefer, spent many hours together discussing the nation's music education over roast

chicken) (Kiefer 1986, 82-83). Also like Villa-Lobos, Lorenzo Fernandez composed many nationalistic works, including his opera *Malazarte*, which premiered at Rio's Teatro Municipal in 1941 (although 'As Tuas Mãos', which opened the Coral João Gomes's debut performance, is not nationalistic, but rather a romantic *modinha*).¹⁵⁹

Caution is of course required when extrapolating from two performed songs to their composers' personal connections and nationalistic inclinations (which McCann goes so far as to describe as an 'unambiguous table-thumping patriotism' in the case of Villa-Lobos) (McCann 2004, 73). The choir's directors may have been unaware of the connections between Lorenzo Fernandez and Villa-Lobos; similarly, Monacelli may not have known which pieces the choir had performed at its 1956 event. However, both composers were well known in the spheres of Brazilian music and the Estado Novo bureaucracy, making it likely that the repertory selectors were aware of their activities. There are further connections: Costa, the choir's conductor for several years from 1963, studied composition and conducting under both Villa-Lobos and Lorenzo Fernandez at the Conservatório Nacional de Música, and one of his compositions was also included in the 1969 concert ('Biografia'). There is also the choir's namesake, João Gomes Junior (1868-1963), a musician often cited as being one of the first to bring the tradition of orpheonic singing to Brazil in the 1910s (Gilioli 2003, 7).¹⁶⁰ Besides providing the choir's name, João Gomes Junior also taught Santiago, its first conductor ('Homenagens').

This document, then, reveals a connection between the Coral João Gomes and the Brazilian tradition of orpheonic singing across two performances separated by a thirteen-year period. Renato Gilioli has studied the ways in which this type of choral singing was used for 'civilising' ends in Brazil from 1910 on, particularly through Villa-Lobos's nation-wide project. He observes that the practice also served ends other than 'civilising', aiming simultaneously to forge a sense of national identity (Gilioli 2003). McCann argues that

¹⁵⁹ Brazilian *modinhas* are sentimental love songs, usually sung by a soloist.

¹⁶⁰ But see Salles 2007, 57-58. According to Vicente Salles, orpheonic singing was introduced to Pará in 1898 by the pianist and composer Clemente Ferreira Júnior.

enthusiasm for these large-scale choral pieces waned rapidly after the end of the Estado Novo, but, in this instance, the tradition was continued for twenty-four more years (McCann 2004, 237). Unusually, then, strains of these particular ‘civilising’ processes persisted in making their way into the Teatro.¹⁶¹

It is worth re-emphasising that the works of Villa-Lobos and Lorenzo Fernandez did not dominate these two concerts, but rather provided component parts of eclectic programmes. Nevertheless, even in its diversity, the choir appears to have been seeking something resembling a ‘civilising’ process. I make this suggestion based on a fifth document from the Teatro’s archive, the original programme from the choir’s 1956 debut concert (TAA 1956nb). Besides listing the repertory performed, it contains a blurb about the choir and its goals, which includes a brief sketch of the history of choral singing:

Choral Singing: one of the oldest artistic practices; we know of the existence of large choral ensembles – naturally in rudimentary form – in the following civilisations: Egypt, Assyria, Chaldea, etc... Among the Greeks the chorus achieved unusual importance and relevance, taking an active part in Tragedy [...] Then there was decay. With Christianity, Choral Singing was reborn. Throughout the centuries it spread and acquired rich technical means; however, only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did the first organised choral societies emerge, with the structures present today. This interesting branch of music received the attention of most of the great composers of all time, some of who wrote their masterpieces for it; for example, Orlando de Lassus, Pierluigi da Palestrina, J.S. Bach, Felix Mendelssohn, and others to this day. The Coral João Gomes Junior, although subject to natural beginner’s limitations, wishes to present a swift demonstration of the different styles, eras, and techniques of vocal composition; so it will perform, in this first concert, chosen excerpts from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and nineteenth centuries, and even melodies extracted from our own population, thus giving proof of flexibility and artistic taste.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ The document also reveals a slippage between national and regional concerns: orpheonic singing in Brazil was focused on making model *Brazilian* – not Amazonian – singers. This fact, combined with Villa-Lobos’s ‘table-thumping patriotism’, suggests that the Teatro was once more reaching to participate in that national sphere from which it consistently received little attention in return.

¹⁶² O Canto Coral: prática de arte das mais antigas; sabe-se da existência de grandes agrupamentos corais – naturalmente em forma rudimentar – já nas civilizações: egípcia, assíria, caldeia, etc... Entre os gregos o Canto alcançou importância e relevo incomuns, tomando parte ativa na Tragédia [...] Em seguida houve decadência. Com o cristianismo, renasceu o Canto Coral que no decorrer dos séculos veio adquirindo amplitude e riqueza de meios técnicos; no entanto, somente nos séculos XVI e XVII, surgiram as primeiras sociedades corais organizadas, e com as estruturas atuais. Este interessante ramo da música mereceu a atenção da maioria dos grandes compositores de todos os tempos que para ele escreveram – alguns deles – suas obras primas; citem-se por exemplo: Orlando de Lassus, Pierluigi da Palestrina, J.S. Bach, Haendel, Felix Mendelssohn, e outros até a atualidade. O Coral ‘João Gomes Junior’ embora sujeito às naturais limitações de principiante, quer dar uma rápida demonstração dos diversos estilos, épocas, e técnicas de composição vocal; assim é que, executará nesta primeira audição, trechos escolhidos dos séculos XVI-XVII-XIX e até melodias extraídas do nosso populário, dando assim, prova de flexibilidade e gosto artístico.

In this brief history, the practice of choral singing is overtly linked with a prevalent world religion, ‘great civilisations’, ‘great composers’, and ‘masterpieces’; the reference to it being ‘one of the oldest artistic practices’ also serves to imbue it with historical value. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the five Western European composers with the comment about the choir’s ‘natural beginner’s limitations’ implicitly establishes a hierarchy: by implying that the Coral João Gomes is as yet unprepared for (or unworthy of) performing such works, the text places European compositions above *manauara* performers. In contrast, it portrays pieces by local composers as out of the ordinary, through the phrase ‘*even* melodies extracted from our own population’ (emphasis mine). The placement of this phrase toward the end of the text, moreover, makes it seem like an afterthought. As they did in the early twentieth century, then, those involved with the Teatro sifted local, national, and international cultural influences for the purposes of local aggrandisement. This time, it was not opera that provided the symbol of civilisation (although at least two opera extracts featured in the choir’s programmes); nevertheless, recourse was still made to the supposed superiority of Western European art music.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a remedial history of the Teatro through an analysis of neglected documents in its archive. In doing so, it has attempted to fulfill the kind of ‘emancipatory agenda’ described by Jong: by addressing gaps in the Teatro’s chronology, it has sought to disrupt the general consensus that the mid-twentieth century was an entirely fallow period, and thus to complicate the streamlined narrative of twin fin-de-siècle cultural booms (Jong 2016). Five archival documents served as entry points into a broader discussion of the uses and views of the opera house during the ‘lost years’ of 1937-1971. The first two revealed some of the ways in which the Teatro responded to the Estado Novo regime: it hosted blatantly nationalistic concerts and a commemoration of Vargas’s ‘Discurso do Rio

Amazonas'. Although it was not directly prompted by this speech, Manaus did then experience a brief economic boom during the Second World War; yet the Teatro was not used for musical performances during the boom years, but instead as office space for the American Rubber Reserve Company. The third document, the *Dona Xepa* programme, showed that the reemergence of the Teatro Escola in the 1960s was framed as a 'cultural rebirth' for the Teatro, just as the opera festival of the late 1990s would be. (This earlier rebranding effort, however, was conveniently forgotten when the later one was undertaken.) This programme also showed some of the nuances of Manaus's relationship with a broader national sphere during this time. The fourth and fifth documents introduced the Coral João Gomes and showed how the choir sifted overtly nationalistic pieces, Western European classical works, and local compositions, in an attempt to continue some of the 'civilising' processes that had been propounded under the Estado Novo.

Through ethnography, this chapter has also explored the murkier dimensions of writing the Teatro's history. For one thing, it was significantly easier for me to access this archive than it is for local scholars to do so. Moreover, the state of flux and disarray of archival documents that I encountered means that my remedial history is based on shifting evidential sands. As I have argued, these challenging archival conditions are not specifically intended to obscure the events discussed here (even though that is, in practice, one of their effects). Nevertheless, the strict limits placed on who can access the Teatro's archive give the lie to Robério's professed desire for a wide range of criticism. In practice, it is easiest for scholars who can generate publicity for local politicians to tell histories like this one. Given these limitations, it is important not to be over-optimistic about the emancipatory scope of archive-based histories, even though they can be positive in many ways. Having said that, this chapter is hopefully remedial in two senses: besides presenting a reading of historical sources that puts hidden events into focus, it has also addressed the social and institutional mechanisms of the archive that houses those sources. In applying both ethnographic and

historical approaches, it has highlighted the conditions under which archival contents are moulded into history, while simultaneously probing the limitations of those conditions.

Chapter Four The ‘Cultural Spiral’ of 1997

A century after the Teatro Amazonas’s inauguration, Manaus again became a point of international musical convergence on a large scale, through a new state-sponsored cultural project primarily based in the opera house. The building, by then in a state of disrepair, was refurbished and a centenary concert starring José Carreras was held in 1996. The following year saw the institution of a new opera festival, the Festival Amazonas de Ópera, with performances of Verdi’s *La traviata*, Bizet’s *Carmen*, and Rossini’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. The performers comprised soloists from the Bolshoi Theatre and the Teatro Colón, the Bolshoi orchestra, and a chorus of *amazonense* singers (Viana 2011, 12-21). Supported by the Amazonas government, the festival was initiated by the German violinist Michael Jelden (b. 1971), who had apparently been inspired by the unhinged eponymous hero of Werner Herzog’s *Fitzcarraldo*. Amazonino Mendes, governor of Amazonas in 1997, branded Jelden’s opera festival a long-overdue restorative: ‘The temple – Teatro Amazonas – having been born during a period of regional economic success, suffered dozens of years of silence [...] A new century has arrived to redeem the silence of another’ (Viana 2011, 13).¹⁶³ His portrayal helped to market the festival as an extraordinary, turn-of-the-century phenomenon analogous to that of Manaus’s Belle Époque.

While Jelden’s operatic project took shape, renowned Brazilian conductor Júlio Medaglia was commissioned by the Amazonas government to establish a permanent in-house orchestra for the Teatro; his venture resulted in what he later referred to as a ‘musical league of nations’, with musicians for the new Amazonas Filarmônica sourced from Bulgaria, Belarus, the Czech Republic, the United States, Venezuela, and Uruguay (Medaglia 2017).

¹⁶³ Born in 1939, Amazonino Mendes was governor of Amazonas from 1987 to 1990, 1995 to 2003, and 2017 to 2018.

O templo – Teatro Amazonas –, nascido em época economicamente positiva da região, padeceu dezenas de anos de silêncio [...] Um novo século aí está para redimir um outro de silêncio.

His original orchestra included only two Brazilian musicians; today (2017),¹⁶⁴ Brazilians comprise about half of the orchestra. The opera festival and orchestra were quickly followed by the creation of an in-house chorus, also funded and organised by the local government through the Secretaria de Cultura in 1997. Subsequent ensembles formed by the Secretaria included a dance company (1998), a guitar orchestra (2000), a big band (2000), a ‘folkloric ballet’ group (2001), a chamber orchestra (2002), a youth orchestra (2007), and a youth dance group (2014). More festivals were established: of theatre (2003), film (2004), jazz (2006), and dance (2009). The Secretaria also opened an arts education centre in 1998: the Liceu de Artes e Ofícios Claudio Santoro. Among other things, the Liceu offered (and still offers) free instrumental lessons to children (Associação de Amigos da Cultura n.d.; ‘Corpos Artísticos’ 2017; Sá Gomes n.d.).

In this chapter, I aim to scrutinise the trajectory of this new, state-organised cultural project. Besides examining primary sources, I also draw on interviews I conducted during six months of fieldwork in 2017.¹⁶⁵ Today, musicians and other cultural agents in Manaus often describe the innovations of the late 1990s as the centrepiece of a ‘cultural spiral’, in which the new opera festival (which is still running) provided impetus for the development of local musical ensembles across an increasingly wide variety of genres. I consider the validity of a spiral metaphor that implies smoothness, and interrogate the use-value of opera as a cultural import in this context. I argue that, from the Belle Époque to the late twentieth century, opera’s value in the Amazon changed from that of an ephemeral status symbol to that of a productive stimulus for diverse local musics. I also argue, however, that this development is complicated by the fact that the Festival Amazonas de Ópera is imbued with higher prestige than the other projects it has inspired. It is telling that opera was not used to stimulate local

¹⁶⁴ I use the ethnographic present throughout much of this chapter. Thus, references to ‘today’ generally refer to 2017.

¹⁶⁵ In drawing on interviews conducted as part of more comprehensive fieldwork, I respond to cautions about developing analyses of music institutions based primarily on official rhetoric (Baker 2014 8-14; Born 1995, 7; Kartomi 2012, 864).

innovations and then discarded; rather, it is still viewed as an anchor for the Secretaria's other projects.

The chapter is broadly organised in three sections. First, I discuss the creation of the Festival Amazonas de Ópera and the Amazonas Filarmônica in 1997 – the centrepoint of the spiral. Second, I briefly trace the spiral's outward trajectory, touching on some of the ensembles and festivals created between 1997 and 2017, and contextualising these developments in the light of Brazilian cultural policy. I also examine a particular milestone: a cycle of Wagner's *Ring*, staged in 2005. Third, I identify a series of hierarchies within the spiral, hierarchies that involve musicians' salaries, the varying prestige of foreign versus local musicians, and programming at the Teatro.

A New Opera Festival, 1997

In June 2017, I interviewed the Teatro's choral conductor, Zacarias Fernandes. He has conducted the Coral do Teatro Amazonas since 1991, when they rehearsed in an upper room in the opera house. It was during such a rehearsal, in September 1996, that Zacarias first encountered Jelden:

We were singing [hums 'Va pensiero' from Verdi's *Nabucco*] until, suddenly, somebody knocked on the door. Michael Jelden, the German. He was passing by along the Rua 10 de Julho and heard the sound. And he came up the stairs [...] and he said, 'They told me there was no chorus here, but I'm seeing a chorus'. Then he introduced himself. In fact, he had come here with the Director [of the Teatro, then Inês Daou], and she'd said, 'The Teatro's here, but we don't have a chorus or an orchestra'. She meant in the professional sense. Only we had singers who, with rehearsals, could respond reasonably well [...] So he said, 'OK. Since there is this chorus, I can bring just the orchestra and the soloists'. This was in September '96. And he said, 'Let's put on a festival here'. He said that to me. And I have the two scores. On the 5 January [1997] he arrived at the Eduardo Gomes airport with scores for *La traviata* and *Carmen*. It was the first time I had held a complete opera score.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Nós estávamos cantando [hums 'Va pensiero' from Verdi's *Nabucco*] até, de repente, alguém bate na porta. Michael Jelden, o alemão. Ele tava passando aqui na Rua 10 de Julho, e ouviu aquele som. E ele subiu [...] e falou, 'Disseram que não tinha um coral aqui, estou vendo um coro'. Aí se apresentou. Na verdade ele tinha vindo aqui com a diretora, e ela disse, 'O Teatro tá aqui, mas não temos coro, não temos orquestra'. Ela falou no sentido profissional. Só que nós tínhamos cantores que, com ensaios, poderiam responder razoavelmente [...] Então ele disse, 'Bom. Já que tem esse coro, eu posso só trazer a orquestra e os solistas'. Isso foi em setembro de '96. E ele disse, 'Vamos fazer um festival aqui.' Ele falou isso para mim. E eu tenho as duas partituras. No dia 5 de janeiro, ele desceu no aeroporto Eduardo Gomes com partituras de *La traviata* e *Carmen*. Foi a primeira vez que eu peguei uma partitura inteira de uma ópera.

Besides the spontaneous nature of the encounter, two elements stand out from Zacarias's narrative: the amateur status of the choir, and the fact that he had never before handled a full opera score.¹⁶⁷ He emphasised to me the technical challenges the three operas presented to his chorus members, particularly given their lack of familiarity with either Italian or French, and their lack of score-reading skills. Nevertheless, when Jelden's opera festival took place, local critics generally praised the Coral (although one review of *Carmen* drew attention to their lack of experience and criticised their erratic onstage movements) (*A Crítica*, 8 April 1997; 11 April 1997; *Amazonas em Tempo*, 8 April 1997).¹⁶⁸

During fieldwork, I heard about the beginnings of the Festival Amazonas de Ópera from various musicians and employees of the Teatro and the Secretaria de Cultura. All of them emphasised the key role played by Jelden. Supported by the Amazonas government, he contracted the Bolshoi Orchestra from Minsk and soloists from the Teatro Colón. Besides the three operas, the festival's programme (which ran from 5 to 21 April 1997) featured a piano recital by Fabiana Biasimi and five orchestral concerts, conducted variously by Urs Schneider, Wilhelm Keitel, Gustavo Plis Sterenberg, and Alexandre Shumiski. Jelden also featured as the solo violinist in Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* in the festival's opening concert. Ticket prices ranged from R\$20 to R\$55 (with Biasimi's recital priced lower, at R\$10), and the festival was promoted internationally, with advertisements appearing in the *New York Times* and *Der Spiegel* (*A Crítica*, 6 March 1997; *Der Spiegel*, 24 February 1997; *New York Times*, 16 March 1997; Viana 2011, 12-21).¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Although most members of the choir were amateurs, one of the original members told me that approximately ten singers received a salary at the time.

¹⁶⁸ The use of amateur choruses in professional opera productions is not unusual, and there are other examples of the practice helping to establish or consolidate new companies. Successful cases in the UK include Welsh National Opera and Scottish National Opera, both of which used amateur choruses until well into the twentieth century; English National Opera also had its roots in amateurism (Atkinson 2006, 15; Gilbert 2009, 1-20; Lowerson 2005, 135-136). It is of course possible that the use of the amateur Coral in the first Festival Amazonas de Ópera was motivated by budgetary constraints. However, it contributed to a longer-term process of cultivating homegrown proficiency in order to ground the practice of opera locally. Arguably, though (and as I discuss below), the musical skills of the Coral improved more slowly than those of the Amazonas Filarmônica because it did not initially import professionals from elsewhere.

¹⁶⁹ The exchange rate with pounds sterling at this time was approximately £1 = R\$1.83. See footnote 197 for more details on currency.

It is difficult to discern the extent to which Jelden was influenced by the fictional Fitzcarraldo. While Zacarias (who worked closely with Jelden during the 1997 festival) was adamant during our conversation that his project *had* been primarily inspired by Herzog, journalist Leyla Leong reported in the newspaper *A Crítica* that Jelden had discovered the Teatro on the Internet when information was published about its centenary in 1996 (*A Crítica*, 6 March 1997).¹⁷⁰ According to Irineu Franco Perpetuo (one of Brazil's better-known music critics), he made the decision to produce operas in Manaus before watching the film (Perpetuo 2009, 126). Nevertheless, Leong's *A Crítica* article overtly made the connection with the sub-heading 'Um novo Fitzcarraldo' (A new Fitzcarraldo), above which a photograph of Jelden is placed next to the film's original video cover.¹⁷¹

Leong's characterisation of Jelden is intriguing. First, she refers to his sixteen-hour working days and describes him as having become *obcecado* (obsessed) with the idea of opera in Manaus. Second, she highlights his unorthodox approach to the project's finances: not only did he make a personal investment of R\$40,000, but he also managed to run up a telephone bill that he described as *alucinante* (mind-boggling). Third, she quotes his assertion that, 'The Teatro Amazonas is the most beautiful theatre in the world, and has to return to presenting operas [...] I am offering the public of Manaus high quality productions that will take the Teatro Amazonas back to the times when major opera companies performed there'.¹⁷² The resulting image is of an obsessive character with a flippant attitude toward money and a conviction that opera must be re-introduced to the Teatro so that it might return to a past era of greatness.

¹⁷⁰ Despite several attempts, I was unable to contact Jelden for further discussion.

¹⁷¹ In the Brazilian press, the parallel was also drawn in *Amazonas em Tempo*, 5 April 1997; *A Crítica*, 7 April 1997; and *Folha de São Paulo*, 10 March 1997. It was likewise taken up across the Atlantic, by *Der Spiegel* (24 February 1997; *Spiegel Special*, 1 October 1999). Herzog has also been more directly involved in the Brazilian opera scene: his *Tannhäuser* was staged at Rio's Teatro Municipal in 2001; and in 1994, he directed a production in Bonn of Carlos Gomes's *Il Guarany* starring Plácido Domingo.

¹⁷² O Teatro Amazonas é o teatro mais bonito do mundo, e tem que voltar a apresentar óperas [...] Estou oferecendo ao público de Manaus espetáculos de alta qualidade que farão o Teatro Amazonas voltar ao tempo em que ali se apresentavam grandes companhias de ópera.

The idea of the Teatro returning to its operatic past – and the notion that this return is imperative – demonstrates how opera acquired a particular use value in 1997 Manaus. As discussed in Chapter Three, the Teatro had hosted performances of various genres throughout the twentieth century (albeit not always regularly), but these years were subsequently emptied out of both content and prestige through scholarly literature and archival machinations. Moreover, the newspaper article’s main photograph depicts Jelden standing inside the Teatro’s auditorium, between two pillars, with an outstretched hand on each. It is almost as if he is personally holding the opera house up, supporting its role and purpose on his shoulders.

There is a second prominent narrative concerning the beginnings of the Festival Amazonas de Ópera, one that downplays the parallels between Jelden and Fitzcarraldo and instead focuses on local job creation. This more utilitarian view was recounted to me by, among others, Robério Braga (discussed in detail in Chapter Three), Secretary of Culture for Amazonas from 1997 to 2017. He told me that he chose opera as the primary vehicle by which to develop culture in Manaus, and that he envisaged it as a central point from which other cultural forms could prosper in a smooth, outward spiral. He expressed a belief that culture ought to be considered in terms of its potential for local development, and justified his focus on opera by noting the myriad skills and workers that productions require. The Festival Amazonas de Ópera has indeed generated jobs locally, not only for musicians but also for seamstresses, carpenters, and other skilled labourers; a member of the production team for the 2017 opera festival told me that over 300 people now work at the festival’s technical production centre.¹⁷³

Notwithstanding Robério’s pragmatic approach to the opera festival, it is important to consider the potential impact of the comparison between Jelden and Fitzcarraldo. In the opening scene of Herzog’s film, which was shot on location in the Teatro, Fitzcarraldo (Klaus

¹⁷³ Robério’s reference to having chosen opera is curious, given the general consensus that the idea to start a new opera festival originated from Jelden. Robério also downplayed Jelden’s involvement during a lecture that he gave as part of the 2017 opera festival. A simple desire for credit is probably the explanation. During the lecture, Robério also repeated the ‘cultural spiral’ metaphor, stating that the opera festival had benefited other local cultural projects and created jobs.

Kinski) and his partner Molly (Claudia Cardinale) appear, breathless, at the opera house, having spent two days and nights rowing there from the Peruvian town of Iquitos. They arrive toward the end of a performance of Verdi's *Ernani*, in which Ernani is being played by Enrico Caruso (acted by Costante Moret, sung by Veriano Luchetti), and Elvira by Sarah Bernhardt (acted by Jean-Claude Dreyfus, sung by Mietta Sighele).¹⁷⁴ The scene is cuttishly parodic: not only is Bernhardt farcically impaired by her missing leg and played by a male actor considerably taller than the one playing Caruso, but she also makes a stage entry too early, having to back hastily out of sight. She moreover lip-syncs her part ineptly to the voice of an overweight gesticulating soprano in the orchestra pit (acted by Lourdes Magalhães) and plays a game of one-upmanship with both Caruso and Verdi by stabbing herself at the end of the opera (*Fitzcarraldo* 1982; see also Leppert 2007, 102-104).

The result, according to Richard Leppert, is, 'a surreal, multiply overdetermined dream world on a stage illuminated in luridly saturated colors, and peopled by actors who perform with intense emotion the ridiculous text Verdi has assigned them'. To 'surreal', he proceeds to add the adjectives 'ludicrous' and 'absurd', attributing the former to *Ernani* itself, and the latter to both *Ernani* and Fitzcarraldo's undertakings in the film. Throughout this scene, Kinski's character is utterly convinced by the onstage performance (Leppert 2007, 102-104). There is one aspect, however, that Leppert omits to mention: it is not only Fitzcarraldo who is convinced. The moment the opera ends, its audience rises *en masse* to give it a standing ovation, and are thus shown to be complicit in Fitzcarraldo's bizarre fervour.

Leppert also refers to Theodor Adorno's discussion of regressive listening, in which the latter states: 'This experience [of regressive listening] was caught with great force in a film by the Marx Brothers [*A Night at the Opera*, 1935], who demolish an opera set as if to clothe in allegory the insight of the philosophy of history on the decay of the operatic form [...] Music has become comic in the present phase primarily because something so completely useless is

¹⁷⁴ For further detail about the *mise en abyme* effect created by the various layerings of actors and singers in this scene, see Hillman 2005, 142-143.

carried on with all the visible signs of the strain of serious work' (Adorno 2002, 314). Adorno's choice of a film about opera, in this instance, to illustrate the achievement of the useless through serious work finds a parallel in *Fitzcarraldo*: in a (failed) attempt to build an opera house in the Amazon rainforest, a man in a white suit drags a steamship over a mountain.¹⁷⁵

An article published in the local newspaper *Amazonas em Tempo* on the first day of the 1997 opera festival presented its readers with three possible interpretations of Jelden's project, encouraging them to decide for themselves which was the most appropriate. The first possibility was that the new festival was indeed *um sonho fitzcarraldiano* (a Fitzcarraldian dream), realised for Jelden's personal artistic satisfaction. The columnist, however, rated this possibility the *mais ingênua* (most naïve) of the three. The second possibility was that the project functioned as a means of self-promotion for Jelden in the international music sphere. The third was that the festival would significantly affect Manaus's cultural scene, helping to create its first professional chorus and other jobs (*Amazonas em Tempo*, 5 April 1997). For this local newspaper, then, Jelden's festival was better characterised in terms of the pragmatism espoused by Robério than in terms of 'Fitzcarraldian' exertions. It is important, however, to bear in mind the historical moment in which the column was written. As George Yúdice argues, a new ideology became entrenched internationally during the 1990s: that of the 'expediency of culture', in which culture is primarily assessed in terms of its social, economic, and political impacts (Yúdice 2004; see also Baker 2014, 35, 166).¹⁷⁶ For Yúdice, 'Art has completely folded into an expanded conception of culture that can solve problems,

¹⁷⁵ In his memoirs from the time of filming *Fitzcarraldo* – tellingly entitled *Eroberung des Nutzlosen* (Conquest of the Useless) – Herzog comments on the steamship: 'The unquestioned assumption is that a plastic model ship will be pulled over a ridge in a studio [...] I told them the unquestioned assumption had to be a real steamship being hauled over a real mountain, though not for the sake of realism but for the stylization characteristic of grand opera' (Herzog 2009, 5).

¹⁷⁶ Yúdice develops his thesis based on case studies in Latin America (including Brazil) and the United States. He proposes that the Adornian analysis of culture-as-commodity has been superseded by culture-as-resource (akin to the idea of nature-as-resource). For example, 'museums and renovated waterfronts can contribute to the economic development of cities and attract innovators for local industry; community artists can help troubleshoot acute social problems like racism, segregation, and residential displacement; supranational cultural integration can provide the means for practitioners from peripheral countries to compete with those in the first world; consumption can be a means for practicing citizenship; and so on' (Yúdice 2004, 338, 1).

including job creation. Its purpose is to lend a hand in the reduction of expenditures and [...] maintain the level of state intervention for the stability of capitalism' (Yúdice 2004, 12). At least in a broad sense, then, it is likely that the columnist was predisposed toward viewing culture in terms of expediency rather than in terms of otherwise useless conquests.

In any case, the Festival Amazonas de Ópera did have expedient consequences, one of which was the creation of a professional chorus: open auditions were held for the 1997 festival chorus, with the existing members of Zacarias's Coral all required to re-audition. A second open audition was subsequently held for permanent professional posts within a chorus organised and funded by the Secretaria de Cultura, complete with regular rehearsals and monthly salaries. This new chorus, renamed the Coral do Amazonas, became one of the Secretaria's permanent ensembles known as the *Corpos Artísticos* (Sá Gomes n.d.).

The Amazonas Filarmônica

The formation of the Amazonas Filarmônica later in 1997 was essentially part of the cultural 'moment' initiated by that year's Festival Amazonas de Ópera. Like the professionalised Coral do Amazonas, the new orchestra was both funded and run by the Amazonas government through the Secretaria de Cultura. It was conceived before the opera festival began, with the first auditions taking place in May and the results published in early June. The first rehearsal was then held on 19 September, and the orchestra gave its debut concert (joint with the Coral do Amazonas) on 14 November 1997 (Sá Gomes n.d.). The auditions were held both in Brazil and abroad: in Manaus, São Paulo, Brasília, Minsk, and Sofia. They were judged by conductor Júlio Medaglia, trumpeter Sérgio Cascapera, pianist Ary de Jacomo Bisaglia, and violinist Clemente Capella. Although the formation of this new orchestra caused great excitement, it was pre-dated by several orchestras that had existed in Manaus during the twentieth century.¹⁷⁷ They may perhaps have been less successful or less professional than the

¹⁷⁷ They included an orchestra established under the governor of Amazonas Arthur Cezar Fernando Reis in 1965, and its replacement, established by Dirson Costa in 1987 (*A Crítica*, 23 March 1997).

Amazonas Filarmônica, but the overwhelming media coverage of the new orchestra can nevertheless be seen as contributing to the ‘emptying out’ process that I discussed in Chapter Three.

The unpublished compilation of documents *Orquestra Amazonas Filarmônica* lists the origins of the 148 musicians who applied for auditions.¹⁷⁸ Brazilians applied from: Amazonas, Espírito Santo, Goiás, Minas Gerais, Pará, Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro, Santa Catarina, São Paulo, and the Distrito Federal. International applications were made from Belarus (Minsk), Bulgaria (Sofia), the Czech Republic (Prague), Germany (Rostock), and Uruguay (Montevideo). Out of the 148 applicants, 44 were selected to form a small classical orchestra led by Regina Sarkisova – until that point the leader of the Bolshoi orchestra (Sá Gomes n.d.).

Material preparations made in advance of the musicians’ arrival in Manaus included a project to alter the acoustics in the Teatro. Although the auditorium’s acoustic was already, according to Roberto Sá Gomes, *uma das melhores do mundo* (one of the best in the world), it was originally designed for opera rather than concert performances (as discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Two of this thesis) (Sá Gomes n.d.). Changes were therefore made to direct the sound of an on-stage orchestra out into the auditorium without it getting lost in the wings. Moreover, plans were made to construct a small village of 45 houses – a ‘Vila dos Músicos’ – in the Zona Leste district of Manaus, to accommodate the incoming orchestral players. Planned by INPA (the Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas da Amazônia, National Institute of Amazonian Research), the village was treated as a combined conservation and low-cost housing project, with the houses built out of Amazonian woods suited to the climate and the surrounding vegetation preserved as far as possible. The village was also to include a sports area, swimming pool, and community centre, but the plans never came to fruition.

¹⁷⁸ The cities and states listed are probably the musicians’ places of residence at the time of application, rather than their places of birth.

Preparations were also made to offer Portuguese lessons to those musicians who did not speak the language (the vast majority) (Sá Gomes n.d.).

The Belarussian and Bulgarian musicians who auditioned for the orchestra discovered the opportunity through contacts in the Bolshoi who had performed at the 1997 Festival Amazonas de Ópera. One original Belarussian member of the Amazonas Filarmônica I interviewed had learned from Regina Sarkisova that auditions were to take place in Manaus. High travel costs made it impossible for him to travel from Minsk to Manaus for the audition, so he sent a fax to Robério requesting that the auditions panel travel to Minsk. Robério agreed, provided that there were at least 30 applicants, and Júlio Medaglia duly carried out auditions in Minsk before going on to Sofia. There were also a small number of Bulgarian musicians already resident in Manaus who auditioned for the Amazonas Filarmônica; two of them had previously played under Medaglia in the Orquestra Sinfônica do Teatro Nacional de Brasília. Moreover, two similar projects had already been undertaken in the early 1990s, with Bulgarian musicians invited to teach and perform in Belém do Pará and in the Orquestra Sinfônica de Riberão Preto in the south-east.¹⁷⁹ According to the musician I spoke with, the explanation that the original Slavic members of the Amazonas Filarmônica moved to Manaus because of the economic decline among the ex-Soviet nations in the late 1990s was merely a journalistic cliché. He emphasised that he had actively wanted to move to Brazil long before the prospect of an orchestral audition arose, but that some people had nevertheless viewed the decline opportunistically: ‘I think that Júlio [Medaglia] got it into [Robério’s] head that, “These Slavs, they’ll come for cheap, for five dollars. Get them over here. They’ll make a good orchestra, of high quality”’.¹⁸⁰

Thus was formed Medaglia’s musical ‘league of nations’. He used this phrase when I interviewed him, expanding, ‘I found it very curious that these people could not talk to each

¹⁷⁹ For more information on the migration of Bulgarian musicians to Brazil (and specifically to Amazonia) in the late twentieth century, see Georgieva 2018, 94-113.

¹⁸⁰ acho que o Júlio fez cabeça do secretário, que, ‘Esses slavos, eles se viram por barato, por cinco dólares. Chama eles para cá. Eles vão fazer uma orquestra boa, de boa qualidade’.

other, but when they played it seemed like they were brothers. This is the miracle of music, right?’¹⁸¹ In one of his monthly columns in the Brazilian classical music magazine *Concerto*, he expressed even more strongly his views on music’s supposed ability to unite disparate peoples. The following extract begins with him quoting from the speech he made at the Amazonas Filarmônica’s inaugural performance at the Teatro:

‘It seems that everything in this world was made to divide people [...] some speak one language, others others, and this causes a lack of understanding. These musicians we see here on stage do not know each other, they meet here for the first time but cannot talk, because each one speaks a different language. However, you will see that, at a simple signal of mine, they will all interact and understand one another as if they were from the same family, children of the same mother, “mother” music’. I then went to the podium and, following a conducting gesture, they played Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony impeccably (Medaglia 2017, 10).¹⁸²

The naivety of Medaglia’s claims is evidenced by comments I heard from some of the orchestra’s original members. One told me that the Amazonas Filarmônica’s first three years saw endless disagreement, with the Belarussians fighting among themselves, the Bulgarians fighting among themselves, and the Belarussians fighting with the Bulgarians: ‘It’s like... what’s it called? The Wild West. We invaded this land where there’s nothing, you see? Whoever takes the first steps in a place lays down their rules. More or less like that’.¹⁸³ Another musician spoke of *desentendimento cultural* (cultural misunderstanding) in the orchestra, and an article in *Der Spiegel* also commented on the *schlechte Stimmung* (bad atmosphere) between the Belarussians and Bulgarians, quoting one Belarussian musician as complaining, ‘the Bulgarians initially derided us as Communists’ (*Der Spiegel*, 1 October 1999).¹⁸⁴ A third musician I interviewed mentioned the disputes, but described them in terms that better aligned with Medaglia’s reference to the orchestra being children of ‘mother’

¹⁸¹ eu achava muito curioso que as pessoas não conseguiram conversar entre si, mas quando tocavam, parecia que eram irmãos né. Esse é o milagre de música, né?

¹⁸² ‘Parece que tudo no mundo foi feito para separar pessoas [...] uns falam uma língua outros outras e isso é motivo para não poder se entenderem. Esses músicos que vemos aqui no palco não se conhecem, aqui se encontram pela primeira vez mas não podem conversar, pois cada um fala uma língua diferente. No entanto vão ver que a um simples sinal meu, todos vão interagir e se entender como se fossem de uma mesma família, filhos de uma mesma mãe, a “mãe” música’. Fui então ao pódio e a partir de um gesto de regência eles tocaram impecavelmente a Quinta Sinfonia de Beethoven.

¹⁸³ É como... como se chama? Wild West, né. A gente invadiu a terra onde não tem nada, entendeu? Quem primeiro pisa pé no lugar bota suas regras. Mais ou menos assim.

¹⁸⁴ Die Bulgaren haben uns anfängs als Kommunisten beschimpft.

music: ‘It’s a family. We fought *a lot, like* a family. And then afterwards we’d be having a beer, chatting again. It’s normal’.¹⁸⁵

Numerous scholars have critiqued the tendency to elide classical music ensembles with social cohesion and overcoming borders (e.g. Baker 2014, 112-115; Beckles Willson 2009; Ramnarine 2011, 348).¹⁸⁶ The difficulties experienced by some of the Amazonas Filarmônica musicians, moreover, were not confined to arguments with their colleagues, and in some cases extended to deep depression.¹⁸⁷ A newer member of the orchestra told me, ‘To tell the truth, Brazil is the last place where I would like to be. So to speak, to drink champagne with penguins in Antarctica is more natural situation for me’. Another described her life in Manaus as ‘terrible’, adding, ‘It’s a very unpleasant city. So when I came here, I really tried hard to love it. It’s impossible. The city’s very ugly, very small, very uncomfortable, it’s too hot here [...] it’s awfully noisy, awfully noisy. All my life I’ve been trying to escape from the noise. And this permanent noise is just killing me, so... Also, it’s impossible to walk here. First, nowhere to go. Second, it’s too hot. Third, quite dangerous’. This negativity was far from universal – several original members of the Amazonas Filarmônica I spoke to had generally been happy in their jobs in Manaus – but it does reveal the holes in the sanguine messages proffered by public figures such as Medaglia.

¹⁸⁵ É uma família. Nós brigamos *muito, como* uma família. E daqui um pouco estamos tomando cerveja, batendo papo de novo. É normal.

¹⁸⁶ For a concise discussion of various approaches to the metaphor of ‘orchestra as society’ and orchestras as bodies with socio-political agency, see Ramnarine 2011, 329-334.

¹⁸⁷ This observation must, however, be considered in the light of scholarship identifying high levels of stress more generally among orchestral musicians in comparison with professionals in other spheres (e.g. Cottrell 2003, 252, 258; Levine and Levine 1996).

Spiralling Outward: A Success Story

If the delusions of grandeur of the Rubber Cycle vanished as rapidly as they arose, a sense of the perennial seems to exist in the [recent] Amazonian operatic outbreak (Perpetuo 2009, 138).¹⁸⁸

In many ways, Manaus's 'cultural spiral' can be characterised as a success in the face of adversity. Adverse conditions are generated, in part, by Brazil's chronic lack of continuity in cultural policy (Vieira and Kamlot 2017, 150-152). This lack of continuity is moreover intrinsically bound up with the nature of law and politics, where much revolves around a system of favour (Kunze 2009, 48-49; Schwarz 1992, 19-32; Yúdice 2004, 5, 60-81).¹⁸⁹ A comment made by one of my interviewees highlights the link between Brazil's clientelistic political sphere and its cultural institutions: 'It's like every theatre is like a political game, you know, depending on the culture secretary or the culture minister or whatever he's called'. This longstanding problem has recently been compounded by considerable cuts in state funding for classical music, following the country's economic recession of 2014-2016 (Vieira and Kamlot 2017, 151).¹⁹⁰ Even as early as 2006, though, Brazil's Minister for Culture (2003-2008) Gilberto Gil admitted, 'Symphonic music and opera form a gap in my management, in that I did not know how to create specific policies for them' (Sampaio 2009, 12).¹⁹¹ In 2017, the Teatro's resident conductor (and conductor of the Festival Amazonas de Ópera since 2002), Luiz Fernando Malheiro, described the situation to me as *trágica* (tragic), elaborating, 'I've never seen such a low time, for culture, for music'.¹⁹²

As mentioned earlier, one of the spiral's measurable successes is the creation of the various *Corpos Artísticos* and festivals between 1997 and 2017, the majority of which

¹⁸⁸ Se os delírios de grandeza do Ciclo de Borracha se esvaíram tão rapidamente quanto surgiram, algo de perenidade parece existir no surto operístico amazônico.

¹⁸⁹ The recent *Lava Jato* (Operation Car Wash), ethically suspect in itself, has shown this clientelism to extend to extreme levels of political corruption. For more details, see Anderson 2019.

¹⁹⁰ This crisis affected Brazil much more severely than the global financial crash of 2008, which it weathered remarkably well, partly owing to the commodities boom of the early 2000s (Barbosa 2012). In Brazil, cultural institutions often receive substantial amounts of their funding through the *Lei Rouanet*, a law that offers tax breaks to private companies in exchange for their sponsorship of cultural projects. It is essentially, therefore, public money (Kunze 2009, 44-47).

¹⁹¹ A música sinfônica e a ópera compõem uma lacuna na minha gestão, que não soube criar para elas políticas específicas.

¹⁹² Eu nunca vi um momento tão ruim como esse, para cultura, para música.

involved (and still involve) local performers. Moreover, the orchestral musicians introduced to Manaus in 1997 were originally required to teach for a minimum of three hours per week in the city's Claudio Santoro music school, in order to pass on their skill to locals (Sá Gomes n.d.). As a result, there are now many more Brazilians (and specifically *amazonenses*) playing in the Amazonas Filarmônica. Besides these points, the bilingualism (English/Portuguese) of the film and jazz festival programmes published between 2004 and 2014 demonstrates international pretensions, and the jazz festival also attracted some well-known Brazilian and international performers, including Hermeto Pascoal (in 2008), Paquito D'Rivera (in 2010), Benni Maupin (in 2013), and Naná Vasconcelos (in 2014). More simply, the fact that the Festival Amazonas de Ópera lasted for twenty years almost uninterrupted (there was no festival in 2015) is commonly cited as an achievement in itself. Many, including Malheiro, attribute its longevity to the continuous presence of Robério as Secretary of Culture between 1997 and 2017.

The narrative of success in the face of adversity was reiterated to me numerous times by local musicians and employees in Manaus's cultural sector. Despite this positivity, however, some of the projects established as part of the spiral have suffered: the film festival was cut in 2013, and there has not been a jazz festival since 2014. Gauging the spiral's success also depends, of course, on the means by which it is measured: the opera festival may have existed for twenty years, but one musician I interviewed, when asked about its trajectory throughout this period, just gave a falling whistle.

A Milestone: *O Anel de Nibelungo*, 2005

In May 2005, eight years after Jelden's festival initiated Manaus's 'cultural spiral', the Teatro reached a particular kind of milestone: its first complete performance of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (in Portuguese, *O Anel de Nibelungo*). The occasion was widely advertised as being Brazil's first *Ring* cycle and has since become a key reference point among the opera

house's community.¹⁹³ The attention of the international media was piqued at the time: articles appeared in the *New York Times* (9 May 2005), Germany's *Opernwelt* (July 2005), and Britain's *Guardian* (5 January 2005), as well as in numerous Brazilian newspapers. According to Malheiro, there was significant resistance to staging Wagner operas in Brazil prior to the Manaus *Ring*. He described to me a widely held belief that they could only be sung by *cantores Wagnerianos, alemães, etcetera* (Wagnerian singers, Germans, and all that). Brazilians singing Wagner was considered taboo. He described to me some of the effects of the Manaus *Ring*:

So, once we had started to do it here, the other theatres began to as well. In São Paulo they put on Wagner with mixed casts. It's the right thing. There are some roles for which we don't have the right voice. Brünnhilde, for example, we don't have a Brünnhilde in Brazil. We don't have a Siegfried in Brazil [...] But this was the intention [...] And it was important for the history of the festival, and also for the other theatres to see that it's possible to do Wagner like this.¹⁹⁴

Malheiro's positive attitude toward the production, however, is not followed by all. A local academic I interviewed commented sarcastically on the unsuitability of the Teatro for the operas: 'You saw the Wagnerian dimensions of the Teatro, right?! The Wagnerian orchestra! And the Wagnerian singers! I had to watch the *Ring* cycle here [...] It's a "record". [But] it has no content whatsoever, it's just a number'.¹⁹⁵ She also noted the unusually small string section for a *Ring* cycle (around 15 violins with no rotation), pointing out the damaging effect it had on both orchestral balance and player fatigue. Moreover, she recalled that many audience members left during the performances, leaving the auditorium almost empty by the end of them. In her opinion, the production was purely a vanity project. Perpetuo appears to

¹⁹³ While it could be described as the first Brazilian *production* of the *Ring*, it was not the country's premiere: that had taken place in Rio's Teatro Municipal in September 1922. Conducted by Felix Weingartner, the 1922 *Ring* was given by one of the impresario Walter Mocchi's touring companies, which comprised singers from Italy, France, the Vienna Staatsoper, and Bayreuth. The company performed a full season, with some of its other titles conducted by Pietro Mascagni (*Correio de Manhã*, 31 August 1922; Perpetuo 2009, 131-133). For more information on Mocchi's prolific impresarial work in South America, see Rosselli 1993, 143-144.

¹⁹⁴ Então, a partir do fato de a gente ter começado aqui a fazer, aí os outros teatros começaram a fazer também. Em São Paulo, fizeram Wagner com elencos mistos. Tá certo. Tem alguns papéis que a gente não tem uma voz adequada. Brünnhilde, por exemplo, a gente não tem uma Brünnhilde no Brasil. O próprio Siegfried a gente não tem no Brasil [...] Mas a intenção era essa [...] E foi importante para a história do festival, e para os outros teatros também verem que é possível fazer Wagner assim.

¹⁹⁵ Você viu que o Teatro tem uma dimensão wagneriana, né?! Orquestra wagneriana! E os cantores são wagnerianos! Eu tive que assistir isso aqui, o ciclo do *Anel*, aqui [...] É um 'record'. Não tem conteúdo nenhum, é só um número.

affirm this attitude: ‘Although, sometimes, because of the long duration of the operas, the theatre reached the end of the performances with less than half of its seats occupied by the public, the realisation of the *Ring* was a watershed in the consolidation of the national and international reputation of the event’ (Perpetuo 2009, 133).¹⁹⁶ It seems, then, that the Teatro’s outward-facing image was prioritised over quality or local relevance.

In 1997, performance standards were arguably not the primary concern of the Festival Amazonas de Ópera. A long view was taken: the local amateur choir was used as the chorus, and future local impact was prioritised over the more immediate activities on stage. In short, it was a means to an end. Eight years later, the 2005 *Ring* offered an opportunity to take stock: to what extent had priorities shifted at the Teatro? On the one hand, the event was credited with placing Manaus firmly on the international operatic map and showing Brazilians that they too could sing Wagner; on the other, accusations were made that the festival’s outward-facing image had become the new pretext for low performance standards and low levels of local interest, while it was in fact attributable to the vanity of the conductor and other organisers.

Hierarchies at the Teatro

Musical hierarchies at the Teatro operate along three main lines, each of which I will discuss: salaries, musicians’ origins, and programming. Table 4.1 shows the salaries of the *Corpos Artísticos* in Brazilian *reais* (R\$) between 1997 and 2008, rounded to the nearest *real*.¹⁹⁷ Empty cells represent a lack of available data (the main problem caused by this lack is that it is impossible to determine the starting salaries of the *Companhia de Dança* and the *Balé Folclórico*). The data is taken from Sá Gomes’s unpublished compilation of documents

¹⁹⁶ Se, por vezes, devido à longa duração dos espetáculos, o teatro chegava ao final das performances com menos de metade de suas poltronas ocupadas pelo público, a realização do *Anel* foi um divisor de águas na consolidação da reputação nacional e internacional do evento.

¹⁹⁷ Overall, the *real* depreciated between 1997 and 2008 (although there were fluctuations within this period). On 1 January 2008, £1 = R\$3.53. On 1 January 1998 (at which point the value of the *real* was pegged to that of the US dollar), £1 = R\$1.83. The values in relation to other currencies, however, are less important for my purposes than the salaries relative to one another. (Conversation rates calculated using www.xe.com historical currency conversion, which does not include data for 1997.)

concerning auditions for the *Corpos Artísticos* between 1997 and 2008 (Associação de Amigos da Cultura n.d.). While I did not find any substantial information on salaries after 2008 (nothing in Sá Gomes's book and little elsewhere), Table 4.1 does show clear patterns during the initial decade of the Secretaria's new cultural project. The ensembles are ranked in descending order from the highest earners (notably, the order does not change at any point). AF indicates the Amazonas Filarmônica. Grey cells represent years in which ensembles did not yet exist.

	1997	2000	2001	2002	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
AF (leader) <i>Symphony Orchestra</i>	4,500				5,760				
AF (rank and file) ¹⁹⁸ <i>Symphony Orchestra</i>	2,250				3,060	3,060	3,060	3,418	3,776
Companhia de Dança <i>Dance Company</i>					1,545		1,545		
Coral do Amazonas <i>Chorus</i>	542	900		900	1,080		1,080	1,271	
Amazonas Band <i>Big Band</i>		750	750		900		900	900	
Orquestra de Câmara <i>Chamber Orchestra</i>					900		900		900
Orquestra de Violões <i>Guitar Orchestra</i>		542		542	650		650		
Balé Folclórico <i>'Folkloric Ballet'</i>					600		600		

Table 4.1. Salaries of the *Corpos Artísticos*, 1997-2008
(Associação de Amigos da Cultura n.d.).

Unsurprisingly, the leader of the Amazonas Filarmônica consistently earned the most, although that salary decreased in relative terms from twice that of a rank and file musician in 1997 to approximately 1.88 times by 2004. At the other end of the spectrum, members of the Balé Folclórico earned little more than a tenth of the orchestra leader's wage in 2004: the discrepancies are significant.

Table 4.2 shows the working hours stipulated in the audition announcements for the ensembles between 1997 and 2008.¹⁹⁹ The data is again from Sá Gomes's compilation of audition documents and is again incomplete (Associação de Amigos da Cultura n.d.).

¹⁹⁸ In order to streamline the table, I have not included the salaries of section leaders and soloists.

¹⁹⁹ I was unable to obtain any copies of musicians' actual contracts.

	1997	2000	2002	2008
AF <i>Symphony Orchestra</i>	3 hours of rehearsal or private study per working day plus 3 hours of teaching per week			Max. working hours per week: 30, except when producing operas, ballets, and other large-scale productions
Companhia de Dança <i>Dance Company</i>				6 hours of dance lessons or rehearsal (with lunch break) per working day
Coral do Amazonas <i>Chorus</i>	10 hours of rehearsal or private study per week	20 'functions' per month, divided between rehearsals, private study, and performances	23 'functions' per month, divided between rehearsals, private study, and performances	3 hours of rehearsal per working day
Amazonas Band <i>Big Band</i>		3 hours of rehearsal or group study per working day plus 3 hours of teaching per week		2.5 hours of rehearsal 3 times a week, with occasional requests for extra rehearsals and performances
Orquestra de Câmara <i>Chamber Orchestra</i>				2 hours of rehearsal 3 times a week
Orquestra de Violões <i>Guitar Orchestra</i>		3 hours of rehearsal or group study per working day, plus 3 hours of teaching per week	15 'functions' per month, divided between rehearsal, private study, and performances. Rehearsals: 3 hours 3 times a week	3 hours of rehearsal 3 times a week, with occasional requests for extra rehearsals and performances
Balé Folclórico <i>'Folkloric Ballet'</i>				4 hours of rehearsal per working day, with occasional requests for extra rehearsals and performances

Table 4.2. Working hours for the Corpos Artísticos, 1997-2008
(Associação de Amigos da Cultura n.d.).

The information in Table 4.2 is insufficient for like-for-like comparisons. It is unclear, for example, how many working hours were required for the ‘functions’ of the Coral and the Orquestra de Violões and how they were split between performance, rehearsal, and study. Ambiguous additions to the basic stipulations of working hours are also confusing: clauses allowing for unspecified amounts of extra rehearsal for large-scale productions (for example, for the Amazonas Filarmônica in 2008) and the failure to specify how long lunch breaks are (for the Companhia de Dança in 2008) make it difficult to put forward concrete claims about salary discrepancies. Useful observations can still be made, though, albeit more tentatively. For example, the number of ‘functions’ required of the Coral do Amazonas increased from 20 per month in 2000 to 23 per month in 2003, even though the singers’ salaries remained at R\$900 per month. Furthermore, it appears that the Orquestra de Câmara had a lighter rehearsal schedule than the Orquestra de Violões in 2008 (six versus nine hours a week); yet the former was almost certainly earning more than the latter. Additionally, in 2008, only musicians who were already members of the Amazonas Filarmônica were eligible to audition for the Orquestra de Câmara (Associação de Amigos da Cultura n.d.). As such, only the members of the highest earning Corpo Artístico were eligible to apply for this extra financial opportunity. The working hours of the Balé Folclórico in 2008 is an anomaly: although they probably had the lowest salary that year, they also seem to have had much more rehearsal time demanded of them than the Orquestra de Violões, Orquestra de Câmara do Amazonas, Amazonas Band, and Coral do Amazonas.

In 2008, the Corpos Artísticos all had an equivalent exclusivity clause in their codes of conduct. The one for the Coral read, ‘The absence of the chorus member in order to attend courses, seminars, meetings, private and group performances, must have the express authorisation of the Coordinating Secretary of the SEC [Secretaria de Cultura], of the Director of the Corpos Artísticos, and of the Choral Conductor’ (Associação de Amigos da Cultura

n.d.).²⁰⁰ There is again ambiguity: did ‘absence’ refer to absence from specific engagements, or to departing from the chorus at any time? That is, did permission have to be requested only if the singer was actually going to miss a choral activity, or also for the member to participate in anything unrelated to the chorus? Did it matter whether or not these alternative activities were professional ones? Furthermore, while permission had to be requested, it is unclear how often it was given and what would constitute reasonable grounds for making the request. Nevertheless, it is evident that the guitarists of the Orquestra de Violões, for example, were not necessarily free to undertake other musical engagements for which they might have been in demand. They were thus both assigned a low salary and hobbled by an exclusivity clause.

The Orquestra Experimental

A hierarchical financial scheme also operates within the Orquestra Experimental, the youth orchestra founded in 2007. Each of its members receives a monthly *bolsa* (scholarship) that is meant to cover the costs of instrument maintenance and travel to and from rehearsals and performances (although its spending is not regulated) (Associação de Amigos da Cultura n.d.). When the orchestra was first established, it offered three types of *bolsa*, which were awarded on a meritocratic basis: A (R\$600), B (R\$500), and C (R\$400) (Associação de Amigos da Cultura n.d.). I learned from an interview with one of the group’s conductors that the value of the *bolsas* has not changed since. The orchestra’s current members are aged 15-30, with an average age of 25. They perform around five concerts a year, and their rehearsal schedule includes a three-hour *tutti* rehearsal (with a twenty-minute break) on a Saturday morning, plus three hours of sectional rehearsals during the week.

Whereas pay grades might be expected to correspond to internal hierarchies in professional musical ensembles, the practice is striking in a youth orchestra. It seems to diverge from the internationally common youth orchestra practice of providing increased

²⁰⁰ O afastamento do coralista para participar de cursos, seminários, encontros, apresentações particulares e em qualquer outro grupo, deverá ter autorização expresso do Secretário Coordenador da SEC, do Diretor dos Corpos Artísticos e do Regente do Coral.

assistance to financially disadvantaged youths (as opposed to better musicians) in order to promote social diversity (Kartomi 2007, 19-20). Moreover, the amounts awarded in the Orquestra Experimental do not strictly correspond to the musician's position in the orchestra, but rather to musical talent as judged in their audition (although, of course, the players who score better in their auditions tend also to be placed as section leaders). Criticism has been levelled at South America's most prominent youth orchestra project, El Sistema, for its practice of awarding advanced students scholarships worth almost as much as the salaries of professional local musicians. Geoffrey Baker points to the complex ethical issues that can result, and also suggests that it complicates any assessment of El Sistema's impact as a social project. In particular, he questions whether the potential for high financial gain in El Sistema results in a fostering of power or rather of dependency: 'Are there not significant risks if parents may be motivated by the financial inducements on offer? What might happen in a poor family if a child decided they hated the orchestra and wanted to leave?' (Baker 2014, 176)

The same questions might be levelled at the Orquestra Experimental, where the top scholarships come close to the salaries of some members of the *Corpos Artísticos*. (The monthly salary data for the Orquestra de Violões and Balé Folclórico are missing for 2007, but they probably did not earn more than R\$650 and R\$600 respectively.) Admittedly, the aims of the Experimental are very different to those of El Sistema: it professes no social cause, styling itself instead as a *celeiro* (granary) of future professional musicians ('Orquestra Experimental celebra dez anos' 2017).²⁰¹ To an extent, its self-styling as a professional training ground justifies its meritocratic distribution of scholarships. Moreover, the practice of giving scholarships is not entirely unusual: the New World Symphony, for example, is a Miami-based youth orchestra that essentially pays its members (through 35 'fellowships' offered per year). Simon Channing believes that such schemes have particular merit: 'There is

²⁰¹ The lack of a professed social cause is particularly notable given the Brazilian context. As Tina K. Ramnarine observes, 'Orchestras in Brazil [...] have become well-known for promoting symphonic repertoires in social projects' (Ramnarine 2011, 328).

certainly a place for such orchestras in helping players to bridge the gap between full-time education and entry into the profession' (Channing 2003, 190-192). The difference, though, is that the members of the New World Symphony have all already graduated from music conservatoires ('About the New World Symphony'). In contrast, the lower age limit of the Orquestra Experimental (15) could prompt questions about the age at which professional-style competition ought to be introduced to musicians. At such a young age, there are arguably more efficient and healthier ways to nurture musicianship than financial incentive.

A Sense of Resentment

Some current members of the *Corpos Artísticos* resent the inequalities between the *Secretaria de Cultura's* ensembles. For example, a singer in the Coral do Amazonas I interviewed commented on a recent trip undertaken by the Orquestra Experimental:

at least two years ago, they went to Argentina. So... how come? Because the director of the *Corpos Artísticos*, he's [also] the conductor of the orchestras. So there's also this barrier between the director of the orchestras and the conductor of the Teatro's choir [...] So these issues, they exist. And then, of course, the director being a person with opinions, right, who forms his own opinions, he comes to the Secretary (this is my impression). So he comes to the Secretary with a distorted vision, for example: 'No, this choir will just do this, because that's all it likes to do. And my orchestra is going to travel.' Let's say, well, common sense, roughly speaking, but this is what I think, that there really is this 'apartheid' [laughs].²⁰²

The same singer also described the Amazonas Filarmônica as the *carro chefe* (flagship) of the *Corpos Artísticos*, observing that the infrastructure of the ensembles (publicity, marketing, and so on) was wholly tailored to the orchestra, with groups including the Coral remaining a secondary concern.

I also asked a member of the Orquestra de Violões whether he would be willing to talk about his salary, to which he jokingly responded, 'No, I can tell you! No problem. It'll serve

²⁰² há uns dois anos pelo menos, eles foram para Argentina. Então... por que? Porque o diretor dos *Corpos Artísticos*, ele é o maestro das orquestras. Então, existe também essa barreira entre o maestro diretor das orquestras com o maestro do Coral do Teatro [...] Então essas questões, elas existem. E aí, evidentemente, o diretor sendo uma pessoa que tem opinião, né, que tem a formação de opinião, ele chega ao Secretário (essa é minha visão). Então ele chega ao Secretário com a visão deturpada, por exemplo, né: 'Não, esse coral aqui vai fazer só isso, porque só gosta de fazer isso. E a minha orquestra vai viajar.' Digamos assim, bem senso comum, grosso modo falando, mas eu penso assim, que há realmente esse 'apartheid' [laughs].

as a protest'.²⁰³ He clarified that the Orquestra de Violões is still among the *Corpos Artísticos* with the lowest salaries, despite having the same working hours as some of the better-paid ensembles. He estimated his own monthly salary at that time as R\$1,300 (approximately 60% of what the Amazonas Filarmônica musicians were being paid twenty years earlier). He suggested that the large discrepancy partly resulted from members of the Orquestra de Violões failing to hustle for higher wages in the ensemble's early years. They were, he told me, not fully aware of their rights as workers, nor conscious of the *Corpos Artísticos* as a whole unit, therefore remaining ignorant of the ongoing financial inequalities. He was confident, though, that the guitarists were gradually becoming more attuned to these aspects: 'we're taking care to check this now, to continue doing a good job, but also in a dignified way. So that we can fight for our rights, as workers. Away from the artistic side, more on the workers side'.²⁰⁴

Origins of Musicians

The origins of the musicians in the *Corpos Artísticos* have been at the crux of tensions since 1997, not least because foreign musicians tend to be the highest earners (whether as members of the Amazonas Filarmônica or as international soloists in the Festival de Ópera). Opinion on the matter is mixed, however: some of my interviewees were optimistic about foreigners travelling to Manaus in order to instigate a new musical tradition; others were more dubious about the operation of this process. The first Festival Amazonas de Ópera was entirely performed by musicians and singers from outside Manaus, with the exception of the chorus and two members of the orchestra. Partly, this was necessary because of a lack of trained opera singers and classical musicians in the region. One local pianist emphasised to me that it also reflected the strength of Brazil's economy in the late 1990s and early 2000s: in the days

²⁰³ Não, eu posso dizer! Tranquilo. Serve de protesto.

²⁰⁴ a gente tá tomando cuidado agora de verificar isso, para continuar fazendo assim um bom trabalho, mas também de uma forma digna, né. De que a gente possa lutar pelos nossos direitos, como trabalhadores. Fora da parte da arte, da parte mais trabalhador mesmo.

when the Teatro could *afford* renowned international singers. He also explained his opinion that local singing had improved since 1997, partly owing to a new university course in music established during this period. Yet he still thought it important for local performers to have contact with successful international ones in Manaus: ‘because we’re in a very isolated state, a lot of the local artists have never left here. They’ve never heard another orchestra. They’ve never heard other singers. So they don’t have any points of reference [...] So, yes, it’s important that artists come from elsewhere’.²⁰⁵

One of the tenors in the Coral do Amazonas was more sceptical about the matter of importing musicians. He told me that he had fought for greater inclusion of local singers as soloists in the Festival de Ópera, and highlighted the pay gap between *manauara* singers and those from the south and south-east of Brazil. Although he acknowledged the lack of local musical training, he regarded it as an inadequate explanation. For him, the primary issue was that the Secretaria de Cultura invested less time and money in productions involving local singers: only when singers came from elsewhere was the Secretaria willing to invest more, and that extra investment resulted in the higher production quality. He also commented on the difference in monthly salary between the Coral and the Amazonas Filarmônica, which he said was at one point R\$1,336 to R\$3,750 even through the rehearsal hours were exactly the same. He directly associated this discrepancy with the musicians’ origins: ‘So, you see the difference, right. [Comparing] the singers from here with musicians that come from Europe’.²⁰⁶

A bass in the Coral conceded that in certain cases – for certain operatic roles, for example – an international performer was required. He also argued that foreign musicians stimulated local development, making particular reference to a strong tradition of string-instrument playing in the ex-Soviet countries, and highlighting the role of the Claudio Santoro

²⁰⁵ como a gente tá num estado muito isolado, muitos artistas daqui nunca saíram daqui. Nunca ouviram outra orquestra. Nunca ouviram outros cantores. Então, eles não têm referência nenhuma [...] Então, é importante sim, que vêm artistas de fora.

²⁰⁶ Então, você viu a diferença, né. Os cantores que são daqui com músicos que vêm da Europa.

music school, where members of the Amazonas Filarmônica (and others) had provided music tuition since 1997. As a result of this teaching project, he said, fewer foreign musicians were required in 2017 than in 1997. In contrast, he suggested that the Coral had developed in technical terms more slowly than the orchestra precisely because it had never had a sudden influx of foreign skilled musicians. He furthermore pointed out that several members of the current orchestra are locals who trained at the Claudio Santoro, giving the example of the orchestra's leader.

It is also important to consider the views of those musicians regarded as 'outsiders' in Manaus. Among those I interviewed was a *paulistana* soprano involved in the 2017 opera festival. She described the vocal power of some of the *manauara* choral singers (*canhão* – like a cannon), but suggested that they were insufficiently driven to attain solo operatic roles. As a result, spaces remained open for her and others from São Paulo and elsewhere. Another soloist referred to some of the Coral's singers as 'Indians', and enthused about them singing opera. His remark is just one example of a wider tendency for musicians from Brazil's populous south-eastern region to exoticise residents of Manaus: in the same breath, he called opera in Manaus 'ridiculous', and emphasised the city's remote location in the Amazon rainforest.

The tendency to exoticise also affects the salaries of international soloists who participate in the Festival Amazonas de Ópera. Malheiro told me that, on a number of occasions, international singers had accepted roles at the festival for a lower fee than they would usually charge. A singer backed this up: 'they have been able to get good singers for less money because, you know, singers know that there's this opera house in the middle of the jungle and they want to come no matter what'. The 2017 festival included three performances of *Tannhäuser*, with the title role sung by the Mexican-British tenor Luis Chapa. Chapa told me that, when he was contacted about the role (a mere two weeks before rehearsals began), the maximum fee offered was significantly lower than the amount he usually stipulates. He

was nevertheless keen to take the job, because it would give him two new opportunities: to sing in Brazil, and to work with Malheiro.²⁰⁷ He agreed to compromise on his fee as long as he was provided with a sizeable hotel room and an Economy Plus plane ticket. On arrival in Manaus, however, he was unimpressed with both the hotel room and the rehearsal spaces, one of which (an upper room in the Ideal Clube, adjacent to the opera house) had no air conditioning. At one stage, he developed a small tear in his throat, which he attributed to the strains of singing in the Ideal Clube and constantly shifting between the hot and humid outdoor air and the fiercely air conditioned auditorium in the Teatro. Regarding these inconveniences, however, Chapa's background was itself capitalised on: a member of the production team praised his consistently cheerful attitude despite the challenging conditions, and attributed it to his Mexican origins. For her, the fact that he is Mexican (despite also being a British national) meant that he was more understanding of the 'way of things' in Latin America.

Not all the international singers involved in the 2017 opera festival, however, were so accommodating. As part of the festival's opening concert, the tenor Thiago Arancam sang a duet from *Phantom of the Opera* with a local soprano, Dhijana Nobre. He had clearly not learned the lyrics, however, and at one point read them off his mobile phone on stage (Fig. 4.1). According to one of the other singers, who knew Arancam by reputation, he would probably have received a fee of around US\$10,000 for this concert.

²⁰⁷ His participation in the festival was also tactical, as he expected the personal contacts he would make would lead to future performances at Mexico City's Ópera de Bellas Artes. His tactics appear to have been successful: he appeared in the title role of Verdi's *Stiffelio* at the Bellas Artes in October 2018.



Fig. 4.1. Thiago Arancam consults his mobile phone on stage.²⁰⁸

Finally, on some occasions foreign members of production teams become frustrated with local working conditions. A member of the production team for the 2017 festival recalled a production of *Manon Lescaut* that she had worked on with an Italian costume and set designer in 2014. They had arrived in Manaus two and a half weeks before the first performance, but were unable to buy new fabric for costumes because of a restricted budget. (They therefore had to use material already in the costume warehouse.) She commented, ‘It was really difficult, and [the costume designer] demanded a lot. And it was really frustrating because I wanted to tell him, you know, I know you come from a different place where things are, you know, perfect, but we’re doing the best we can. Please cut us some slack [...] Because he made the seamstress do and redo stuff four or five or six times, and everyone was getting frustrated, you know?’

²⁰⁸ Still from video taken by Luis Chapa. Reproduced with permission.

The mixed opinions regarding the importation of musicians and singers to the Teatro concern both Brazilians from outside Amazonas and foreigners. To an extent, local musicians recognise that the practice has stimulated local culture and development; nevertheless, some of them resent the considerable discrepancies in salaries and prestige. Moreover, the correlation between foreignness, salary, and type of ensemble essentially results in the highest prestige being conferred on orchestral classical music(ians), or (unsurprisingly) on international operatic soloists.

Programming and Repertory

During my fieldwork I observed an eclectic programme of events at the Teatro. The only ensemble that has a fixed weekly slot is the Amazonas Filarmônica, but I saw all of the *Corpos Artísticos* perform at least once during my six months there. Many other performers also use the opera house and are financially encouraged to do so: I learned from a senior member of the Teatro's administration that local musicians are not required to pay for the venue at all, and performers from outside Amazonas only need to donate 10% of their box office takings. As a result, a wide range of ensembles performs a wide range of music. Having said that, the same staff member admitted to me that the process of applying for a performance slot is opaque and essentially relies on obtaining an email address that is not made public. In practice, then, only those 'in the know' receive performance slots. Nevertheless, besides operas and Amazonas Filarmônica concerts, I heard *boi-bumbá* (a popular Amazonian music), a Linkin Park tribute band, indigenous ritual songs, a North American guitar trio, local amateur choirs, and many more events.

The Teatro is, theoretically, an open space for all kinds of performance and music, and a number of musicians I met praised the balance and variety of programming. One singer described it as *bem democrática* (very democratic). He explained that some of the *Corpos Artísticos* (the orchestra, the *Corpo de Dança*, and the Coral) have fixed dates in the opera

house's calendar, with the Corpo de Dança having fewer performances scheduled than the orchestra simply because each one requires more rehearsal time. Besides the ensembles run by the Secretaria de Cultura, he told me, there is also a period of applications each year, during which anybody can apply for a slot. As a result, he said, 'you can't complain. You can only praise it. Because it's very diverse. It's very diverse and has something for all tastes'.²⁰⁹ A local singing student also described the Teatro as offering something *para todo gosto* (for all tastes) and observed that all of the events put on seem to attract an audience. She furthermore emphasised the frequency of events: one for almost every day of the year. This prolific programming, she pointed out, creates space for plenty of variety. A member of the Orquestra de Violões gave the following response when I asked him whether he thought there was any style of music that ought *not* to be played within the Teatro:

Are you recording? I'm kidding. Anything goes on the recording [laughter]. Erm, so, you can't judge a style like this: 'Ah, this style doesn't get in. This style shouldn't get in either. This one gets in.' I think that good sense for this would be high-quality music, not music performed in whatever fashion [...] Not simply, 'Oh, We won't have *fórró*', for example, or, 'we won't have *beiradão*'. No. That's not the issue. It's *what fórró* is that, right? What type of *fórró* is that? You get it? Is it high quality? Are the lyrics good? You see? At least that's my view. I think a rather democratic view of things is more – that's what I believe in.²¹⁰

Some musicians, however, do not agree with the concept of the Teatro as a 'democratic' cultural space. A member of the Coral do Amazonas told me, 'I think that with the issue of repertory, we have to focus like opera houses. So, an opera house, so we can always do other things, but keep erudite music there as the flagship'.²¹¹ He was critical of the move that both the Coral and Amazonas Filarmônica had made toward playing lighter, more popular music

²⁰⁹ não dá para reclamar, né. Só dá para elogiar. Porque é muito diverso. É muito diverso e tem para todos os gostos.

²¹⁰ *Fórró* is an umbrella term that refers to various popular dance styles from Brazil's north-east. For more information, see Crook 2009, 173-174; McGowan and Pessanha 2009, 151. *Beiradão* refers to a practice that emerged during the 1970s, in which musicians play at parties along the riverbanks of rural Amazonian towns. The music played is influenced by *cúmbia* and *merengue*. There is very little published information about *beiradão*, but there is one unpublished Master's dissertation (Norberto 2016).

Tá gravando? Tô brincando. Tanto faz na gravação [laughter]. Erm, então, não dá para julgar um estilo assim: 'Ah, esse estilo não entra. Esse estilo também não deve entrar. Essa aqui entra.' Eu acho que o nosso bom senso para isso seria música feita com qualidade, não música feita de qualquer jeito [...] Não simplesmente, 'Ah. Não vai entrar fórró', por exemplo, ou, 'Não vai entrar beiradão.' Não. Não é essa questão. É *que* fórró é esse, né? Que tipo de fórró é esse? Entendeu? É feita de qualidade? As letras são boas? Entendeu? Pelo menos é essa minha visão, assim. Eu acho que uma visão um pouco democrático das coisas é mais – é nisso que eu acredito.

²¹¹ acho que a questão do repertório, a gente tem que se concentrar como casas de óperas, né. Então, uma casa de ópera, então a gente sempre pode fazer uma coisa outra, mas manter ali a música erudita como carro chefe.

on occasion (for example, the Amazonas Filarmônica performed a concert of Disney tunes on 20 July that year). As far as he was concerned, popular music is widely performed by other ensembles in Manaus, so the Coral (and other nominally classical ensembles) should provide something to which members of the public might not otherwise have access. He was not the only member of the chorus to hold such views. Another echoed his sentiments, also claiming that too wide a range of repertory hindered *unificação vocal* (vocal unification) within the choir. For one local pianist, the historical context of the Teatro also has an impact on what ought to be performed in it: ‘There are people who defend much more investment in popular productions. And they don’t see classical music as belonging to this reality. But I believe it is part of the history of the city. The Teatro is the concrete part of this history, right? [...] So, I think it’s genuine, a genuine expression’.²¹²

When considering the place of classical music and opera in the hierarchy at the Teatro, it is also important to think about their place in the wider Brazilian context. A conductor I interviewed at the 2017 Festival Amazonas de Ópera described opera’s current place in Brazilian culture as ‘on the trash’. A soprano in the festival argued, similarly, that there is a lack of space for opera in the country. She lamented, ‘seeing as Brazil is very large, it has room for everyone, right? It has a place for everyone. And it doesn’t have a place for opera, you see? So, I see that there’s a lot of prejudice regarding opera’.²¹³ I asked her to elaborate on her sense that there was prejudice concerning opera, questioning whether it might result from it not being a particularly Brazilian tradition. She responded,

No! Imagine! There’s no problem at all. No, I don’t see any problem. I just don’t see space. The only thing is this: we – our problem is that we don’t have a space [...] The theatre in Rio de Janeiro is a joke at the moment. A lot of people not getting paid. All going without receiving a salary. Singers dying of heart attacks because of this. Our friend Leonardo Páscoa sang here [in Manaus] at the Festival. He passed away, less than a month ago.²¹⁴

²¹² Tem gente que defende muito mais investimento em manifestações populares. E não enxergam a música clássica como algo pertencente à essa realidade. Mas eu acredito que é parte da história da cidade. O Teatro é a parte concreto dessa história, né [...] Então, eu acho que é genuíno, uma manifestação genuína.

²¹³ como Brasil é muito grande, tem espaço para todo mundo, né. Tem lugar para todo mundo. E um lugar da ópera, não tem, entendeu? Então assim, eu vejo que tem muito preconceito com ópera.

²¹⁴ Não! Imagina! Não tem problema nenhum. Não, não vejo problema. Só não vejo espaço. A única coisa é isso: a gente – o nosso problema é que a gente não tem um espaço [...] O teatro do Rio de Janeiro tá uma palhaçada,

These comments were admittedly made by individuals with a heavy investment in opera in Brazil. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the extent to which opera's 'lack of space' in the wider national sphere might justify its top billing at the Teatro. The rhetoric of the Teatro being a very 'democratic' space is frequently iterated, and it holds well with that smooth image of a spiral often used as a metaphor for Manaus's cultural project initiated in 1997. Perhaps, though, if the opera house aimed to be less 'democratic' (that is, if it programmed more opera at the expense of other art forms), it could help to redress a more widespread imbalance. Of course, a problem would still remain in this scenario: in South America, opera is frequently associated with both elitism and colonialism (Lazar 2016, 240-241). This association cannot be brushed aside, given the Teatro's iconic nature. Resorting to charges of elitism, nevertheless, risks directing the discussion back toward music's social role or expediency (Yúdice 2004). As Sian Lazar discusses in relation to the Teatro Colón, maintaining the predominance of opera in opera houses can, instead, challenge the idea that culture exists exclusively as a means to social and economic ends (Lazar 2016, 241-243). Perhaps, in other words, the Teatro could benefit from less utilitarianism, and more Fitzcarraldian exertions. The current ticket prices for the Festival Amazonas de Ópera are, in any case, not extortionate (in 2017, full-price tickets ranged from R\$5 – R\$60, or £1 – £12), making accusations of elitism somewhat less grounded.²¹⁵ A final point, though, is that, even supposing opera and other classical music ought to receive the highest levels of prestige and programming at the Teatro, it remains impossible to justify the current severe discrepancies in salary between the *Corpos Artísticos*.

né. Um monte de gente sem receber. Todo indo sem receber salário. Cantor morrendo de infarto por conta disso. Nosso amigo Leonardo Páscoa cantou aqui no Festival. Faleceu, tem menos de um mes.

²¹⁵ However, as discussed in Chapter Five, certain individuals see *any* ticket price as a sign of exclusivity, and additional factors also make the Teatro difficult to access for poorer inhabitants of Manaus.

Conclusion

In Manaus, opera had a notably different use-value from one turn of the century to the next. During the Belle Époque, performances were mainly staged by touring European companies; musical works written by locals or concerning local themes were limited to five revues. Between 1997 and 2017, in contrast, opera was no longer treated as something transient that the city's residents could see as a kind of status symbol. Rather, the end of the twentieth century saw the invocation of culture's expediency: opera acquired a significant role in promoting local cultural projects and job creation. Yet, when Jelden's opera festival instigated the new 'cultural spiral', his endeavour swiftly prompted comparisons with Herzog's Fitzcarraldo. The implication was that, no matter how overtly signs of serious work were displayed, putting on an opera festival at the Teatro was ultimately a useless pursuit.

Despite the 'Fitzcarraldian' characteristics attributed to Jelden, however, a more pragmatic explanation of events seems to have held sway. The Festival Amazonas de Ópera prompted the creation not only of a new symphony orchestra, but also of other resident ensembles and cultural festivals. Most of these initiatives have lasted an unusually long time in the turbulent context of Brazilian cultural policy, and their very longevity is often credited as an achievement in itself. Moreover, teaching provided by foreign members of the Amazonas Filarmônica has helped to increase the numbers of *amazonense* classical musicians, and there are now a substantial number of Brazilians in the orchestra. In some ways, then, the spiral image so often invoked by locals is apt, and I have shown the ways in which the project can be considered a success in the face of adverse conditions. Nevertheless, the spiral is in fact not completely smooth: the various discrepancies I have highlighted, concerning salaries, programming, and the origins of musicians, show that orchestral classical music, opera, and also Europeanness are given top billing at the Teatro Amazonas.

Chapter Five The Opera House in the (Concrete) Jungle



Fig. 5.1. Map of Manaus and the area surrounding the Teatro Amazonas, 2017.

It is an August evening in 2017, and I am making my way to the Teatro Amazonas for the launch of a new CD: indigenous Amazonian singer Djuena Tikuna's debut album, Tchautchiüãne (My Village). To travel to the Teatro from my apartment in Manaus's Chapada neighbourhood, I take a bus into the city centre, to a stop on the Avenida Epaminondas. On leaving the bus, I am greeted by noise and bustle: hawkers loudly sell fruit and vegetables, watches, phone cases, and electronic items; voices amplified by megaphones advertise reduced-price menus around dinnertime. Most of the buses in Manaus do not have air conditioning, and I have already sunk into the humid equatorial heat by this point. Because of the number of these buses constantly pulling in and out, it takes me some time to cross the road to walk down the Rua José Clemente. I pass a man in a white panama hat sitting outside a bar on my left; as usual, he nods to me as I pass. Later tonight, this bar and others will sprawl out into the street, with plastic chairs and tables placed out, barbecues lit, and a television rigged up on a table to show the football.

*I continue walking alongside the dilapidated Santa Casa de Misericórdia hospital. Originally a contemporary of the Teatro (although it was substantially re-designed in the 1920s), the hospital closed in 2004 and has since fallen into disrepair. Its contents have been looted and its glass windows broken, its wooden beams are rotting, and plantlife has overwhelmed much of its structure. No significant barriers have been erected to stop people entering the abandoned building, and it has become a place to seek shelter, inject hard drugs, or commit murder.²¹⁶ On my right, opposite the derelict hospital, is the former residence of Eduardo Ribeiro, the governor of Amazonas who oversaw the extensive urban reforms of the late nineteenth century when the Teatro was built; in contrast to the Santa Casa de Misericórdia, it has been well preserved and now functions as a museum. I then walk along the edge of the Palácio da Justiça, which once housed the city's judiciary proceedings. It too is now a museum, as are several smaller buildings in this area, which is often referred to as Manaus's centro histórico (historic centre, or old town). By the Palácio, at the junction of the Rua José Clemente and the Avenida Eduardo Ribeiro, I find a small cart filled with Amazonian tucumã (the fruit of the *astrocaryum aculeatum* palm); its vender casually peels strips of the bark-textured orange fruit to package and sell to passersby. I proceed along the side of the rose-coloured opera house to reach its front entrance in the Praça São Sebastião.*

²¹⁶ See *Amazonas em Tempo*, 21 February 2019.



Fig. 5.2. The Teatro in the Praça São Sebastião, 2017. Photographs by the author.

The Teatro sits (as it always has) on raised ground within the Praça, its elevated position making it prominent among the surrounding buildings. The square is picturesque; it feels like a pristine island in the midst of the clamour and unattractiveness of the surrounding streets, most of which are lined with shops, cafés, street vendors, and beggars. Many of the city centre's informal merchants are Haitian immigrants; most of the homeless are recent arrivals from neighbouring Venezuela.²¹⁷ The Biblioteca Pública (Public Library) is located within sight of the opera house on one of these streets, the Rua Barroso. I often study there, always accompanied by a bleak, relentless monotone chant from one of the street merchants outside: vende joias, compro ouro, vende ouro (jewels for sale, sell your gold, gold for sale).

The Praça is cooler than its surrounding streets: it was designed to maximise ventilation, and there is a ring of verdant, carefully pruned trees within it. Around it are various buildings: a Catholic church dating from 1888, a restaurant selling regional Amazonian dishes, a fast food café, a bar, and some small art galleries and museums. There are stands selling popcorn and iced smoothies of the Amazonian açai berry, often marketed abroad as a 'superfood'. There is also a small green kiosk that belongs to a man named Joaquim. Although he spends much of his time selling cigarettes to teenagers, Joaquim's kiosk is also the best place in Manaus to buy books.

All sorts of people come to the square to relax. Tourists take photographs of the opera house, or refresh themselves with a coffee in the Portuguese café with the green façade. The more adventurous of them try some tacacá from Gisele's stand (a local soup made from dried shrimps, manioc broth, and mouth-numbing jambú). Teenagers arrive to hang out after school, buying cigarettes from Joaquim, or smoking marijuana on the ramps up to the opera house.

I arrive early at the Teatro to find a pre-concert event taking place immediately in front of its façade. An amplified voice announces performances by four indigenous groups:

²¹⁷ See Evan Ellis 2017, 29; Silva 2017.

Eware, a group of Tikuna ethnicity; Kariçú, a group of Dessana and Tukana ethnicities from the Alto Rio Negro (an indigenous reserve in north-west Amazonas, near the Colombian border); and two more groups whose names I do not catch. Brightly coloured feathered headdresses are much in evidence, as is face and body paint in various patterns. A substantial crowd has gathered to watch, with many people taking photographs and filming on mobile phones; members of the press are also circulating with bulky, professional cameras. One group is performing co-ordinated movements, or dance steps,²¹⁸ to music projected through large speakers. The music varies little. The rhythms are simple, with a consistent alternation between a strong and a weak beat, a bass guitar playing a continuous lambada rhythm of a crotchet followed by two quavers, and a panpipe and singer spinning modal melodies over alternating chords of G minor and D minor.²¹⁹ The performers stamp together to make their anklets of sementes (seeds, or nut shells) rattle on the music's strong beat. Sometimes a performer falls out of synchronisation with the others and ends up stamping more forcefully on the weak beat. Some of them pose for photographs, making heart shapes with their hands. After some time, words in capital letters are projected onto the opera house façade: DEMARCAÇÃO JÁ (Demarcation Now). They refer to land demarcation, and have become the slogan of a movement fighting for the protection of indigenous territories throughout Brazil.

Inside the Teatro, the event proper opens with Djuena and a group of children singing the Brazilian National Anthem in their own Tikuna language. Next, speeches are given by representatives of organisations participating in what Djuena refers to as a movimento indígena (indigenous movement) in Manaus.²²⁰ Each representative speaks of fighting for

²¹⁸ In some Amazonian languages, there are no distinct words for 'dance' or 'music'. For example, in the Tikuna language, a single word, *yü'ü*, refers to both dance and festivity (Tosta Matarezio Filho 2015, 385).

²¹⁹ *Lambada* is a musical style and dance that first became popular in the state of Pará in the 1970s. Usually up-tempo, it is in duple time, features syncopated rhythms, and incorporates elements of merengue, salsa, and rumba. For more information, see McGowan and Pessanha 2009, 154-157.

²²⁰ The organisations represented are COIAB (Coordenação das Organizações Indígenas da Amazônia Brasileira, Coordination of the Indigenous Organisations of the Brazilian Amazon), FOREEIA (Fórum De Educação Escolar Indígena Do Amazonas, Forum of the Indigenous School Education of Amazonas), and COPIME

indigenous rights and of a need to celebrate and disseminate indigenous culture. Setting a politicised tone, one speaker asserts that the Teatro was built on top of an indigenous settlement, and speaks of the militância (militancy) of Djuena's music. Another speaker compares the Teatro to a large maloca (meeting house) hosting indigenous culture.²²¹ The atmosphere is celebratory, but also emotionally charged. The audience applauds whenever somebody makes a statement about how often Brazil's indigenous population is overlooked. From time to time, somebody shouts out Fora Temer! (Out With Temer!), displaying their frustration with Brazilian president Michel Temer, who has been criticised for undermining indigenous rights.

Eventually, after the speeches and several warm-up acts, Djuena's main ensemble takes the stage. It comprises vocals, violin, electric guitar, bass guitar, percussion, flutes, and a small didgeridoo-like instrument.²²² Throughout the performance, images of the Amazon rainforest are projected onto the back wall. Djuena announces the names of the songs as they are performed: 'eware', 'maraka'anandê', 'moëütchima pa tchorü no'ê', 'maïyu wüiguü'... Each one of them is accompanied by a performer making birdcall noises into a microphone.²²³ The music is harmonically and rhythmically simple – mostly two alternating chords, a strong followed by a weak beat, and repetitive modal melodies. In 'eware', though, the violinist plays fast and flamboyant improvised lines, introducing an element of solo instrumental virtuosity. Toward the end of the performance, Djuena announces that, although she has previously performed in her 'traditional' Tikuna clothing, she has chosen to wear a

(Coordenação Dos Povos Indígena De Manaus e Entorno, Coordination of the Indigenous Peoples of Manaus and its Surrounding Areas).

²²¹ Common to many indigenous Amazonian societies, a *maloca* is a communal building, usually made from locally sourced natural materials, which can function as both a living space and an area in which rituals are performed.

²²² The musicians performing at the Teatro also played on the CD *Tchautchiüâne*: Antón Carballo (violin), Anderson Tikuna (electric guitar), Agenor Vasconcelos (bass guitar), Diego Janatã (percussion, flutes, and the small didgeridoo-like instrument), and Poramecü Tikuna (shaker and vocals) (*Tchautchiüâne* 2017).

²²³ Most of the songs were from the new CD. Their titles are all in the Tikuna language. 'Eware' means 'sacred territory'; 'maraka'anandê' means 'the celebration of our maracas'; 'moëütchima pa tchorü no'ê' means 'the old woman lives her youth in me'; and 'maïyu wüiguü' means 'we are relatives'. The birdcalls were made by Cleudilon de Souza Silveira. Credited on *Tchautchiüâne* as Cleudilon Passarinho (Cleudilon the little bird), he can, reportedly, reproduce 37 birdcalls of the Amazon (Farias 2017; *Tchautchiüâne* 2017).

long dress on this occasion, in order to counter common stereotypes regarding indigenous people. After all, she explains, she grew up in an Amazonian aldeia (rural village) until she was seven years old, but has since then lived in Manaus, the Amazon's largest urban centre.

This chapter brings the study of the Teatro close to the present day: it focuses on the year 2017 and revisits the relationship between the opera house and its geographical surroundings. Both the immediate and wider environs of the Teatro have changed substantially since it was inaugurated at the end of the nineteenth century; the scene described above is (unsurprisingly) a far cry from the one portrayed in Chapters One and Two of this thesis. At the fin de siècle, the Teatro dominated the skyline. Now, although it remains prominent within the Praça, concrete apartment blocks overshadow it and views of it are obscured by large quantities of telephone wires. Traces of the rubber boom wealth can still be seen in buildings like the Teatro and the Palácio da Justiça, and in segments of tram tracks that remain in the square. Other buildings, though, bear traces of how the splendour turned to decay: they are worn down and grey, or, like the hospital, have been abandoned and overrun by tropical flora.

Manaus's population currently numbers around 2 million, and is overwhelmingly Brazilian (the most recent census, in 2010, recorded 1,798,774 Brazilian and 3,241 foreign residents) ('Manaus: Censo Amostra, Migração'). Its population and rate of urbanisation increased substantially following the creation of the Zona Franca de Manaus (a free trade zone) in 1967. Known locally as *o distrito* (the district), the free trade zone offers tax incentives to companies willing to base themselves in the city; it currently employs over 100,000 workers and produces many of Brazil's electronic goods. In 1960, approximately 35.5% of the Amazonas state population lived in urban areas; by 2010, this figure had risen to 79%, with most of these urbanites residing in Manaus (Watson 2018, 77). Many *manauaras* deride persistent stereotypes of their locality, frequently circulating online memes captioned *No Amazonas é Assim* (How Things Are In Amazonas). One example reads, 'When I say that

I'm from/live in Manaus... What Brazil thinks: Manaus. My house', followed by photographs of a pile of rocks and a mud hut. The text continues, 'And in reality:', followed by aerial photographs of the city's skyscrapers. The lower caption reads, 'Want to stop being ignorant? Go study!!!'²²⁴

Like many opera houses, the Teatro acts as a prominent geographical reference point in an urban environment (Aspden 2019, 1-2). That is not to say, however, that its environment is *exclusively* (or straightforwardly) urban, even now. In spite of the prolific online memes, the Teatro's wider Amazonian setting is still commonly envisaged as primarily natural. As Marnie K. Watson puts it, 'Amazonia is imagined to be forever a place of nature, rather than culture, largely immune to transformation through human intervention' (Watson 2018, 75). Moreover, as discussed in the Introduction to this thesis (1-4), current debates about environmentalism and climate change mean that many individuals have a compelling motive for wanting the Amazon to remain untouched nature (as they see it), rather than to display significant signs of human activity (see Kawa 2016). As a result, the Teatro is today enmeshed in a uniquely charged entanglement between urbanity and nature, which is being debated at a global level.²²⁵

The italicised vignette above provides an anchor point for this chapter, and I will return to it later on in order to pick at some of the analytical threads knotted up in it. In so doing, I will explore the questions: how does the Teatro interact with its surrounding

²²⁴ A copy of this meme can be viewed at <https://miquels777.wordpress.com/no-amazonas-e-assim-1/>.

²²⁵ 'Nature' is, perhaps much more than 'urbanity', a contested term. In not defining the term at the outset, I follow the approach of Raymond Williams, who examines culturally constructed ideas of nature (e.g. Williams 1980). As the chapter proceeds, I consider the limitations of distinguishing between the urban and the natural in the case of Manaus. Nevertheless, while acknowledging the complexities of delimiting boundaries between city and rainforest, it is still important to recognise their differences. Despite humanity's pronounced influence on the planet – which has led atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen to label our current geological era the Anthropocene – the extent of this human impact ought not to be over-exaggerated (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000). That is to say, not only can landscapes and environments be strikingly adept at resisting human intervention, but also cultural endeavours (including opera houses) are always embedded in ecological systems, whatever the extent to which humans may have altered such systems (Kawa 2016). This observation is not new: prominent attempts to subvert anthropocentric thinking have been made by scholars such as Gilles Deleuze, Donna Haraway, and Bruno Latour (e.g. Deleuze and Guattari 2013; Haraway 2008; Latour 2005; see also Saldanha and Stark 2016). Efforts to undermine the binary divide between nature and culture have also been made by numerous scholars, including anthropologists Philippe Descola and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (for a concise summary of their opposing positions on the matter, see Latour 2009).

geographies? How does this interaction manifest in performances? The Teatro provides an ideal starting point from which to approach these types of question. Theatres (and opera houses) are such standard aspects of the urban landscape that they often remain present through long periods of history; many other types of building – palaces, train stations, factories, and so on – have proved far more transient. As Marvin Carlson puts it, ‘the stability of theatre as an element does not mean that its urban role is stable but, on the contrary, that it has been able to accommodate itself to a variety of urban functions as the city around it has changed’ (Carlson 1989, 6-7). Thus, reading the Teatro ethnographically can contribute to an awareness of the social changes that have occurred around it since it opened in 1897.

The remainder of the chapter has four sections. First, I examine the Teatro’s iconic status, showing how its prominence in the urban landscape is exaggerated in comparison to that of other Brazilian (and, indeed, many foreign) opera houses. Second, I consider its position within a city experiencing rising crime levels; I argue that, as a flipside to its iconic status, the Teatro functions as a kind of ‘fortified enclave’ in this context (Caldeira 2000, 4). Third, I return to the *Tchautchiüãne* launch event, noting how it brings questions surrounding indigeneity into the Teatro alongside negotiations of Amazonian geographies. Fourth, I briefly introduce some further examples of the ways in which Manaus’s musicians and politicians portray opera and the Amazon as mutually beneficial, often for their own strategic purposes.

Opera House as Postcard Picture

In addition to numerous bars that offer live music in Manaus (many of which are located in the stylish neighbourhoods of Vialves and Adrianópolis), some dedicated music venues have been constructed in recent years. In 1985, an outdoor bandstand was built at Praia Ponta Negra (a man-made beach in the city’s wealthiest neighbourhood); the Studio 5 Centro de Convenções, a performance venue within a shopping centre, was opened in 1991; and the

city's *sambódromo* (the large stadium where Carnival celebrations take place) was inaugurated in 1994 ('Conheça O Studio 5 Centro de Convenções'; 'Portfólio de Obras'; 'Projetos'). A rock club called Porão do Alemão was opened in 1998; the Teatro da Instalação was inaugurated as a theatre in 2001; and another shopping centre venue, the Teatro Manauara, was opened in 2010 (*A Crítica*, 17 December 2014; 'Conheça Porão do Alemão: Como Começou'; 'Teatro da Instalação'). Despite this new array of professional music institutions, however, it is still the opera house that is most often featured on postcards of the city: it has persisted as one of Manaus's main icons.

In part, the Teatro's iconic status results from the privileged location it still occupies in the urban fabric, even though Manaus has expanded and changed substantially over the last 120 years. Although it is not unusual for opera houses to be prominent within city landscapes, the Teatro displays this trait to a heightened degree.²²⁶ For one thing, its location near to the docks, in the city's *centro histórico*, makes it easily accessible for tourists travelling on the Amazon's many cruise ships, which tend to moor at Manaus for stops of up to twenty-four hours. Its physical characteristics, furthermore, have helped it to remain visually conspicuous despite the numerous skyscrapers that now pepper the skyline around it. As mentioned, it is positioned on raised ground; its colourful dome also adds to its height, furthering its imposing stature; and its thick, rose-coloured walls do likewise. In all of these aspects, the Teatro contrasts with other Brazilian opera houses, including the Theatro da Paz in Belém, the Teatro Arthur Azevedo in São Luís, the Teatro de Santa Isabel in Recife, and the municipal theatres of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo: these venues blend far more unobtrusively into the streets around them (as, indeed, do many opera houses outside Brazil).

Audience members frequently allude to the Teatro's physical characteristics in relation to its iconic status.²²⁷ One audience member I interviewed was relatively new to Manaus,

²²⁶ For an astute recent analysis of ways in which opera houses act as 'urban exhibition spaces', see van den Berg 2019.

²²⁷ Besides conducting two interviews in person with audience members, I collected feedback on why individual audience members attend events at the Teatro by writing to all of the email addresses on the Teatro's mailing

having moved there several months earlier from São Paulo. He told me that he had never attended a concert in his former home-city, but that he had been attracted to the Teatro because of its architecture. Others, similarly, told me that their primary reasons for watching performances at the opera house relate to the venue itself (rather than to the ensemble performing, the genre being performed, the work being performed, and so on). A substantial number of them praised its architecture, making comments such as: ‘The Teatro Amazonas is a temple of culture. I watch shows there because the theatre, besides having a very diverse programme, is a very beautiful place and has an incredible historical value. Being part of this story is as rewarding as watching a show there’; and, ‘Because [the performances] make me feel good. I like the vibrations of the music. The theatre brings me nostalgia for a previous time, and I admire it immensely for its beauty, grandeur, and importance’.²²⁸

Alongside the references to the Teatro’s physical distinction, a second theme emerges from these comments: the sense that it has a special historical value. It is intriguing that, while nearby Belle Époque structures (such as the Santa Casa de Misericórdia hospital) have been left to decay, the opera house has undergone multiple restorations and is in constant use today. In stark contrast, the Hotel Cassiano, where many of the Teatro’s top performers were accommodated during the Belle Époque, is among the historical buildings that have fallen into a dramatic state of ruin (Fig. 5.3).²²⁹ The phenomenon can partly be explained by the argument I made in Chapters Three and Four of this thesis: to the benefit of local politicians, there has been an effort to present Manaus’s cultural history as a tale of two turns of the century, both of which are elided with opera. The Teatro has thus been convincingly co-opted to represent a streamlined narrative of local opulence, decline, and renewal.

list. Out of the 1,216 contacts that I wrote to, I received 66 responses to the question, ‘Why do you watch performances at the Teatro? Please describe your reasons below.’

²²⁸ O teatro Amazonas é um templo de cultura. Assisto a espetáculos la porque o teatro alem de ter uma programação bem diversificada é um lugar muito lindo e tem um valor histórico incrível. Fazer parte desta historia é tao gratificante quanto assistir um espetáculo la; Porque me fazem sentir bem. Gosto da vibração da música. O teatro me traz nostalgia por uma época em que eu não vivi, e admiro-o imensamente por sua beleza, imponência e importância.

²²⁹ For a collection of studies on the ways in which ruins can carry traces of imperial processes, see Stoler 2013a.



Fig. 5.3. The Hotel Cassiano in 2017 (on the right). Photograph by the author.

This narrative was robustly reinforced at a workshop I attended in May 2017 at the Café Les Artistes in central Manaus. The event was aimed at university students studying tourism, and comprised two lectures; the second, entitled ‘Teatro Amazonas, 120 anos do ícone do Turismo e Cultura do Amazonas’ (Teatro Amazonas, 120 Years of Amazonas’s Icon of Tourism and Culture), was delivered by Robério Braga. In it, he referred to the Teatro as the main symbol of Manaus, claiming that no other city in the world is primarily known for its opera house. He then summarised the Teatro’s history: after giving an effusive account of its construction, he lamented the reforms of the 1920s (see Introduction, 7) and decried the use of the venue for political functions and graduation ceremonies during the twentieth century, when it was (supposedly) devoid of art. In contrast, he emphasised the attention that the venue had received from the national and international press for its opera festivals since 1997.

Robério's use of narrative to strengthen the Teatro's iconic position replicated an older trend regarding the status of opera houses more generally. Suzanne Aspden describes the phenomenon:

The situation of the opera house in Europe's civic landscapes in the nineteenth century invoked both unabashed commercialism and a heightened (and commercially exploited) self-awareness [...] the weight of historical and cultural expectation framed narratives around the opera house much as they framed operatic narratives themselves – indeed, in this period, when the opera houses are well established, it is the stories told about opera and its locations that most emphatically enhance its edifice (Aspden 2019, 6).

Certainly, stories other than Robério's have also contributed to the enhancement of the Teatro as edifice. I have already discussed the tendency among local historians and musicologists to glorify the Belle Époque (at the expense of later historical periods) (Monteiro 2003; Páscoa 1997; 2009a). I have also mentioned the myth that Enrico Caruso once performed at the Teatro, and the fact that this myth led Luciano Pavarotti to travel to Manaus on a 'pilgrimage' (Pavarotti 2019). Werner Herzog's portrayal of the opera house, too, may have influenced Michael Jelden to produce an opera festival there in 1997 (*A Crítica*, 6 March 1997). Over time, then, these various representations of the opera house have contributed to its standing in an international imaginary.²³⁰

Another feature that helps to enhance the Teatro is its juxtaposition with those dilapidated buildings nearby, most of which also date from the Belle Époque. Nicholas Kawa argues that, 'to read Manaus as a city haunted or even mocked by its past is simply too easy, and in many ways, quite misleading' (Kawa 2015). The situation is indeed more complex, at least regarding the opera house: while its neighbouring ruins present the illusion of the past erupting into the present, the Teatro itself is a lively music venue. The ruins serve as a reminder that the Teatro, like them, once had a 'golden age' that has now gone; meanwhile, the opera house is able to evoke nostalgia by proxy and, simultaneously, to be a modern, operational institution.

²³⁰ Having said this, not all of these representations directly affect residents of Manaus: the staff members who give the guided tours of the Teatro, for example, have never heard of *Fitzcarraldo*, and the DVD is not sold in the gift shop.

The Teatro's iconic status does not only earn it a place on postcards and tourist brochures: it also makes its stage attractive to a diverse range of musical ensembles. As one member of the Amazonas Filarmônica put it,

since it's the only venue with this capacity, you know, and it's a whole historical thing, every artist in the world wants to play at the Teatro Amazonas [...] So-and-so comes from somewhere in China; a group of Japanese drums, for example, as already came [...] they don't want to perform at Studio 5, at the Teatro Manauara. They want to [perform] at the Teatro Amazonas. The White Stripes want to [perform] at the Teatro Amazonas, right? [...] Everyone wants a bit of this theatre.²³¹

This musician's emphasis of the diversity of ensembles that might not usually play in an opera house, but nevertheless 'want a bit' of this one, is striking. It calls to mind the Teatro's early years, during which, despite having been built specifically to host opera, it was quickly filled with other kinds of performance, from acrobatic acts to revues and zarzuelas. That the opera house functioned as a multi-purpose space was not surprising at that time, given that it was the city's only significant performance venue. Today, though, notwithstanding the various other venues in the city, 'everyone' still wants to perform at the Teatro. Moreover, 'everyone' now extends not only to acrobats or zarzuela performers, but also to taiko drummers and heavily amplified rock bands like The White Stripes, who performed at the opera house in 2005.²³²

Opera House as Fortified Enclave

Maria, another audience member I interviewed, expressed intriguing opinions about the Teatro's position in *manauara* society; her comments reveal important details concerning aspects other than its iconic status. She explained that she frequently watches performances there, partly because she has friends who study drama at university, but also because she likes the building itself (*eu gosto do prédio em si*). Like the audience members I quoted above, she often attends events irrespective of what they are in order to spend time in the opera house,

²³¹ como é a única casa com essa capacidade, né, e tem tudo uma questão histórica, todo artista no mundo tem vontade de tocar no Teatro Amazonas [...] Vem fulano de tal, na China; um grupo de tambores do Japão, por exemplo, como veio já [...] não quer apresentar no Studio 5, Teatro Manauara. Quer no Teatro Amazonas, né. O White Stripes quer no Teatro Amazonas, né [...] Todo mundo quer um pouquinho desse teatro.

²³² A video of the complete performance is available on YouTube ('The White Stripes Live in Manaus').

although she does have favourite ensembles: the Amazonas Band (a big band) and the Amazonas Filarmônica. When I asked her to try to explain these preferences, she responded, ‘It’s very complicated. OK: normally in life, I don’t listen to jazz. Or classical music. I come to the Teatro to do exactly that. I don’t know, I like the instruments, I like the whole situation.’²³³ She explained that she usually listens to rock music and MPB,²³⁴ commenting, ‘It doesn’t dialogue with what I like here in the Teatro. It’s totally separate [...] I *stop* to watch something [in the Teatro]. For me, it’s not just an everyday thing. It’s an extraordinary thing, it’s not everyday.’²³⁵ For Maria, the inner space of the opera house is distinctly segregated from daily life. Of course, opera house and theatre interiors are deliberately designed to draw audience members away from their everyday activities and concerns. Foyer spaces and lobbies, for example, prompt a mental transition from the real world outside to the excitement and escapism of the theatrical world (Carlson 1989, 133). Nevertheless, both Maria’s use of the word ‘extraordinary’ and her comment that she listens to music in the opera house that she does not listen to elsewhere suggest that the experience of seclusion from exterior surroundings might be particularly acute in the case of the Teatro.

I also asked Maria about her thoughts on the Teatro’s audiences more generally. She proposed that paid, ticketed events primarily attract a higher-earning, middle-class audience, whereas free events (which work on a ‘first-come-first-served’ basis) attract more working-class audience members, who might take the bus at 3pm to arrive at the Teatro at 6pm in order to queue for entry to an event that begins at 7.30pm. She commented on some reactions to such audiences: ‘I’ve seen people who are intellectuals saying that the audience of these free days is kind of rude, lacks respect and so on. [But] I see it as less elitist, it’s a more

²³³ É muito complicado. Bem: normalmente, na vida contemporânea, eu não escuto jazz. E nem música clássica. Eu venho ao Teatro para fazer exatamente isso aqui. Não sei, eu gosto dos instrumentos, eu gosto de toda a situação.

²³⁴ The term MPB, or *Música Popular Brasileira*, is sometimes used to refer to popular Brazilian music of any kind. Alternatively, it can be used to describe a collection of Brazilian musical styles that first emerged in the late 1960s, which combine elements from samba, rock, jazz, and other genres. ‘Classic’ MPB performers include Elis Regina, Chico Buarque, Maria Bethânia, and Milton Nascimento (who also had a cameo appearance as an actor in *Fitzcarraldo*). For more information on MPB, see McGowan and Pessanha 2009, 75-102.

²³⁵ Não diálogo com o que eu gosto aqui no Teatro. É totalmente aparte [...] eu *paro* para assistir algo. Não é para mim também uma coisa cotidiana. É uma coisa extraordinária, não é cotidiana.

popular thing.²³⁶ When I asked about the effects of tickets being very cheap, as opposed to free, she noted that any price at all was likely to deter lower earners: ‘It’s not just because they don’t want to pay, but it’s like this: the Festival [de Ópera], erm... the Teatro itself is still very elitist. They know it’s elitist. So, a person who is from a more humble origin, she’ll look. If it’s paid, she won’t look at the price, that this price is R\$6.²³⁷ She’ll see that it’s paid, and she won’t want to go, because – even because there’ll be a different audience.’²³⁸ Maria, moreover, described a general perception among Manaus’s poorer communities that the Teatro is solely a place for tourists, emphasising that in her own neighbourhood – a working-class one, distant from the city centre – there are many people who have never been inside the venue.

Some of the Teatro’s resident musicians, though, reported that they had made efforts to encourage friends and acquaintances of varied backgrounds to attend performances. When I asked a member of the Amazonas Band whom he thought the Teatro was for today, he offered a mixed response:

The Teatro? I think it’s still not for everyone. I think it’s still not for everyone. But I think that a substantial part of the community already knows the Teatro through its concerts [...] But from the *periferia* [city’s outskirts], I think they still don’t really know the Teatro. A different type of culture. They’re even scared to go to the Teatro [...] But I think that, with all this movement, many people were reached by the Teatro. And I – I started to do this, to invite people who never knew the Teatro. They never knew the Teatro. So I started, ‘Mate, let’s go to the Teatro today. I’ll show you it, and then you’ll get to know it’. ‘Ah, but it’s paid’, and so on. ‘No, no. Come on, let’s get to know it’. And through – I planted some seeds like that, you see?²³⁹

²³⁶ eu já vi pessoas que são intelectuais dizendo que o público desses dias gratuitos é tipo mal educado, respeite mal e tal. Eu vejo que é menos elitista, é uma coisa mais popular.

²³⁷ On 1 January 2017, £1 = R\$4.02. (Conversation rate calculated using www.xe.com historical currency conversion.)

²³⁸ Não é só porque não querem pagar, mas é tipo assim: o Festival, erm... o Teatro em si ainda é muito elitista. Eles sabem que ele é elitista. Então a pessoa que é de uma origem mais humilde, ela vai ver. Se é pago, ela não vai procurar sobre o preço, que esse preço é R\$6. Ela vai ver que é pago, e ela não vai quer ir, porque – até porque vai ter um público diferente.

²³⁹ O Teatro? Acredito que ainda não seja para todos não, né. Acredito que ainda não seja para todos não. Mas acredito que boa parte da sociedade já conhece o Teatro, né, através dos concertos [...] Mas da periferia, ainda, acredito que não conhecem muito o Teatro. Um outro tipo de cultura, né. Até têm um medo de ir ao Teatro [...] Mas acredito assim, que com todo esse movimento, muitas pessoas foram alcançadas para o Teatro, né. E eu, eu cheguei a fazer isso, a convidar pessoas, né, que nunca conheceu o Teatro. Nunca conheceram o Teatro. Então, eu cheguei, ‘Cara, vamos lá no Teatro hoje. Eu vou apresentar lá, e, de repente, você conhece.’ ‘Ah, mas é pago’, e tal. ‘Não não. Vamos lá, vamos conhecer.’ E através – eu plantei algumas sementinhas assim, entendeu?

A member of the Amazonas Filarmônica, Paulo, recounted a similar process:

We started doing concerts with a super-reduced audience, seriously [...] The Festival de Ópera, driving here in the city in 2000, 2001, I don't remember – not driving, I was in a taxi. I saw an advert at a shop here: 'Take a Test Drive and get a ticket to the Festival de Ópera'. Because there were no audiences. It was very difficult. Gradually, with the students, the [Claudio Santoro] music school [...] It was the people that we ourselves, musicians, asked, 'Oh, you've never been to that orchestra, man?' 'No, I'm ashamed to go to the Teatro'. Because there's still this thing of the past, that the Teatro is only for the upper classes. People *still* have this *a lot* here. It was *us* that said, 'No, I play in the damn orchestra! You'll see me, damn it! I'm here with you in the bar having a beer, let's go there.' And the guy went. I myself must have taken a hundred people there through the years. There are people who are still going today, and they quote my name, saying, 'Look, I'm a fan, because Paulo told me, and I'm going to this day'.²⁴⁰

These comments overtly demonstrate that, although the Teatro is iconic, it can feel daunting and inaccessible to some of Manaus's residents – particularly those from the lower classes who live on the city's outskirts. As such, they fit a hypothesis most recently propounded by Anna Bull, regarding classical music institutions more broadly: 'The sonically sealed spaces of many classical music venues, insulated from their urban surrounds, enable its aesthetic of detail, precision, and dynamic extremes [...] these are simply another of the middle classes' ways of closing off their protected and exclusive spaces to others in society' (Bull 2019, xvi). Certainly, the two musicians' accounts highlight the fact that cultivating audience members is a dynamic process, and that attendance at the opera house cannot always be mapped onto broad social categories such as class or area of residence.²⁴¹ Nevertheless, I would argue that certain aspects of Manaus's urban geography work to reinforce the Teatro's social exclusivity.

²⁴⁰ Nós chegamos a fazer concertos com um público super-reduzido, realmente [...] O Festival de Ópera, dirigindo aqui na cidade em 2000, 2001, não lembro. Dirigindo não, estava num táxi. Eu vi uma promoção numa loja aqui: 'Faça um Test Drive e ganha um ingresso para o Festival de Ópera.' Porque não tinha público, né. Era bem difícil. Aos poucos, com os alunos, a escola de música [...] Era as pessoas que nós mesmo, músicos, dizíamos, 'Oh, você nunca foi a essa orquestra rapaz?' 'Ah não, tenho vergonha de ir no Teatro.' Porque tem essa coisa ainda do passado, que o Teatro é só para a classe alta, né. Pessoas têm *muito* isso *ainda* aqui. Nós que chegamos, 'Não, eu toco na orquestra, porra! Vai me ver, porra!' Entendeu? 'Eu tô aqui com você no barzinho tomando uma cerveja, vamos lá.' E a pessoa ia. Eu mesmo deve ter colocado umas cem pessoas aí, esses anos todos, né. Eu tenho pessoas que até hoje vão, e elas citam meu nome, falando, 'Olha, sou fã, porque o Paulo falou, e eu vou até hoje.'

²⁴¹ Claudio Benzecry has focused on this point in his ethnographic research on Argentina's Teatro Colón. Suspicious of a sociological tendency to '[focus] on a societal/class level of analysis in which the practice is merely the basis for a status-based value tournament that reproduces the legitimacy of the dominant class', he argues that it is insufficient to look at correlations between social background and musical taste (or attendance at musical events) (Benzecry 2011, 5; see also 2009). Such an approach indeed risks casting the phenomenon as static, whereas individuals can actually be initiated over time, and in diverse circumstances, into attending particular venues.

With its economy suddenly boosted by the free trade zone in the 1960s, Manaus urbanised quickly and haphazardly. As a result, its infrastructure today is precarious: traffic is often bad, buses run without timetables, and potholes are ubiquitous across the city.²⁴² It is a chaotic city, increasingly sprawling outwards with new informal shantytowns erupting on its edges (Linstroth 2015, 115, 126). For *manauara* author Milton Hatoum, ‘Its urbanism is improvised, stupid and savage. Manaus is part Miami and part Calcutta – a portrait of the worst of Brazil’ (*The Irish Times*, 22 September 2010).

In addition to haphazard infrastructure, crime levels have also risen steeply in recent years, affecting who is able to access the Teatro safely (*A Crítica*, 6 June 2019; Riccio et. al. 2016). The Amazonas Band rehearses three times a week at the Teatro da Instalação, located near to the opera house and only a few minutes walk away from the bus stops on the Avenida Epaminondas. When I first spoke with the band’s Music Director, he asked me whether I had been to its rehearsal venue. I told him that I had and he responded, ‘You’ve been?! And you’re still alive. It’s a “no go zone”. The place is seriously “no go” [...] The area is really dangerous, it’s the red light district. Prostitution. The guy from the hotel next door was murdered recently’.²⁴³ On a subsequent occasion, he asked me if I had heard about the recent murder of a British woman in Coari (a municipality of Amazonas to the west of Manaus), and compared the risks she had faced paddling a canoe alone through rural Amazonia to the level of danger in the area surrounding the Teatro da Instalação (see ‘British kayaker Emma Kelty “murdered” on Amazon trip’, 19 September 2017). While he probably exaggerated for dramatic effect, several sources in 2018 (including the BBC’s Brazil website) ranked Manaus at number 34 out of the 50 most violent cities in the world (*A Crítica*, 7 March 2018; ‘Estas são as 50 cidades mais violentas’ 2018).

²⁴² In recent years, residents have taken to protesting against this problem by planting banana trees in the potholes (*A Crítica*, 23 April 2017; 1 February 2018).

²⁴³ Já foi?! E tá viva. É um ‘no go zone’. O lugar é bem ‘no go’ [...] A área é perigosíssima, é a zona vermelha. Prostituição. Cara do hotel ao lado foi assassinado ultimamente.

High crime levels are not unusual in Brazilian cities, and they are often accompanied by a pervasive climate of fear. A common response from certain social groups – usually the middle and upper classes – is to instigate forms of spatial segregation. Wealthier residents draw on a discourse of crime and fear in order to justify ensconcing themselves in what Teresa Caldeira calls ‘fortified enclaves’: ‘privatized, enclosed, and monitored spaces for residence, consumption, leisure, and work’ (Caldeira 2000, 4; see also Low 2001).²⁴⁴ Caldeira notes that, by the year 2000, São Paulo had established so many such enclaves that it had become a ‘city of walls, with a population obsessed by security and social discrimination’ (Caldeira 2000, 232). Manaus can now be characterised in a similar way, with its most blatant type of enclave the gated condominium common to wealthy areas such as Ponta Negra.

A discourse of fear is also prevalent in Manaus: Rachel Reis Mourão observes the extent to which crime in the city is sensationalised by the mass media, which (unsurprisingly) tends to focus on shocking homicides at the expense of covering more common crimes including muggings and petty theft. She moreover notes that the backgrounds of crime victims (such as age, occupation, and ethnicity) are rarely reported. As a result, a sense emerges that crime could affect anyone: ‘One of the pervasive consequences of the gap between the portrayal of violence in the media and the actual risk of being victimized is an increase in the *fear* of crime’ (emphasis mine, Mourão 2014, 7, 19).²⁴⁵ In Manaus, moreover, the wealthy have a second motivation for concealing themselves in ‘fortified enclaves’: they can shield themselves not only from crime, but also from the equatorial heat. Wealthier *manauaras* rarely walk through their city’s streets, instead moving between their air-conditioned apartments, air-conditioned cars, and air-conditioned destinations (including the auditorium of the Teatro). One member of the Amazonas Filarmônica poignantly metaphorised the lifestyle:

²⁴⁴ Such practices are not unique to Brazil; they can be found in many cities, including Los Angeles, Johannesburg, Buenos Aires, Budapest, and Miami (Caldeira 2000, 1).

²⁴⁵ For another recent article detailing the nature and perception of violent crime in Amazonas, see Riccio et. al. 2016.

- Musician: Here, we're living as if we were in Outer Space [...] because we travel by car, we stay there, as if we were wearing those, you know...
- Me: Spacesuit?
- Musician: Spacesuit, that's it. You can't walk around, you can't appreciate the nature.²⁴⁶

The wealthy, then, can afford to live their daily lives as if in spacesuits, sheltered both from the heat and from the crime that is perceived to be rampant. Social inequality has become an organising principle of the urban layout, just as it is a key organising principle of the interior spaces of nineteenth-century opera houses, in which the layout of boxes, for example, can denote the smallest minutiae of social distinction (Caldeira 2000, 4; Carlson 1989, 142-149).

I observed a striking example of the extent of fear in public places on one occasion when I was attending a concert at the Teatro da Instalação. The concert finished early, at about 8.30pm; as I was leaving, an audience member asked if she could walk with me to the bus stop, because she felt nervous walking down that street on her own in the dark. The walk took approximately two minutes, and there were many other audience members going the same way. Nevertheless, there is a widespread attitude in Manaus that the streets are unsafe to traverse, particularly after dark. Even the buses themselves are dangerous at night: in 2017, over 3,000 muggings were recorded on buses in the city (*A Crítica*, 10 November 2017). In keeping with Caldeira's observations on enclaving practices, though, the use of these public spaces in Manaus is mainly restricted to the lower classes: the better off tend to take taxis or drive their own cars, rather than walking through the streets or travelling by bus. The Teatro, moreover, does not always attempt to ameliorate this situation, sometimes programming concerts to start late and go on later. A performance of Wagner's *Tannhäuser* during the 2017 Festival de Ópera, for example, started at 8pm, included two long intervals, and finished at around 1am. Such late programming, however cheap tickets may be, makes attending the Teatro prohibitive to those who rely on public transport.

²⁴⁶ 'A gente aqui, vivendo como se fosse no espaço sideral [...] porque a gente anda de carro, ficar lá, como se fosse vestido de, de aqueles, sabe...' 'Spacesuit?' 'Spacesuit, isso. Não dá para passear, não dá para apreciar o natureza.'

It is not especially surprising that Manaus's lower classes can find the Teatro's physical presence intimidating. They are, after all, explicitly *not* the traditional audience for such a place. At the time the Teatro was built, opera houses functioned as landmark civic monuments that overtly symbolised power and elitism (Aspden 2019, 1; Carlson 1989, 79-88). Any attempts, therefore, to make the Teatro socially inclusive must confront this symbolism, which is literally set in stone, ingrained in the very bricks and mortar. The ideological residues secreted within the building itself cannot but condition local responses to it. Moreover, the exclusive aura of a nineteenth-century opera house is probably heightened for inhabitants of an Amazonian city accustomed to the enclaving practices of its local elites. Initiatives such as diverse repertory and cheap tickets are undertaken to give the impression that the Teatro is no longer elitist. Its entrance, moreover, is not even physically gated like those of the expensive condominiums in Ponta Negra; in one sense, only its rose-coloured walls stand between residents of the urban periphery and the opera, rock, or *boi-bumbá* performed on its stage. Yet the lingering symbolism of those walls, combined with a socially exclusive urban layout, can make them seem impenetrable.

Tchautchiüãne

Djuena, the singer from the vignette with which I opened this chapter, is both a long-term resident of Manaus and an indigenous Amazonian of Tikuna ethnicity.²⁴⁷ The launch of her new CD, *Tchautchiüãne*, was widely advertised as the first performance in the Teatro's history to feature an indigenous *protagonista* (lead performer) and styled by the local press as a large-scale celebration of indigeneity in the city's most iconic venue (*A Crítica*, 30 July

²⁴⁷ The Tikuna are Brazil's largest indigenous ethnic group, and speak a language thought not to share roots with any other Amazonian languages (Tosta Matarezio Filho 2015, 14-15). The most recent national demographic census (in 2010) recorded 46,000 Tikuna living in Brazil (*Censo Demográfico 2010*). For a detailed linguistic analysis of the Tikuna language, see Goulard and Montes 2013.

2017; ‘Cantora indígena Djuena Tikuna’ 2017; *Folha de São Paulo*, 23 August 2017).²⁴⁸

During the concert’s opening speeches, the event was similarly portrayed as an occasion for Manaus’s indigenous residents to carve out a space for themselves, both literally and symbolically. Spatial imagery was overtly drawn on: as mentioned, the Teatro was described as being built on top of an indigenous dwelling, and its auditorium was metaphorically turned into a *maloca*.²⁴⁹ The space literally being occupied, though, also had its own symbolic heft: the opera house built from steel and other materials imported from Europe; the opera house with only one painting of an indigenous Brazilian, which in fact portrays Christianity overcoming indigenous beliefs; and so on. No matter how many metaphors were invoked, it was difficult to ignore the allusions held within the Teatro’s material structure. As Carlson puts it, ‘The actual object, though standing for another, absent space, nevertheless carries with it inescapably some of the connotations of its embedding in reality and history’ (Carlson 1989, 198). In fact, the very traction of metaphors lies in their inexactitude, or in the gap between what they say and what they imply (see Stoler 2013b, x). Consequently, the *Tchautchiüãne* launch simultaneously substituted and invoked the opera house’s ingrained symbolism, playing with it in order to mould the performance into not only a celebration, but also a politicised act.

The event undeniably succeeded in carving out a space for indigeneity in a literal sense: it received substantial coverage by the local press; the Teatro was filled with audience members speaking various Amazonian languages; and feathered headdresses, long a staple of the operatic *stage*, featured conspicuously that night in the stalls and balconies.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ The current status of Brazil’s indigenous population has a complex historical background. The best English-language introduction to the topic is John Hemming’s trilogy, which recounts the history from the arrival of the Portuguese to the end of the twentieth century (Hemming 2004a; 2004b; 2004c).

²⁴⁹ Mário Ypiranga Monteiro makes a disparaging comment about the *maloca* in his history of the Teatro. When he discusses Manaus’s economic decline after the rubber boom, he describes what he considers to be the poor quality of audiences at the opera house: ‘An audience with different manners, with jibes, guffawing at the insult of jokes of the bad performers. An audience educated in *malocas*...’ Um platéia orientada noutros rumos, no deboche, rinchavelhando ao insulto das piadas dos maus artistas. Uma platéia educada em *malocas*... (Monteiro 2003, 445).

²⁵⁰ This was not the first time the Teatro had a large indigenous audience, but it is not a common occurrence. Márcio Souza reports that a performance of his musical *Dessana Dessana* (which recounts the creation myth

Symbolically, though, the matter is more complex. Feathered headdresses, for example, are conspicuous visual cues: they serve to depict indigeneity at a glance, and photographs of them can easily be circulated by mass media. Indeed, the recent growth in international concern with environmental conservation (which began to develop in the 1980s and 90s) has increasingly prompted indigenous Amazonians to co-opt such visual cues for strategic purposes.²⁵¹ As Beth Conklin notes, ‘feathered headdresses [...] have become secular political props and the sine qua non of activist apparel’ (Conklin 1997, 727). Djuena, however, opted not to wear one, and moreover drew attention to the fact that she had chosen to wear a dress rather than what she referred to as ‘traditional’ Tikuna clothing.²⁵²

The donning of headdresses (or ‘traditional’ clothing) for activist purposes is tightly bound up with modes of aesthetic idealisation that are well established among the Amazon’s international stakeholders. As Conklin argues, the popular tendency to depict indigenous Amazonians as ‘guardians of the forest’ results from a mixture of ‘an undeniable basis in Amazonian cultural ecology and ethnobiology’ with ‘two long-standing currents in Western thought: exoticism [...] and primitivism’ (Conklin 1997, 713). This mixture serves to make indigenous Amazonians palatable for widespread conservationist fervour, while simultaneously providing them the means to tap into said fervour in order to promote their own agendas. Given the extent to which operatic stages, including that of the Teatro, have

according to the Amazonian Desana clan) at the Teatro in 1975 was well attended by indigenous people (Souza 1984, 34). Robério Braga incorrectly asserts that the 2005 performance of *Dessana Dessana* at the Teatro was its world premiere (Viana 2011, 121). Manaus’s indigenous residents tend to wear accessories such as headdresses only for strategic purposes – usually either to celebrate their indigeneity or to make a political point about it. They usually do not wear them in their everyday lives (Linstroth 2015, 129-130).

²⁵¹ It was also during the 1980s that Brazil re-democratised after a long military dictatorship. The process of recognising indigenous rights and lands was galvanised following the adoption of a new, democratic constitution in 1988 (the one still in use today) (Le Tourneau 2015, 213).

²⁵² Despite several attempts, I was unable to speak with Djuena to clarify exactly what she meant by ‘traditional’ Tikuna clothing. Broadly speaking, interest in depicting and maintaining a distinct Tikuna cultural identity has fluctuated significantly over time; trends in dress have fluctuated correspondingly (Sampaio-Silva 2000, 274). For a summary of descriptions of Tikuna clothing recorded during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Nimuendajú 1952, 36-40. For a description of a selection of masks worn in Tikuna rituals (although masks are exclusively worn by men), see Sampaio-Silva 2000. Fig. 5.4 shows the Tikuna Eware group; the clothing they wore to perform in Djuena’s pre-concert event is probably an example of what she meant by ‘traditional’.

portrayed and perpetuated these ‘long-standing currents’ (especially exoticism), Djuena’s choice not to use ‘traditional’ dress and accessories was especially poignant.²⁵³

She did, however, wear facial paint: a horizontal red line bisecting her face at the bridge of her nose, and elaborate black swirls around her mouth, depicted her membership of the Onça (Jaguar) Tikuna clan (Farias 2017; Sampaio-Silva 2000, 275).²⁵⁴ The benefit of such adornments as facial paint and headdresses is that they are impermanent: indigenous activists can put them on and take them off as they like, and can also combine them in different ways depending on the situation at hand (see Conklin 1997, 723). In this case, Djuena’s use of facial paint, combined with her eschewal of ‘traditional’ clothing, allowed her to portray herself as both an indigenous Amazonian maintaining established values or traditions, and a shrewd urbanite alert to discriminatory practices and the need to fight for rights and recognition.

The occasional shouts of ‘Fora Temer!’ from the audience were connected with the projection of the words DEMARCAÇÃO JÁ onto the Teatro’s façade during the pre-concert event. President of Brazil from August 2016 to December 2018, Temer was extremely unpopular: by the end of his term, his approval ratings were consistently in the single figures.²⁵⁵ He also repeatedly pursued policies to erode conservation laws and indigenous rights. In particular, his government aimed to reduce the powers of FUNAI (Fundação Nacional do Índio, National Indian Foundation), Brazil’s governmental agency for protecting indigenous rights. With FUNAI’s influence weakened, it would become easier to open up demarcated indigenous territories – which currently cover approximately 12% of Brazil’s

²⁵³ For copious examples of exoticism in opera, see Locke 2011; 2017.

²⁵⁴ The substances used were probably annatto and charcoal. The more permanent genipap is often used in rural indigenous Amazonian communities, but is less often used by people deliberately displaying themselves to the media (Conklin 1997, 723).

²⁵⁵ Temer was also arrested on corruption charges on 21 March 2019 as part of the *Lava Jato* operation, mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis (9) and in Chapter Four (123).

landmass – for mining and other forms of development (Cunha et al. 2017; Linstroth 2015, 122).²⁵⁶



Fig. 5.4. Pre-concert performance at Djuena Tikuna's CD launch. The words DEMARCAÇÃO JÁ are projected onto the Teatro's façade.²⁵⁷

Earlier in 2017, a group of well-known Brazilian musicians had filmed a music video simply called 'Demarcação Já!'.²⁵⁸ In response to Temer's aggressive policies, it attempted to raise awareness about Brazil's indigenous population to help their fight for land rights. It shows clips of indigenous customs and daily activities, of acts of violence being committed against indigenous people, of land being destroyed to make way for building projects, and of activist groups protesting outside government buildings in the capital city of Brasília. Djuena is the first musician to appear in the video; after her, numerous Brazilian music stars feature, including Gilberto Gil, Maria Bethânia, and Ney Matogrosso, as well as ethnomusicologist

²⁵⁶ Jair Bolsonaro, Temer's successor as Brazilian president from the beginning of 2019, has similarly expressed the controversial opinion that indigenous peoples have too much land ('Brazil Amazon', 13 September 2019). FUNAI is currently exclusively responsible for indigenous land demarcation (Le Tourneau 2015, 215).

²⁵⁷ This photograph is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0): <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>. It is attributed to Alberto César Araújo and Amazônia Real, and can be found at: <https://amazoniareal.com.br/djuena-tikuna-emociona-e-faz-historia-no-palco-do-teatro-amazonas/>

²⁵⁸ The music video is available on YouTube ('Demarcação Já!' 2017).

Marlui Miranda and anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro ('Demarcação Já!' 2017). Replete with a cast of ardent celebrities, 'Demarcação Já!' conveyed a sense of urgency and emphasised the continuing precarity of indigenous rights.

Over 50% of Brazil's demarcated indigenous territories are located in what is known as 'legal Amazonia', an area which comprises the northern states of Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Pará, Rondônia, Roraima, and Tocantins, plus part of Mato Grosso and most of Maranhão ('Demarcação de Terras'). They cover over 1.1 million square kilometres (approximately 21%) of the region's landmass (Le Tourneau 2015, 213). The images of the Amazon rainforest projected onto the back of the stage throughout Djuena's concert therefore referenced not only Manaus's wider surroundings, but also the primary setting for demarcated lands. Yet the relationship between images and land is a complex one. As mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis (1-2), Luiz Fernando Souza Santos has argued that Amazonia is no longer primarily depicted (on a global scale) as nature, but rather as environmental resource or concern.²⁵⁹ Drawing on Michel Foucault's notion of biopower, he refers to this shift as *ambientalização* (environmentalisation), a potent process that discursively reduces the vast and varied region to a utilitarian function (Santos 2007; see also Foucault 1998).

This process of *ambientalização* has prompted heightened political tensions concerning the division and allocation of Amazonian land: the stakes are high when the region is framed as such a globally significant cause. Importantly, many of its demarcated territories are located in areas that have not yet been deforested. In fact, the Brazilian federal government officially classified these territories as environmental conservation zones in 2007 (Le Tourneau 2015, 216-217). Since that point, indigeneity has effectively been forced into a

²⁵⁹ As such, Santos contrasts current understandings of the Amazon with longer-standing depictions of it as a 'land that time forgot' or a kind of impenetrable nature that can overwhelm human endeavours. For an example of the former type of depiction, see Souza 2001, 86. Through numerous writings (including Theodor Roosevelt's tales of his journey through the Amazon in 1913, and Alberto Rangel's collection of short stories, *Inferno verde*), the latter image has coagulated into a portrayal of the Amazon as a 'Green Hell'. As Candace Slater comments, 'Even though the region does not hold a monopoly on belligerent landscapes, the Amazon has regularly inspired such images at different points in time' (Slater 2002, 95-99). Despite Santos's argument, both of these images – along with their implications that a human presence in the Amazon is inappropriate – remain relatively prominent in current discourse.

direct equivalence with conservation: indigenous Amazonians have become *conflated* with environmental concerns, trapped within a reductive concept of Amazonian place (Santos 2007, 404-406; see also Le Tourneau 2015, 217). The opening track of *Tchautchiüãne*, ‘yiemagü rü nainecüti’igü’ (we are the forest), provides a clear example of a cultural manifestation of the situation. Its lyrics forcefully associate the Tikuna with the Amazon rainforest and highlight a need for conservation:

Nhumarü Naĩnecü rü nangetchaü	Now the rivers are drying up
nhumarü natügü rü nitche’e	The birds sing no longer
Werigü tama marü nawiye’egü	They only know how to weep
Nhumarü na au’e	The sky bleeds
Daũa’ane rü napu iduüma	And the butterflies fly far away
berugü rü yawa nae’gü	In my village, the children burn
Tchautchiüãnewa buãta rü	with fever
tia’ünegü	And they burn, even the shaman’s
Yuücü arü Cue’ rü tiaãëgü	breath
name imaëü	We are survivors, we must live
yiemagüni i ã’üagü i naĩnecüwa	We are the cry of the forest
yiemagüni i tchoni iĩgu de’a	We are the fishes, swimming
iyaeüwa i’ĩgü	upstream
yiemagüni i ngo’ügü i totchimaüã	We are the flight of the macaws in
ü’acü i derenecü	the sunset
yiemagüni i maĩyugü i du’ügü i	We are the children of this earth
poraügü	The forest is ours, we are the
nha’ã i naĩnecü i torü ni’ĩ.	forest.

(*Tchautchiüãne* 2017)²⁶⁰

The elision between indigeneity and conservation, however, is not only ethically suspect, but also historically uninformed. Although early anthropological research suggested that pre-Columbian indigenous peoples had little effect on their Amazonian environment, merely adapting passively to it, more recent studies show that the activities of these peoples substantially altered much of the Amazonian landscape in an urban (or at least proto-urban) fashion. It is estimated that this early population numbered up to 9 million, and that human-made features of the region included extensive road networks (Kawa 2016, vii).²⁶¹ Of course, these activities were not so rapidly destructive as current methods of deforestation. Nevertheless, an awareness of them contradicts the common stereotype that indigenous

²⁶⁰ My English translation of these lyrics is based on the Portuguese version provided in the CD liner notes.

²⁶¹ The evidence for the extent to which pre-Columbian Amazonians shaped the landscape includes: enriched ‘anthropogenic’ soils, geoglyphs, earthen mounds, raised agricultural fields, and cultivated forest islands (Kawa 2016, 17-18).

Amazonians are (and always have been) solely forest dwellers, completely removed from any urban context.

As mentioned, the Tikuna title of Djuena's new CD, *Tchautchiüãne*, means 'my village'; its cover also provides the Portuguese translation, *Minha Aldeia*. Although she moved to Manaus at the age of seven, Djuena did spend her early years in a rural Amazonian context, and *Tchautchiüãne*'s overt reference to her childhood home plays a part in the indigeneity that she performed on the Teatro's stage. Yet, even as she highlighted her rural origins and advocated for demarcation, Djuena simultaneously worked to undermine the common elision between indigeneity and environmentalism. She, moreover, made an active effort to locate herself in a national sphere: singing the national anthem in Tikuna was a clear statement that Brazil's indigenous population comprises socially and politically engaged citizens, who equally retain distinct languages and distinct cultural practices. The *Tchautchiüãne* launch event thus brought onto the Teatro's stage questions concerning indigeneity, nature, urbanity, and the division and allocation of Amazonian territory.

Strategising the Rainforest: Politicians

Although I have so far focused on the launch event for *Tchautchiüãne*, there are many other examples of the Teatro acting as a catalyst for negotiations of its entangled urban and rainforest surroundings. One such example leaves traces in a book entitled *Canto lírico da selva* (Jungle Opera), which was published in 2011 by the Amazonas government to commemorate the fifteenth year of the Festival de Ópera. The book provides the following information about each year's festival from 1997 to 2011: the operas performed and summaries of their plots, cast lists, performance dates, lists of the orchestral musicians, lists of the production team members, and lists of the administrative staff. Its back pages include: a record of the awards the festival has won; a description of the Claudio Santoro music school; and an introduction to the festival's production centre, the Central Técnica de Produção

‘Marcos Apolo Muniz de Araújo’ (which is based in Manaus’s Cachoeirinha neighbourhood). Besides these details, the book’s main feature is a selection of photographs from past performances. They are organised chronologically, with two short pieces of text preceding each year’s set – one written by Robério, and one by the governor of Amazonas during that year.²⁶² The book also includes prefaces by Robério, conductor Luiz Fernando Malheiro (mentioned in Chapter Four), and Omar Aziz (b. 1958, governor of Amazonas 2010-2014) (Viana 2011).

The book’s title overtly foregrounds the opera festival’s rainforest setting (as opposed to its more immediate, urban one), positing a theme to which the inner texts can respond (or, at least, against which they are inevitably read). While these responses vary, they primarily attempt to portray opera and the rainforest as existing in a symbiotic relationship. For one thing, the Amazonian setting is used to create the sense that the Teatro, by association, is in the global eye – an iconic venue recognised by people the world over. For example, in his commentary on the 2001 festival, Amazonino Mendes describes the Teatro as, ‘A performance venue built with unique characteristics because it is implanted in a city lodged in the middle of the Amazon rainforest and known worldwide’ (Viana 2011, 61).²⁶³ Malheiro similarly asserts that, ‘Manaus and the Teatro Amazonas are unique because of their geographical location and history, but now also because of their Festival de Ópera on the global stage’ (Viana 2011, 11).²⁶⁴ Going a step further, Robério unapologetically draws attention to the way in which discursive connections forged between the opera house and its well-known surrounding forest can serve as a political tool: ‘We have much to appreciate, but the greatest applause is for the *amazonense* people who chose politicians who understood the

²⁶² From 1997 to 2003, the governor was Amazonino Mendes; from 2003 to 2010, it was Eduardo Braga; and from 2010 to 2011, it was Omar Aziz.

²⁶³ Uma casa de espetáculos construída com características únicas por estar implantada em uma cidade encravada no meio da floresta amazônica e conhecida no mundo inteiro.

²⁶⁴ Manaus e o Teatro Amazonas são ímpares pela sua localização geográfica e pela sua história, mas hoje também pelo seu Festival de Ópera dentro do cenário mundial.

mission of culture and the arts, multiplying their efforts and stimulating this legacy: opera in the humid tropics for the world to see' (Viana 2011, 227).²⁶⁵ Elsewhere, he writes,

it is important to remember that, every year, the festival has fulfilled its role of stimulating the artistic activity of the state [of Amazonas], opening to the world the curtains of this, the most special of all stages: Amazonas. Creating the artistic movements and making them grow in the middle of the largest preserved rainforest is the mission of a young and daring government that develops it as an industrial hub and firmly launches it as one of the country's cultural hubs (Viana 2011, 121).²⁶⁶

Besides emphasising (and perhaps overstressing) the Teatro's international prominence by recourse to its Amazonian setting, several of the texts in *Canto lírico* also imply the inverse: that the Teatro draws attention to the Amazon, or at least to Amazonas state. Aziz, for example, writes, 'today, the Festival Amazonas de Ópera is undeniably one of the main reference points of our state, helping to consolidate Amazonas as an international cultural hub' (Viana 2011, 7).²⁶⁷ Amazonino expands on Aziz's statement, referring to the Teatro as the *coração da Amazonia* (heart of Amazonia), and associating its *ousadia* (boldness) and *desafio* (challenge) with inherent characteristics of the *habitantes da floresta* (inhabitants of the forest) (Viana 2011, 13).

Some comments go further still, proposing that the Teatro provides specific benefits for the Amazon's inhabitants or instills certain values in them. Eduardo Braga (b. 1960, governor of Amazonas 2003-2010) claims that the local government's social policies are committed to improving citizens' lives, to raising their self-esteem, and to providing hope for a better future. He continues,

The seventh Festival Amazonas de Ópera is emblematic in this sense, because we will live beside the great concerts not only at the Teatro Amazonas – the country's splendid artistic centre – but also in the public square and in the interior, gathering audiences from

²⁶⁵ Temos muito a apreciar, mas o maior aplauso é para o povo amazonense que escolheu governantes que entenderam a missão da cultura e das artes, multiplicando esforços e estimulando este legado: Ópera nos trópicos úmidos para o mundo ver.

²⁶⁶ é mister lembrar que a cada ano o festival vem cumprindo seu papel de impulsionar a atividade artística do Estado, abrindo para o mundo as cortinas deste que é o mais especial de todos os palcos: o Amazonas. Criar os movimentos artísticos e fazê-los crescer no meio da maior floresta tropical preservada é missão de um Governo jovem e audacioso que se desenvolve como polo industrial e se lança, com firmeza, como polo cultural do país.

²⁶⁷ O Festival Amazonas de Ópera é hoje, inegavelmente, um dos maiores referenciais de nosso Estado, contribuindo para consolidar o Amazonas como um polo internacional de cultura.

the most diverse social bases and nationalities, to applaud the *bel canto of the forest*, the only event of its kind in Latin America (Viana 2011, 93).²⁶⁸

He, moreover, claims that this artistic activity in turn benefits the rainforest: ‘Investing in the cultural projects of Amazonas is investing in the future, recognising that the creation, growth, and maturation of artistic movements in the heart of the planet’s largest rainforest is also an investment in the preservation of nature’ (Viana 2011, 155).²⁶⁹ Although he does not explain *how* investing in cultural projects such as the Festival de Ópera (or the Teatro more generally) helps to preserve nature, the *idea* that it does fits with another theme that emerges from the book’s various texts: that of the Amazon’s abundance of natural resources. Amazonino, for example, makes reference to the *encanto da floresta* (enchantment of the forest) and to its *riquezas naturais únicas* (unique natural resources) (Viana 2011, 23, 79). Robério, likewise, describes the forest’s *encantamentos e grandezas* (enchantment and grandeur) (Viana 2011, 93). In the comments on the 2011 festival, Aziz reflects on the various achievements of the Secretaria de Cultura through the opera festival. He includes a list of the local government’s pledges: ‘to consolidate programmes capable of expanding and democratising opportunities for economic and social development, to value local ideas and initiatives, and to keep alive the immense natural heritage that is our forest. Achievements like the Festival Amazonas de Ópera show that we have found the right way’ (Viana 2011, 227).²⁷⁰

These examples from *Canto Lírico* demonstrate how local politicians (plus the Teatro’s resident conductor) present the Teatro and its surrounding rainforest as mutually beneficial in order to promote their own political achievements. Only certain properties of the landscape, however, serve this purpose: aspects such as rapid deforestation are not mentioned;

²⁶⁸ O VII Festival Amazonas de Ópera neste sentido é emblemático, porque vamos conviver com os grandes concertos não só no Teatro Amazonas – o esplendoroso polo de arte do País – mas também em praça pública e no interior, reunindo plateias das mais diversas bases sociais e nacionalidades, para aplaudir o *bel canto da floresta*, único evento do gênero em toda a América Latina

²⁶⁹ Investir nos projetos culturais do Amazonas é investir no futuro, reconhecendo que a criação, o crescimento e a maturação dos movimentos artísticos no meio da maior floresta tropical do planeta, é também um investimento na preservação da natureza.

²⁷⁰ consolidar ações capazes de ampliar e democratizar as oportunidades de desenvolvimento econômico e social, valorizar ideias e iniciativas locais e manter vivo o imenso patrimônio natural que é a nossa floresta. Conquistas como o Festival Amazonas de Ópera mostra que encontramos o caminho certo.

nor are the various challenges of managing an opera festival in this setting.²⁷¹ The opera house thus catalyses an evaluation of its geographical setting: a selection of its pertinent aspects, and a rejection of others as unprofitable.

Strategising the Rainforest: *Boi-bumbá*

On 16 August 2017, I attended another performance at the Teatro. I arrived early, taking my seat before the rest of the audience began to drift into the auditorium. Once they had all settled into their seats, a band made its way onstage. The lead singer, Sebastião Júnior, was accompanied by three backing singers, a keyboardist, an electric bassist, an electric guitarist, an electric *cavaquinista*,²⁷² and three percussionists – one playing a *caixa* (snare drum), one a *surdo* (bass drum), and one a medium-sized drum placed horizontally across his knees. A cellist, a violinist I recognised from the Amazonas Filarmônica, and two backing dancers made up the rest of the bodies onstage.

When the band began playing, the heavily amplified sound was immediately overwhelming in the small auditorium. The *surdo* powerfully marked both beats of the duple metre, emphasising the second and adding basic fills at the ends of phrases. The *caixa* adopted a slightly lazy semiquaver pattern, both delaying and accentuating the last semiquaver of the first beat. A march-like feel resulted, approximating that of a slowed down Carnival samba (albeit with far fewer percussive rhythms). The strings and keyboard filled in simple harmonic progressions of primary chords, and Sebastião Júnior sang catchy, modally inflected melodies in a robust voice clearly used to projecting over crowds at large-scale events. He wore a white suit, all of the other musicians were dressed in red, and the two dancers wore elaborate feathered headdresses and anklets. Between them was a life-sized

²⁷¹ Such challenges include Manaus's relative remoteness, even in the age of air travel, from most significant Brazilian urban centres. A member of the production team at the 2017 festival recounted to me the process of transporting costumes and props to the Teatro from a production in São Paulo: because it was too expensive to fly them, a van had to make the 28-day journey, which involved a significant amount of off-road travel across difficult terrain. I also learned that the Amazonian humidity frequently warps the woods used onstage in the Teatro's productions. The Amazonas Filarmônica musicians, similarly, explained to me the extent to which the tropical climate can damage their instruments.

²⁷² A *cavaquinista* is somebody who plays the *cavaquinho*, a small four-stringed Brazilian guitar.

puppet of an ox that was made to dance and buck its head by a man inside its wooden frame; it was entirely white except for the red heart painted on its forehead. As the song continued, the audience became increasingly expressive, reacting enthusiastically to certain lyrics, such as *bate meu coração* (my heart beats) and *mostra pro mundo essa festa dos Tupinambás* (show to the world this party of the Tupinambás).²⁷³

Sebastião Júnior is a locally well-known *levantador de toadas* (lead singer) of the popular music *boi-bumbá*. This type of music has many regional variations around Brazil, and is known variously as *bumba-meu-boi*, *boi surubim*, *boi calemba*, *boi de reis*, *boi de mamão*, *bumba*, and *boisinho* (Pinto 2014, 91). The brief musical description above is characteristic of the Amazonian variant,²⁷⁴ which rose in popularity from the 1960s to become a craze from the 1990s to the present, and which is most often performed by urban Amazonians (Watson 2018, 77, 82-90). Performances of *boi-bumbá* usually present a set plot (or extracts from it) based around the death and resurrection of a *boi* (an ox). Watson provides a succinct summary of the standard narrative:

a humble laborer (generally of African descent) lives and works with his consort on the cattle ranch of a wealthy landowner (of European descent). The wife becomes pregnant and has a craving for bull tongue (or sometimes bull liver). To satisfy her desires, the husband kills the ranch owner's favorite bull and then, panicking, flees to the forest to hide. The ranch owner brings in the local Indian tribe, administered by the Jesuits, to help root the evildoer out of the forest. Confronting him, the patron orders the poor African man to bring the bull back to life. A variety of bumbling healers [...] try to restore the bull to life, until at last a *pajé* (shaman) from the local tribe performs a miraculously successful ritual, and the bull is at last resurrected (Watson 2018, 78).

Although the Amazonian *boi-bumbá* is performed in many venues (including the Teatro) all year round, its main annual event takes place in late June in Parintins, a city with a population of approximately 70,000 situated near the Amazonas/Pará border on the Ilha de Tupinambarana (actually a group of four islands in the Amazon River). This event takes the form of a competitive festival held in the city's *bumbódromo*. Similar to Brazil's *sambódromos* – large stadiums used to house the samba parades of Carnival – the

²⁷³ During Brazil's colonial period, a community of Tupinambá (an indigenous tribe) resided close to the north-east coast. At some point during the colonisation process, a group of them migrated inland to the area surrounding what is now Parintins; they became known as the Tupinambarana (Uggé 1993, 17).

²⁷⁴ For a more detailed musical description, see Carvalho 2014.

bumbódromo can host an audience of 35,000 ('Centro Cultural de Parintins'). In it, two main 'teams' – the Boi Garantido, and the Boi Caprichoso – compete against one another, presenting the *boi-bumbá* narrative in a lavish manner through songs, large percussion sections, colourful costumes, and ornate floats. The ox of the Boi Garantido (to which Sebastião Júnior belongs) is white with a red heart on its forehead; Caprichoso's is black with a blue star on its forehead. The team colours are, correspondingly, red and blue. The Parintins Festival is a popular, heavily commercialised venture, sponsored primarily by Coca-cola. It is shown on television throughout Brazil, and successful *boi* singers have the status of local celebrities. Hotel rates in Parintins soar during the festival, and many *manauaras* and other Amazonians spend huge amounts of money to attend (see Watson 2018, 84-85).

Sebastião Júnior's concert in the Teatro thus presented a highly commercialised type of music. It is also a type of music that draws on local indigenous influences, as evidenced by the costumes worn by the backing dancers. Furthermore, the lyrics of *boi-bumbá* songs often highlight the richness of Amazonian nature and assert the need to protect it (Watson 2018, 84-90; see also Carvalho 2014, 230). For example, the song 'Tic, Tic, Tac' includes the following lines:²⁷⁵

²⁷⁵ On an international scale, 'Tic, Tic, Tac' is probably the most famous Amazonian *boi-bumbá* song. It was first recorded by the band Carrapicho in 1996; it became a hit that year in several European countries, with the band becoming particularly popular in France (see Alves 2016).

É nessa dança que meu boi balança	My ox sways in this dance
E o povo de fora vem para brincar,	And the outsiders come to play
As barrancas de terras caídas	The banks of fallen earth
Faz barrento o nosso rio mar,	Muddy our river-sea
Amazonas rio da minha vida	Amazonas, river of my life,
Imagem tão linda que meu Deus	Such a beautiful image that my God
criou,	created
Fez o céu, a mata e a terra,	He made Heaven, forest, and earth,
Uniu os caboclos, construiu o amor	United the <i>caboclos</i> , built love

In a similar fashion, one of the 2019 festival songs, ‘Um Canto de Esperança para Mãtria Brasilis’, laments Brazil’s environmental problems, and portrays *boi-bumbá* as a persuasive medium for conveying an environmentalist message:

É o Brasil!	It’s Brazil!
Mãe negada	Mother denied
Mãtria viva explorada	Living motherland exploited
Terra forte açoitada	Strong earth thrashed
Pietà destronada	Compassion dethroned
[...]	[...]
É o Brasil!	It’s Brazil!
Cancioneiro	A songbook
Que se faz luzeiro	That becomes a light
Bradando a arte do povo	Singing out the art of the people
Que ecoa em canto novo	That echoes in this new song
O brasil que a gente quer reinventar!	The Brazil that we want to invent!

In contrast, the song that opened Sebastião Júnior’s concert, ‘No Compasso dessa Emoção’, asserts the superiority of the Boi Garantido and focuses on locating the annual Parintins contest on a global stage:

Rufa, ribumba tambor	The rumbling drum
Faz tremer este chão	Shakes this floor
Bate meu coração	My heart beats
No compasso da emoção	To the rhythm of this emotion
Reina meu Boi Garantido	My Boi Garantido reigns
Maior dos bumbás	The best of the <i>bumbás</i>
Mostra pro mundo esta festa	Show to the world this party
Dos tupinambás	Of the Tupinambás

As Watson convincingly shows (and as these lyric extracts attest), *boi-bumbá* provides a medium through which Amazonians can fashion, and comment on, their relationship with their home region (as well as with popular images of that region). She argues that the musical practice ‘exist[s] at a powerful nexus of conspicuous consumption, regional pride, green discourse, and a nostalgic desire for authentic experiences’ (Watson 2018, 84). Thus, while it

promotes the Amazon's natural splendour, *boi-bumbá* is heavily commercialised, sponsored by Coca-Cola, and projected on television screens across Brazil. While it focuses on the need to preserve the rainforest, it evinces the kind of nostalgia felt by those who have moved their lives away from the forest and into the Amazon's cities.

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, *manauaras* are used to dealing with stereotypes of their home as a primordial place where nature dominates. *Boi-bumbá* helps them in this effort, tapping into many of the modern elements associated with city living, such as commercialism, television, and celebrity. Watson describes the music as a result of 'the friction of the encounter between the overdeterminedly natural space of Amazonia and the urbanization and industrialization brought by global capitalism' (Watson 2018, 94). This friction, then, filters into the Teatro through *boi-bumbá* concerts put on by Sebastião Júnior and others. Whether it is strategically co-opted by local politicians for self-promotion, featured in the lyrics of the popular *boi-bumbá*, or used to fight for indigenous rights, the geography surrounding the Teatro persistently saturates its walls.

Conclusion

In a famous essay on Naples, written in 1924, Walter Benjamin and Asja Lacis explored the city's 'porosity': the interpenetration of public and private life, of trade and play, of the new and the dilapidated, of Sundays and weekdays, and so on (Benjamin and Lacis 1986). Following their essay, the 'porosity' metaphor has been enthusiastically adopted in city studies.²⁷⁶ However, while the metaphor is usually employed in reference to internal urban layers or sectors, cities are not hermetically sealed: the divide between cities and their wider geographical surroundings can be as blurred as that between their inner segments. In Manaus, rainforest flora encroaches upon the urban domain, sometimes penetrating it like the plants

²⁷⁶ The literature on the 'porous city' is extensive. For a recent study of the term as both metaphor and organising principal for certain urban agendas, see Wolfrum et. al. 2018. For an example of its application to a Brazilian city, see Carvalho 2013. The notion of the porous city is, of course, challenged by the 'enclaving' practices (described above) common to Brazilian cities.

that now overwhelm the Santa Casa de Misericórdia hospital and the Hotel Cassiano. Roads and peri-urban shantytowns protrude out of the city into the forest. People, of course, also seep between the two.

The Teatro's surroundings have changed significantly since it opened in the late nineteenth century. Manaus has grown into a large, sprawling city of 2 million people; the surrounding Amazon rainforest has been deforested, defended, and demarcated. Within a city beset by crime, the opera house has become not only an icon, but also a fortified enclave, inaccessible to many by virtue of its historically ingrained symbolism. At a time of concern about indigenous land rights, it has also become a place of protest. Politicians invoke its rainforest setting in order to exaggerate its prominence in an international sphere; equally, they claim that its fame and success draw attention to the Amazon region. Performances of *boi-bumbá* on its stage present the nostalgia of urban Amazonians for an environment they have left behind, and convey an environmentalist agenda through a heavily commercialised, urban music. Amid its current environs, the Teatro has become a potent catalyst for negotiations – sometimes highly charged ones – of the Amazon's geographies.

Conclusion

How does the Amazon affect the opera house, and the opera house the Amazon? During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Manaus's isolated inland location precluded it from joining the opera scene that spread along Brazil's Atlantic coastline. Yet, in the end, that very location played a significant part in opera's arrival: centrally placed in Brazil's Amazonian territory, and connected by river to the major port city of Belém, Manaus was well positioned to act as a hub for the rubber trade that grew rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century. With the wealth of the rubber boom came immigration and urbanisation; with immigration and urbanisation came a lavish, Italianate opera house.

Between 1859 and the end of the nineteenth century, attitudes toward performance venues in Manaus changed, particularly regarding their relationship with the surrounding rainforest: from being constructed of locally sourced straw and palm leaves, they abruptly became built of imported stone, steel, and glass when the Teatro Amazonas was erected. Whereas European travellers viewed earlier venues as sites of communion with nature, the Teatro symbolised rupture and reified the nature-culture divide. Its physical characteristics referenced tensions between national and regional interests, and the quantity of imported materials revealed a local thirst for the European. In an attempt to align itself with the leading urban centres in Europe and the United States, the opera house functioned as a showcase of local wealth and progress.

The beginning of 1897 saw the instigation of musical and dramatic seasons at the Teatro. In the following years, however, several musicians died from smallpox and yellow fever during stays in the Amazon; in reaction to reports of the deaths, European (and some Brazilian) companies cut short or cancelled their trips to perform in Manaus. The threat to life was clearly a legitimate concern; nevertheless, these companies were willing to abandon their visits to Amazonia in favour of Rio de Janeiro, despite both destinations sharing the same diseases. In part, this behaviour was prompted by French and Italian publications that

attributed an unhealthy climate to the Amazon, unashamedly sensationalising the risks it posed. As such, local narratives of progress were undermined by literature emanating from the very nations that provided one of Manaus's major emblems of civilisation: opera.

During the Teatro's initial decade, local elites sought to sift and combine a range of foreign influences in order to bolster their sense of advancement and sophistication. Even when there was a gap between the grandiose opera house and the resources with which it was filled, it was never so much of a gap as to dull the bright rhetoric of progress. (Nevertheless, even while pursuing self-aggrandisement through the established international symbol of opera, *manauaras* also sought to localise activities, producing five revues that focused on Amazonian themes.) However, owing largely to the transience of the rubber boom, fin-de-siècle Manaus did not break out of its liminal status between provincial town and international centre of commerce. As a result, a sense of tension remained between the opera house and its location.

The mid-twentieth century was, by some measures, a period of decline. Between 1937 and 1971, Manaus strove to engage with a national sphere, but received little acknowledgement or attention in return. When Getúlio Vargas visited the city in 1940, he spoke of uniting Amazonia economically with the rest of Brazil, portraying Manaus as one conquest in an on-going effort to dominate the region's forests and rivers. His speech had little effect, however: once again, it was a project to extract the Amazon's natural resources that prompted a brief economic boom, when the American Rubber Reserve Company based itself at the Teatro between 1942 and 1945.

After the Second World War, the opera house returned to hosting musical and dramatic performances (albeit not regularly). Nationalistic orpheonic singing and popular Brazilian dramas were complemented by at least one north-eastern regionalist work: Ariano Suassuna's *O Auto da Compadecida*. The Coral João Gomes Junior also performed eclectic programmes that featured Western European art music alongside local compositions. The

choir's choice of repertory, although diverse, was not indiscriminate: accompanying programme notes implied a hierarchy that valued the European works over both the regional compositions and the *manauara* singers.

The new state-run cultural project initiated in 1997 (the 'cultural spiral') saw an influx of foreign musicians to Manaus. Since then, mixed opinions have emerged among local performers: some are optimistic about foreigners (and Brazilians from outside Amazonas) travelling to the city in order to instigate new musical traditions; others are more dubious about the specific mechanisms of this process or resentful of the considerable discrepancies in salaries and prestige. 'Outsider' singers and musicians sometimes exoticise Manaus and its residents, and occasionally hold low opinions of local performers. This tendency to exoticise also means, though, that renowned international soloists motivated by a sense of adventure can be enticed to perform at the opera house for a discounted fee.

Today, the Amazon rainforest has become an international focus point in the context of environmentalist fervour; within it, Manaus has grown into a sprawling city of 2 million inhabitants. The Teatro has become iconic within this urban fabric, its historical heft and physical characteristics making it prominent even in comparison with other opera houses in Brazil and further afield. Yet the ideological residues stored in the building react with the enclaving practices of local elites to turn the Teatro into a 'fortified enclave' in a spatially segregated city. Nevertheless, the opera house frequently acts as a prominent stage on which to explore questions concerning indigeneity, nature, urbanity, and the division of Amazonian territory. In this and other ways, the Teatro has become a potent catalyst for negotiations of Amazonian geographies.

Besides considering the relationship between the Teatro and its geographical settings, this thesis has examined and critiqued some of the local historical narratives that have been

constructed around the opera house. In so doing, it has partially prised open the musical past of a region often represented as bereft of significant human history. At a time of anxiety about climate change, humanity at large is invested in the Amazon not changing over time; yet, as discussed in the Introduction to this thesis (3-4), denying history to the region means that international stakeholders are better able to legitimate their desires to control and to exploit it (see Stokes 2018, 8). In this case, then, it is not enough for scholars to remain alert to which parts of the globe have their human histories widely recognised and which do not. Rather, it is necessary to act on this imbalance – to intervene in history’s globally uneven distribution (see Chakrabarty 2000; Ricoeur 2004, xv).

There is good reason to feel apprehensive about such an interventionist act (especially given the archival access inequalities explored in Chapter Three of this thesis). The endeavour cannot but elicit some sense of unease and generate probing questions: to what extent has the writer adopted the role of omniscient narrator, and what right have they to do so? Which voices in the narrative have been emphasised and which silenced? Is a Western European, or Anglophone, academic authority simply being reinforced by the implication that only a scholar from that institutional background might be able to re-structure the global distribution of history?

There are, however, ways in which the sense of unease around this project can be mitigated (if never eliminated). For one thing, this thesis has made substantial use of literature written by scholars local to Manaus (as well as to Amazonia and to Brazil more broadly). As such, besides providing the first substantial examination of the Teatro in English, it draws much needed attention to scholarship being undertaken in Brazil. I have sought not only to treat these texts as primary source material, but also to engage on a critical level with the interpretations of events and theoretical ideas they contain – for example, drawing on Luiz Fernando Souza Santos’s concept of *ambientalização*. For another thing, certain aspects of the ethnographic approach I incorporated have much to offer. As Timothy Rice puts it,

‘ethnomusicologists writing music history do so in a way that emphasizes ethnomusicological themes, questions, and values’ (Rice 2014, 89). Martin Stokes, moreover, compellingly argues that ‘history-saturated ethnographic methodologies’ can provide valuable inputs to (global) music history projects:

ethnography of any kind insists on the contingency and situatedness of ethnographic knowledge. Today, ethnography involves a keen sense of conversation, of dialogue, of the play of language. Ethnographic conversations may often be a complex and poorly distributed matter, and thus limited – the world we live in ensures that. But the ideal of conversation might push us towards a view of ethnographic knowledge as participatory, networked, and task-oriented, rather than accumulating on higher and higher levels, from grounded ‘facts’ to abstract ‘theories’ (Stokes 2018, 8-9).

At the beginning of this thesis, I described it as an institutional ethnography in the form of a long history: it strives to be ethnography first – contingent, situated, conversational, playful, participatory, networked, and task-oriented – and history second. Chapters Four and Five have displayed these attributes of ethnographic knowledge the most overtly: they emphasised my positionality during the research process, examined actual conversations (both formal interviews and more casual exchanges), highlighted the networks of sources and individuals that coalesced to inform my portrayal of events, and directly represented the voices of my interlocutors through quotations from interviews.

By conducting these interviews as part of more comprehensive fieldwork, I was also able to ameliorate some of the risks of analysing music institutions primarily through official rhetoric. For example, by speaking with members of the Amazonas Filarmônica, I managed to poke holes in messages that portray the ensemble as a model of social cohesion (a portrayal broadcast by public figures including the well-known conductor Júlio Medaglia). Similarly, conversations with local academics revealed the fragility of official rhetoric concerning the Teatro’s 2005 *Ring* cycle. Furthermore, building up a network of contacts and relationships during months of fieldwork enabled me to reveal a series of hierarchies at the opera house (hierarchies of salaries, musicians’ origins, and programming). Such information is not made public and may have remained inaccessible without the sorts of relationships I cultivated during extended fieldwork.

The ethnographic vignette with which I opened Chapter Five provided a sense of my own experiences negotiating the urban fabric of Manaus and attending events at the Teatro; at the same time, it sought to bring the reader into the folds of a performance in the opera house. It made overt the ways in which my relationship to my subject matter changed as the thesis progressed: I could only envisage the goings-on of the late-nineteenth-century Teatro through newspaper articles and other textual fragments that carry traces of the past. In contrast, I had an intimate, embodied relationship with the Teatro of 2017, as well as personal relationships with the people that worked there or spent their leisure time there. Indeed, it was my lived experiences that initially prompted me to question the Teatro's status as both icon and 'fortified enclave' in Manaus's segregated urban layout. For example, there were a number of occasions on which I opted not to attend an event at the opera house because I was concerned about the cost of taking a taxi home afterward and equally worried about the safety of the buses after dark. Even though the management team at the Teatro permitted me to attend performances for free, I sometimes felt unable to do so because I could not travel freely in a city that I perceived to be dangerous.

Chapter Three served to emphasise the complex and contingent nature of archival research, prefacing a remedial history with an ethnographic account of the Teatro's archive. Besides foregrounding the material conditions of the archive, I also investigated the personal interactions that form an integral part of such institutions. I did so not simply to reiterate the observation that history is subjectively fabricated – a 'partial truth', as James Clifford might have put it – but rather to expose the *specific* mechanics of the history I constructed (Clifford 2011). Among other things, this chapter established the unpredictable nature of some of my source materials; I noted, for example, that a book I encountered at the end of a 'circuitous rabbit-hole' furnished much of the data I drew on in Chapter Four. My access to sources, although ostensibly comprehensive, was in practice often secured through convoluted routes;

had chance encounters not taken me down that rabbit hole, the fourth chapter of this thesis might have looked very different.

My extended contact with the everyday life of the Teatro also prompted me to question the local histories that are promulgated through official rhetoric and academic literature. In particular, my dealings with Robério Braga and others involved with the opera house encouraged me to probe the historical narrative of twin fin-de-siècle cultural booms (both of which are often elided with opera) and the smooth spiral image used to portray the cultural project initiated in 1997. The personal networks I developed, and the conversations and dialogues that ensued, helped me to dig into the fissures of established narratives in order to reassess not only the Teatro's present, but also its past. In short, through ethnographic fieldwork, I became alert to the need to challenge the streamlined historical narrative of the Teatro's opulence, decline, and renewal.

Although the format of this thesis, then, could be seen to imply an all-embracing explanatory arc or the presence of an omniscient narrator, I have striven to show that the tale is far more fractured than that. To that end, I neither approached this study with a single, pre-established theoretical framework nor abstracted my analyses disproportionately from my fieldwork experiences. While scholars such as Gary Tomlinson are somewhat scornful of 'ethnographers' fond hopes for the survival of lived experience in their written accounts', something is certainly lost when even the *ideal* of approximating lived experience is abandoned in historical or ethnographic studies (Tomlinson 2012, 60). In a literal sense, it is of course true that ethnography cannot provide experiential immediacy (see Bruner 1986, 6-7; Clifford 2011, 2). Nevertheless, there is value in attempting to convert lived experiences into texts without an undue *degree* of abstraction. As Steven Friedson argues, excessive adherence to traditional 'Procrustean beds of knowledge' can sometimes resemble forcing circular research into square boxes, and can involve making unwarranted omissions or distortions

(Friedson 1996, 1).²⁷⁷ Throughout this thesis, I have endeavoured to avoid constraining circular observations within square analyses. Instead, I have sought to align my study with the ethos of ethnographic knowledge outlined by Stokes: conversational, and continuously relating to lived human activities.

Of course, no amount of ethnographic experience or sensibility is enough of a ‘defense mechanism’, as Karen Halttunen puts it, to absolve or to shelter the historian from all charges (Halttunen 1999, 167). In the case of the Teatro, though, it is difficult to imagine a more constructive option than a historical ethnography. The recent spat between Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron over fires in the Amazon (in August 2019) was a particularly vitriolic display of the extent to which the region has been reduced to a utilitarian function in the global imaginary. Today, international news outlets primarily represent it as a ‘vital carbon store that slows the pace of global warming’ (‘Amazon Rainforest Belongs to Brazil’). It is by ignoring or suppressing intricate human histories that the Amazon can be discursively condensed into a global resource *rather than* (not as well as) a vast and varied region that is home to a diverse human population. This thesis has sought to challenge this widespread representation, instead proposing a historically aware, humanist interpretation of music in the urban Amazon.

²⁷⁷ In referencing Friedson’s phenomenological approach to ethnography, I do not mean to imply that ethnographers are able to suspend (or ‘bracket’) their preconceptions or theoretical proclivities, but rather that any pre-existing epistemological inclinations they might harbour should not *dominate* others that may be encountered in the field.

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