

**The physician as opera character -
a reflection of medical history and public perception**

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Abstract/ Summary

Physician characters appear in about 10% of the opera repertoire. The doctor's importance, basis of knowledge, social status, and role in the opera change in the historic development of opera. Whereas in the 18th century the doctor does not have a healing function but plays a buffoon in a supportive role, in the 19th century he appears both as charlatan and already as a scientifically trained physician. In the 20th century, the doctor plays a major role in a socially superior position and, in addition to being a clinician, he is often depicted as a researcher. The dynamics of the physician's role in opera history, on the one hand, reflects the development of medicine and, on the other hand, illustrates the development of the social position of doctors and the public attitude towards the medical profession over the last centuries.

Key Words

Physician, doctor, charlatan, opera, libretto, music

Introduction and methodological considerations

Music is arguably the most abstract form of art. It was long considered one of the seven ‘artes liberales’ at European universities (along with grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry and astronomy) that were a prerequisite for advanced graduate studies (1). In modern times, music has played an increasingly important role in medicine, such as in anxiolytic and psychotherapeutic approaches, and also in the specific medical care for artists (2). But what about the representation of medicine in music? Does it exist, and if so, what is its possible background and significance? These questions will be explored using the model of the physician in the opera genre.

A systematic search in standard theatrical reference books yielded some 40 operas from three centuries in which physicians appear on stage (Table 1). In view of the approximately 400 works belonging to the contemporary repertoire, this does account for approximately 10% of the operas. Thus, it was surprising that an extensive search in the literature, both in the areas of medicine and music theory, yielded only a few reports published on this subject including a systematic review by Estes (3).

Several operas were selected as specific examples to illustrate important aspects of our subject. This selection was done under the premise of a longitudinal section through the history of opera and of a focus on works in which physicians play a relatively prominent role, as opposed to appearance as extras or in speaking roles. Operettas and musicals were not considered in the present paper. Using a structural approach (in a simplified form), the role and function of the physician was analyzed in different categories including the character and importance of his role, his function and basis of knowledge, and his social status in the opera. In addition, the physician and his role is understood as an important element, as text in the broader sense, and is thus accessible to contextual interpretations (4).

The structural approach was supplemented by a historical view. Reference to the historical background is imperative, since the concretization of the physician’s image also carries with it

time-conditioned judgments and values such as individual attitudes of the artist. Beside the structural and historical analysis, the biographical analysis of the respective artists should be added as a further potential means of access to the textual interpretation. The position of the particular opera within the context of the composer's or librettist's oeuvre, as well as individual experiences of the artists in terms of health, illness and medical care may be important components of an artistic creation. The latter aspects, however, are only fleetingly touched upon in this paper.

Historical overview

Opera history begins in the late Renaissance and early Baroque (5,6). There are no doctor characters in the operas of Monteverdi, Gluck or Händel in part because the stories are often based on material from mythology or antiquity. At best, Apollo, the ancient Greek god of healing and music, appears in some of the works. In the 18th century, at the height of the classical period, there are only a few doctor characters, all of them belonging to the field of comic opera (Table 1).

In Mozart's "Cosi fan tutte" (Women are like that) the chambermaid Despina appears disguised as a physician to cure patients who pretend to have taken poison in this game of confusion about female fidelity and infidelity. The mixture of seriousness and humor, typical of Mozart operas, the cascades of complementing and diverse ideas (7) meet with the courtly festive culture of the 17th and 18th century in which masquerades and allegorical plays had a firm place. At the occasion of the anniversary of the Elector of Brandenburg in 1700, a feast was given in the city of Charlottenburg which featured the replica of a village market with the usual barkers, conjurers and tooth breakers. The Electress disguised herself as a physician selling magic potions, thereby participating in a masquerade (8). Satire at that time allowed the part of the physician to be played by both a chambermaid and an electress. The interest of the educated class in medicine and pharmacotherapeutics was characterized by the realization

that man in the end must die in spite of the existence of physicians or, according to numerous satirical pamphlets, because man places his trust in doctors. A unified medical profession with a generally binding training curriculum did not exist at that time. Apart from academically trained medical doctors, primarily surgeons and barbers treated external diseases. Also, sometimes, lay healers such as shepherds and executioners were granted royal privileges for the treatment of illnesses requiring minor surgical interventions. This difference goes hand in hand with a certain capriciousness in dispensing medical treatment which finds its counterpart in the artistic play with role switches and deception.

In the 19th and 20th century, there are several operas with physician characters (Table 1). In earlier works, physicians often appear in opera buffa (comic opera) while in later ones, they appear in the tragic romantic opera, the lyrical opera, the expressionistic opera and modern works. Some well-known composers are missing on this list, as for example Richard Wagner, whose work draws much from early medieval folk myths. At best, Brangäne in “Tristan and Isolde” could be interpreted as a nurse (10,11). Our review may not provide a comprehensive listing of contemporary operas with doctors due to the methodological difficulties in identifying all such works.

Eighteenth century

Example 1 (see libretto excerpt 1)

“Le nozze di Figaro” (The marriage of Figaro) is one of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s great Italian operas (libretto by da Ponte after Beaumarchais). After the overture, the leading characters are introduced, among them Dr. Bartolo, a physician who does not appear in his genuine role as a healer but in an opposite function. Dr. Bartolo is angry at Figaro (excerpt 1) and threatens to take revenge on him for having once helped to abduct his ward Rosina, whom he would have liked to have married himself. Toward the end of the opera, however, Dr. Bartolo sides with Figaro, but not before he finds out by chance that Figaro is his long lost

son whom robbers had abducted as a baby. Dr. Bartolo and the described course of action are altogether of secondary importance. The opera deals primarily with the planned marriage of the leading character Figaro and with the feudalistic endeavors of his master, the Duke Almoviva, to claim the right of *ius primae noctis* (first wedding night) with Susanna, Figaro's prospective wife - much to the annoyance of the duchess who, in turn, amuses herself with Cherubino, the duke's servant.

Example 2 (see libretto excerpt 2)

In the same year as the Mozart opera, "Doktor and Apotheker" (Doctor and Pharmacist), an opera by Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf (libretto by Stephanie the Younger), also had its premiere in Vienna and is probably the best known of his approximately 40 plays. Dr. Krautmann is a physician in a small town in Germany and extols his importance in the introductory aria (excerpt 2a). The parodistic way in which this is done leaves doubts as to his real reputation. Dr. Krautmann and the pharmacist's daughter are in love with each other. When Stöbel finds out about this, he tries to marry his daughter off to an old friend. The young lovers try to prevent this with a masquerade. However, the plan fails initially and all the while, the two opponents clash violently time and again (excerpt 2b), each questioning the other's professional competence and threatening to take legal action.

The conflict between the physician and the pharmacist was predetermined because of the frequently overlapping areas of professional competence and was even partially exacerbated by government decrees. For example, in 1784, contrary to the existing laws for pharmacists, the government of the court diocese Osnabrück allowed a pharmacist, to treat small flesh wounds and abscesses and bleed patients in an emergency (12). In July 1796, a pharmacist was accorded the right to do surgery on the basis of an attestation testifying to his competence as a pharmacist and his skill as a surgeon (13). With these privileges, the authorities considerably aggravated the professional quarrels which then had to be settled in court. Indeed, in the 18th century, physicians often had to reckon with lawsuits and fines when their

treatment, which was based on irrational notions, did not bring the expected success. In addition, the activities of travelling doctors, which were largely performed publicly at fairs by craftsmen trained as surgeons, tooth pullers, cataract depressors and stone extractors, were rather difficult to control effectively. Although these healers were required to obtain a permit from the local administration, they often travelled on to the next place when the fair was over. This mobility made it easy for them to get out of town and avoid legal consequences for quackery. V. Dittersdorf uses this conflict as a creative element in his work and allows the physician to appear in his professional role albeit in a grotesque and parodistic manner.

Nineteenth century

Example 3 (see libretto excerpt 3)

Romanticism saw an awakening of interest in old mythological subjects, like the story of Tristan and Isolde, whose central theme is a love potion (initially considered a death potion) that induces irresistible love (10). In Gaetano Donizetti's "L'elisir d'amore" (The Love Potion) (libretti by Romani), Nemorino, a simple peasant, is in love with Adina, the lady of the manor, who in turn is enamored of the military and flirts with a Captain Belcore. Nemorino knows the old tale of Tristan and Isolde and, when the travelling physician Dr. Dulcamara comes into town, he remembers the effect of the love potion. Considering the competition on the market for health services, advertisement on one's own behalf become quite important (excerpt 3a). There were no strict regulations in this regard compared to the present. It was also almost impossible to make sure that the few and very general rules were followed. Nemorino asks Dr. Dulcamara for a drug that provokes love and the latter sells him a bottle of Bordeaux wine as a love potion. Although the first dose dispels his sadness (Figure 1), Adina still remains unaffected. Nemorino grows surer of himself with a higher dose, and while he waits for the love potion to take effect, he dances with other village girls. Dr. Dulcamara obviously relies here on the disinhibiting effect of the alcohol. Nemorino's

behavior makes Adina jealous and she actually falls in love with him. As it is customary in the Italian opera buffa, the two marry and then Nemorino even inherits a considerable fortune. Dr. Dulcamara also exploits this opportunity of increasing his fame by claiming that Nemorino's sudden wealth is also due to the medication (excerpt 3b).

Dr. Dulcamara is one of the first physicians as a leading character in an opera and reflects to some extent the situation of medicine in the early 19th century (14). Some ideas still prevail that date back to antiquity and are based on Galen's humoralism. Humoral pathology was closely related to a total therapy (as the one proposed by Dulcamara) and was displaced in the course of the century by the development of solidistic and cellular pathology and the associated new assessment of diagnosis and therapy. This process obviously does not begin abruptly in the 19th century, on the contrary, for many, it starts already with Paracelsus (15). Nevertheless, 19th century with Virchow, Pasteur, Koch, Billroth, Mendel, Charcot, Pettenkofer, etc. is the era in which medicine is placed, in both diagnosis and therapy, on scientific foundations. The early evolution of a modern hospital system and modern medical faculty also took place during that time, such as the foundation of the New Paris Medical School in 1794).

In the 19th century, surgery, which had often been taken care of by barbers until that time, was integrated into medicine. In the opera "La Forza del Destino" (The Power of Destiny) by Giuseppe Verdi, a surgeon is of great importance for the plot though he has only a minor singing part (16). He removes a bullet from Don Alvaro's chest; the patient survives the procedure - only to die anyway caught up in a web of tragic entanglements at the end of the opera. In Donizetti's "Don Pasquale" (libretto by Anelli), the increasing power of the physician to exercise psychological influence is portrayed (17). In this opera, his name is, typically enough Dr. Malatesta (Dr. Headache), who "cleverly pulls the strings" by getting Norina to agree to sham marriage with the old Don Pasquale.

Example 4 (see libretto excerpt 4)

One of the best known tragic operas of the 19th century is “La Traviata” by Giuseppe Verdi (libretto by Piave after Dumas). Alfredo, who comes from a good house, falls in love with Violetta, a star of the Paris demi-mode. His father, fearing for the good name of the family, asks Violetta to let go of his son. She acquiesces without giving Alfredo the true reasons. The latter, mad with jealousy, exposes her as a prostitute at a feast. Subsequently, Violetta’s state of health deteriorates rapidly, probably due to progressive tuberculosis. Dr. Grenvil, her physician, supports her but predicts that she will soon die. In the end, Alfredo comes back to her after having been told the true story by his father. During the death scene at the end of the opera, the physician joins the other mourners (excerpt 4, Figure 2). Knowing that he cannot save his patient, he stays with her until she dies. Considering the well prepared and publicly staged social death of Violetta, the role of the physician, who is also helpless toward this societal death, is extended by a sympathetic and comforting aspect.

Example 5 (see libretto excerpt 5)

“Les contes D’Hoffmann” (Tales of Hoffmann) by Jacques Offenbach (libretto by Barbier) takes place in Lutter’s wine cellar, a pub. The leading character is based on E.T.A. Hoffmann who led a colorful life as a poet, musician, painter, designer and lawyer in Berlin in the early 19th century. In this opera, Hoffmann tells about the three unhappy love affairs in his life. His first great love, Olympia, turns out to be an automated doll, the second, Giulietta, is a courtesan in the grand style.

His third love, Antonia, is very beautiful and a gifted singer but is in a frail state of health. From her mother, who died young from a heart condition, she has inherited not only the beautiful voice but also the disease. Here, the concept of heredity is taken up, which was introduced in the last century. Dr. Miracle appears, allegedly to help Antonia with some medicine. But Hoffmann senses disaster in the guise of the doctor. Crespel, Antonia’s father, also has a dark forboding when Dr. Miracle first examines her and then asks her to sing (excerpt 5a). Dr. Miracle diagnoses cardiac arrhythmia, Antonia’s pulse is fast and irregular.

This is also depicted musically by interrupted 16th notes (3 each with a rest) in the accompanying voice, corresponding to an accompanying arrhythmia. The musical rendition of the pulse as a rhythm as far back as the 4th century (15). Galen further developed the theories on the correlation between the quality of the pulse and musical rhythm, and Françoise Marquet even published a special notation on pulse characterization in 1769 (15,18).

In a recent article, Dauber elucidated the forensic differential diagnosis of the hereditary causes of arrhythmia in connection with Antonia in Offenbach's opera (19). Of the 3 possibilities - prolonged QT interval, hypertrophic cardiomyopathy and mitral valve prolapse - the first seems to be the most unlikely since it is a rare, autosomal dominant hereditary disease sometimes associated with neural deafness (Romano-Ward syndrome). Many patients with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy exhibit signs of cardiac insufficiency, which is not apparent in Antonia's case. The clinical signs of mitral valve prolapse include a systolic click, fragile physical habitus, occasional dyspnea, states of anxiety and exhaustion and occasional supraventricular or ventricular arrhythmias. Sudden cardiac death occurs rarely but is described as a complication (20). Since, Antonia displays many of these described symptoms she may have suffered from this disorder. Nevertheless, Dr. Miracle asks her to sing, tempting her with the life of an artist that is much more exciting than a conventional life married to Hoffmann (21). Antonia sings and collapses on stage. The quickly summoned doctor (the dubious Dr. Miracle appears once again) arrives and pronounces her dead (excerpt 5b). Singing may thus have triggered the fatal arrhythmia (22,23).

The question arises whether Antonia's arrhythmia may not be a symbol for something that "has gotten out of rhythm". The three unhappy love affairs point toward a certain disorientation. If, however, love is depicted here as subordinated to a predisposition that is slightly pessimistic or somewhat chaotic - even in connection with an exciting but strenuous life as an artist - the role of the doctor has to be connected with this scenario. Though set against the artist, the scientist not only fails to resolve the chaos or support the persons

involved but actually brings the deadly consequence to its conclusion. That is to say, the scientist and doctor ends the chaos with death, which otherwise might not have occurred at all or not as quickly. Does the art of healing sometimes include a fatal function?

Another dramatic example of a doctor figure is found in “Lulu” by Alban Berg (adapted from Erdgeist, Pandora’s box, Wedeking), this time he dies himself - presumably of sudden cardiac death. In the first act, the leading character, Lulu poses for a painter who succumbs to her temptations. The two are caught in flagranti by Lulu’s spouse, a ‘Medizinalrat’ (state physician). Before he can strike them with his cane, he suddenly collapses and dies.

Twentieth century

In some operas of the early 20th century, the doctor has only a small or just a speaking role, but usually in his practical function. In “Pelleas and Melisande” by Claude Debussy (libretto by Maeterlinck), the doctor, who is being consulted in the final scene, cannot help the dying Melisande. In “Der Rosenkavalier” (Knight of the Rose) by Richard Strauß (libretto by v. Hofmannsthal), the baron Ochs von Lerchenau is slightly wounded at the upper arm during a dispute with Octavian and attended to by a doctor.

Example 6 (see libretto excerpt 6)

One of the best known compositions of this century is Alban Berg’s “Wozzeck” after the drama of the same name written by Büchner almost 100 years earlier. Wozzeck is a soldier, uneducated and somewhat slow-witted, who works as a regimental servant for the captain of his company. In order to earn some extra money to support his wife Maria and their child, he puts himself at the disposal of the doctor who uses him for medical experiments and as ‘illustrative material’ for medical students (Figure 3). During a dietary experiment, Wozzeck is allowed to eat only legumes for one week and only meat for another (excerpt 6a). The doctor in “Wozzeck” bears resemblance to Justus v. Liebig, an important 19th century chemist and agronomist (3). The doctor is shown here primarily as a researcher for whom scientific

success is more important than Wozzeck as his patient. This becomes obvious when Wozzeck tells him about visual hallucinations and that he is hearing voices (excerpt 6b). The doctor reacts in an exalted and cynical manner in which his powerful position vis-à-vis the humiliated position of the patient becomes obvious, a stylized example of a failed doctor-patient relationship (17, 24).

The opera ends tragically. Wozzeck kills Marie and, departing from Büchner's drama, commits suicide. The historical model for Wozzeck was a barber who on the basis of a psychological examination was held fully responsible for the murder he had committed and was executed in Leipzig (25).

When "Wozzeck" was first performed in the mid-20's, discussions among doctors in Germany centered on the "crisis" in medicine. The background of this debate is multifaceted. It focused primarily on both the fear of a "proletarianization" of the medical profession and on violent attacks on the incompetence of traditional mechanistic and scientific medicine. For many doctors, the great popularity of the reform and naturopathy movement was symbolic of a loss of public confidence and authority and called conventional medicine into question. Both doctors and laypersons increasingly criticized the practice of human experiments as an inhuman method without benefit to the patient that served exclusively to further one's personal career (26, 27). In "Wozzeck", the negative portrayal of a scientist in the person of the doctor reflects the contemporary criticism of a physician who sacrifices the interests of the patient for the sake of his career. It also appears to forecast the dark role of medicine in the nazi regime in Germany a decade later.

The psychiatric element plays an important role in several contemporary operas, as, for example, in "Wir erreichen den Fluß" (We Come to the River) by Hans Werner Henze. In the second part of the opera, the protagonist (a general) is a patient in a psychiatric clinic. Henze's opera was first performed in London in 1976, and the inclusion of the psychiatric element reflects the discussion on medical problems taking place at that time in Europe. Since

the beginning of the 70's, there had been increasing criticism of the state of psychiatric care, especially from psychiatrists. The German Society on Psychiatry and Neurology had taken up this subject in 1971. The "Interim Report of the Expert Commission on the State of Psychiatry in the Federal Republic of Germany" published in 1973 paints a clear picture of the shortcomings. The subsequent intensive debate in the media apparently also influenced a number of opera productions. For example, in the Berlin production of "La damnation de Faust" (The damnation of Faust) by Hector Berlioz, Götz Friedrich as the opera's director took great liberties with the production's artistic interpretation (Figure 4). Faust, according to Goethe a physician himself, is presented here as a patient in a psychiatric ward and Mephistopheles is interpreted as the attending physician.

Conclusions

A doctor appears in about 10% of the established operas. His function, importance, basis of knowledge, social status, and character in the opera clearly changes in the course of opera history (Table 2). In the 18th century, the doctor does not have a healing function but plays the buffoon as a rule and a socially rather subordinate role. He usually has a supporting role. This changes in the 19th century: He still initially appears as a miracle doctor and charlatan but at the same time already in the guise of a scientifically trained physician who acts in a more differentiated manner, albeit with the touch of the demonic in some instances. The rise of physician competence is paralleled by a rise in power with its potential to be used detrimentally. In the 20th century, the doctor often plays a major role. He usually has a superior position, or at least a high social standing and, in addition to being a clinician, he is often depicted as a researcher and partially cynically caricatured. The dynamics of the physician's role in opera history, on the one hand, reflects the development of medicine and, on the other hand, illustrates the development of the social position of doctors and the public attitude towards the medical profession over the last centuries.

Acknowledgements

The support of Mr. Riesterer of Kranich-Photo, Berlin, who for many years has been photographer at the Deutsche Oper Berlin is gratefully acknowledged. Tonya Hongsermeier, Boston, and Peter Schmiedebach, Hamburg, provided valuable and insightful comments.

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Legends

Fig. 1 From “L’Elisir d’Amore” (the Love Potion), Gaetano Donizetti.

Dr. Dulcamara: Rolando Panerai, Nemorino: Luciano Pavarotti.

Production: John Copley, Deutsche Oper Berlin.

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Fig. 2 From “La Traviata”, Guiseppe Verdi.

Doctor Grenvil: Ivan Sardi, Violetta: Julia Varady.

Production: Gustav Rudolf Sellner, Deutsche Oper Berlin.

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Fig. 3 From “Wozzeck”, Alban Berg.

Wozzeck: Lenus Carlson, Doctor: Frido Meyer-Wolf.

Production: Otto Schenk, Deutsche Oper Berlin.

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Fig. 4 From “La Damnation de Faust”(The Damnation of Faust), Hector Berlioz.

Faust: Kenneth Riegel, Mephistopheles: José van Dam.

Production: Götz Friedrich, Deutsche Oper Berlin.

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Table 1: Important Operas with Physicians

Composer	Title	Premiere (year and city)	Physician
Haydn J	Il mondo della luna (The world of the moon)	1777 Eisenstadt	Doctor from Bologna, Baritone
Mozart WA	Le nozze di Figaro (The marriage of Figaro)	1786 Vienna	Doctor Bartolo, Bass
v. Dittersdorf CD	Doktor und Apotheker (Doctor and pharmacist)	1786 Vienna	Doctor Krautmann, Bass
Mozart WA	Così fan tutte (Women are like that)	1790 Vienna	Despina (disguised), Soprano
Gyrowetz A	Der Augenarzt (The ophthalmologist)	1811 Vienna	Berg, Tenor
Rossini G	Der Barbier von Sevilla (The barber of Seville)	1816 Rome	Doctor Bartolo, Bass
Spohr L	Pietro von Abano	1827 Kassel	Pietro, Baritone
Donizetti G	L'élisir d'amore (The love potion)	1832 Milano	Doctor Dulcamara, Bass
Donizetti G	Don Pasquale	1843 Paris	Doctor Malatesta, Baritone
Lortzing A	Der Waffenschmied (The armourer)	1846 Vienna	Hans Stadinger, Bass
Berlioz H	La damnation de Faust (The damnation of Faust)	1846 Paris	Faust, Tenor
Verdi G	Macbeth	1847 Florence	Physician, Bass
Nicolai O	Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor (The merry wives of Windsor)	18849 Berlin	Doctor Cajus, Bass
Verdi G	La Traviata	1853 Venice	Doctor Grenvil, Bass
Verdi G	Les vêpres siciliennes	1855 Paris	Procida, Bass
Cornelius P	Der Barbier von Bagdad (The barber of Bagdad)	1858 Weimar	Abul Hassan Ali Ebn Bekar, Bass
Gounod C	Margarete	1859 Paris	Faust, Tenor
Verdi	La forza del destino (The power of destiny)	1862 Petersburg	Chirurgus, Tenor
Boito A	Mefistofeles	1868 Milano	Faust, Tenor
Offenbach J	Les contes d'Hoffmann (Tales of Hoffmann)	1881 Paris	Doctor Miracle, Bass
Reinecke C	Gouverneur von Tours (Governor of Tours)	1891 Schwerin	Doctor Marteau, Bass
Kienzl W	Heilmар der Narr (Heilmар the fool)	1892 München	Heimar, Baritone
Verdi G	Falstaff	1893 Milano	Doctor Cajus, Tenor
Pfitzner H	Der arme Heinrich (Poor Heinrich)	1895 Mainz	Physician, Bass
Debussy C	Pelléas et Mélisande	1902 Paris	Physician, Bass
Strauss R	Der Rosenkavalier	1911 Dresden	Physician, Super

	(The knight of the rose)		
Puccini G	Gianni Schicci	1918 New York	Spinelloccio, Bass
Prokofiev SS	Lyobor k tryem apelsinam (The love of the three oranges)	1921 Chicago	3 Physicians, Tenor and Bass
Berg A	Wozzeck	1925 Berlin	Doctor, Bass
Gurlitt M	Wozzeck	196 Bremen	Doctor, Bass
Gershwin G	Porgy and Bess	1935 New York	Doctor Archdale
Berg A	Lulu	1937 Zürich	Medizinalrat Speaking Role
Prokofiev SS	L'ange de feu (The fiery angel)	1955 Venice (partial performance 1928 Paris)	Physician, Baritone
Poulenc F	Les dialogue des Carmélites (The dialogues of the Carmelites)	1957 Milano	Javelinot, Baritone
Henze HW	Elegie für junge Liebende (Elegy for young lovers)	1961 Schwetzingen	Doctor Reischmann, Bass
Heinze HW	Ein Landarzt (A country doctor)	1965 Frankfurt	Landarzt, Baritone
Henze HW	Wir erreichen den Fluß (We come to the river)	1976 London	Physician, Baritone
Debussy C	La chute de la maison Usher (The fall of the house Usher)	1977 New Haven	Physician, Baritone
Nyman M	The man who mistook his wife for a hat	1986 London	Doctor S, Baritone

Table 2: The changing appearance of the physician in opera history

Century	Role	Character	Role as Physician	Basis of Knowledge	Social Position*
18 th	minor	comic	none	quack	inferior
19 th	minor major	comic tragic	clinical work	magic potion physical	equal
20 th	major	epic	clinical work research	rational biological	superior

* in the context of the plot

Libretto Excerpt 1: Le nozze di Figaro (The marriage of Figaro), Mozart WA, 1786 (Da Ponte L, translated Salter L)

Act 1, No. 4, Aria (D major) Doctor Bartolo

La vendetta, oh, la vendetta
è un piacer serbato ai saggi
L'obbliar l'onte, gli oltraggi è bassezza,
è ognor viltà.

.....

Tutta Sevilla conosce Bartolo, il birbo Figaro
vinto sarà.

Revenge, yes, revenge
Is a pleasure meant for the intelligent
to forget insults and outrages
is always low and base

.....

All Seville knows Dr. Bartolo,
that rascal Figaro will lose the day.

Libretto Excerpt 2: Doktor und Apotheker (Doctor and Pharmacist), v. Dittersdorf CD, 1786 (Stephani dj, translated Willich SN)

a) Act 2, from Scene 1, Aria (C major) Doctor Krautmann

Ein Doktor ist bei meiner Ehr'
der größte Mann im Staate!
Denn wer nützt außer ihm wohl mehr?
Selbst keiner aus dem Rate.
Denn diese können weiter nichts, als
projektieren, konsultieren, referieren,
kontrollieren, kondemnieren, exequieren...

A doctor is certainly
the greatest man in the state!
Because, who is more useful
than him?
Even nobody of the Council. Ignorant!
Because these cannot do anything except
planning, consulting, reporting, controlling,
condemning, carrying out...

b) Act 2, from Scene 17, Duett (E minor), Doctor Krautmann, Pharmacist Stößel

K: Sie sind ein Scharlatan, ein Ignorant
S: Ich bin ein weiser Mann, ein Laborant!
K: Ein Schrecken für Gesunde, ein Doktor
für die Hunde
S: Das spricht der Neid aus Ihnen,
es zeigens Ihre Mienen.
Beide: Doch Sie bekommen schon Ihren
Lohn. In Ihrem Sohn räch' ich mich schon...
Verdammter Scharlatan! Nun halt ich mich
nicht mehr. Ich bei meiner Ehr Dir schon
das Handwerk legen, Du sollst Dich nicht
mehr regen. zu Boden Ignorant. Du Pillen
Fabrikant! Rezepten Fabrikant!

You are a charlatan, an ignorant!
I am a wise man, a laboratory worker!
A tenor for the healthy, a doctor for dogs
You are just envious
as shown by your expression.
Both: You will get what you deserve. I take
revenge in your son...
Damned charlatan! I won't hold back any
longer. I swear to stop your job, you won't
move any longer. Get down, ignorant. You pill
manufacturer! Recipe manufacturer!

Libretto Excerpt 3: L'elisir d'amore (The love potion), Donizetti G, 1832 (Romani F, translated Cochrane P, Chalmers K)

a) Act 1, Scene 5, from Cavatina (A major) Doctor Dulcamara

<p>Ei move i paralitici Spedisce gli apopletici, gli jasmatici, gli asfitici gl'isterici, i diabetici guarisce timpanitidi, e scrofole e rachitidi e fino il mal di fegato che in moda diventó. Mirabile pe' cimici Mirabile pel fegato guarisce i paralitici spedisce gli apopletici. Comprate il mio specifico Voi, vedove e donzelle voi, giovani galanti per poco ve lo dò. Avanti, avanti, vedove, avanti, avanti, bamboli Comprate il mio specifico per poco ve lo dó.</p>	<p>It moves paralytics is effective with apopletics asthmatics, asphitics hysterics, diabetics, it cures earache, scrofula and rickets, and even liver disease which has become so fashionable. Wonderful with bugs wonderful for the liver it cures paralytics, is effective with apoplectics. Buy my specific, you widows and young girls you, young gallants, I'll let you have it for almost nothing. Come up, come up, widows Come up, come up, children buy my specific I'll let you have it for almost nothing.</p>
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b) Act 2, Final Scene, from Recitativo (C major) Doctor Dulcamara, Nemorino, Adina, Gianetta, Chorus

<p>N: Caro dottor, felice io son per voi</p>	<p>Dear Doctor, you have made me happy</p>
<p>C: Per lui?</p>	<p>He has?</p>
<p>D: Per me. Sappiate che Nemorino è diventato a un tratto i più ricco castaldo del villaggio, Poiché morte è lo zio.</p>	<p>I have. You must know that Nemorino has suddenly become the richest farmer in the village, since his uncle has died?</p>
<p>A+ N: Morto lo zio?</p>	<p>His uncle has died?</p>
<p>G: Io Io sapevo</p>	<p>I knew it.</p>
<p>D: Lo sapevo anch'io. Ma quel che non sapete. Nè potreste sapere, egli é che questo sormumano elisir può in momento, non solo remediar al mal di amore, ma arricchir gli spiantati.</p>	<p>I knew it as well. But what you don't know nor could know, is that this superhuman elixir can, in a moment, not only cure the ills of love but make the penniless rich.</p>
<p>C: Oh, Il gran liquore!</p>	<p>Oh, The wonderful drink.</p>

Libretto Excerpt 4: La Traviata, Verdi G, 1853 (Piave FM, translated Polydor)

Act 3, from Final Scene (E major, D flat major), Violetta, Doctor Grenvil, Alfredo, Germont, Annina

V: Se una pudica vergine
Degli anni suoi sul fiore
A te donasse il core
Sposa ti sia....lo vò
Le porgi quest'effigie
Dille che dono ell'è
Di chi nel ciel fra gli angeli
Prega per lei, per te.

D, A, G, A:
Finchè avra' il ciglio lagrime
lo piangerò per te
Vola a beati spiriti
Iddio ti chiama sè.

If some gentle maiden
In the springtime of her life
Should give to you her heart
Let her be your wife
For such is my wish
Give her this picture
And tell her it's a gift
Of one who's from heaven
amongst the angles
Pray always for her and for you.
As long as I have tears to shed I shall weep
for you.
Fly to the regions of the blessed, For God
calls you to him!

Libretto Excerpt 5: Les contes d'Hoffmann (Tales of Hoffmann), Offenbach J, 1881
 (Barbier J, adapted from Hoffmann ETA, translated Cochrane P, Chalmers K.)

a) Act 3, No. 21, from Trio (A flat minor, G minor) Doctor Miracle, Crespel, Hoffmann, Antonia (backstage)

M:	Quel age avez-vous, je vous prie?	How old are you, please?
C:	Qui? Moi?	Who? Me?
M:	Je parle à votre enfant.	I'm speaking to your daughter.
H:	Antonia?	Antonia?
M:	Quel age? Répondez!	How old? Answer!
	Je le veux! Vingt ans!	I want to know! Twenty!
	Le printemps de la vie!	The springtime of life!
	Voyons, voyons, la main!	Come along, let's see your hand.
C:	La main?	The hand?
M:	Chut! Laissez-moi compter.	Hush! Let me count.
H:	Dieu! Suis-je le jouet d'un rêve?	Heavens! Am I the victim of a dream?
	Est-ce un phantome?	Is it a ghost?
M:	Le pulse est inégal et vif, mauvais symptome!	The pulse is fast and uneven, a bad sign.
	Chantez	Sing!
C:	Non, non, tais-toi! Ne la fais pas chanter!	No, no, be quiet! Don't make her sing!
M:	Chantez!	Sing!
A:	Ah! -	Ah! -
M:	Voyez, son front s'anime, et son regard flamboie.	Look how her face brightens and her eyes sparkle.
	Elle porte la main à son coeur agité!	She is clutching the beating heart.
C:	Que dit-il?	What is he saying?
	Il serait dommage en verité de laisser à la mort une si belle proie!	To hand such a pretty victim over to death!

b) Act 3, No. 23, from final Scene (F major, D minor, E minor, E major) Doctor Miracle, Crespel, Hoffmann, Niklaus, Antonia

A:	Mon père! écoutez, c'est ma mère qui m'appelle! Et lui de retour! C'est une chanson d'amour qui s'envole triste ou folle Ah! - C'est une chanson d'amour! (Elle meurt)	Father! Listen, it is my mother calling me! And he has come back! It is a love song a soaring love song, sad and joyful Ah! - it is a song of love (She dies)
C:	Non! Un seul mot, ma fille, parle-moi!	No! Just one word, Daughter, speak to me, daughter!
	Parle donc!...Mort excécrable! Non! Pitié, pitié! Grace! Eloigne-toi, ma fille! Hoffmann! Ah, misérable, c'est toi, c'est toi qui l'as tuée. Du sang pour colorer sa joue. Une arme, un couteau.	Oh, speak!... Hateful death! No, have pity, pity! Merci! Go away! My daughter! Hoffmann! Wretch! You are the one who has killed her. Blood! To redden her cheeks. A weapon, a knife

N: Malheureux!
H: Vite donne l'alarme!
Un médecin, un médecin!
M: Présent!
Mort!
C: Ah, Dieu, mon enfant, ma fille!
H: Antonia!

You wretch!
Quick! Raise the alarm!
A doctor, a doctor!
Here I am!
Dead
Oh, God, my child, my daughter!
Antonia

Libretto Excerpt 6: Wozzeck, Berg A, 1925 (Adapted from Büchner G, translated DECCA)

Act 1, from Scene 4 (atonal, Passacaglia: Theme and variations), Doctor and Wozzeck

a)

D: Was erleb' ich Wozzeck? Ein Mann ein Wort? Ei, ei, ei! What's this, Wozzeck? A man of your word, are you? Dear me!

W: Was denn, Herr Doktor? What's the matter, Doctor

D: Ich hab's geseh'n, Wozzeck, Er hat wieder gehustet, gebellt wie ein Hund! Geb' ich ihm dafür alle Tage drei Groschen? Wozzeck! das ist schlecht, sehr schlecht! Oh! I saw you, Wozzeck. You were coughing again, in the street, you were coughing like a dog!

Don' I give you three Groschen every day? Wozzeck, that's bad!

The world's bad, very bad! oh!

W: Aber Herr Doktor, wenn einem die Natur kommt!

But Doctor, if nature insists!

D: Die Natur kommt! Die Natur kommt! Aberglaube, abscheulicher Aberglaube! Hab ich nicht nachgewiesen, daß das Zwerchfell dem Willen unterworfen ist. Die Natur, Wozzeck! Der Mensch ist frei! In dem Menschen verklärt sich die Individualität zur Freiheit! Husten müssen! Hat er schon seine Bohnen gegessen, Wozzeck? Nichts als Bohnen, nichts als Hülsenfrüchte! Merk er sich's! Die nächste Woche fangen wir dann mit Schöpsenfleisch an. Es gibt eine Revolution in der Wissenschaft: Eiweiß, Fette, Kohlenhydrate, und zwar Oxyaldehydanhydride...Aber, er hat wieder gehustet!

Nature insists! Nature insists! Superstition, nothing but appalling superstition! Haven't I proved that the diagnosis is subject to the exercise of the will? Nature, Wozzeck! Man is free! In man, individuality is transfigured and becomes Freedom! The idea: that it's necessary to cough! Have you eaten your beans yet, Wozzeck? Nothing but beans, nothing but legumes! Bear it in mind. Then next week we'll start with mutton. There's a reduction in science now: Protein, fats, carbohydrates, and oxyaldehydanhydrids.... Yet you are coughing again.

W: Herr Doktor. Wenn die Sonne im Mittag steht, und es ist, als ging die Welt in Feuer auf, hat schon eine fürchterliche Stimme zu mir geredet.

Doctor, when the sun is overhead at noon, and it's as though the world were bursting into flames, a terrible voice has spoken to me.

D: Wozzeck, Er hat eine Aberratio...

Wozzeck, you're suffering from aberratio

b)

W: Die Schwämme! Haben Sie schon die Ringe von den Schwämmen am Boden gesehen? Linienkreise, Figuren, wer das lesen könnte!

The toadstools! Have you ever seen rings of toadstools on the ground? Circles... figures.... Oh, to be able to read them!

D: Wozzeck, Er kommt ins Narrenhaus. Er hat eine schöne fixe Idee, eine köstliche Aberration mentalis partialis, zweite Spezies! Sehr schön ausgebildet!

Wozzeck, you'll end up in the madhouse! You have got a beautiful obsession, a splendid aberratio mentalis partialis of the second species! Highly developed!

Wozzeck, Er kriegt noch mehr Zulage! Tut Er Wozzeck, you'll get a raise! Are you

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>noch alles wie sonst? Rasiert seinen Hauptmann? Fängt fleißig Molche? Isst seine Bohnen?</p> | <p>doing everything as before? Do you shave your captain? Are you looking lizards as you should? Are you eating your beans?</p> |
| <p>W: Immer ordentlich, Herr Doktor; denn das Menagengeld kriegt das Weib: Darum tu' ich's ja!</p> | <p>Just as I should, doctor. So that my girl gets the extra money: that's why I do it.</p> |
| <p>D: Er ist ein interessanter Fall, halt er sich nur brav! Wozzeck, Er kriegt noch einen Groschen mehr Zulage. Was muß Er aber tun?</p> | <p>You are an interesting case, just behave yourself! Wozzeck, you'll get a pay raise of one Groschen. But what do you have to do.</p> |
| <p>W: Ach, Marie!</p> | <p>Oh, Marie!</p> |
| <p>D: Bohnen essen, dann Schöpsenfleisch essen, nicht husten. Seinen Hauptmann rasieren, dazwischen die fixe Idee pflegen! Oh meine Theorie! Oh mein Ruhm! Ich werde unsterblich! Wozzeck, zeig' Er mir jetzt die Zunge!</p> | <p>Eat your beans, then some mutton, don't cough. Shave your captain, and go on looking after your obsession! Oh my hypothesis! Oh! my fame! I shall be immortal! Wozzeck, show me your tongue now!</p> |







