LUIGI DALLAPICCOLA'S *IL PRIGIONIERO* AND
GIAN CARLO MENOTTI'S *THE CONSUL*:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

As art reflects life, so too does it hold a mirror to the lives of the people who create it. The turbulent events of the first decades of the twentieth century, including two World Wars and the rise of Italian Fascism and German Nazism in the 1920s and 30s, affected millions of lives across several continents. This document explores the ways in which Luigi Dallapiccola (1904–1973) and Gian Carlo Menotti (1911–2007) voice their reactions to these events in their operas, \textit{Il Prigioniero} (1948) and \textit{The Consul} (1950).

Italian composer Luigi Dallapiccola spent twenty months in internment during the First World War, and would be forced on several occasions to go into hiding during the Second World War. His opposition to Mussolini and the Italian Fascists, coupled with his quasi–obsession with internment and freedom, led to his composition of three works of “protest music,” of which \textit{Il Prigioniero} is the second. \textit{Il Prigioniero} tells the story of a prisoner of the Inquisition, his attempt at escape and eventual capture.

Italian-American composer Gian Carlo Menotti emigrated to the United States in 1928, at age seventeen, and spent a great much of his time traveling and working in various countries. Having friends and family in many nations, and being of “alien” status in the United States, Menotti was very aware of the processes of immigration and the plight of refugees. \textit{The Consul} is the story of a woman attempting to obtain an exit visa to escape persecution in her home country. She is met by bureaucratic “red tape” at every turn, and is unable to flee, resulting in her suicide. Although Dallapiccola and Menotti did not know each other, nor do they appear to have
been familiar with each other's work, both composers drew the same conclusions about the nature of freedom due to their life experiences through shared historical events. Both *Il Prigioniero* and *The Consul* explore themes of hope, prayer, accessibility to freedom, and the culpability of both action and inaction in perpetuating oppression.
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INTRODUCTION

The political turmoil in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century wreaked havoc on the lives of millions, and forever changed the face of Western Europe. World War I (1914–1919) left millions of soldiers and civilians dead, with many more maimed and wounded. Just twenty years later, World War II (1939–1945) would be the deadliest war the world has ever seen, leaving an estimated fifty to eighty million people dead. In the aftermath of these conflicts, hundreds of thousands of people were displaced, their homes destroyed during the war. Still others found that their home had become part of a nation of people with whom they did not feel ethnically and socio-politically connected, leading them to seek opportunities to emigrate to a new country. After 1945, as the world emerged from the horrors of war, people and nations sought to turn away from the death and destruction of the past and peacefully rebuild. As efforts began to build a new world, individuals struggled to process what had happened, searching for the meaning of past events.

Not surprisingly, much of the art from this post–war period seeks to make sense of the past, and one can see reflected in it the effects of the political climate of the first half of the twentieth century. As people struggled to turn their thoughts to the future and away from war, various compositions were written by several composers that dealt with themes inspired by the political events framing their lives. Two such compositions, Luigi Dallapiccola's _Il Prigioniero_ (1948) and Gian Carlo Menotti's _The Consul_ (1950), premiered within three months of each other and are remarkably similar thematically. Both of these works address issues of freedom, the
role that hope and prayer play in concealing truths from those who suffer, as well as the idea that group inaction is as equally destructive as totalitarian oppression.

While *Il Prigioniero* and *The Consul* resemble each other thematically, they also mirror each other through their use of a variety of dramatic elements. Many of the characters in both operas remain nameless, allowing the heroes of each to serve as the Everyman/woman, while enabling the antagonists to fill a larger symbolic role beyond that of their story-line function. This ambiguity regarding character identification allows each opera a broader spectrum of possible interpretation than that of its exact setting, and enables each piece to serve as a meaningful social commentary. In speaking directly to the antagonistic forces within the operas, both Dallapiccola and Menotti chose to feature two characters who either directly or indirectly hinder their protagonists from achieving freedom. While Dallapiccola's Inquisitor and Menotti's Secret Police both literally or figuratively incarcerate the hero/heroine they oppose, the Jailer and Secretary both hinder the Everyman/woman from achieving freedom by failing to act on their behalf. Thus, each opera features both an active and passive antagonist, highlighting the role of action versus inaction in the inhibition of the attainment of freedom. Interestingly, both *Il Prigioniero* and *The Consul* also reference an individual in power who never makes an appearance in the opera – King Phillip II and the Consul, respectively. The purposeful omission of the physical presence of these characters further demonstrates the similar perspectives shared by Dallapiccola and Menotti regarding big governments' neglect of basic human rights. In keeping with their use of non-specific characterization, both Dallapiccola and Menotti use ensemble singing as a way of conveying group sentiment and showing commonality among various people. Lastly, both *Il Prigioniero* and *The Consul* feature prominent dream sequences,
which both foretell future events and aid the audience in understanding the themes of the drama.

Although Dallapiccola and Menotti were both born in Italy, the two men lived vastly different lives and had very little in common. Dallapiccola spent the years of both World Wars living in Italy, was quite politically outspoken, and felt the effects of war on a deeply personal level. Conversely, Menotti did not seem to experience any hardship during his childhood in Italy during the First World War, and emigrated to the United States in 1928, where he remained for the duration of the Second World War. Menotti was not a political figure and made very few comments with regard to politics throughout his long life. In addition to their disparate lives, the music of Dallapiccola and Menotti is also quite different. Dallapiccola's music makes use of serial techniques, while Menotti's remained tonal and was often criticized for being too populist and accessible. Even though their music was rather different, each composer was likened to Puccini by a variety of critics, a comparison which arose from the lyricism and melodic characteristic of much of their output. Dallapiccola and Menotti both also made use of motives to convey extra-musical ideas throughout these operas. Additionally, Il Prigioniero and The Consul bear striking similarities in their message regarding access to freedom, oppression by action and inaction, and hope as a pacifying agent. In examining the commonalities of these operas, it is necessary to canvas the major political events of the first half of the twentieth century and the affect that they had on the personal experience that led to the creation of such similar works by such disparate individuals. Through understanding the sociopolitical contributions to each composer's life experience, it is possible to recognize the impetus for the striking similarities between Il Prigioniero and The Consul.
CHAPTER 1
LUIGI DALLAPICCOLA (1904–1975)

Luigi Dallapiccola was born on February 3, 1904 in Pazin (Pisino), on the Istrian peninsula of the Republic of Croatia. Since the city's formation, Pisino had been controlled at various times by Austrians, Venetians, and Slavic peoples. At the time of Dallapiccola's birth, Istria was part of the Habsburg-ruled Austro-Hungarian Empire. After World War I, the peninsula would become part of the Kingdom of Italy. At the end of the Second World War, Istra was included as part of Yugoslavia and then became part of Croatia upon the collapse of the USSR.

As one might suspect from a border region with such a high frequency of political change, the entire Istrian peninsula, of which Pisino was a part, was, as Dallapiccola called it, a “microcosm” of the world—people speaking a variety of languages, being of various cultural backgrounds, and having differing political affiliations.¹ In his writings, it is clear that Dallapiccola was quite aware of Istria's lack of a unified cultural identity, remembering that when the train conductor would announce their stop, he would shout the name of the city in three languages: “Mitterberg—Pisino—Pazin!”² Dallapiccola himself was raised bilingual in Italian and German; he attended high school both at the Italian language school his father directed and a German language school in Austria. Partially because of his multicultural surroundings, Dallapiccola was acutely aware from a very young age of cultural diversity, and also cognizant of the fact that

² Ibid., 2.
there were many who desired to suppress and assimilate this variety. Perhaps it was this awareness that compelled him to develop a quasi–obsession with individual and societal freedom. This preoccupation with an individual's struggle against tyrannical oppression is evident in much of his output.³

Dallapiccola's father, Pio Dallapiccola (1869–1951), worked as a teacher of classical languages and headmaster of the only Italian language school permitted to operate in the area. Pio was sympathetic to the cause of the Italian Irredentists, a group of ethnic Italians who believed that certain regions outside the borders of the Kingdom of Italy should be repatriated due to their historical and cultural connections to Italy. The elder Dallapiccola instilled in his son a feeling of camaraderie with Italians and identification with Italian culture.⁴ Although living in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, this connection to Italian culture and identity was much stronger than any local alliances that the younger Dallapiccola felt. Young Luigi grew up sharply perceptive of the distance, both physical and political, of his small, isolated peninsula from the country of his family's Italian cultural heritage.⁵ The longing that Dallapiccola felt for his perceived patria (homeland), and his sense of confinement on the Istrian province separated from the Kingdom of Italy, would be the beginning of a preoccupation with confinement that is also found in many of his works.⁶ Later-life experiences would contribute heavily to his feelings of isolation and imprisonment, and add to his musical output as an adult.

³ Jamuna S. Samuel, “Music, Text, and Drama in Dallapiccola's Il Prigioniero” (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 2005), vi.
⁴ Ben Earle, Luigi Dallapiccola and Musical Modernism in Fascist Italy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 59.
⁵ Ibid., 59-60.
In the summer of 1914, Dallapiccola's life in Istria changed suddenly. As he recalled, news in those days traveled slowly, and it was only a day later that people in Pisino learned of the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, that led to the beginning of the First World War.\(^7\) By 1915, the Italians had declared war on the Austrian Empire, leaving the Dallapiccola family in a precarious position as members of an Italian-speaking minority in this region. The Austrian authorities became vigilant in their suppression of anything they perceived to be anti–Austrian, which included those whom they suspected of being a part of the Italian Irredentist movement. By 1917, the Austrians considered much of the Italian community in Istria to be a threat, and in March, the Italian school over which Pio presided was shut down by the Austrian government. Pio Dallapiccola was declared “politically unreliable,” and the entire family was forced to relocate to Graz until the end of the war, a period of about twenty months.\(^8\) Young Luigi felt deeply incensed by this forced relocation and internment, and his family's perceived oppression and persecution by the Austrians during this period would remain deeply embedded in his psyche in his adult life.\(^9\)

In May of 1922, after completing his secondary schooling and deciding to pursue a career in music, Luigi Dallapiccola settled in Florence, which would remain his home for the rest of his life. As the composer himself noted, it should not be surprising that he would choose to settle in Florence. The city has long been considered a cultural capital of Italy, and for a young man from Istria with an Irredentist father, Dallapiccola would certainly have felt drawn to the city that seemed the most Italian of all Italian cities. Moving to Florence was perhaps as much of a way

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7 Ibid., 358.
8 Earle, *Luigi Dallapiccola and Musical Modernism in Fascist Italy*, 59.
for Dallapiccola to study music as it was for him to feel repatriated to a country that he had not yet truly known.10

Shortly after Dallapiccola's arrival in Florence, Benito Mussolini rose to power in the autumn of 1922. While Dallapiccola became vehemently anti-Fascist after 1935, he did not begin his career as such. According to Dallapiccola, when Mussolini launched an invasion of Ethiopia on October 20, 1935, the Fascists revealed their true nature to the world, and Dallapiccola began to see Mussolini's regime as an insufferable totalitarian dictatorship.11 As the 1930s wore on, Dallapiccola's disdain for the Fascists turned into outrage, particularly with the implementation of the anti-Semitic laws on September 1, 1938.12 Shortly after this, as a result of this new, Nazi-inspired legislation, Laura Dallapiccola, Luigi's wife, was removed from her long-held position as librarian at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence, because she was Jewish.13 Since Laura could no longer work in Italy, the Dallapiccolas struggled to survive for the next few years with only one income. Things continued to worsen, and on December 11, 1941, Italy entered the Second World War by declaring war on the United States. During the next years, Italy suffered bombardment by the Allied forces, and air raid sirens blared several times a day. Just two years later, on September 11, 1943, Mussolini was “liberated” and Nazi troops entered Florence, where they would remain an occupying force for a year. Quickly, the Dallapiccolas decided that it would be imprudent to remain in the city under Nazi control, and

11 Ibid., 28.
they took up residence at his colleague Leone Massimo's home north of Fiesole. On November 6, 1943, Luigi and Laura were informed by a friend that the Nazis had begun rounding up the Jews. The couple prepared to escape to Switzerland, but were unable to flee, and remained at Massimo's home until the villa was requisitioned by the Germans in February 1944. At this time, the Dallapiccolas returned to their home in Florence, remaining alert to the possibility of impending danger. Should such danger arise, they would stay with friends for a few days until it was safe to return home. It was in this state that the Dallapiccolas lived until the city of Florence was liberated by the Allies on August 11, 1944. At the time of the liberation of Florence, Luigi Dallapiccola was forty years old.

Having grown up the child of an Irredentist as part of an Italian minority in an isolated province, Dallapiccola was familiar with political struggle and the desire for freedom at a young age, a sentiment that was only deepened by his family's internment at Graz during the First World War. In the 1930s, as his comfort with the ideals of Fascism diminished and he became outraged at the injustices committed under Mussolini, Dallapiccola's resentment of the regime grew. However, he writes that he was not so naive as to think that he could protest openly and make a difference. During the Nazi occupation of Florence, the Dallapiccolas went into hiding for their safety, which renewed and heightened the feelings of isolation and claustrophobia felt as

15 Luigi Dallapiccola, Dallapiccola on Opera: Selected Writings of Luigi Dallapiccola, Volume One, 57.
a child in Istria and later in Graz. By the end of the war, he was ready to give full voice to his
desire of freedom and his outrage at the injustices of persecution.
CHAPTER 2

IL PRIGIONIERO

Composition Background

From 1922 to 1943, and arguably until the end of the war in 1945, Italians lived under the shadow of Mussolini's fascism. This coincides with the period of a great portion of Dallapiccola's creative output. While Dallapiccola's works often exhibited a concern with questions of humanity, his work became considerably more politicized after the Fascists' 1935 invasion of Ethiopia, which sparked Dallapiccola's disgust with the regime. As Mussolini's government tightened restrictions on art and propaganda, Dallapiccola found himself increasingly isolated from the musical trends outside of Italy, and more at odds with the ideals of the regime. Beginning in 1938, Dallapiccola started to compose what would come to be called his “protest music”—three pieces, the composition of which spanned seventeen years, which form “a kind of tryptich [sic] in which the composer explored the theme of imprisonment and liberation with which he was preoccupied during that period.”¹⁷ These pieces are the Canti di Prigionia (Songs of Imprisonment), Il Prigioniero (The Prisoner), and the Canti di Liberazione (Songs of Liberation).

Luigi and Laura Dallapiccola took a vacation to Paris in the summer of 1939, on the eve of the Second World War.¹⁸ Perusing the kiosks of books on the banks of the Seine, Laura

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purchased a book of short horror stories entitled *Contes Crueles* (Cruel Tales) by the French Symbolist writer Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam (1838–1889). Laura suggested that Luigi read one of the tales contained in the collection, “La torture par l'espérance” (Torture by Hope), saying that it might contain the makings of an excellent libretto subject for him. At the time of their Paris excursion, Dallapiccola was immersed in composing what would be later termed his first piece of protest music, the *Canti de Prigionia* (1938–1941), and had already decided to write an opera based on a similar subject. Upon reading “La torture par l'espérance,” he decided that he would like to use it as the basis of an opera libretto, and began research for what would become *Il Prigioniero*.

Dallapiccola completed the libretto for *Il Prigioniero* in the winter of 1943 in Fiesole, Italy at Leone Massimo's home, where he and Laura were living in hiding during the Nazi occupation of Florence. There he read the text to a small gathering of friends, who received it enthusiastically, identifying the Prisoner's plight as a reflection of their own difficult situation. After the requisition of Massimo's home by the Germans in 1944, Dallapiccola's work on *Il Prigioniero* was intermittent. The first draft of the fifty-minute one-act opera was finally completed on April 25, 1947, and the complete orchestral score was finished May 3, 1948. *Il Prigioniero* received its premiere on December 1, 1949 as an unstaged radio performance broadcast out of Turin. It was not until May 20, 1950 that it premiered in its fully-staged version at the Teatro Comunale di Firenze in Florence, Italy.

*Il Prigioniero* is written primarily for dramatic soprano, baritone, and tenor. The opera

20 Luigi Dallapiccola, *Dallapiccola on Opera: Selected Writings of Luigi Dallapiccola, Volume One*, 60.
also features comprimario roles for tenor and baritone, a silent role, and employs an offstage SATB chorus. The orchestral forces required by the score are rather sizable. It is scored for strings, two flutes, three piccolos, two oboes, English horn, Eb clarinet, two Bb clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, three French horns, three trumpets in C, two tenor trombones, three trombones, tuba, percussion, two harps, piano, and organ. Dallapiccola makes use of four different vocal production techniques throughout the opera: full-voiced singing, *mezzo cantato*, *sprechstimme*, and *parlato*. In the final scene of the production, Dallapiccola notes in the score that the sound should be unnerving, and the use of amplification is suggested. He writes: “The sonorities of the second choral intermezzo must be formidable. Every spectator must literally feel overwhelmed and submerged by the immensity of sound. For this purpose, do not hesitate, if necessary, to use mechanical means (loudspeakers, etc.).”

**Synopsis**

In the score, Dallapiccola writes that the action of *Il Prigioniero* takes place in the second half of the sixteenth century. More specifically, the drama must be understood to take place in the year 1572, as this corresponds both to the reign of the Duke of Alba as the Spanish Governor of the Netherlands under King Philip II (1567–1573), and the Beggar's Revolt of 1572, both of

21 “Da sonorità del Secondo Intermezzo Corale dovrà essere formidable: ogni spettatore dovra sentirsi letteralmente travolto e sommerso dall’immensità del suono. A tale scopo non si esiti, se necessario, a servirsi di mezzi meccanici (altoparlanti ecc.)”
which are referenced in the opera. The action primarily takes place in the depths of a prison in the Spanish city of Saragossa, which served as the location for Spain's official prisons for the Inquisition during this period. The final scene of the opera occurs in the evening outside the fortress door in a garden.

The opera begins with a man and woman—the unnamed prisoner and his mother—visiting in his dark prison cell. The mother speaks of her worry and anxiety about her son's fate, and she shares the contents of a recurring nightmare eliciting her fears that he will meet a tragic end. The Prisoner speaks to his mother about how the Jailer calling him “fratello” (brother) has reduced his torment and anguish and restored his hope for the future. He tells his mother that he has begun to pray again after not having done so for some time. The Mother exits the cell, and the Jailer enters. Hope is further rekindled in the Prisoner by the Jailer's recounting of recent events in Flanders of peasants fighting the Spanish, partaking in the Beggar's Revolt. The Prisoner thanks the Jailer for continuing to inspire his hope. The Jailer leaves him for the evening, encouraging him further by saying, “Have faith, brother. Sleep...and hope!” After the Jailer leaves, the Prisoner notices that the door to his cell has not been properly closed. Clinging to the words that the Jailer last spoke to him, the Prisoner cautiously sneaks out of his cell and navigates through the dark underground tunnels of the prison at Saragossa. Along his route to freedom, he is forced to recede into the shadows of the dark passageway to avoid being discovered by a torturer, who hurries by without noticing the Prisoner. Continuing on, he again must hide in the shadows as two priests, lost in conversation, pause directly in front of him, seem

23 “Abbi fede, fratello. Dormi... e spera!” Luigi Dallapiccola, Il Prigioniero.
to stare through him, and ultimately continue on their way. Finally, he reaches the door and escapes outside to a large garden. Overcome with joy and thankfulness, he stretches his arms wide to embrace a large tree in the garden. From the shadows of its branches steps the Grand Inquisitor, who returns the Prisoner's embrace. The Prisoner immediately recognizes the kind voice of the Inquisitor as that of the Jailer. In the distance, the Prisoner sees the ominous glow of the pyre upon which he is to be executed. Reluctantly understanding his fate, the Prisoner chokes out, “I see now! Hope... the worst torture.” The Grand Inquisitor leads the Prisoner to his death and offers words of comfort in a sweet, genuinely compassionate voice. The opera ends with the Prisoner questioning his fate, “Freedom!”

**Themes**

Completed in 1948, Dallapiccola's one-act opera *Il Prigioniero: un prologo e un atto da "La torture par l'espérance" del Conte Villiers de l'Isle-Adam e da "La légende d'Ulenspiegel et de Lamme Goedzak" di Charles de Costar (The Prisoner: a prologue and an act from “Torture by Hope” by Count Villiers de l'Isle-Adam and “The Legend of Ulenspiegel and of Lamme Goedzak” by Charles de Costar)* tells the story of one man's imprisonment by an absolute power. With limited action occurring on stage, the drama follows the psychological journey of the Prisoner and his feelings of anxiety, despair, hope, and agony on the last evening of his imprisonment. The opera discusses culpability for tyranny, and the role of both action and

24 The Jailer and Inquisitor are to be portrayed by the same performer, as per Dallapiccola's instructions in the score: *de parti del Carcier e del Grande Inquisitore devono essere sostenute dallo stesso interprete.*
25 “Vedo! La speranza...l'ultima tortura...” Luigi Dallapiccola, *Il Prigioniero.*
inaction in allowing the abuse of power. Additionally, the opera explores the themes of freedom, hope, and prayer, and their interconnection and interdependence.

Throughout the opera, issues of individual and societal freedom, and the concept of collective responsibility to ensure human rights for all are examined. Specifically, Dallapiccola assigns blame for both action and inaction in the protection of freedom, and exposes a myriad of personal intentions under which atrocities are committed. In his condemnation of existing societal structures, Dallapiccola ends the opera with the Prisoner questioning, “Freedom?” as he is led to his execution, begging the audience to engage with him in the consideration that freedom is only possible in death.

In addition to issues of freedom, *Il Prigioniero* addresses the theme of hope, the loss of which becomes the greatest torture imaginable. While hope can enable a person to achieve great things, it can also cause a person to live and believe outside the sphere of their reality. Once hope is gone, the reality of a situation is seen clearly by a person, which, in certain circumstances, can be a fatal blow. Thus, the existence of hope becomes the ultimate torture in its ability to cloud an individual's judgment and self-image.

Lastly, Dallapiccola's use of prayer throughout *Il Prigioniero* illustrates the beliefs and desires of various characters, often showing that characters who are on opposing sides of a conflict may have the same prayer. Dallapiccola uses prayer throughout the opera as a type of protest, giving voice to the character's unrealized hopes, and allowing the audience to see that the hope expressed through prayer is often contrasting with the character's apparent reality.

While at first glance the themes of hope, prayer, and freedom might seem separate, Dallapiccola connects the three into one inextricably-linked concept that offers a viewpoint on
the nature of human suffering. With the understanding that freedom can only occur through death, one understands hope to be the greatest impediment to freedom in that it causes people to cling to life, preventing them from seeing that death is their only path to freedom. Thus, the existence of hope prevents the actualization of freedom. Through prayer, these two opposing concepts are linked. A person prays for freedom, the ultimate goal, by expressing hope for the future. As death is the only path to freedom, and hope is a feeling of expectation of a desired result, which is not death, freedom is difficult to achieve while hope remains intact. Thus, prayer has a natural duality and is at odds with itself, both asking for freedom and expressing hope, both of which cannot exist simultaneously. Dallapiccola appears to struggle with accepting his own realization that hope and freedom stand as opposite forces, as he ends the opera, not with a statement, but with a question: “Freedom?”

“La torture par l'espérance”

The main action of Il Prigioniero is a basic retelling of a short story by Symbolist author Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam entitled, “La torture par l'espérance,” which is set in the Spanish Inquisition's prison at Saragossa. In the late 1860s, famed author Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) introduced Villiers de l'Isle-Adam to the works of American author Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849).27 As influenced by Poe, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's story features the use of dark imagery, and loosely treats the historical truth of Inquisition. One of Poe's short stories, “The Pit and the Pendulum,” particularly correlates to the Villiers de l'Isle-Adam tale through its loose historical setting in the Spanish Inquisition, illustrations of torture, and psychological intensity.

Retaining the basic premise of Villiers l'Isle-Adam's original short story, Dallapiccola's libretto also centers on a prisoner during the Spanish Inquisition, his attempt at escape, and his eventual capture and inferred execution. While Dallapiccola maintains the darkness of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's story, he varies from “La torture par l'espoirance” in several important ways, ultimately creating a highly politicized retelling of the short horror story.

La légende d'Ulenspiegel et de Lamme Goedzak

Dallapiccola acknowledges two pieces of literature in the full title of Il Prigioniero as having inspired the opera. In addition to “La torture par l'espoirance,” he credits a popular book by Belgian author Charles de Coster (1827–1879), La légende d'Ulenspiegel et de Lamme Goedzak. While Dallapiccola takes his plot from the Villiers de l'Isle-Adam work, he makes use of thematic elements from the de Coster to give Il Prigioniero a much broader political significance than that of “La torture par l'espoirance.” Charles de Coster's book, titled La Légende et les Aventures héroïques, joyeuses et glorieuses d'Ulenspiegel et de Lamme Goedzak au pays de Flandres et ailleurs (The Legend of Ulenspiegel and Lamme Goedzak and their Adventures Heroical, Joyous and Glorious in the Land of Flanders and Elsewhere), spins the Flemish folk character Thyl Ulenspiegel into a Protestant hero of the Dutch Revolt.

While “La torture par l'espoirance” tells the story of a man living in a country in which he is a persecuted minority, the addition of the Flemish Revolt to the story of the Prisoner gives the impression that the Prisoner is being oppressed by an outside force. Therefore, the Prisoner becomes a man who is imprisoned, perhaps, by living life according to his custom, and he is
perceived as “in-group”\textsuperscript{28} by the audience. The Rabbi in “La torture par l'espérance,” while living according to his custom, is perceived as existing outside the boundaries of normal in his society, and thus would be perceived as “out-group” by an audience. With the addition of the background of the Dutch Wars of Religion and the Spanish imperial rule of the Netherlands in the sixteenth century, Dallapiccola shifts the perception of the Prisoner from “out-group” to “in-group,” and shifts the view of the oppressors from self-contained dictatorship to imperialistic tyrants not relegated to terrorizing the inhabitants of their own nation, but free to oppress the world.

With the inclusion of the political background of \textit{La légende d'Ulenspiegel et de Lamme Goedzak}, Dallapiccola gives himself an opportunity to include elements of political drama in the music itself. An opportunity arises with his use of what he referred to as the Roelandt motive.\textsuperscript{29} For hundreds of years, Roelandt was a great bell in the Belfry of Ghent, sounded to signal approaching invaders of the city and to announce victory in battle. The bell came to be a symbol of Flemish autonomy and freedom. During the reign of Charles V, after the unsuccessful uprising at Ghent in 1539, the Emperor persecuted those involved in the rebellion and removed Roelandt from the belfry, further subjugating the citizens by removing their symbol of independence. In his own writings on the opera, Dallapiccola names the “Roelandt” motive, which he uses

\textsuperscript{28} According to social identity theory, as pioneered by the work of psychologist Henri Tajfel, “in-group” is a term for a group with whom an individual identifies. Conversely, “out-group” refers to members of a social group understood as dissimilar to and opposite of one’s self-ascribed identity. For further reading, see Henri Tajfel, \textit{Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

\textsuperscript{29}Jamuna Samuel, \textit{Music, Text, and Drama in Dallapiccola’s Il Prigioniero}, 39.
throughout the opera to represent the ringing of the Roelandt bell as a symbol of freedom from tyranny.\(^3\)

Figure 1: “Roelandt” Motive, *Il Prigioniero*, mm. 1–3\(^3\)

As Jamuna Samuel has noted, “‘Roelandt’ is arguably the most distinctive and prominent motive of the opera, returning at key structural and dramatic points of the music.”\(^3\) Among the more significant appearances of “Roelandt” are in the first three measures of the opera and at the moment when the Prisoner arrives at the prison's exit door. The use of the “Roelandt” motive is one of many examples of Dallapiccola's use of the orchestra to function not as a background for the drama, but as a field upon which the psychological elements of the drama can unfold.

**Character Symbolism**

An important difference between *Il Prigioniero* and the Villiers de l'Isle-Adam story upon which it is based is the symbolic nature of the opera's characters, enabled by the libretto's

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30 Luigi Dallapiccola, *Dallapiccola on Opera: Selected Writings of Luigi Dallapiccola, Volume One*, 60.
31 Dallapiccola's serial technique in *Il Prigioniero* has been discussed thoroughly in the literature and is not the focus of this document. The presentation of the Roelandt motive and subsequent discussions of certain rows arise simply because the composer's self-ascribed dramatic titles for these compositional building blocks support my dramatic reading of *Il Prigioniero*. Dallapiccola, *Il Prigioniero*, 1.
omission of character names. By removing all character identifiers, such as references to name, age, and life circumstance, Dallapiccola enables each character to become symbolic for subsets of people who are part of, or ruled by, an oppressive government. Only identified in the score by their function (e.g. “the prisoner”, “the mother”, etc.), none of the characters are ever addressed aurally as such within the opera. In the few instances in which one character will address another, the only terms used are “son” or “brother,” both of which are used to address the Prisoner. These terms contribute to the universality of the characters, as they can only be identified in their relationship to one another.

In contrast to the opera, “La torture par l'espérance” identifies both the Prisoner and Inquisitor by name. By assigning proper names to the principal characters of the story, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's gives the tale a firm foundation in time and space. The original French work identifies the Prisoner as “...none other than Rabbi Aser Abarbanel, a Jew of Aragon, who, on an accusation of usury and pitiless contempt of the poor, had for more than a year undergone daily torture. In spite of all, 'his blind obstinacy being as tough as his skin,' he had refused to abjure.”

The Grand Inquisitor is later identified in the story as “the venerable Pedro Arbuez d'Espila, sixth Prior of the Dominicans of Segovia, third Grand Inquisitor of Spain.” By expressly identifying these characters, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's tale is not universal, unlike Dallapiccola's. Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's work is about a Jewish man imprisoned and executed during the Catholic fervor of the Spanish Inquisition: a specific person tied to a particular event in time and space. The

33 “Ce prisonnier n’était autre que rabbi Aser Abarbanel, juif aragonais, qui, prévenu d’usure et d’impitoyable dédain des Pauvres, avait, depuis plus d’une année, été, quotidiennement, soumis à la torture. Toutefois, son «aveuglement étant aussi dur que son cuir», il s’était refusé à l’abjuration.” Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, “La torture par l'espérance.”

34 “...le vénérable Pedro Arbuez d’Espila, sixième prieur des dominicains de Ségovie, troisième Grand-Inquisiteur d’Espagne.” Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, “La torture par l'espérance.”
specificity of the Villiers de l'Isle-Adam story assigns the blame for the protagonist's death squarely on the Inquisition, and in so doing, releases all other parties from guilt. Thus, there is one clear protagonist and one clear antagonist, neither of whom particularly resonate with modern audiences due to their specificity of circumstance. In stripping each character of their identity, Dallapiccola universalizes “La torture par l'espérance” and creates an opera that is as poignant a commentary of the Inquisition as it was of Italian Fascism, and remains relevant today.

The Prisoner

In the score of *Il Prigioniero*, Dallapiccola's protagonist is simply referred to as “*Il Prigioniero*” (The Prisoner). Within the opera, he is only addressed as “*mio figlio,*” (my son) by his Mother, and as “*fratello*” (brother) by the Jailer and Grand Inquisitor. The omission of the Prisoner's proper name, in conjunction with his being addressed as “son” and “brother,” contribute to his ability to be representative of the Everyman. The Prisoner could be any man who finds himself in opposition to the regime. In maintaining the anonymity of the Prisoner and assigning him the role of the Everyman, Dallapiccola not only strips away all identifying characteristics of the man, but also removes him from the historical context of the Inquisition. Details surrounding the circumstance of the Prisoner's incarceration are not given in the opera. While it is obvious that the Prisoner is an enemy of the Inquisition, the details surrounding his crime, including his name, are not given. Thus, the Prisoner can assume virtually any identity ascribed to him in the imagination of the audience, enabling a wide range of people to identify with him. The Inquisition was conducted against Jews, Muslims, Protestants, Nobility, and
Clergy within the Catholic Church who were found to be sympathetic to outsiders—basically, anyone found to be an enemy of the regime. Nearly anyone could find themselves in the position of the Prisoner. Without letting the audience know the Prisoner's crime, nor his name, Dallapiccola positions him as the Everyman, and enables him to exist during the reign of any totalitarian ruler. In so doing, the opera is no longer about a Prisoner in the Inquisition, but can be understood to be about anyone persecuted by any regime.

The Mother

Like all of the other characters in the opera, the Mother is more of a representational figure than a three-dimensional character, representing the Prisoner's home life and loved ones, and all those who are affected by oppression, but are powerless to oppose it (e.g. women, children, the elderly, and the infirmed).

Dallapiccola's creation of the role of the Mother in Il Prigioniero marks a deviation from “La torture par l'espérance,” which does not have any female characters. While Villiers de l'Isle-Adam begins his story with several members of the Inquisitional tribunal descending into the depths of the prison at Saragossa, the opera begins with a lengthy prologue and scene featuring the Prisoner's Mother. The Mother sings of universal things: her suffering at the imprisonment of her child, anxiety over her son's future, her sorrow at the realization that she may never see him again, and her fear of the governmental authority.

Dallapiccola's inclusion of a Mother character serves several functions. In beginning the opera with The Mother's presence, Dallapiccola's drama at once allows the audience to

35 Together, the prologue and scene takes up roughly one-third of the entire opera.
empathize with the Prisoner. By depicting the suffering of a Mother on behalf of her child, *Il Prigioniero* further vilifies the leaders of the Inquisition. Thus, the audience instantly feels camaraderie with the Prisoner and antagonism toward the power that incarcerates him. As the Mother describes her nightmare, she gives voice to the voiceless victims of oppression, demonstrating not only the suffering of those persecuted by the regime, but of women, children, and all others who have no power to escape their subjugation.

A feature of Dallapiccola's libretto that draws attention to the Mother's representation of society's powerless victims is the way in which the Mother's text fits into the drama. After her substantial solo during the Prologue, described above, the Prisoner finally begins to sing as if to himself, but his words do not relate to what his Mother has just sung. In the ensuing duet, the Prisoner relates his experience of having his hope renewed by the Jailer, and his Mother listens, often repeating to herself a line that he has said. Thus, the two characters do not converse; they only exist concurrently and seem to comment on a related topic. In the only instance in which the Mother directly speaks to her son, she asks him as she exits, “And this, tell me, is really our final farewell?” to which the Prisoner does not reply.  

The Mother's dramatic position as a symbol of society's powerless is accentuated by the lack of direct interaction between her and any other characters.

**Chorus**

The chorus represents the collective voice of those who are part of or ruled by an oppressive regime. Interestingly, by assigning texts with a plurality of meanings and sources and

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by keeping the chorus offstage, Dallapiccola simultaneously uses the chorus to represent a variety of groups of people, both those who identify with and support the regime as well as those who oppose and are persecuted by it.

By allowing the chorus to speak for groups of people politically opposed to each other with the same text, Dallapiccola is showing that both groups are not dissimilar, and in fact have many commonalities. In showcasing their similarities, *Il Prigioniero* brings together disparate groups of people, subtly showing that the polarization of people is unnecessary as they all want the same things.

*The Inquisitor*

The Inquisitor represents the members and officials of the reigning totalitarian regime. He enacts the oppressive plans of those in power, though he is not necessarily the creator of their policies. He is zealous in his purpose and believes he serves the greater good of society. He appears to care about humanity, evidenced by his compassion for the Prisoner and his reference to him as “Brother” as the Jailer had called him, and strives for the world's complete adherence to the regime's ideology. In this way, the Inquisitor represents the greatest danger to humanity, not only because of his position of power, but because he truly believes the propaganda of the regime, and is able to justify its many atrocities by his belief that they are truly for the greater good.

*The Jailer*

The Jailer represents those who do not necessarily share the ideals of the regime and are
not a part of it, but they live within it and do not attempt to stand up to injustice. This group may have sympathy for the regime's opponents, as evidenced by the Jailer's compassion for the Prisoner, but they are not persecuted by it and do not act to stop it. While the Jailer serves the Inquisition, he is not necessarily a part of it.

Dallapiccola's creation of the role of the Jailer is the most significant variance from “La torture par l'espéранce,” which does not have a Jailer, in that it significantly changes the variety of possible readings of the story. Through the character of the Jailer, Dallapiccola shows that the inaction of the Jailer in aiding the Prisoner is as harmful to him as the actions of the Inquisitor. By recognizing the Jailer as a representation of all those who have power to oppose injustice but fail to act, Dallapiccola shows that the action of an oppressor and the inaction of a bystander are equally destructive in the lives of the oppressed.

King Philip II

An interesting part of Dallapiccola's drama is the “role” of King Philip II. While the character of Philip II does not appear in the opera, he is mentioned several times, first by the Mother, and later by the Jailer. Historically, King Philip II (1527–1598) ruled over the Netherlands from 1555 until his death, and was the third Spanish monarch to continue the policies of the Inquisition after their institution. Under Philip II's reign, the Inquisition persecuted not only Jews and Muslims within Spanish borders, but also those who were found guilty of having only superficially converted to Catholicism. In addition, Philip II, for a time, made a fitting husband to Queen Mary I of England (“Bloody Mary”), under whom thousands of English Protestants were executed. During his tenure as regent of the Netherlands, the Inquisitional
autos-da-fé\textsuperscript{37} spread to the Low Countries, where Protestants were burned to death side-by-side with political dissidents. While Philip II spent very little time in the Netherlands, his shadow hung oppressively over the people.

Philip II is the only individual in the opera to be identified by name, and thus the only personage to be linked to a specific circumstance in time and space. While this specificity may be incongruent with the care with which Dallapiccola ensured the universality of his opera, the fact that Philip II never appears in the drama helps to maintain the generality of him as an absolute dictator. Without his appearance in the opera, it is easy enough for an audience member to substitute another political leader in Philip's place. Interestingly, the King, who is the only individual who held the power to stop the unraveling of the Prisoner's fate, does not ever make an appearance in the drama. Thus, while Dallapiccola draws attention to the responsibility of Philip II in the suffering of the people, he also focuses the audience's attention on the fact that, in the absence of Philip II, it is her people who carry out his orders, and who are equally responsible for suffering. Therefore, at the outset of the opera, Dallapiccola introduces the concept that through action or inaction, a person can be responsible for harming others.

\textit{Politicization of Plot Elements of “La torture par l'espérance”}

Through the use of indistinct characters who represent larger groups of people within the oppressive rule of a totalitarian government, Dallapiccola uses the story of “La torture par l'espérance” to create a metaphor for the ways in which various subsets of society relate to each

\textsuperscript{37} Literally, “act-of-faith,” an auto-da-fé was a ceremony of public penitance held as the final step in the Inquisition process. The auto-da-fé included a Catholic Mass, public prayer, procession of the accused, and sentencing.
other and have differing levels of ability to combat the oppression they face.

In addition to the creation of symbolic characters, Dallapiccola changes certain aspects and episodes of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's story to imbue the drama with more political meaning. With the addition of the description of the Mother's nightmare, Dallapiccola likens King Philip II to Benito Mussolini, immediately allowing the audience to draw parallels between the intolerance and oppression of the Spanish monarch with that of a more contemporary ruler.

Dallapiccola's opera features two choral intermezzi, which will be discussed in more detail later in this document. The texts of these choruses speak to both the desires and feelings of the oppressive regime of the Spanish Catholics as well as those that they oppress. By connecting the oppressed with his oppressor, they are unified in their shared prayers. Thus, the culpable parties in the demise of the Prisoner are made human, and the audience is given the opportunity to identify with both the oppressed and the oppressor.

The role of the Jailer, as discussed earlier, adds a secondary guilty figure to the original tale by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. In addition to the Inquisitor, who actively supervises the torture and incarceration of the Prisoner, Dallapiccola adds the Jailer, who through his inaction, fails to help the Prisoner in his plight. Thus, the opera blames both the Inquisitor and the Jailer as contributing to the suffering of the Prisoner. To cement in the minds of the audience the shared culpability of both the Inquisitor and Jailer, Dallapiccola specified in the score that both characters must be portrayed by the same singing actor.

**The Nightmare**

The Mother begins the opera by describing a recurring nightmare to her son. In the
nightmare, the visage of King Philip II transforms into the face of Death, and the Mother screams herself awake. The Mother dreams of Philip II and not of her son's more immediate threat, the Grand Inquisitor. While it is Philip II who ultimately holds the key to her son's freedom, it would be more logical for her to fear the man directly responsible for her son's torture. By featuring Philip II as the terror of the dream, Dallapiccola brings the audience's attention to the role of leadership's policies in the lives of everyday people. While it may be the Inquisitor's job to execute heretics, his job description is based on the policies of the King, and is, therefore, ultimately the responsibility of the King.

This nightmare, not included in either of the libretto sources, immediately imbues the opera with a highly-politicized theme of unjust imprisonment by a totalitarian dictatorial government. What is more, through Dallapiccola's use of symbolism within the description of the dream, King Philip II is extracted from his historical context and inserted into the Italian Fascist context of the 1940s. The Mother describes: “The King that disturbs the world with his daydream/fancy. And he, Philip, the owl, son of a vulture, rests his pale forehead on a stained glass window. Finally, raising his right arm up, muttering: God is King of Heaven. I am King on earth.”  

Dallapiccola has packed considerable symbolism into this bit of text, with obvious parallels between Philip and the Spanish Empire to Mussolini and the Italian Fascists.

Philip II is described as being the “son of a vulture.” Under Philip II's father, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (1500–1558), several of Europe's most powerful dynasties, including the Spanish Empire and the lands of the House of Habsburg, were united. As the leader of the most

38 “Il Re che turba il mondo col suo fantasticare. È lui, Fillipo, il Gufo, figlio dell’avvoltoio, poggia la fronte pallida a una vetrata. Infine solleva il braccio destro in alto, mormorando: Dio Signore è del cielo. Io son Re sulla terra.” Luigi Dallapiccola, Il Prigioniero.
powerful Empire in Europe, Charles V faced many rebellions throughout his territories, often responding forcefully to keep the people under subjugation. In particular, the Dutch people suffered heavily under his rule. As the result of the quelling of a particularly dangerous revolt in Ghent, Charles V punished the insurgents and removed the famed Roelandt bell, a symbol of Dutch independence, from the belfry at Ghent.

Owls have long been regarded as omens of bad fortune, particularly by the Romans. By comparing Philip II to an owl, Dallapiccola depicts him as not only the current regime's leader responsible for the bad things that have befallen the people, but also as an omen of things to come. By showing Philip's reign as a continuation of his father Charles', Dallapiccola creates an association with the contemporary rule of the Fascists, as Benito Mussolini's ideology and political practice was strongly influenced by that of his father, Alessandro Mussolini (1854–1910). Therefore, by showing Philip II as a tyrannical ruler who was influenced by the political activities and harshness of his father, Dallapiccola equates Philip II with the younger Mussolini.

The next line in the dream text, “He rests his pale forehead on a stained glass window. Finally raising his right arm up...” juxtaposes the religious intolerance of the Inquisition with the intolerance of Fascism. By resting his head against the stained glass window, a symbol of Christianity, Dallapiccola symbolically shows Philip II's alliance with the Church. Next, Philip II raises his right arm up,” indicative of enacting a Roman salute.39

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39 The Roman Salute, a greeting whereby the right arm is raised and extended, is commonly associated with Adolph Hitler and Nazism, however it was first adopted by the Italian Fascists in the 1920s, becoming a compulsory greeting in some areas of government as early as 1923. For further reading, see Falasca-Zamponi, Simonetta. Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini’s Italy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
By the time of Dallapiccola's writing of the libretto for *Il Prigioniero*, Mussolini's government had outlawed the handshake as a form of greeting, and only permitted the use of the Roman salute. In fact, images of handshakes were edited out of media products and propaganda footage, so that, by 1943, the Roman salute was the only visible form of greeting in Italian society. Thus, Dallapiccola successfully morphs the audience's perception of the drama's tyrant Philip II into the contemporary dictator Benito Mussolini, all the while maintaining his antagonistic relationship with the other characters. Through only these few sentences, found in the beginning of the opera, Dallapiccola clearly shows a relationship between the horrors of the Inquisition and the contemporary Italian political situation.

As the Mother continues to describe her nightmare and its terrifying image of Philip II,
she likens the King to a vision of death, recounting her vision of his iron lips, heavy footsteps, and eyes, which reveal gaping eye sockets and sunken cheeks. Philip II—whose reign resulted in the slaying of his subjects, including those for whom the Mother cares—becomes the embodiment of Death itself in her dream. Through the use of dream, Dallapiccola is able to show the pervasive fear that the leader of the imperial forces imposes on his oppressed subjects, and also show that for those people, the face of Philip II is the face of Death. Taken within the historical context of Dallapiccola's life and his opposition to Fascism, one can liken the image of Philip II and his people's reaction to his regime to that of Benito Mussolini and the hatred for him shown by the Italian public in the aftermath of World War II.

**Choral Intermezzi**

*Il Prigioniero* features an offstage chorus, which sings Latin prayers during two choral intermezzi. Each intermezzo features a short text, and in both cases, the text is split in half, containing lines of text from two different sources.

The Latin text of the first choral intermezzo is “Have mercy upon us, O Lord. Just as we have hoped in you. Your priests are vested in justice, and your saints exalt you.” The first half of this text is a prayer for mercy, taken from the forth-century *Te Deum*, a hymn of praise and thanksgiving based on the last verse of Psalm 32. The inmates of the prison at Saragossa would certainly be inclined to pray for mercy and deliverance from the torture facing them on a daily basis and the inevitable execution that awaited them. This choral intermezzo can be heard from the perspective of the prisoners, but it can also be heard from the perspective of the practicing


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Catholic, who oppress the prisoners by way of the Inquisition and whose doctrine includes a belief in original sin. While the chorus sings of deliverance from their innate sin, the prisoners desire deliverance from the pain and tortured life of their incarceration. The second line is taken from Psalm 132, one of fifteen biblical psalms considered part of the “Song of Ascents.”

The Prisoner tells his mother that the Jailer's kind words renewed his faith and inspired him to pray. He repeats the same prayer: “God help me to walk, the road is so long that it seems to me that I will not be able to finish it. God, help me to ascend.” The Psalms in the “Song of Ascents” discuss paths going from lowly states to elevated ranks, or the act of rising in circumstance by overcoming trials. While The Prisoner is not directly praying any of the “Song of Ascents,” he is praying a prayer of similar content. Taking the Prisoner as an Everyman, the embodiment of all humanity, his prayer can be seen as representative of what others placed in his same circumstance would pray. Just as easily as this second line of text could come to be the voice of the prisoners being held by the Spanish, it could also rise up from a group of Catholics from the Inquisition.

This portion of the prayers implores God to help his priests carry out his will, and simultaneously serves as reaffirmation of the divine justice being carried out by the priests. Through utilizing texts of universal accessibility, Dallapiccola has linked the oppressor with the oppressed, having the prisoners' and Inquisition's prayers rise up in unification despite highly disparate circumstances. By connecting the oppressed with his oppressor, we see that they are not so different, and they are brought much closer together in their shared humanity. Thus, the

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42 The Song of Ascents is made up of Psalms 120–134. Various Christian denominations refer to them alternately as Pilgrim Songs, Song of Steps, Gradual Songs, or Song of Degrees. Each of these fifteen Psalms is characterized by an emphasis on hope.

43 Both the Te Deum and Psalm 132 are included in the Liturgy of the Hours of the Roman Catholic Church. The Liturgy of the Hours, together with the celebration of the Mass, constitutes the Church’s public worship.
culpable parties in the demise of the Prisoner are made human, and the audience is given the opportunity to identify with both the oppressed and the oppressor.

Like the first chorale, the second prayer sung by the chorus draws text from two sources. The first half, “Lord open my lips and my mouth will proclaim thy glory,” is the fifteenth line of Psalm 51. The second half of the prayer sung by the chorus, “I languish, and groaning bend my knee...” is taken from a prayer written by Mary, Queen of Scots (1582–1587), during her imprisonment by Queen Elisabeth I of England (1533–1603), after which, she was executed.

There are several interesting things to note about these texts. First, Psalm 51 is a prayer for God's forgiveness for the sins of his people. The psalm declares the sinfulness of the people, and their request for forgiveness, upon which they will forever sing the Lord's praises. The use of this text by a chorus of Catholics during the Inquisition would make sense for multiple reasons. It is a common prayer recited during worship services, and would have been used during this time period. Additionally, as the prayer is about admitting sin and praying for forgiveness, it is appropriate that the Catholic perpetrators of the Inquisition would pray on behalf of those they imprisoned and sentenced to death with the hope that they might repent in the hours before their execution so that their souls might be saved. Incidentally, the line of Psalm 51 immediately following the one used in the chorus' prayer is, “You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.” Thus, while the chorus sings on behalf of the Prisoner, what they have left unsung is what contradicts what they are doing: making a burnt offering and human sacrifice of their political enemies. By including the text of the Psalm that implies their righteousness and omitting the very next line, which would find them violating the pleasure of God, Dallapiccola is showing the audience the single-mindedness and error in the
ways of the Catholics conducting the Inquisition.

The second half of the second choral intermezzo's text, “I languish, and groaning bend my knee...” would, on first glance, appear to show the pity and devotion of the Catholics to their God. On closer examination, however, one can see that Dallapiccola is again ascribing text to one group of people that has significant meaning for another group of characters within the opera. Within the context of Mary Stuart's prayer, the lines sung by the chorus are thus: “I languish, and groaning bend my knee, adoring, and imploring Thee to set me free.” A prayer begging for freedom, written by an imprisoned woman—in this case, a Catholic imprisoned by a Protestant—hardly seems a fitting prayer to be sung by the Catholic chorus imprisoning the Prisoner. In this way, Dallapiccola is again uncovering the commonality between oppressors and oppressed by showing the universality of prayers, and how both sides in a dispute might call upon the same powers using similar language. While the chorus uses this text to show its piety, the text is fitting for the Prisoner to show his desire for freedom. In another sense, the text serves two different meanings as well. While applicable to the Prisoner, the text speaks of a desire for freedom in a worldly sense and can also be applicable to the chorus, praying for the freedom of the Prisoner and themselves in the afterlife. In this context, the chorus is praying for freedom from sin and for everlasting life in Heaven, as per their faith. In this way, both the chorus and the prisoner have the same prayer, yet they contradict each other, because one cannot have their prayer answered without negating the prayer of the other. If the Prisoner escapes, his soul will not be freed and he will suffer eternal damnation. If he dies, his soul may be freed, but his prayer for the saving of his life will not be answered. By juxtaposing two contradictory views of the same text, Dallapiccola brings two disparate forces—indeed, the protagonist with those working
against him—together, where they both can be viewed as mirror images of one another.

An additional significance to the use of the prayer of Mary Stuart within the prayer of the chorus in the second intermezzo is that, in its entirety, it was one of three prayers set by Dallapiccola in his earlier work, Canti di Prigionia. In quoting himself and his earlier work, he invites his audience to understand Il Prigioniero as having a relationship to the Canti, and as a continuation of the message of the Canti. Thus, Dallapiccola is able to imbue a significant message to just one sentence of text.

**Inaction and Action: The Connection of Jailer to Inquisitor**

A primary theme of Il Prigioniero is that of culpability for oppression. The original non-political story by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam does not have a Jailer. The only character with whom the Prisoner, Rabbi Aser Abarbanel, interacts is the Inquisitor, Pedro d'Arbuez. This relationship between Prisoner and Inquisitor allows the story to be purely a non-politicized short horror tale in which there is one antagonist who persecutes the protagonist by his actions. With the addition of the Jailer, the culpability for the persecution of the Prisoner is split between the Jailer and the Inquisitor, with the Jailer appearing to be an ally to the Prisoner, and the Inquisitor maintaining his clearly antagonistic role from the original story. By splitting the blame between two characters, Dallapiccola explores the role played by action and inaction in the suppression of freedom. While the existence of two antagonistic characters might suffice to draw the audience's attention to the dangers of inaction, Dallapiccola drives the point home by having the same actor portray both the Jailer and the Inquisitor, showing that the two characters (representing inaction and action, respectively) are identical. Additionally, the first utterance of both the Jailer and the
Grand Inquisitor is to address the Prisoner as “Brother.” Dallapiccola chose to not only set this word using the same melodic motive in both instances, but he did so using the identical pitch level and temporal proportion. By featuring the same singer and the same motive, Dallapiccola ensures that the audience recognizes that the Jailer and Inquisitor are connected.

Figure 2: Jailer “Brother” Motive, mm. 287–8

Figure 3: Grand Inquisitor “Brother” Motive, mm. 898–9

By casting the same performer as both the Jailer and the Inquisitor, Dallapiccola enables the audience to understand that, despite their unique roles, the Jailer and Inquisitor equally enable oppression. Dallapiccola therefore asserts that the Prisoner's fate was not only sealed by those who acted against him (the Inquisitor), but also by those who chose not to act (the Jailer). Rather than placing the blame squarely on the shoulders of the Inquisitor, Dallapiccola creates the role of the Jailer, a more sympathetic character, and shows that through inaction, he is equally responsible for the death of the Prisoner. Through this telling of the story, Dallapiccola invites the audience to question themselves and consider how many deaths have occurred because of individuals' inaction, thus politicizing the subject material of Villiers de l'Isle Adam's original.

The use of the same actor to portray both the Jailer and Inquisitor has led to a common misreading of Dallapiccola's opera in some of the scholarly literature. A frequently held view is that the Inquisitor and Jailer are the same character. From this vantage point, the Inquisitor, posing as the Jailer, sadistically tortures the Prisoner by befriending him and inspiring him to return to prayer, allowing him to hope for escape by leaving the cell door open, only to recapture
him in the courtyard, dealing the final blow of torture through destroying his hope.

Although purported as the only understanding of the drama's action, this view does not take into consideration several of Dallapiccola's stage directions, autobiographical identifiers found within the drama, nor his variance from the original short story by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam in his creation of the role of the Jailer. Thus, a more accurate reading of the drama understands that, while the Jailer and the Inquisitor are portrayed by the same person, they are in fact two unique characters who share equal responsibility for the fate of the Prisoner, showing that inaction is as strong a force as action in reinforcing and maintaining oppression.

**Freedom**

In exploring the topic of freedom and the human desire for liberty, Dallapiccola approaches the subject from three angles: the Prisoner's desire for freedom from imprisonment, freedom from tyranny for those who are symbolized by the Prisoner, and, from the Christian perspective of the Inquisitor, the desire for all people to have freedom from sin. Through the events in the opera, it becomes clear that the only way to achieve any of these three forms of freedom is through death.

The idea of freedom from imprisonment is most thoroughly expressed by the Prisoner's attempted escape. At the moment the Prisoner passes through the door of the prison and enters the night air of the garden, he believes himself to be free of incarceration, and he exclaims “Alleluia!” as he is overcome with joy. This exclamation is greeted immediately with an embrace from his oppressor, the Inquisitor, who leads him toward the light of the fires in which the Prisoner will be executed. Throughout the opera, the Prisoner struggled to escape the prison,
viewing escape as his only means to freedom from incarceration. Upon his capture, he sees that there was never any way to escape the prison. As he is lead to his death, the Prisoner questions, “Freedom?”, realizing that he is only able to achieve freedom from incarceration through death.

In speaking with the Jailer about the recent events in Flanders, the Prisoner expresses his desire for freedom from tyranny. As the Jailer explains the current state of the Flemish insurrection against the Spanish, he paraphrases de Coster's novel, saying, “Charles tore out his mother's tongue the day he removed the bell from Ghent that used to sound throughout Flanders. Roelandt, the pride of an entire land.”

By informing the Prisoner that Charles V, the predecessor of Philip II, “tore out his mother's tongue,” the Jailer is expressing a negative value judgment of the former ruler's removal of the bell from the belfry at Ghent. Additionally, by inserting a quote from de Coster's book, the Jailer is associated with Flemish nationalism, indicating that his allegiance lies not with the Inquisition, but with the insurgence.

The Jailer's statement stirs the Prisoner to ask him to describe the current situation in Flanders, to which the Jailer responds with an “Aria in Three Strophes,” the text of which is also taken from *La légende d'Ulenspiegel et de Lamme Goedzak*. The Jailer's aria begins with a description of the insurgents riding their ships on the sea towards the shores that they intend to liberate, referring to them, as de Coster did, as “Swans of Liberty.” The aria's music begins with


Dallapiccola's “freedom” row, further identifying the Jailer's description of the Beggar's Revolt as a source of hope for the Prisoner.\textsuperscript{46}

Figure 4: “Freedom” row at P0, \textit{Il Prigioniero}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{freedom_row_p0.png}
\end{center}

Figure 5: “Freedom” row in the Jailer's “Aria in Three Strophes, mm.360–5, \textit{Il Prigioniero}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{freedom_row_aria.png}
\end{center}

In quoting the de Coster's positive imagery of the Flemish fighters, it can be inferred that the Jailer is placing virtue on the Flemish struggle against the Spanish, and thus supporting the fighters' ultimate goal: freedom from tyranny. Throughout the Jailer's aria, it is asserted that through the Flemish succeeding in battle, the Spanish will be overthrown from their rule in Flanders, and the Flemish will achieve autonomy and freedom from tyranny. Upon the Prisoner's capture, the Revolt is still in full force, and its outcome does not affect the Prisoner. Thus, the only way for the Prisoner to escape the tyrannical rule of the Spanish is through death.

Freedom from sin is a concept of freedom that is present in the viewpoint of the Church, and was a primary justification for the Inquisition.\textsuperscript{47} Upon greeting and embracing the Prisoner in the garden in the final scene of the opera, the Inquisitor says to the Prisoner, in a line borrowed

\begin{center}
\textit{Sull'Oceano, sulle Schelde, con il sole, con la pioggia, con la grandine e la...}
\end{center}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{46} Jamuna S. Samuel, “Music, Text, and Drama in Dallapiccola's \textit{Il Prigioniero},” 183.
\textsuperscript{47} Helen Rawlings, \textit{The Spanish Inquisition} (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 40.
\end{footnotes}
from “La torture par l'espérance,” “On the eve of your salvation, why do you want to leave us?” Dallapiccola's stage direction instructs that the Inquisitor sing this line “with sincere pious compassion,” which indicates the Inquisitor's genuine concern for the salvation—or liberation from sin—of the Prisoner. The Inquisitor's hope is that the Prisoner will repent of his sins and turn to the Christian God, asking for forgiveness from sin while being cleansed by fire.

According to Catholic belief of the Inquisition, once a heretic dies, their soul is condemned to continue burning for all eternity. Therefore, the Inquisition's most popular method of executing heretics was by fire, perhaps with the hope that the visceral experience of burning would incite fear of this prophesied eternal lake of fire and cause them to convert to Christianity before their death. From the Inquisitor's perspective, the only hope for the Prisoner's liberation from sin is his accepting Jesus Christ as his path to salvation. While it is never addressed in the opera whether this is achieved, one can surmise that the Prisoner does not convert to Christianity, as he has undergone so much torture already and not converted. Thus, the Prisoner's only way of liberation from sin comes, again, through his death.

Throughout the course of the opera, none of the three solutions for liberation are achieved. The Prisoner does not escape incarceration, the Dutch do not overthrow the Spanish, and the Prisoner does not convert to Christianity. Moreover, through the unfolding of the drama, Dallapiccola makes it evident that none of these three outcomes are a possibility except in death. When it seems that perhaps the Prisoner has escaped his incarceration, he finds himself in the

48 “Alla vigilia della tua salvezza perché mai ci volevi abbandonare?” Luigi Dallapiccola, Il Prigioniero. “Eh quoi, mon enfant! À la veille, peut-être, du salut... vous vouliez donc nous quitter!” Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, La torture par l'espérance.
49 “Con l'accento della più sincera pietà...” Luigi Dallapiccola, Il Prigioniero.
50 References to a “lake of fire” are found in the Bible in Revelation 19-21, Matthew 10 and 25, Psalm 16, Romans 10, and Ezekiel 18.
arms of his oppressor. After the Jailer's encouraging description of the Flemish revolts in the Low Countries, it would not be until 1648 that the Dutch were finally independent of the Spanish—a full fifty years after the death of Philip II. Although the audience is not privy to the death of the Prisoner, as the story ends with his being led to his death by the Inquisitor, one can assume that he did not repent for his sins and free his soul from eternal damnation. This conclusion can be deduced based on the Prisoner's obvious lack of repentance during his prison term.

Dallapiccola's opera ends with the Prisoner questioning if his liberation had finally arrived as the Inquisitor leads him to the glow of the fire that holds his death. Indicated by the composer to be “mezzo-cantato,” the opera concludes with the Prisoner half-singing the question, “Freedom?” This eternal question brings with it the close of the curtain, and invites the audience to ponder its meaning. In asking the question “Freedom?”, there is no doubt that the Prisoner understands that in death he will finally find the freedom that had eluded him in life. In death, he will no longer be imprisoned or tormented, and will find his final peace.

Poignantly, by ending the opera with a question, Dallapiccola invites the audience to ponder if there could have been an alternate ending for the protagonist. Could the Prisoner have achieved freedom without dying? If the Prisoner had escaped the prison and fled to the mountains as he had hoped, would he truly have been free? Would the Spanish not still be persecuting others just like him? Would he ever be free to live a normal life? In an alternate ending, if the Prisoner had not escaped the prison, but the Dutch had successfully overthrown the Spanish and replaced Philip, would tyranny end? Would not the Dutch have become as tyrannical as the Spanish had been? History shows that within 150 years of the Spanish Catholics’
oppression of the Dutch Protestants, the Dutch would go on to oppress Catholics in Ireland, pushing them into the south of Ireland and causing so great a divide on the island that violent conflict between Protestant and Catholic Irishmen continued well into the twentieth century. As a metaphor for tyranny throughout the world, the story and outcome of *Il Prigioniero* shows that only in death is freedom to be found. By ending with a question instead of a statement, Dallapiccola asks audiences to attempt to solve this problem.

**Hope**

The theme of hope as a force that inhibits people from accepting the truth of their situation maintains a position of prominence throughout *Il Prigioniero*. Indeed, from the first sentence of the libretto, “I will see you again, my son!” to the last word, “Freedom?”, Dallapiccola imbues each character with blind hope that prohibits them from accepting their reality. In keeping with the namesake of “La torture par l'espérance,” hope proves to be the worst torture endured by the Prisoner throughout the opera. In the case that a person can recognize death as the only freedom, he embraces death and the release it brings, putting an end to suffering. Hope, however, causes a person to cling to the belief that there is another way to freedom, a way that does not end in death. Since the drama proves that there is no other way to freedom but through death, the concept of hope, therefore, becomes detrimental to the protagonist's ability to be free.

In the Prologue, the mother vacillates between hope and reality. She claims that she will see her son again, yet she contradicts herself by saying that she believes her visit with him in the opera to be the last time she will see him. Despite the reality she faces, she is unable to let go of
the hope that her son will be freed. This hope proves to be torture for her, as she becomes upset and agitated in contemplating her son's fate. If she lost hope, she would be able to grieve for her son, and then move on instead of remaining in personal purgatory.

Because of his hope for freedom, the Prisoner endures torture and pain. His recapture and execution are particularly heartbreaking because he was so hopeful to find freedom in life. The Prisoner presents a bleak view of hope, therefore, as hope is not only the ultimate torture, but the force standing in the way of freedom. The idea that hope is the worst torture and the only thing standing before freedom is a dark realization, but it is more a commentary on the state of the world than on the futility of hope.

In light of Dallapiccola's life experiences, it is certainly not surprising that he would write an opera commenting on the destructiveness of the cycle of violence in the world, and the futility of hope in the face of that history. The Prisoner's futile hope shows Dallapiccola's lack of confidence in the history of the world; however, a glimmer of hope is offered in the Prisoner's final utterance, “Freedom?” Dallapiccola is making the statement that death is the only way to freedom. He is not, however, saying that that must be the case for all eternity. If that were his intended point, perhaps he would not have ended the opera with a question, but with a statement. The fact that it is a question, however, is significant. Dallapiccola is urging the audience to end the cycle of violent oppression and find another way. Change the world, so that death is no longer the only opportunity for freedom, and hope is no longer the greatest torture. While it is small, there is a tiny glimmer of hope left—not for the Prisoner, but for the world.
Prayer

The role of prayer in *Il Prigioniero* is significant. Almost all characters within the opera sing a prayer or call out to God. It is interesting to see how Dallapiccola intertwines the concepts of hope, prayer, and freedom all together, and also, through his use to the choral prayer sources, one can see how multiple groups of people can pray the same prayer and yet their desired outcomes are contradictory.

Although the Mother does not specifically recite a prayer or call on God within the prologue, her opening statement, “I will see you again, my son! I will see you again...” is set to Dallapiccola's self-designated “prayer” row.⁵¹

Figure 6: “Prayer” row at P0, *Il Prigioniero*

![Prayer row at P0](image)

Figure 7: “Prayer” row at R10 mm. 9–12, *Il Prigioniero*

![Prayer row at R10](image)

Thus, from the very opening measures of the piece, Dallapiccola has intertwined hope, prayer, and freedom—a theme that will be paramount throughout the work. The mother's hope is that she will see her son again, and she prays for this to be the case. In order for her to see her son again, he must be free. Thus, she prays for his freedom as well. However, as we have seen, the hope of

⁵¹ Jamuna S. Samuel, “Music, Text, and Drama in Dallapiccola's *Il Prigioniero*,” 139.
his freedom is what keeps her from grieving and moving on, and thus she is effectually praying that she will not be free from her grief.

The next instance of prayer occurs in the first choral intermezzo. By virtue of the chorus being offstage, this prayer is ambiguous—who is singing? Is it a group of Catholics in the Inquisition or is it the Prisoners? The fact that the text is split between two sources, both with significance for both groups of people, contributes to the ambiguity. It would seem that as a chorus of Catholics, praying for mercy and forgiveness for original sin is plausible, especially considering that the first part of their prayer is taken from the *Te Deum*, which is often attributed to St. Ambroise, who has been remembered throughout history for being particularly known for supporting the persecution of non–Christians. Additionally, the idea that the priests are vested in justice would appeal to the sensibilities of those supporting the Inquisition. On the other hand, if the chorus is taken to be a chorus of prisoners, the words calling for mercy have an obvious significance, and the second line, being taken from the Song of Ascents, indicates a plea to help them rise above their current circumstance. The prayer is made more ambiguous by the music to which Dallapiccola has set it. Using the “glorious” row, he has simply assigned it a musical significance of glory, rather than of prayer or hope. Thus, while it is a prayer, its musical significance is glorifying God. Because of this ambiguity, the opera's stage director can have their choice of how to portray the chorus—as prisoners, priests, or both.

The most significant and recurring prayer that occurs in *Il Prigioniero* is the Prisoner's prayer he recites to his mother, telling her that since his positive encounter with the Jailer, he has begun to pray the same prayer: “God, help me to walk, the road is so long that it seems to me I

52 Ibid., 49.
will not be able to finish it. God, help me to ascend.” Again, in setting this text, Dallapiccola uses the “prayer” row.

Figure 8: “Prayer” row mm. 241–4, Il Prigioniero

The prayer's text is significant in the opera's theme of freedom in death and in the use of the concept of ascending. The Prisoner's prayer is quite literal when applied to his earthly scenario of attempting to escape through the long and winding passageway from the depths of the prison. When applied figuratively, it is his prayer for help in the long struggle to find freedom. In asking for help to climb, he is asking for help to rise above his circumstance and persevere to find freedom. In both cases, his prayer was answered: he manages to escape the prison, and he is given freedom. However, the answer to his prayer does not come in the way that he anticipates—he finds freedom in the garden but is quickly greeted by the Inquisitor. He is granted freedom at last, but it is only reached through death.

Conclusion

Il Prigioniero tells a tragic story of one man's hope of freedom, the failure to realize this hope while alive, and the final understanding that hope for liberation lies only in death. Through the opera, Dallapiccola uses the concepts of prayer, hope, and freedom, to explore the greater existential question of the reality of achieving freedom, and engages the audience in considering

53 “Signore, aiutami a camminare, cosi lunga è la vita che mi pare di non poterla, finire.
Signore, aiutami a salire.” Luigi Dallapiccola, Il Prigioniero.
whose responsibility it is to promote and enable freedom on earth. By exploring the idea of the interconnection of humanity, as shown by the demonstration of guilt through both action and inaction, hope as an illogical reaction against oppression and a way to prolong one's own suffering, and prayer as a way in which all people are connected and desirous of the same things, Dallapiccola invites the audience to engage with the opera's open-ended question, “Can freedom only be achieved in death?,” and through the dual role of the Jailer and Inquisitor, “In what ways are we guilty of injustice through our inaction?”
CHAPTER 3

GIAN CARLO MENOTTI (1911–2007)

Gian Carlo Menotti was born on July 7, 1911 to an aristocratic family in Cadegliano, Italy near the Swiss border at Lake Lugano. He would grow up to have a career spanning continents, his operas and plays performed in several translations in many nations, and he would come to found the Spoleto Festival, properly named the “Festival of Two Worlds.” Fluent in several languages, Menotti's life was quite international, even as a child. The Menotti family's income was dependent on his uncle Francisco's business across the Atlantic in Colombia, South America. Menotti's parents, Alfonso and Ines Menotti, began their married life in Colombia, where Alfonso's brother Francisco owned and operated an import/export coffee business. After a short time, Ines missed Italy, and the couple returned to their native country to begin their family. The Menottis retired on funds coming in from Colombia every month.54 Thus, Menotti’s life from birth consisted of talk of current business in South America, and the family made frequent trips out of the Kingdom of Italy. In fact, in the summer, when the Menottis would go to Lake Lugano for a day of swimming, all of the Menotti family had to produce their passports, as the beach the family preferred was not on the Italian shore of the lake, but the Swiss side. It is possible that Menotti's disdain for the bureaucracy surrounding travel documents stemmed from his childhood swimming days.55

55 Ibid., 88.
The sixth of eight children, Menotti demonstrated his artistic talent at a young age, often mounting elaborate puppet shows and theatrical productions with his siblings and other children from the village. Gian Carlo's mother Ines, an ambitious woman, decided from his first foray into music lessons that her son would be a successful professional musician. The village of Cadegliano was a small one, quite rooted in tradition, and remained virtually unchanged throughout the upheaval of the First World War, especially as compared with other regions of the country. Thus, despite the shrinking aristocracy and rise of the middle class that resulted from World War I throughout much of Europe, Cadegliano remained much as it had been before the war, and the Menotti family continued the older traditions of aristocratic privilege and lifestyle.

As the young Menotti's talent continued to make itself apparent, he outgrew the country teachers available to him in Cadegliano, and his mother became increasingly disturbed that Gian Carlo was not able to have the finest music teachers available. As it was, the family could only convince those teachers of music who really needed the money to come to the village from Milan. Menotti's first music teachers were a strange assortment, from one elderly woman who always wore the same hat and shawl, to a man hired to transcribe Menotti's first compositions who turned out to be blind, leaving all of Menotti's works written before 1924 in braille.

Eventually, Ines convinced her husband to allow the family to live in Milan for the winter and return to Cadegliano in the summer. Thus, when Menotti was fourteen years old, he moved to Milan with his family and enrolled at the Milan Conservatory.56

Menotti was thrilled with life in Milan. He felt that he was a country boy getting his first taste of city life and absorbing as much culture—not only music, but also the theater—as he

56 Ibid., 12.
During his three years in Milan, Menotti became a frequent theater goer. He enjoyed plays as much as opera, and was as interested in stagecraft as in music. After several years at the Milan Conservatory, however, Gian Carlo showed little improvement or passion in his music studies. Having made his acquaintance on her own, Ines Menotti met with Arturo Toscanini and asked his advice on musical direction for her son. To Mrs. Menotti's surprise, Toscanini suggested that Gian Carlo move to Philadelphia to study at the Curtis Institute of Music, which had only just been founded in 1925. Around this time, Gian Carlo's father died. While his father's death had little effect on the young Menotti, as they were not close, it profoundly changed the financial situation of the Menotti family. After the death of both Francisco and Alfonso, Francisco's business partner in Colombia refused to continue sending money to the Menotti clan in Italy. Ines took several trips to Colombia to attempt to rectify the situation, and around the time that Toscanini suggested the young Gian Carlo should move to Philadelphia, Ines was considering moving to South America to salvage the family business. After much trepidation and deliberation, Mrs. Menotti decided that this would be the best course of action for her son, and so in the fall of 1928, Menotti moved to the United States to study composition at the Curtis Institute of Music. He arrived in New York by boat and took a train to Philadelphia. He spoke no English, and was unsure if he would be accepted to Curtis until he auditioned and had his work reviewed. The stress of an unknown future combined with a reliance on others due to his inability to speak English was extremely anxiety-inducing for the boy, and he was terribly sad to live alone in the new country.  

It did not take long for the teenaged Menotti to begin to adjust to his new life, and his

57 Ibid., 13.
58 Ibid., 16–7.
years at Curtis were happy and productive. In addition to studying music, Menotti had the extra task of learning English in the first few years of his time in Philadelphia. Many of Menotti’s first teachers at Curtis were assigned to him because they could either speak French or Italian, and Menotti’s first American friends were those who were fluent in one of the languages that he was able to speak.

After attending for six years and graduating from the Curtis Institute of Music in 1933, Menotti lived in Vienna and St. Wolfgang, Austria until his return to New York in 1937. While in Austria, Menotti had the opportunity to meet many affluent people, and enjoyed socializing in the upper echelon of international society. Despite the gathering storm of Nazism, Menotti found Vienna in the 1930s to be a jubilant and international city. He made many acquaintances there, some of whom were Jewish. Tragically, many of these new acquaintances disappeared just a few years later due to the advancement of Nazi persecution. In 1937, after the composition of his first successful opera, *Amelia al ballo* (Amelia goes to the Ball), he returned home, just as many of his contemporaries living abroad were being warned that because of political situations in Europe, all Americans should leave immediately.

In the late 1930s, with the success of his opera *Amelia al ballo*, Menotti was approached by Dino Alfieri, the Italian Minister of Culture, who wanted to present Menotti’s music in Italy, where it had never been presented professionally; Menotti was very excited. Then Alfieri told him that he just had to join the Fascist party, and Menotti refused. As a result, Menotti’s music

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was no longer welcome in Italy. After the Italians declared war on the United States in December of 1941, Menotti was obligated to register as an “enemy alien” with the U.S. State Department. While many of his American friends were enlisting in the military to join the war effort, Menotti narrowly escaped spending the war years in an American internment facility due to the intervention of his friend, the Attorney General, Francis Biddle. In 1942, while living peacefully in his home in New York, Menotti was still receiving financial aid from his family in Italy, but Mussolini declared war on the United States and all funds from Italy were stopped. With friends and family living on three different continents (Menotti’s mother had settled with her second husband in Colombia), Menotti was affected by the war despite not being in it.

In 1946, Menotti’s third opera, The Medium, was wildly successful and ran for several months on Broadway. He became something of the theater's “golden child,” highly sought after for a variety of new projects. After such success with his stage works, Menotti received a contract in 1947 from MGM to write film scripts. Although his scripts were never made into movies, one of them contained the idea for his first full-length opera, The Consul.

After World War II, life began to return to normal, but as the Iron Curtain closed, many people attempted to flee the hopelessness of their lives in Europe. In the years after the war, newspapers were filled with articles about refugees and immigration woes. By 1947, Menotti was 36 years old. As an American immigrant with Italian citizenship, he was painfully aware of the bureaucracy surrounding visas and passports, especially after his being labeled an “enemy alien.” Coupled with having been raised by an international family who were required by

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61 Ibid., 37–8.
62 Ibid., 52.
63 Ibid., 45.
64 Hixon, Gian Carlo Menotti: A Bio–Bibliography, 6.
business to travel quite frequently outside of their country, Menotti was doubly aware of the plight of the immigrant. Perhaps because of his family, upbringing, and vocation, Menotti became outraged after the war at the restrictions on immigration and travel. In 1947, he began to give voice to his rage through writing *The Consul*, which would prove to be among his best known and most respected works.
CHAPTER 4

THE CONSUL

Composition Background

With his one-act opera *Amelia al ballo* (1937), Menotti was catapulted to fame virtually overnight. Within two years, the young Menotti was commissioned by NBC to write the first opera specifically written for radio, which was another successful one-act opera, this one entitled *The Old Maid and the Thief*. After the very successful run of 212 performances of *The Medium* on Broadway, Menotti had firmly established himself as the leading opera composer in America. Due to the high quality of his librettos, which Menotti always wrote himself, he began to receive commissions not only for new operas, but for non-musical theater pieces as well.

In 1947, Menotti accepted a contract to write film scripts for MGM. This offer resulted in his moving to Hollywood for three months, and the creation of two screenplays (both of which were ultimately to be rejected by the company). The first of Menotti's efforts, *The Bridge*, was loosely based on a newspaper clipping he had read in the *New York Times* about a group of refugees attempting to return home after the end of World War II. The article in question dates from May 20, 1947:

Refugees Dodge Trains on Border Bridge as both Austria and Hungary Bar Entry.
Vienna, May 19—A group of 116 Rumanian Jews has been confined to the railroad station in the Austrian frontier village of Loipersbach since last Saturday night after having spent the three previous days and nights dodging traffic on a railroad bridge leading from Hungary to Austria. What has happened to them is typical of the fate not only of Jewish refugees but of refugees generally in Central Europe... the Russians here insisted on returning to Hungary those refugees who had already arrived. Then the
Hungarian frontier guards refused to readmit the refugees. The Austrian frontier watchers, in their turn declined to permit the refugees to cross the Loipersbach railroad bridge. There they stayed, without food and water, until Saturday night, when the Austrian guards finally took pity on the refugees, and housed and fed them in the railroad station. They are still in the station, suffering less hardship, but enjoying no more freedom than before.65

In Menotti’s screenplay, a group of refugees leave Austria during the war and move to Hungary. After the war, they attempt to return home to Austria, crossing a bridge at the border. The Austrians at their end of the bridge will not accept the refugees as they do not have passports, despite the fact that they are Austrian citizens. When the refugees attempt to return to Hungary, they are refused reentry, again for lack of documentation. For a week, the group then lives on the bridge, with no country to claim them. Ultimately, MGM decided that *The Bridge* was too depressing for contemporary audiences who were looking to turn away from the sorrows of the aftermath of war. Although the screenplay was never realized in film by MGM, the topic of immigration and bureaucracy had piqued Menotti's interest. He began to work intermittently on *The Consul* while in Hollywood, and continued this work while teaching at the Curtis Institute of Music. The opera was finished in 1950, shortly before its premiere.

Winner of the New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for the best musical play and the Pulitzer Prize for Music, both for the 1949–1950 season, *The Consul* is considered by many to be the highlight of Menotti's output. Called "a musical drama in three acts,” Menotti chose not to associate *The Consul* with the term "opera" in the hopes of gaining a wider audience for his first full-length opera. Given its world premiere on March 1, 1950, a trial run at the Schubert Theatre in Philadelphia, it made its Broadway premiere two weeks later on March 15, 1950 at the Ethel

Barrymore Theatre. Well-received by contemporary audiences, it enjoyed 269 performances in New York City on Broadway, a formidable run that lasted approximately eight months. Since its first performance, The Consul has been translated into twelve languages and has been performed in over twenty countries. The work is dedicated to Emily Zimbalist, wife of one of the producers of The Consul, Efrem Zimbalist, Jr., and daughter-in-law of Mary Louise Curtis Bok, Menotti's mentor and the founder of the Curtis Institute of Music.

The Consul is written for eleven singers: three sopranos, mezzo-soprano, two contraltos, tenor, two baritones, bass-baritone, and bass. Additionally, there are two small silent roles, and one other part that is sung offstage, the Voice on the Record. While the Voice on the Record can be sung live by an offstage soprano, many productions use a recording made by Mabel Mercer that was made for the original Broadway production. The work is scored for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, two trumpets, two horns, trombone, percussion, harp, piano, and strings. For the sake of expression and clarity, Menotti makes use of a variety of vocal styles throughout the opera, including “classical” singing and “pop” singing, parlato, quasi parlato, and screaming. As a composer who was very concerned with the theater, Menotti’s score has many indications for the performer to affect their vocal timbre to aid their character portrayal, such as “in a breaking voice” or “the following dialogue must be interpreted very freely and in an almost whispered, but clear, voice”.

67 Menotti, The Consul, 148
68 Ibid., 143.
**Synopsis**

As specified in the score, *The Consul* takes place in the present time “somewhere in Europe,” in a country ruled by a totalitarian regime.\(^\text{69}\) This is most often interpreted as an Eastern European country behind the Iron Curtain. In the description of the apartment belonging to the main characters, the Sorels, Menotti writes that it is a “small, shabby apartment in a large European city.” Due to the somewhat more stable nature of the 21st-century European political climate, many stage directors choose to set *The Consul* in the late 1940s, and not in the present day, to be more in keeping with the political atmosphere of the story while still placing it in the specified locale. However, if a director wanted to keep the opera in the present time, he or she could easily transport the story to another location that currently struggles with oppression. The opera is in three acts, with two scenes per act. The first scene of the first two acts and the final scene of the last act take place in the Sorel apartment. The other three scenes occur in the waiting room of a foreign consulate, described by Menotti as being “a cheerless, coldly-lit room, furnished with the usual benches and wall desks.”\(^\text{70}\) In most productions, the consulate is interpreted as being that of the United States, however it is purposely left unidentified by Menotti.\(^\text{71}\) In the words of Donald Hixon, “One of the most powerful elements of *The Consul* is its deliberate avoidance of specific time or place. The 'good guys' might be 'we' or 'they.' Or vice versa.”\(^\text{72}\)

*The Consul* begins in the apartment of the Sorel family in the quiet darkness of early morning. John Sorel, a leader of the resistance movement, struggles into the apartment and calls

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69 Ibid., iv.
70 Ibid., 58.
for help from his wife, Magda, before falling to the ground, revealing a gunshot wound in his leg. John's wife and mother run to him, and as they dress his wound, he tells them that the resistance meeting he attended was raided by the police; he was shot, and a friend of his was killed. As Magda asks John if the police pursued him, sharp voices are heard outside. John quickly hides. The Secret Police Agent and two plainclothes officers enter the apartment and begin searching for John while questioning Magda, who claims that she does not know anything about John's whereabouts. Finally, the police leave, and they are heard outside arresting a neighbor. John comes out of hiding, and it is decided that the current situation is too dangerous for him, and he must leave immediately to attempt to cross the border into the neighboring democratic country. Magda agrees to go to the consulate of that country the next day to obtain visas for her, his mother, and their baby. The three say a tearful farewell and hope that they will be reunited soon.

The second scene begins the next morning in the consulate. Mr. Kofner, an elderly gentleman with a slight professional air, speaks to the secretary. He has spent endless days filling out papers and submitting them. Again, his papers are not quite correct, and he is instructed to resubmit the following day. Next, the old, nameless Foreign Woman makes her way to the desk. When it becomes apparent that she cannot speak English, Mr. Kofner offers to translate for her. The Foreign Woman, through Mr. Kofner's translation, explains that she needs a visa to see her dying daughter. Unmoved, The Secretary gives the Foreign Woman a stack of papers to fill out. Dejected, Mr. Kofner and the Foreign Woman sit. Finally, Magda approaches the desk. After asking to see the Consul, the Secretary responds, “No one is allowed to speak to the Consul. The Consul is busy.” Magda appeals to the Secretary, saying that her husband, John Sorel, fights for
the freedom that the Secretary's country represents. She tells the Secretary, “But you are our friends! The friends of the oppressed!” The Secretary will not be swayed, and gives Magda a stack of papers, denying her an audience with the Consul. Magda sits, and all of the characters waiting in the room sing a quintet about the endlessness and futility of waiting, all while the Secretary busily occupies herself.

Act II begins back at the Sorel apartment, one month later. Magda vents her extreme frustration at her unsuccessful attempts to obtain a visa. The Mother comments that she has never seen such a sad, sickly baby, and she sings a lullaby to her grandson. Exhausted, Magda falls asleep and has a nightmare filled with terrible images of John, the Secretary, and the Secret Police Agent. She wakes up horrified, calling for her mother-in-law. Suddenly, a rock breaks the window and lands in the room—it is the prearranged signal of a message from John. After they call Assan, one of John’s contacts in the resistance, and ask him to come over, they are interrupted by the Secret Police Agent, entering the apartment and questioning everyone once more. Magda violently throws the Police out, and Assan immediately enters. Assan informs Magda that John will not cross the border to freedom unless he knows that she and his Mother and baby can join him. Magda lies and tells Assan to tell John that they will join him soon. While Magda is getting supplies, the Mother tells Assan that the baby has died. When Magda returns, Assan quickly leaves. Magda notices something is wrong, and realizes that her child has died. The Mother sings her swan song, and the audience understands that the death of the baby will bring the Mother's death as well.73

The second scene of Act II begins a few days later in the consulate. A young woman,

73 Ken Wlaschin, Gian Carlo Menotti on Screen: Opera, Dance, and Choral Works on Film, Television, and Video (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1999), 40.
Anna Gomez, is speaking with the secretary about her situation. She is quickly dismissed. Next, the magician Nika Magadoff approaches the desk. Like everyone before him, he is unsuccessful in his attempts to obtain a visa. Suddenly, Magda bursts into the consulate and approaches the Secretary. Again, the secretary denies Magda an audience with the Consul. Magda loses control of herself and screams at the Secretary. The Secretary responds to Magda's outburst, saying, “Mrs. Sorel, if you behave like that, I must ask you to leave.” Magda regains her composure and embarks on an eight-minute aria and scena, expressing her sorrow over the current state of world affairs, explaining her desperate situation, verbalizing her indignation that free people of the world watch as innocents die, and ending with a powerful declaration, “Oh the day will come, I know, when our hearts aflame will burn your paper chains... that day, neither ink nor seal shall cage our souls. That day will come.” The Secretary is moved by Magda's plea, and tells her that the Consul has a very important visitor, but after he leaves, Magda may speak to him. When the visitor exits the Consul's office, Magda prepares to enter, but faints when she sees that the “very important visitor” is the Secret Police Agent.

Act III begins in the consulate. Magda sits motionless as the secretary works. Vera Boronel enters and speaks with the Secretary. Her visa has been approved, and she signs various papers. Assan enters and tells Magda that John has heard about the deaths of his baby and mother and plans to return for Magda. Assan begs Magda to do something to prevent John's return, saying that if John returns he will certainly be captured, which would mean the end of the resistance. Assan begs Magda to do something. Magda agrees, and gives Assan a note, assuring him that when John reads the note, he will not come back. Magda leaves the consulate. Shortly

after her departure, the Secretary prepares the consulate for closure for the day. She sings an aria about the haunting presence of so many people who need visas. Suddenly, John Sorel enters the consulate looking for his wife, and explaining that the police have followed him and he is safe in the consulate. The Secretary explains that she cannot keep him there, but helps him by telling him another way he could escape the building without being seen. The Secret Police enter, and after a struggle, get the best of John. Indignantly, the secretary tells them that they cannot arrest him in consulate, because “it is against all international rules.” With guns drawn, the Secret Police Agent tells the secretary that they are not arresting him, and that John will come with them of his own free will. Bitterly defeated, John agrees. Finally understanding the severity of the situation, the Secretary calls the Sorel home to try to get in touch with Magda.

The final scene of the opera takes place immediately following the previous scene. As Magda enters her apartment in a daze, the phone rings, but she does not reach it in time. She absentmindedly makes her way to the oven, apologizing to John as she goes. She turns on the gas and puts her head in the oven. As the fumes begin to affect her, she hallucinates about everyone from the consulate, John, and her mother-in-law. The characters dance and invite Magda to join them, but she is frightened. She attempts to get her papers together as John and her mother-in-law slowly leave. The Magician helps her back to the oven where she returns to her position. The phone rings and Magda rouses from the oven, reaching for the phone, but the fumes have already done their damage. She collapses, dead.

Themes

There is no denying that *The Consul* is a political opera. From its setting in a consulate to
its plot of attempting to navigate through endless bureaucracy, it remains as poignant today as
when it premiered in 1950. The drama follows the struggle of Magda Sorel against an unyielding
bureaucracy in her attempt to escape a totalitarian state. Through tragedy, the opera discusses
themes of the culpability for tyranny, and the role of both action and inaction in allowing the
abuse of power. Additionally, the opera explores the themes of the accessibility of freedom, and
the ways in which hope and faith often shield people from their reality.

Through the opera, Menotti draws attention to the ways in which global politics affect the
lives of the masses, most of whom do not care about the current regime. Rather, they simply
want to live their lives in peace. Although there are laws and policies in place to protect these
people, the laws are not sufficient nor do they take into account the variety of people's needs. The
Consul investigates the ways in which people's lives are ruined by politics and bureaucracy. In
the exploration of this, Menotti shows how it is not only the active participation of the regime
that ruins lives, but also the passivity of bureaucracy and those in countries unaffected by war
that can have a devastating impact. In the words of John Gruen, “Menotti...asks himself the
question: how many of us must bear the guilt for such actions, far away as they may be from us?
In other words, for whom does the bell toll?”^75

In addition to questions of culpability for oppression, The Consul explores the nature of
freedom, and its accessibility to the masses. Menotti accomplishes this in a variety of ways, from
directly addressing it, particularly in the arioso sections of the Mother's role and the Secretary's
aria, as well as in the quintet that ends Act I. Additionally, Menotti treats the issue of the
accessibility of freedom more subtly through his plot, showing a variety of reasons that

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characters seek asylum, and offering freedom to a character in the opera whose reason for leaving is unknown, showing the audience that the lottery of the immigration system is not a functional one.

Menotti's concern over faith and belief evidenced themselves even in his first opera, *Amelia al ballo*, and continued to be a theme in much of his operatic output throughout his career. Menotti was fascinated with the relationship between hope and reality, and many of his operas are concerned with this subject. While *Amelia* (*Amelia al ballo*) evidences her belief that she will attend the evening's ball, despite her situation, Menotti's subsequent operas deal with belief in a more serious light, from Baba's belief that she was attacked by the mute boy Toby despite evidence to the contrary (*The Medium*) to Bob's belief that a man can only be what people believe him to be, regardless of his truth (*The Old Maid and the Thief*). Faith is the subtext of many of Menotti's librettos, even from the first of his operas. Their faith and belief is what informs the actions of each of these characters.

**Source Material for The Consul**

As was the case for all of his operas, Menotti wrote the libretto for *The Consul* himself. While the story and characters are pulled from the imagination of the composer, there were a few incidents that stood out in Menotti's mind, which he drew upon when writing the opera's libretto. In addition to the *New York Times* article that inspired *The Bridge* and Menotti's interest in the perils of refugee immigration, several of the characters in Menotti's libretto are based on real-life

77 Ibid., 4.
encounters and events. Additionally, while there are no obvious portrayals of Jewish people in the opera, it cannot be ruled out that Menotti was not unaffected by the unknown fate of his Jewish friends in Europe, nor can one assume that the topic of immigration and displaced persons did not appeal to Menotti at least in part because he himself was an immigrant.

The lead character in *The Consul*, Magda Sorel, is based on the subject of an article Menotti read in the *New York Times* from Wednesday, February 12, 1947. The headline reads, “Immigrant a Suicide: Woman, Denied Entry to U.S., Hangs Herself on Ellis Island.” The article discusses the fate of Mrs. Sofia Feldy, a 38-year-old Polish immigrant, who lost her daughter and her husband and was refused entry to the United States by a board of special inquiry. Rather than return to Poland, Mrs. Feldy committed suicide by hanging in the Ellis Island detention room.79 Although the story of Sofia Feldy would be significantly altered by Menotti, her experience proved to be the basis for Menotti’s Magda Sorel.

The character of The Foreign Woman is based on an elderly Italian woman that Menotti met on an airplane. She spoke no English, and told Menotti in her native Italian that she was visiting her daughter in the United States. As Menotti described her, “she was tiny, like some shriveled child, and her wrinkled skin, the heritage of peasant ancestors, was the color of earth.”80 Upon arrival, the American authorities detained the old woman because her documents were not in order. Menotti translated for her as long as he possibly could until it was necessary for him to leave, leaving the woman alone in a foreign country with no one who spoke her language. Menotti never found out what happened to her, and felt that someone must record her

80 Ardoin, *The Stages of Menotti*, 57.
story. There is, then, something of Menotti in the character of Mr. Kofner, the man who helps the old Italian woman in the Consul to understand what the secretary is telling her to do.

The character of Anna Gomez is based on a childhood memory of Menotti’s. At dinner with his mother, Menotti became aware of a man and a woman, presumably a father and his daughter, eating in the restaurant. The woman was about thirty years old, and had a streak of white hair. The pair were conversing in hushed tones, but every so often, the woman would cry out “No!” and nervously run her hand through her hair. That evening, the young Menotti had trouble sleeping and could not shake the image of that woman. The nameless woman from Menotti's childhood enters The Consul as Anna Gomez, complete with white streak in her hair and nervous habit of running her hands through her hair.81

**Character Symbolism**

The characters in The Consul are at once realistic and multifaceted, and yet simultaneously serve to create a representational discussion of the difficulties of modern diplomacy and bureaucracy. In keeping with his omission of a specific time or location for the opera, Menotti leaves out certain character details in order to make each more representational. While some of the characters are named, it is interesting to note that several do not have names, such as the Mother, Secretary, Secret Police Agent, and the Consul. By creating characters that are both realistic and symbolic, The Consul can be understood on two levels: while it superficially is the story of a woman attempting to obtain an exit visa, it is at its core an allegory for all those attempting to flee oppression and those who prevent their freedom.

81 Gruen, Menotti: A Biography, 29.
John Sorel

Of all of the characters in *The Consul*, John Sorel is among the least three-dimensional. John represents the only force opposing the totalitarian state, and thus he is presented as the only character with any power to change things. He is not only symbolic of those who actively resist oppression, he is also an embodiment of the ideal of freedom. While all the sympathetic characters wait at the consulate, and figures such as the Secretary and the Secret Police Agent hinder their plans, John operates outside of this system. John is an interesting characterization of a rebellion in that he is presented as strong and idealistic, but through the unraveling of the drama, the audience is also able to see the terrible toll of his actions. Menotti clearly saw John as a positive figure, saying, “John Sorel's intense love of humanity renders him almost superhuman, and only for his wife and mother does he remain a man.”

In this light, John is seen as a revolutionary hero and martyr, fighting for everyone waiting in the consulate. John's struggle is presented in a positive light, and his ideals are noble. As he explains to his wife in Act I, “This we must do so that one day our son may see with innocent eyes the flower we nourish in bitter darkness.”

He later instructs Magda to go to the Consul by saying, “Go to the consulate tomorrow. Tell them our story. Ask them for help. Tell them what I've done. They will not bolt their doors to my wife and my mother and my little son.”

Through these lines, Menotti characterizes John and his cause as both noble—fighting for the freedom and innocence of the next generation—and in keeping with the ideals of the Western Democracies. The conclusion may even be drawn from what he tells Magda that his resistance and fight for freedom is

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82 Ardoin, *The Stages of Menotti*, 56.
84 Ibid., 37–8.
supported by the government represented by the consulate.

Interestingly, while John and his actions set the tone for the opera's dramatic action, he is largely absent from the story after the first act. *The Consul* is not about John or the resistance fighters, it is about everyone else: what happens to the people who live in a war-torn country who are simply trying to live their lives. Thus, John sets up the impetus for Magda, and then leaves her to deal with the situation. In keeping with all of his operas, Menotti chose to center *The Consul* on a female character. Speaking of the absence of strong male figures in Menotti's operas, critic Winthrop Sargeant observed: “His principal male characters are as a rule damaged and groping figures—childlike, lame, or mentally unbalanced. It is the women who carry the burden of dignity, strength, holiness, or dominance.”85 While John may not be damaged, the fact remains that he is largely absent, and representative of an ideal to be reached for, but not a present reality.

**Magda Sorel**

Magda Sorel, the apolitical wife of the leader of a freedom fighter, is presented as the Everywoman. She has a mother-in-law and a baby to care for, both of whom are nameless, and her husband's name is John, a possible reference to the American placeholder name, John Doe. Magda could be any woman whose life has been put in danger by forces beyond her control. Her only desire in the opera is the safety of her family and to be reunited with her husband in safety. She expresses frustration with her husband for endangering their lives, but ultimately she strives to keep her family together.

As a character representative of the Everywoman, it warrants discussion that Magda is named while her mother-in-law and baby remain nameless, and her husband is given the first name of the American unidentified person placeholder. It is clear that Magda represents thousands of people who struggle every day to escape horrible living conditions and are met at every turn by difficulty and despair. She is also the symbol of the families of those who fight for Western ideals, those who, by the choices of their husbands, brothers, fathers, or someone else, must become outlaws themselves. Stories of refugees struggling to find a place to live in peace filled the newspapers while Menotti was writing *The Consul*, and have populated headlines ever since. Refugees are discussed in the news not as people, but as numbers. Their lives are dehumanized and they are discussed *en masse*. By naming Magda, the Everywoman, Menotti first identifies her as one of the huddled masses, and then gives her a name. In doing so, Menotti restores humanity to those she represents. In watching her story unfold throughout the opera, Menotti encourages his audience to see each refugee read about in the paper as a Magda Sorel—not a number, but a human being, deserving of dignity and freedom as much as the person reading about them in the paper.

*The Mother*

In the words of Menotti, the Mother, who remains nameless, “personifies the aging mother of everyone who carries the bitter taste of death in her dry mouth. She will live until she is no longer needed.” The Mother and the baby coexist as a unit. In fact, the Mother never appears onstage without the baby until the final dream sequence. The Mother's life is ending, the

86 Ibid., 56.
baby's has only begun, but both are sick, and will not survive the drama. Symbolically, Mother and baby form the circle of life, which remains sick and unchanged. The Mother lives her whole life under oppression, and the baby never has a chance to live his life. Together, Mother and baby give the complete life cycle of an oppressed person, and fittingly, neither is ever granted freedom, except in death.

As a character representing the life cycle, and more, the cyclical nature of human history, the Mother offers the most insight into the motivations of the “everyperson.” She complains about John's revolutionary activities, saying, “A million dead cannot feed your child!” She laments the state of the world, and worries over the future, drawing attention to the cycle of violence that seems unending, saying, “We old people have seen too many tears, we have seen too much blood, we have seen too much betrayal. We can no longer keep our silence.” Menotti uses the outspoken Mother figure to speak for the ages, commenting on basic human needs and desires and the sorrow that war brings. Thus, she can be seen not only as representative of the elderly in a time of conflict, but as the very voice of history itself, warning over the fate of the future. Taking the baby as representative of the future, one can see that all of the Mother's comments regarding the baby are also meaningful when applied to the baby's symbolic role as the future. Interestingly, as the drama unfolds and the hope for the Sorels' future begins to fade, the baby becomes more and more sick, until he finally dies, foreshadowing that the Sorel family and all they represent have no future.

87 Menotti, The Consul, 11.
88 Ibid., 20–1.
Mr. Kofner

Mr. Kofner represents those in middle class society—teachers, business people, professionals—who may find themselves wishing to leave a police state. Mr. Kofner is not a fighter or a renegade, and the audience is never given his reasons for needing to exit the country. Although he appears to be an educated, contributing member of society, even he cannot successfully maneuver through the endless bureaucracy of the consulate. Mr. Kofner aids opera viewers to see that not all those who seek asylum are violent or degenerates, and not all those whose paperwork is rejected are incompetent and less deserving. As Menotti writes, “Mr. Kofner, probably an elderly school teacher, is the image of patience; one knows by looking at him that he will never get that which somehow represents the last hope in his life of privation and deception.”

The Foreign Woman

As discussed earlier, the character of the Foreign Woman is based on an encounter that Menotti had with an old Italian woman on an airplane. This role represents those who, for one reason or another, are dependent on others and do not quite understand the difficulty of international politics. The Foreign Woman wants to visit her dying daughter, but is unable because of foreign policy. The Foreign Woman does not speak the language of those around her, and is elderly and provincial. She is presented as always being in need of the assistance of others. Thus, when the government of the consulate is unwilling to help her, she finds herself dependent on others for assistance.

89 Ardoin, The Stages of Menotti, 56.
Anna Gomez

Anna Gomez is perhaps the stereotype of a person seeking political asylum, and yet she is portrayed with a human side, giving dignity to the plight of the refugee, and giving the audience something to think about with her small solo part, making up only four pages of the entire score. When she approaches the desk, the Secretary reads from Anna Gomez's case file: “Three years in concentration camp. Husband, prisoner. Whereabouts, unknown... no documents. I don't see what we can do for you.” Anna responds by explaining that her permit is about to expire and she must leave the country at the end of the month. She has already tried to obtain a visa from the consulates of many other nations, but no one will help her. She continues, “They don't know what to do with me, and nobody cares. Still, there must be a place for me somewhere in this large world.” The Secretary responds by telling Anna to return to her country, and then, slightly embarrassed when Anna implies that returning home would mean death, the Secretary invites her to fill out a stack of papers.

In this scene, Anna and the Secretary draw attention to a problem with immigration—the world is certainly large enough for all people to live in, and yet because of politics and bureaucracy, it is too much of a hassle for anyone to find a place for everyone. The Secretary is uncomfortable by Anna's presence, not because she is embarrassed at her own ignorance, but because she is embarrassed by Anna's existence. Anna's survival is a bother to everyone, and certainly the Secretary wishes she would simply disappear so that she no longer has to deal with the problem. By dehumanizing her, the Secretary allows herself to believe that her inaction will not result in the death of a fellow human being. As John Ardoin writes, Anna is “...a woman with

90 Menotti, The Consul, 154.
no country whose life is a hindrance to everyone. We wonder if we will someday read about her in the morning paper as Menotti did about Sofia Feldy, or, as Menotti has mused, 'encounter her again years from now in another consulate.'”91

**Vera Boronel**

The part of Vera Boronel is quite small; in fact, the only time that she is given any significant stage time is in Act III when the Secretary informs her that her visa has been approved. Interestingly, Ms. Boronel is the character in the opera about whom the audience learns least. There is no mention of why she needs a visa or who she is. She is simply one more person waiting in the consulate. In portraying her in this manner, Menotti does not make a stand on one case being more deserving than another, and shows that it is completely random how visas are distributed. Ardoin quotes Menotti as saying, “Of all the people waiting in the consulate, it was Vera Boronel who least needed a visa and who, naturally, got one.”92 The granting of a visa to a woman whose case does not seem as desperate as some others in the drama draws attention to the ways in which the contemporary (and current) laws surrounding immigration and the granting of visas relies on a lottery system that is not always just and has no way of taking into account the human side of each case. As the Secretary repeats throughout the opera, “Your name is a number. Your story’s a case. Your need a request. Your hopes will be filed. Come back next week.”93 In the system outlined by the Secretary, Vera's situation and Magda's are equated, although for Vera, a visa may mean a vacation, whereas for Magda, it

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91 Ardoin, *The Stages of Menotti*, 56.
92 Ibid., 56.
means life. Through Vera, the audience is able to see the flaws in immigration policy.

The Magician

The character of Nika Magadoff, the Magician, is multifaceted. On one level, he represents somewhat of a celebrity, arguing for his being deserving of a visa based on his career. He presents himself as an international performer, and a man whose very life is lived throughout the world, yet he finds himself in the same situation as the others, waiting in the consulate, hoping to escape. Interestingly, as Nika Magadoff is promoting the glories of his past and his great career as a means to justify his need for a visa, he says, “I have often performed for the Prince and the Princess Yusoupoff, and the Duke of Alba, and the Queen of Belgium—all the finest, all the richest, all the noblest, all the brightest, all the greatest people in the world.”

While any members of the world's elite class could have been mentioned by the Magician, he mentions only people who were somewhat political and opposed dictatorships in their various corners of the globe. Prince Felix Yusupov (1887–1967) is largely regarded as the assassin of Grigori Rasputin, the controversial adviser to Russia's last royal family. The Duke of Alba most likely refers to Jacobo Fitz-James Stuart y Falcó, 17th Duke of Alba de Tormes (1878–1953), who opposed the reign of General Franco of Spain and called for a re-institution of the Spanish Monarchy after the Spanish Civil War. Additionally, the Queen of Belgium refers to Elisabeth of Bavaria (1876–1965), a beloved ruler of Belgium who saved hundreds of Jewish children from deportation during the German occupation of Belgium from 1940–1944. After the liberation, the Queen opened her palace to the British to use as a military headquarters until the end of the war.

94 Ibid., 165–6.
Thus, the Magician is attempting to not only justify his merit for a visa, but also show his political allegiance as being aligned with that of the country represented by the consulate. When the Secretary rejects his plea for special treatment, the Magician walks away dejectedly, saying, “Even a great, great artist must find a way to make a living.”\(^\text{95}\) In this way, the audience can see something of Menotti in the role of the Magician; he was known to laughingly quote this line in regard to some of his work. The Magician shows that even those who once held prominent positions within society are not immune to the horrible realities of persecution.

While The Magician’s scene takes up a considerable amount of the first scene of Act II, he does not reveal anything of himself or the reason for his need of a visa. He is only presented as an illusionist and hypnotist, and as such, is rather mysterious. In the final dream scene of Act III, the Magician appears again, luring Magda to breathe in the oven's fumes, helping her to die. By presenting the Magician so closely to Magda's death, it becomes clear that the true illusion is that of freedom being accessible in life. Thus, the illusionist conjures ideas that Magda may be free and reunited with John, but he brings her out of her hypnotic dream to the reality of her death. Regarding the Magician, Ardoin quotes Menotti as saying, “…beware of Nika Magadoff, this mysterious conjurer who holds in his eyes the power to lull you to sleep. Beware of him, for the visions that he allows you to possess so clearly one moment, he will whisk away the next moment... he is Death.”\(^\text{96}\)

**The Secret Police Agent**

The Secret Police Agent is the obvious antagonist of *The Consul*. He makes three

\(^\text{95}\) Ibid., 193.  
\(^\text{96}\) Ardoin, *The Stages of Menotti*, 56.
appearances in the opera—intimidating, questioning, and threatening Magda in all three cases. The Secret Police Agent represents oppression and the power of a totalitarian regime. Through his representation of the powerful regime and his pursuit of the Sorel family, it is easy to see that he is the cause of the Sorels' untimely deaths.

It is interesting to see that Menotti chose to use a short motive played by the woodwinds to represent the Secret Police.

Figure 9: Secret Police Agent Motive, Act I, Scene i, *The Consul*

The first few entrances of the motive are played in the upper range of the clarinet. The clarinet's registration and figuration reminds one of Klezmer music, and it is interesting to note that the Holocaust and persecution of the Jews in Europe by the Nazi Gestapo soldiers was still very fresh in the minds of many in 1950. While it cannot be said with certainty that this was the inference Menotti was making with his choice of motive for the Secret Police, the fact remains that many listeners have drawn this conclusion on their own. Thus, Menotti equates the Secret Police Agent with the terror and oppression of the Nazis, giving audience members an easy reference point for their understanding of the story.

*The Secretary*

A counterpart to the Secret Police Agent, the Secretary to the Consul shares the role of antagonist in the opera. A woman bound by rules and regulations, the Secretary fails to make

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exception for anyone requesting a visa, regardless of their situation. She insists on following protocol, and is cold and unyielding. As such, she represents bureaucracy and the immigration lottery. While she is not openly antagonistic to any of the sympathetic characters of the opera, she insists that protocol must be followed, and because of her immobility, the Sorel family dies.

The motive that Menotti frequently associates with the Secretary is sterile, repetitive and banal, ascribing to the Secretary qualities of repetitiveness and thoughtlessness.

Figure 10: Secretary Motive, Act I, Scene ii, *The Consul*  

Thus, while the Secret Police's motive is evocative of Klezmer music and the Nazis reign of terror, the Secretary's music is without character, representing the lack of personal connection with the people who need her help.

*The Consul*

Despite being the namesake of the opera, the character of the Consul never appears in the opera. Thus, the “role” is a perfect representation of the free democracies of the world to those who are oppressed. The characters in the opera wait to be heard and recognized by the Consul, but he never appears. In the opening of the third Act, the Secretary tells Magda “…the Consul will not be here today… There is a reception at the Turkish Embassy, you know… No point in your waiting.” 99 Thus, it is not simply that the Consul, representative of the free world, is not

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aware of the needs of the people represented by those in the consulate, rather that he is unwilling to help them, and pushes their needs aside. The Consul has time for a reception at the Embassy, but not for the powerless waiting in his office. Thus, the Consul's absence is representative of the absence of the aid of free states to the needy in oppressed nations.

**The Mother as Social Commentator**

As discussed earlier, the figure of the Mother, taken together with the baby, represent the cycle of human suffering. More than any other character, the Mother most frequently speaks directly to the greater tragedy presented in *The Consul*—not that of the Sorel family, but of the cycle of violence and oppression within which all of humanity is trapped. The Mother's utterances are interesting in that she comments not only on the cycle of violence of which we are all a part, but also her hopes and beliefs that God, in his divine providence, would not allow such atrocities. Thus, the Mother's role speaks to the reality of life replete with violence and hate, and the hope and faith with which people surround themselves in order to cope with the violent reality of life.

In the beginning of Act I, John arrives home, wounded, and his Mother and Magda lament the situation. As mentioned earlier, while Magda sings of how John's actions have affected her life, the Mother addresses the greater societal problem of violent political conflict by asking John, “...when will all this sorrow end? Damn you, you and all your friends! Why don't you men bring home some bread, and not only fear and blood? A million dead cannot feed your child!”

Although the cause John advocates is worthy, the Mother expresses her distress over

100 Ibid., 11.
the cycle of violence of which he is a part. While Magda refers to John as a hero in Act II, the Mother sees him as equally culpable for the violence that threatens her family as the oppressive regime that they oppose. A few minutes later, as the Secret Police Agent searches their home, the Mother asks, “Shall we ever see the end of all this! I’m not thinking of us old people, but of all our children and their sons. Shall they ever see the end of all this? ...patience has become the virtue of the young...Even death seems too slow in granting us our rest.”101 In this instance, the Mother is addressing the Secret Police in much the same way that she spoke to her own son. Seeing the Mother as a representation of the voice of time and human history, the justification of the violence or strife does not matter; both sides are culpable. After the police have left, the Mother laments to herself, “Oh God! How long must women cry over man's destiny? Have pity on man, this bit of clay, wet with women's tears.”102 In this brief bit of text, the Mother addresses not only the cycle of violence throughout history on those who are killed and oppressed, but also the effect that this history has had on those who love them.

In Act II, Scene ii, the Mother sings a touching lullaby to her sleeping grandson, whom the audience never sees. Superficially, the Mother expresses her concern that the child is sick, saying, “I've never seen a baby so little and sad; like an old man, so wrinkled and white.”103 Taking the baby as a representation of the future, the Mother expresses her concern for the future, which looks grim and bleak. As the scene continues, the Mother sings of things she will do to enable the child's comfort and happiness in the future:

“I shall find for you shells and stars. I shall swim for you river and sea. Sleep my love, sleep for me. My sleep is old... Rain will fall but Baby won't know. He laughs alone in

101 Ibid., 19–21.
102 Ibid., 32.
103 Ibid., 115.
orchards of gold. Tears will fall but Baby won't know. His laughter is blind... I shall build for you planes and boats. I shall catch for you cricket and bee...”

Thus, Menotti uses a seemingly innocuous lullaby to show the cycle of life—the past and present are sacrificed for the promise of the future's being bright.

While the Mother comments on history's cycle of violence and oppression, she simultaneously reveals her faith, showing the ways in which people justify the horrors they face with their beliefs that things will improve (despite all of the evidence pointing to the fact that it likely will not). In the first scene of Act I, after it has been decided that John must flee immediately to evade capture by the police, the Mother assures Magda, “Yes, Magda, John is right. He must go now. But God will join us again.” As Magda is begging John to stay, the Mother’s faith that God will intervene and allow the family to be reunited in the future allows her to watch John walk out of their lives. Thus, her faith blinds her to the reality of her situation.

This scene offers an interesting look at belief, and offers an insight into Menotti’s own relationship with his faith. After Magda has a dream foreshadowing the death of her baby, the Mother assures her that she need not be upset, singing, “Dreams are never true, silly girl... this is not like you, not like you.”

104 Ibid., 115–8.
Just a few minutes later, Magda's baby does indeed die, causing the Mother to sing a short aria lamenting the loss of the child, and also of the possibility of a future. At the end of the aria, the Mother indicates that she will die soon too, as this heartbreak is too much for her to bear. She then says, “but I believe that God receives with kindness the empty-handed traveler.”

Figure 12: “But I believe that God...,” Act II, Scene i, The Consul

105 Ibid., 129.
106 Ibid., 151.
While the vocal line of these two sections is different, the orchestral accompaniment is almost identical between the two passages. In both sections, the Mother is speaking her beliefs—that dreams are not true, and that God will receive her. By using the same music between the two sections, it is also conceivable that Menotti’s own loss of faith is audible here. The Mother assured Magda that dreams are not true directly after Magda dreamed that her baby had died. As it turned out, the baby did die, and the dream was true, proving the Mother's belief about dreams to be false. One could then see how, using the same music to underscore the Mother's belief that “God receives with kindness the empty-handed traveler” could be Menotti’s way of subtly suggesting that this belief is false as well.

**Two Dreams**

Since childhood, Menotti was fascinated by the mysterious workings of dreams, which is evidenced in *The Consul* with the inclusion of two extended dream scenes.107 These dreams are incorporated into the opera, the first in Act II, Scene i, and the second in the final scene of Act II. Both dreams foreshadow things to come: in the first, the death of Magda's baby, which can also be read as the end of the Sorels' future; in the second dream, Magda's death is foreshadowed, with the dead and dying inviting her to join them.

Magda's first dream begins as John, “bloodstained and bandaged,” enters the apartment carrying branches and stones. The Secretary follows him in. John tells Magda that the sticks and stones are to build them a “cross and a grave.”108 As the dream continues, John tells Magda that the Secretary is his sister, that they must love her, and share everything with her. He then tells

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108 Menotti, *The Consul*, 120.
Magda that the Secretary will dig their grave. The three approach the dinner table as John says, “The bread must be broken. The wine must be spilled.” Magda suddenly becomes agitated, singing “Look...look. The wine has turned black like blood that is shed. Look, John, look, John! The bread is white like the flesh of the dead... Oh John, send her away. Your sister is death; she covets my child for a grave.”

In close examination of this dream, the heartfelt Catholicism of Menotti’s youth makes itself apparent in the clear Christian symbolism presented. The dream equates John Sorel, the opera's symbol of freedom and savior of an oppressed people who will be martyred for his beliefs by the totalitarian government who opposes him, with Jesus of Nazareth, martyred for his beliefs by the oppressive Roman government. *The Consul* presents freedom as being attainable in death, and thus John's death shows the way to true freedom. Likewise, according to Christian belief, Jesus was martyred to enable those who believe in him to have freedom after death.

In John's first utterance in the dream, he tells Magda that he carries the supplies for his own cross and grave. With this statement, he indicates that he is aware of his approaching death, and is fully prepared for it. Next, John insists that the Secretary is his sister. Interpreting the dream with a Christian lens, Menotti is likening the Secretary to the biblical character Judas Iscariot, the disciple who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Just as Judas was thought to be a friend of Jesus and ultimately betrayed him, the Secretary is supposed to be a friend of the Sorels. The Secretary is a part of a democracy's consulate, a country that the Sorels thought would support them in their struggles for freedom, and yet does nothing to help them. Magda even sings, “But you are our friends, the friends of the oppressed!” to the Secretary when trying

109 Ibid., 119–126.
110 Matt. 26:14–6 NIV
to understand why she is not being given access to the Consul. Thus, John is betrayed by the Secretary is much the same way that Jesus was betrayed by Judas. Next, John invites the Secretary to break bread and spill wine with him, a symbol of the Christian practice of communion, in which wine is representative of Christ's blood, and bread represents his body. In the biblical story of Jesus' last days, Jesus shares bread and wine with Judas, as John proposes to do with the Secretary. Suddenly, Magda exclaims that the wine has become blood and the bread has turned into flesh. According to Catholic dogma, during the practice of communion in which bread and wine is consumed in remembrance of Jesus, the bread and wine undergoes a process of transubstantiation, by which the bread and wine are changed into the literal body and blood of Jesus. Thus, Menotti's equating of John Sorel with Jesus is complete.

By creating such a strong connection between the story of Jesus' betrayal by Judas Iscariot and the Secretary's betrayal of John Sorel, Menotti makes a bold assertion. John Sorel, the opera's symbol of those who desire freedom, is betrayed by the Secretary, who represents the indifference of citizens in Western democracies, a group that includes most audience members of the opera. Through the simultaneous comparison of the Secretary to Judas Iscariot and the average citizen in democratic Western nations, Menotti equates much of his opera audience with the person responsible for the death of Jesus. For Christians and those familiar with the stories of Christianity, this is an uncomfortable accusation.

The second dream in The Consul occurs in the final scene of the opera. In this scene, Magda turns on the gas oven and breathes in the fumes. As the gas begins to affect her, the dream begins. Magda sees those who had been waiting in the consulate and hears the voice of the Secret

111 Menotti, The Consul, 85.
Police Agent barking questions at her—the same questions found on the paperwork given to her by the Secretary. The Magician appears, saying “Choose your partner. The dance is on,” at which point the characters from the consulate begin a macabre waltz.\footnote{Ibid., 274.} John and his Mother appear and join the waltz, dancing with each other. The Mother wears a wedding dress, and Magda comments, “Mother, I thought that you were dead. You look so young, I feel so old and sad.”\footnote{Ibid., 275–6.} John and his Mother invite Magda to come with them as they exit, leaving Magda alone with the Magician. Magda struggles to join John and his Mother, but cannot keep up with them. The Magician hypnotizes Magda and the dream ends, returning Magda to her place at the oven, where she collapses, dead.

This second dream, occurring just minutes before the end of the opera, helps to clarify some of the central themes of the drama, specifically the joint culpability of totalitarian regimes and citizens of Western democracies in oppression, as well as the idea that freedom is possible only in death. In the beginning of the dream, Magda is terrorized by the voice of the Secret Police Agent, asking her, “What is your name?” and “Age?” as she screams her answers. These questions, familiar to her from the forms given by the Secretary at the consulate, are now being asked by the Secret Police Agent. By linking the Secret Police Agent and the Secretary through use of the same text, Menotti underscores the culpability of both characters in the tragedy of the Sorels, and that both the totalitarian regime and the indifference of the West are at fault for the deaths of thousands.

After a few moments of the dream, The Mother, looking young, appears in a wedding gown. The Mother, who had heretofore symbolized the burden of history, is suddenly made new
in her appearance as a bride, a symbol of youth and freshness. Thus, the character that had represented the human cycle of suffering has now been immortalized as a symbol of youthful potential in death.

The Magician hypnotizes the characters in the dream and commands them to dance. This is reminiscent of Act II, Scene ii, in which he hypnotizes those in the consulate to dance while imagining themselves in a lovely ballroom. In that scene, they are hypnotized and oblivious to their current situation of waiting in the consulate. In the final scene's dream, the Magician again hypnotizes all the characters and they begin to waltz, but this dance is the dance of death, which terrifies Magda. Therefore, the Magician's magic is that he can transcend space between life and death and incite people to believe one thing when the reality is something quite different. As a result, the Magician is the only one capable of transporting Magda back to the realm of the living at the end of the dream.

Inaction and Action—The Connection of Secretary to Secret Police

A prominent theme explored throughout the opera is that of guilt through both action and inaction. While the Secret Police Agent is the obvious antagonist of the opera, it is clear that the Secretary is an equally important adversary to those hoping for freedom. Through her unwillingness to involve herself in the lives and stories of those suffering around her, she creates roadblocks at every turn for those who need her help. Ultimately, this leads to the untimely deaths of the entire Sorel family. With the inclusion of the Secretary as an antagonist, Menotti shows that through the inaction and apathy of the Western free world, bureaucratic indifference is responsible for many unnecessary deaths. Additionally, through ignorance and inaction, the
privileged citizens of wealthy first-world nations are just as much to blame for these deaths as the undemocratic regimes that actively seek to repress their people. Thus, by equating the Secretary with the Secret Police Agent in terms of their role as antagonist in *The Consul*, Menotti invites each audience member to contemplate his or her role in the deaths of countless individuals like Magda Sorel.

In his portrayal of both of the antagonists of the drama, Menotti leaves the Secret Police Agent rather two-dimensional while giving the Secretary a much more substantive role. In catering to an audience primarily made up of citizens of democratic Western countries, it may be a fair assessment that Menotti left the Secret Police Agent rather superficial because a character representing the oppressive face of fascism or communism would need no help being seen as evil by Western audiences, particularly in the 1950s. On the other hand, the Secretary's character hits much closer to home for Western audiences. Until the third Act, the Secretary is cold and rigid, and can be understood by audiences as a particularly unfeeling individual, in no way representative of all of the citizens of free countries. Before the final appearance of John Sorel, followed by his and Magda's deaths, the Secretary is given a short aria entitled, "Oh, those faces!" While the Secretary, a rather shallow and non-introspective character, complains about the endless stream of people clamoring into the consulate in search of visas, a much deeper societal problem is alluded to as viewed from a first-world perspective:

Oh, those faces! All those faces! They hang from the ceiling and the walls. They wait for me all day long. They still will be here in the morning, boneless, pale in the dusty sun. One must try not to remember. One must not think. Otherwise, how can one do any work? Ah, those names! All those names! Why must there be so many names? Their cases are all alike.\(^{114}\)

\(^{114}\) Ibid., 244–6.
The Secretary's complaints of the never-ending line of heartbroken visitors lead the audience to despise this character all the more. Can she not see that they all have legitimate reasons to be terrified of their government? Can she not see that she is in a position to help them? Upon further examination, however, the clever audience member might begin to ponder: What if everyone who truly needed a visa were granted one? What if an exception could be made for everyone who needs help? It does not take the imaginative person long to answer these questions with visions of an overcrowded free society without sufficient work or housing to handle the significant influx of refugees. In fact, this is most often the reason given by those who argue against accepting refugees: the host country will be overcrowded, there will not be enough work for everyone, crime will increase. Cleverly, Menotti inserts this brief aria near the end of the opera to cause the audience to both despise the Secretary for her disdain of the refugees, and yet to identify with her. The character of the Secretary upholds and values the rules and regulations about who can be helped and who cannot. If a rule is broken for someone with extenuating circumstances, then it must be broken for everyone, as it seems everyone has an extenuating circumstance. By the end of this brief two-minute aria, the attentive audience member comes to appreciate that it is not just the Secretary causing a problem for Magda and the others, but rather the entire system of world governance and immigration policy. Perhaps this is the element that makes The Consul such a tragedy. Not only do the heroes die, but this opera forces Western audiences to identify with the antagonist, and to be unable to find any realistic alternative outcome for the protagonists.
**Ensemble**

Where *The Consul* does not have a dedicated ensemble, there are several scenes in which multiple characters sing together to express group sentiment, serving as the voice of the world's oppressed and displaced. By bringing many characters together to express a common thought, Menotti gives voice and identity to the masses. While a dedicated chorus would have done this, Menotti's use of named characters allows the voice of the people to take on a more distinctive identity, showing various individuals with differing situations who all desire the same thing. In this way, Menotti humanizes the hordes and gives dignity to a group of people often stripped of their grace and poise in media coverage. Two such instances will be discussed below, occurring in the second scene of Acts I and III.

Closing Act I is a quintet sung by several characters as they wait in the consulate. In the first half of the ensemble, the characters sing of spending countless hours waiting for visa paperwork that may not ever come. The quartet finishes with an impassioned cry, “Oh, give us back the earth and make us free. It is God's gift to me, this ever flow'ring earth. Oh, let all flags be burned and guilt be shared. My brother's shame be mine and his my fare... Oh leave the doors unlocked and light the lamps within.”

This first quintet expresses the characters' desire for freedom, and the belief that all people have an innate human right for freedom, which is hindered by government and borders.

The second ensemble expressing collective sentiment is the final dream sequence occurring in Act III. In this scene, most of the opera's characters sing,

“Lo, death's frontiers are open. All aboard! Burn your papers, lock your bags (all aboard!). Bid farewell to benches and inkwells (all aboard!). All aboard! Death's

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115 Ibid., 95–108.
frontiers are open. All aboard! There's no bar nor chain to cross (all aboard!). There's no flag nor flight, there's no clock nor numbered nights. Horizons, horizons. There's no guard to bribe or beg. Death's frontiers are free. Horizons, horizons. There's no guard to kiss or kill. Death's frontiers are free.”¹¹⁶

This can be understood as a companion piece to the first. With these ensembles occurring at the end of the first and subsequent final acts of the drama, they serve as bookends of the opera and help the audience to understand the story as a critique of bureaucratic policies which prevent universal accessibility to freedom. While the quintet from Act I calls for the burning of flags, the final ensemble offers the idea of death as the land of true freedom, where there are no flags. Thus, in the beginning of the opera, the characters search for freedom in life, while the same characters sing of death as the only way to freedom by the end of the opera. In framing the entire work with these two ensemble pieces, Menotti enables his audience to fully understand *The Consul* not only as a story centering on the Sorel family, but as one of accessibility to human rights.

*Freedom*

The issue of freedom and its accessibility to all people is central to *The Consul*. With the exception of the antagonists, each character in the opera strives to attain freedom, and all of their actions are motivated by their desire to achieve the freedom that they hope for. John Sorel, the embodiment of freedom's ideals, the champion and, later, martyr of freedom, is described in the libretto as a freedom fighter. When Magda attempts to explain her identity to the Secretary, she explains, “My name is Sorel, Magda Sorel. The wife of Sorel, the lover of freedom.”¹¹⁷ In the

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 266–76.
¹¹⁷ Ibid., 79.
end of Act II, as Magda finishes the pivotal “Papers” aria, she exclaims, "Oh, the day will come, I know, when our hearts aflame will burn your paper chains...that day, neither ink nor seal will cage our souls. That day will come. That day will come!"
Figure 13: “Oh, the day will come...,” Act II, Scene ii, *The Consul*\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{118} Gian Carlo Menotti, *The Consul*, 213.
With these words, Magda demonstrates her faith that someday, all people will have access to freedom, and bureaucratic indifference, exemplified by the Secretary, will not prevent all people from having the freedom that is their basic human right. The music of this final section of the aria is lyrical and expansive, and is one of the only instances in the opera in which the full forces of the orchestra are utilized.

In the final scene of the opera, as Magda gasps for her last breath, the orchestration is sparse, featuring only three chords for solo piano alternating with silence. At the moment that Madga dies, the orchestra explodes out of the silence into a *fff* restatement of the final section of Magda's “Papers” aria from Act II.

Figure 14: Restatement of “Oh, that day will come...,” Act III, Scene ii, *The Consul*¹¹⁹

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By using the music earlier associated with freedom, Menotti equates Magda's death with her achievement of that end. In death, Magda has been freed from the cycle of oppression, and that it is evident that only in death that one can be freed from the horrors and injustices of the world.

**Hope and Faith**

Throughout *The Consul*, Menotti intertwines the ideas of hope and faith, showing how characters hope for certain outcomes and believe they are plausible because of their faith. Often seeing hope and faith as a means that separate people from seeing the truth of their situation, the relation between faith and reality is a concept that always fascinated Menotti.¹²⁰ There are several instances in which characters in *The Consul* relate their belief that the future will turn out for the best, despite the reality (and eventuality) that it does not.

The first scene of Act I ends with a trio between John, his Mother, and Magda. In the trio, the characters sing of their current need to say goodbye—John is about to make his way to the border—and their hope that they will be reunited soon. The trio concludes as they agree to take solace in their hope, not allowing doubt to affect them as they traverse the difficult times ahead. Within the context of the whole opera, the hope the characters express is in vain, as each of the three Sorels will die before the curtain falls. Their hope can be seen as a veil that inhibits their understanding of the truth of their situation. In order to showcase the futility of their hopes, Menotti uses the trio music later in the opera to underscore a moment in which all hope is lost. In the first scene of the final Act, directly before he is arrested, John Sorel retrieves Magda's handbag from the Secretary, and clutches it tightly, the only thing connecting him to his wife. In

the moment that John grabs the bag, the orchestra plays the theme from the Act I trio, showing John's hope at seeing Magda again as he holds her purse close to him. As if to show that hope is futile, the Secret Police enter and arrest John within thirty seconds of his retrieving the purse. In this way, Menotti shows that hope and belief in a better future, while tempting to entertain, is only a device to shelter people from their harsh reality.

Conclusion

The Consul tells a tragic story of a family's hope of freedom, the failure to realize this hope while alive, and the final understanding that freedom lies only in death. Throughout the opera, Menotti uses the concepts of hope, faith, and freedom to explore the greater existential question of the reality of achieving freedom, and engages the audience in considering who is truly responsible for oppression. By exploring the idea of guilt through both action and inaction through the characters of the Secret Police Agent and the Secretary, Menotti, in the words of John Gruen “asks himself the question: how many of us must bear the guilt for such actions, far away as they may be from us? In other words, for whom does the bell toll?”

121 Ibid., 210.
CHAPTER 5
COMPARING IL PRIGIONIERO AND THE CONSUL

Through dramatic analysis of *Il Prigioniero* and *The Consul*, it is evident that there are considerable commonalities between the two works. Although Dallapiccola and Menotti had differing compositional styles and artistic personalities, it is clear from these two operas that the two men felt similarly about the nature of freedom. While both works are concerned with the nature of freedom and its accessibility to all, *Il Prigioniero* centers on issues of incarceration and internment, while *The Consul* deals with bureaucracy and immigration. Differences in these plot elements are directly related to the life experiences of their composers.

As previously discussed, Dallapiccola's family was forced to relocate to an internment area during the First World War. Decades later, Luigi and Laura Dallapiccola entered into hiding on more than one occasion during World War II. Given such a history with internment and political persecution, Luigi Dallapiccola's choice in *Il Prigioniero* of a plot that involves a man's incarceration is certainly not surprising. Likewise, Dallapiccola's reference in the opera to the Inquisition is logical, because of their history of persecuting those who were not of like political or spiritual belief. While Dallapiccola cast the Prisoner as nameless, he chose to specifically reference the Inquisition, and consequently, a regime that persecuted those opposed to difference—a regime much like the Fascists, Nazis, and Communists of Dallapiccola's time.

While Menotti was not affected by the World Wars as directly as Dallapiccola, his status as an “enemy alien” during the Second World War, coupled with his very international lifestyle,
drew his attention to the process of immigration. Additionally, his life in the United States, far removed from the actualities of war except for news footage, developed in Menotti an understanding of the disparity between the hardship of European post–war reality and the prosperity and stability in the United States.

**Character Symbolism**

In both *Il Prigioniero* and *The Consul*, identifiers for certain characters are omitted, leaving the dramas open to interpretation through differing avenues, and giving the characters symbolic meaning beyond their function in each story.

*Il Prigioniero*’s roles are entirely symbolic and contain no character identifiers, such as name or age. The roles are named in the libretto as “*Il Prigioniero,*” “*La Madre,*” “*Il Carceriere*” and “*Il Grande Inquisitore,*” identified only by their relationships to each other, not by any inherent identity. This makes the story universally relevant in two ways, and unifies the characters in their joint humanity. First, by assigning identity only in their function in the drama, each character is made to represent a group of people, and individuality is stripped away. The Prisoner is the Everyman—he can be a representation of all those oppressed, not just one particular subset. Secondly, by identifying the characters only relationally, Dallapiccola shows the flexibility of identity, and the way in which, depending on the regime in power, any person's identity can change at any time. In this way, Dallapiccola's opera strips away the usual ways in which identity is created and maintained in order to connect the humanity of both oppressor and oppressed, and show that at any time, oppressor can become oppressed, and vice versa.

*The Consul* features symbolic characters in a similar vein as *Il Prigioniero*, while
simultaneously giving a strong identity to the story’s heroine, Magda Sorel. Within The Consul, certain characters remain nameless, such as the Secretary and Secret Police Agent, while everyone else is named. By identifying the powerless and leaving those in power unidentified, Menotti shifts the audience’s focus to the refugee's plight. Western audiences are familiar with news reports of refugees and immigration, often as unnamed groups of individuals seeking asylum. Frequently, reports of these people are offered through the eyes of the regime from which they flee, or the one to which they hope to escape. While Dallapiccola’s opera equalizes all characters in their lack of clear identity, Menotti’s opera reverses the Western perception of its characters by giving a clear identity to those seeking paperwork in the consulate, and leaving those in power unidentified.

While both Il Prigioniero and The Consul purposely maintain ambiguity of character identity, Dallapiccola and Menotti do so to differing effect. In stripping all of the characters of their identities except in relation to each other, Dallapiccola emphasizes sameness of oppressor and oppressed, and shows the dangers of oppression. Il Prigioniero shows that if “in-group” and “out-group” members are essentially the same, then at any point the power balance could be shifted, and the oppressor becomes the oppressed. In keeping with his life experiences, having lived under subjugation by the Austrians, Fascists, and Nazis, Dallapiccola demonstrates the dangers presented by the political pendulum. Il Prigioniero urges the audience to realize that all people are the same, and how each relates to the other is what is important.

Like Il Prigioniero, Menotti’s opera also reflects his life experiences. Living in the United States and reading newspaper articles about unnamed refugees and victims, Menotti chose to restore the identity of these displaced persons to combat the images of them as dirty, huddled
migrants. By giving identity and life stories to these would-be refugees, *The Consul* serves as a reflection of Western indifference and prejudice against them. While Dallapiccola lived within oppression and made all of his characters the same to accentuate shared humanity, Menotti dehumanized those in power while simultaneously humanizing those who Americans previously perceived as faceless numbers.

**Inaction and Action**

Through the dual role of the Jailer and Inquisitor in *Il Prigioniero*, and the antagonism of both the Secretary and the Secret Police Agent in *The Consul*, Dallapiccola and Menotti both propose that oppression is enabled not only by those who are part of a political regime, but also by those who do nothing to oppose those in power.

While the character of the Jailer does nothing that antagonizes or harms the Prisoner, his culpability for oppression through his inaction is evidenced by the fact that he is portrayed by the same actor as the Inquisitor. Conversely, in *The Consul*, the Secretary is perhaps more antagonistic to Magda Sorel than is the Secret Police Agent. While she does not threaten Magda, she is given much more stage time than the Secret Police Agent, and so her antagonism towards Magda and those in the consulate is more deeply felt by the audience.

Based on their lives, Dallapiccola and Menotti most likely conceived the dangers of inaction with regard to differing political situations. Dallapiccola was certainly aware of those in Europe who allowed Fascism and Nazism to spread unopposed, until these regimes could impose racial laws with no opposition. The spread of these groups' policies lead to widespread genocide and directly affected the safety and freedom of Dallapiccola’s wife, Laura. Menotti’s opposition
to those whose inaction enable oppression is more evidenced through his views on immigration. As an Italian citizen, Menotti was granted legal alien status in the United States, enabling him to lead the life of his choosing. Certainly he was aware of the ways in which immigration restrictions could easily affect him, and seeing the limitations placed on others like him made him aware of the injustice of laws surrounding refugees. While Dallapiccola condemns those who face oppression within their own nation and do nothing to stop it, Menotti condemns those who are in a position to aid those who suffer in other nations, but do nothing.

**Philip II and the Consul**

Interestingly, both *Il Prigioniero* and *The Consul* reference an individual in power who never makes an appearance in the opera—King Philip II and the Consul, respectively. In both dramas, these characters are the individuals who could easily put an end to the suffering and oppression of the operas’ protagonists. In *Il Prigioniero*, King Philip II of Spain looms harshly just out of reach of the opera’s action, both in the Mother’s description of her nightmare, and in the Jailer’s discussion of the freedom that might be possible with a Flemish victory over the Spanish. In Menotti’s opera, the Consul’s lack of presence is even more noticeable, as this character is the title role of the opera. The opera could have been entitled “The Consulate,” but was named *The Consul* instead, perhaps to draw attention to the distance between those who have power to end oppression and those who are oppressed. Additionally, at the end of the second Act of *The Consul*, the Consul's political allegiance to the totalitarian regime that hunts for John Sorel is made apparent. The Consul, who supposedly was a friend of democracy and of those in his waiting room, is actually as much their enemy as Dallapiccola's Philip II of Spain is
to the prisoners at Saragossa. In this way, those in the consulate are equated with those in the Inquisition’s prison—while they may not be chained, they are no freer than the Inquisition's prisoners. Thus, the inclusion of King Philip II and the Consul in their respective operas serve to show the disparity of power and access to freedom.

Dallapiccola chose to show the absent oppressor as Philip II, the leader of the oppressive regime. Not surprisingly, in the Mother's nightmare, he then likened him to Italy's dictator, Benito Mussolini. As an Italian living in Italy, Dallapiccola was unhappy with his nation's leadership, and his use of Philip II as the shadowy figure of death succinctly communicates his displeasure.

In his opera, Menotti certainly could have alluded to Hitler, Stalin, or equally oppressive leader, however, he chose the Consul as the absent oppressor. In doing so, Menotti is not drawing attention to the oppression of a particular regime so much as the unwillingness of supposed democratic governments to assist. Thus, it can be concluded Menotti is criticizing the actions and inaction of the government of the country in which he lived, the United States of America, just as Dallapiccola criticizes the Italian government with his opera.

**Chorus/Ensemble**

Though Dallapiccola’s *Il Prigioniero* features a designated chorus and Menotti’s *The Consul* has no chorus, both composers use instances of ensemble singing in these operas to express group sentiment. In keeping with the theme of shared humanity between oppressor and oppressed, Dallapiccola’s chorus can be viewed from a variety of perspectives, and unites otherwise opposing sides of a conflict into a single voice. While the texts of the *Choral*
Intermezzi relate directly to the drama of the opera, they serve to unite disparate people, reinforcing Il Prigioniero’s theme of human unity. Unlike the choral segments of Il Prigioniero, the ensemble singing in The Consul does not seek to bring together the oppressed with their oppressors. Rather, ensemble singing in The Consul is most frequently used to speak the oppressed people’s desire to have their human rights returned to them. In both operas, the ensemble sections give voice to requests, prayers, and hopes of the characters, and these sentiments reflect desires for freedom and mercy.

**Dreams**

Dreams feature prominently into both Il Prigioniero and The Consul, with the Mother’s dream in Il Prigioniero simply being described and Magda’s two dreams in The Consul enacted. The use of dreams in both operas is rather similar in that they both foretell future events and aid the audience in understanding themes of the drama.

In the dreams of both operas, an element of foreshadowing is present. The Mother’s dream in Il Prigioniero describes the image of Philip II transforming into the face of Death, foreshadowing the Prisoner’s death. Likewise, Magda’s first dream in The Consul shows John carrying materials for both his and Magda’s graves, foreshadowing their deaths by the end of the drama. Additionally, the dream ends with the Secret Police Agent gazing at the baby, indicating that the baby’s fate is also bleak. Incidentally, in the original score of The Consul, Menotti’s stage direction did not include the Secret Police Agent. Rather, at the end of the dream, a light was to illuminate the alcove of the apartment, showing a fetus. This proved to be a logistical nightmare for Menotti as a stage director, and he eventually revised his staging to replace the fetus with the
Secret Police Agent looking ominously at the baby. In understanding the Secret Police Agent’s presence as an alternative to the fetus, it is clear that the dream not only foreshadows the deaths of Magda and John, but also that of the baby. Magda’s second dream, in Act III, foreshadows her death, with John and his Mother inviting her to join them, and the rest of the cast singing, “Death’s frontiers are open,” foreshadowing Magda's imminent death.

In addition to foreshadowing the events of each opera, the dreams of both Il Prigioniero and The Consul serve to solidify some of the thematic ideas of each work. The Mother’s description of King Philip II, which equates him to Benito Mussolini, immediately likens the oppressive regime of the opera with that of 1930s and 40s Italy, showing the Fascists to be oppressive and vicious. As King Philip II is transformed into the embodiment of Death, the opera clarifies the position that Mussolini is the face of Death for Italians, and that political prisoners' incarceration is unjust and represents the death of freedom. Both dreams in The Consul shed light on multiple thematic elements of the opera. In the first dream, John is likened to Jesus, establishing him as a martyr for the just cause of freedom, while the Secretary is likened to Judas Iscariot, the false friend and betrayer of Jesus. In this way, the first of Magda’s dreams solidifies the opera’s theme that the Secretary, and thus the citizens of Western democracies, have betrayed those who hope and fight for freedom. Magda’s second dream features an ensemble piece singing of death as the final frontier, the borders of which are always open and never guarded. Through this dream, the theme of freedom only through death is introduced and explained, informing the audience’s understanding of the freedom Magda finds in death only a few moments after the end of the dream.

122 Ardoin, The Stages of Menotti, 62.
While the dreams in both the Dallapiccola and Menotti operas do not serve to further the plot of the drama, they clarify themes explored throughout the opera, and aid in the audience’s interpretation of the events of the drama.

**Musical Style**

In many ways, Dallapiccola and Menotti are at opposite ends of the musical spectrum, and yet there are certain commonalities in their music. Dallapiccola greatly admired the Austrian composers of the Second Viennese School, and *Il Prigioniero* was written during the period in which he began to assimilate their techniques. Menotti, on the other hand, was considered by many to be a populist composer, and his music was often maligned by the musical establishment. Beyond their music, Dallapiccola and Menotti could hardly have been more different men. Dallapiccola was a great scholar and educator, and for his entire adult life, called Florence his home. Conversely, Menotti was an international personality, equally at home in Europe and the United States, and frequently traveling for months at a time.

As different as these men and their personalities were, it is interesting to note that both of their musical styles were often compared to Puccini, with both of their works often being criticized for being something of a “poor man's Puccini.” This comparison arises from the lyricism of both of their compositional styles, replete with sweeping melodic arches and declamatory recitative that seamlessly weaves in and around arias.

Within *Il Prigioniero* and *The Consul*, another musical similarity is the use of motives to convey extra-musical ideas. In the case of *Il Prigioniero*, Dallapiccola identified several rows that he labeled “Hope,” “Prayer,” and “Freedom,” imbuing his composition with extra-musical
meaning in the very building blocks of the piece. ¹²³

Menotti's use of motives is also associated with extra-musical ideas, such as the use of the final section of Magda's “Papers” aria as the ending music of the opera, showing that Magda's freedom was finally attained in death. Other instances of Menotti's musical motives linked with extra-musical ideas include his use of the music from the trio ending Act I, scene I, when John enters the consulate and retrieves his wife's handbag. Additionally, the Secret Police Agent's musical figuration and orchestration is reminiscent of Klezmer music, imbuing the police with the same ominous power held by images of Nazis. In this way, both Dallapiccola and Menotti use musical figures to denote extra-musical ideas through *Il Prigioniero* and *The Consul*.

**Hope and Prayer**

Hope and prayer both feature prominently in *Il Prigioniero* and *The Consul*. In both operas, characters hope for freedom, albeit in various forms. The Prisoner hopes for freedom from incarceration and freedom from tyranny, while his oppressors hope for the freedom from sin that comes with his acceptance of their religion. In *The Consul*, John Sorel hopes for freedom from tyranny, as does the Prisoner; however, many other characters have less lofty goals. The Foreign Woman hopes to see her daughter before she dies, Anna Gomez hopes to find a country that will accept her, Magda hopes to attain exit papers for her family, and John's Mother hopes that the cycle of human suffering will end. Ultimately, all of the characters' hopes relate back to the hope for freedom from incarceration and from tyranny, although they are not always expressed as such. While the characters in the consulate are not physically in a prison, the fact

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that they are unable to leave their country forces them to be somewhat trapped in the consulate, and so it is not dissimilar from the situation of the Prisoner.

Through prayer, characters in both *Il Prigioniero* and *The Consul* express their hopes, and give voice to their belief that their hopes are not in vain. Moreover, through prayer, they come to believe that their hopes have a possibility of coming to fruition. In this way, their prayers give validity to their hopes, and cause the characters to be unable to see and accept the reality of their situations. From the Prisoner praying that he will be freed, to the belief of John Sorel’s Mother that God would not allow a baby to die, prayers in both *Il Prigioniero* and *The Consul* go unanswered. These unanswered prayers accentuate the theme in both operas that prayer and hope only serve to shield people from truth and prolong their suffering.

**Freedom**

At the core of both *Il Prigioniero* and *The Consul* is the issue of freedom. The Prisoner seeks freedom, both from incarceration and from the tyranny of the Inquisition. Likewise, Magda seeks freedom from the terror she faces in the form of the Secret Police Agent. Other characters in *The Consul* also seek freedom, whether to leave the country forever, or just to move about the world freely. In both of these operas, freedom for the characters is never achieved, nor does it seem possible that it ever could have been. It is only in death that the protagonists are able to attain freedom.

Dallapiccola shows slightly more optimism than Menotti in the way that they each chose to end their operas. As he is led to the fires of the stake, Dallapiccola’s Prisoner asks, “Freedom?” This question is not so much asking if his freedom has arrived, because he realizes
that soon he will be “free.” The Prisoner’s question is directed to the audience and invites them to contemplate if the Prisoner had any other alternative options for freedom. By asking the audience if this is the way in which freedom can be attained, he invites the consideration of ways in which others in contemporary times are prevented from attaining freedom and if the case of the Prisoner is quite common. While Dallapiccola asks the audience to consider if freedom is only attainable through death, Menotti tells his audience quite clearly that this is the case. Within the last few minutes of the opera, the ensemble within Magda’s final dream sings that “Death’s frontiers are free.” This text explains that everyone is welcome to the land of the dead, and all will find rest and freedom there. To confirm this truth, at the moment of Magda’s death, the orchestra reprises the music from Magda’s “Papers” aria, removing all doubt from the minds of the audience that in death, Magda has achieved freedom at last. In this way, Dallapiccola leaves a small space for contemplation, and perhaps hope, that death is not the only way. The more pessimistic (and less religious) Menotti leaves no room for doubt, firmly ending the opera with Magda’s freedom in death.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

It is evident through their shared themes and extra-musical associations that *Il Prigioniero* and *The Consul* have much in common. Despite being written by composers who did not associate with one another, had dissimilar life experiences, and did not ascribe to the same musical aesthetic, *Il Prigioniero* and *The Consul* can be understood as thematically-related “protest operas.” With their themes of limited access to freedom, culpability for oppression by action and inaction, and hope as “the opiate of the masses,” these operas clearly depict a pessimistic view of the political climate paramount in Europe and the United States in the post–war period. In accordance with their life experiences, Dallapiccola and Menotti chose to focus their operas on differing situations while still addressing the same broader themes. In light of his wartime experiences, it is understandable that Dallapiccola would explore these themes through the view of a prisoner. Likewise, with Menotti’s transcontinental lifestyle and status as a legal alien residing outside the country of his citizenship, it is clear that issues of immigration and travel paperwork in a closed society would strike close to home for the composer. While each composer chose to center the actual dramatic events of his opera around differing plot elements, the themes of both operas remain almost identical. This sameness indicates the profound effect that the sociopolitical events of the first half of the twentieth century had on these two disparate individuals, enabling them to draw the same political conclusions from their experiences. The comparative study of *Il Prigioniero* and *The Consul* is a prime example of the ways in which
world events connect the life experiences of people from various walks of life, and that music is a reflection and refraction of this shared human experience.
REFERENCES


