

The Evolution of Opera Theatre in the Middle East and North Africa

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By

Paolo Petrocelli

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This book is dedicated to
my parents, Maria Franca and Pier Luigi
my brothers, Carlo and Enrico
and Carolina

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	xi
List of Tables	xii
Acknowledgements	xiii
Summary	xiv
Chapter One.....	1
Introduction	
Chapter Two.....	6
Opera in the Middle East and North Africa	
2.1 A brief history of opera	
2.2 An overview of opera theatres in the Middle East	
2.3 Opera in Arabic	
Chapter Three	13
Algeria	
3.1 Théâtre Impérial d’Alger	
3.2 Théâtre National Algérien	
3.3 Opéra d’Alger	
Chapter Four.....	25
Saudi Arabia	
4.1 Saudi culture	
4.2 Riyadh Opera House	
4.3 Saudi Vision 2030	
4.4 Towards a Saudi cultural renaissance	
Chapter Five	34
Bahrain	
5.1 Dramatic arts in Bahrain	
5.2 Bahrain National Theatre	

Chapter Six.....	45
Egypt	
6.1 The origins of opera houses in Egypt	
6.2 Cairo Opera House	
6.3 Alexandria Opera House	
6.4 Damanhour Opera House	
Chapter Seven.....	66
United Arab Emirates	
7.1 Modern cultural entertainment in the UAE	
7.2 Theatres in the United Arab Emirates	
7.3 Dubai Opera House	
Chapter Eight.....	77
Eritrea	
8.1 Asmara Opera House	
Chapter Nine.....	79
Jordan	
9.1 Jordan's cultural system	
9.2 The National Centre for Culture and Arts (NCCA)	
9.3 King Abdullah II House of Culture and Art	
9.4 Amman Opera Festival	
Chapter Ten.....	85
Iran	
10.1 Music in Iran	
10.2 Roudaki Hall	
10.3 Vahdat Hall	
10.4 Roudaki Cultural and Art Foundation	
Chapter Eleven.....	99
Iraq	
11.1 Musical culture in Iraq	
11.2 Baghdad Opera House	
Chapter Twelve.....	103
Israel	
12.1 From the Palestinian Opera to the Israeli Opera	
12.2 Tel Aviv Performing Arts Centre	

Chapter Thirteen	111
Kuwait	
13.1 Culture and tradition in Kuwait	
13.2 Kuwait National Cultural District	
13.3 Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre	
Chapter Fourteen	116
Lebanon	
14.1 The cultural system in Lebanon	
14.2 Towards the construction of the Beirut Opera House	
14.3 Opera Lebanon	
14.4 The Lebanese National Opera project	
Chapter Fifteen	125
Libya	
15.1 Berenice Theatre	
Chapter Sixteen	127
Morocco	
16.1 The cultural system in Morocco	
16.2 Cultural policy objectives in Morocco	
16.3 Théâtre National Mohammed V	
16.4 Théâtre Royal de Marrakech	
Chapter Seventeen	136
Oman	
17.1 The role of culture in the Sultanate	
17.2 Royal Opera House Muscat	
17.3 Interview with the Director General of the ROHM	
Chapter Eighteen	155
Palestine	
18.1 Opera in Palestine	
18.2 Edward Said National Conservatory of Music	
Chapter Nineteen	160
Qatar	
19.1 The cultural system in Qatar	
19.2 Katara Cultural Village	

Chapter Twenty	165
Syria	
20.1 Culture in Syria	
20.2 Damascus Opera House	
20.3 Music in Damascus	
Chapter Twenty-One	172
Somalia	
21.1 National Theatre of Somalia	
Chapter Twenty-Two.....	174
Tunisia	
22.1 The Tunisian cultural system	
22.2 Théâtre Municipal de Tunis	
22.3 Cité de la Culture	
Conclusions	181
Bibliography	188

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1:	p.19
Fig. 2:	p.20
Fig. 3:	p.24
Fig. 4:	p.33
Fig. 5:	p.57
Fig. 6:	p.58
Fig. 7:	p.59
Fig. 8:	p.62
Fig. 9:	p.63
Fig. 10:	p.65
Fig. 11:	p.67
Fig. 12:	p.68
Fig. 13:	p.68
Fig. 14:	p.80
Fig. 15:	p.81
Fig. 16:	p.106
Fig. 17:	p.107
Fig. 18:	p.108
Fig. 19:	p.109
Fig. 20:	p.129
Fig. 21:	p.130
Fig. 22:	p.131
Fig. 23:	p.132
Fig. 24:	p.132
Fig. 25:	p.138
Fig. 26:	p.157
Fig. 27:	p.158
Fig. 28:	p.158
Fig. 29:	p.162
Fig. 30:	p.163
Fig. 31:	p.176
Fig. 32:	p.177

LIST OF TABLES

Tab. 1.....	p.10
Tab. 2.....	p.41
Tab. 3.....	p.42
Tab. 4.....	p.142
Tab. 5.....	p.143
Tab. 6.....	p.145

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SUMMARY

This book is the first structured and complete research work undertaken on opera theatres across the entire Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Until now, no single study has looked at every theatrical and musical institute in these countries. Many of the opera theatres that are examined in this work have had very little written about them at all in Italian or English. This work aims to fill this void in order to attempt to provide scholars and practitioners in the sector with the first reference work on the subject that might help our understanding of the evolutionary process that has led – and continues to lead – all the countries in the MENA region to equip themselves with an opera theatre.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Today, opera remains one of the most celebrated forms of performing arts in the world. Its promotion and production, in any part of the world, requires a collective effort both on the part of the public sector (public institutions, the state) and the private sector (sponsors, donors).

There are two basic models of organising the artistic productions of an opera theatre: the season system and the repertoire system.

Many opera theatres now use a hybrid model, while some operate in a manner similar to that of a festival in which performances are put on for a limited time period (for example, scheduling operas exclusively during the summer period).

Italian opera houses have traditionally used the season system, in which an arts company and a cast of singers are asked to work in a theatre to stage a production of a specific opera for a limited time period. The production, which is performed to the public on a number of occasions, is rarely put on again the following season.

The grand opera houses of the United Kingdom and the United States also tend to adopt the season system but, more often than not, in a hybrid form, which includes, for example, the staging of multiple productions and alternating them over the course of a short period of time.

This method is almost never adopted by Italian theatres, except at certain festivals (such as the summer season of the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma at the Baths of Caracalla). Generally, in Italian theatres, preparatory work for the production of a new opera always begins after the last recital of the previously staged work.

The repertoire system, on the other hand, is particularly widespread in Germany and Central Europe. The opera houses that have adopted this system have resident companies of singers at their venue who rotate their performances of various operas. Each production is staged for a number of months and is put on again the following year.

The season system is often preferred to the repertoire arrangement as it is believed to be capable of achieving higher artistic standards, due to a longer and more focused period of rehearsals, and the selection of singers

who specialise in specific roles and directors and orchestral conductors who are best suited to the staging of a particular operatic production.

In terms of their legal status, opera houses are almost all non-profit organisations or public institutions.

In Europe, governments are almost always involved in supporting theatres through direct institutional channels (as is the case in France and Germany).

In Italy, the United States and the United Kingdom, opera theatres are often run as private foundations, with strong ties to both centralised and local organisations.

In both cases, governments, at different levels, play a crucial role in the governance of opera houses, especially in Europe, where they often have the authority to nominate members of senior management. Public entities therefore have direct control of many cultural institutions, including from an economic and financial perspective.

Opera theatres have various sources of income, depending on the types of national and local funding systems that they rely upon.

Direct public funding allocates grants of various types that are, most of the time, bestowed upon them through the country's Ministry of Culture and/or local government administrations (regional, municipal, provincial) or a vehicle institution, such as the Arts Council in the United Kingdom. In Europe, the majority of a theatre's financial income comes from public funding.

Private financing may come from non-profit organisations (principally foundations), businesses or private individuals who contribute donations and sponsorships. Contributions from individuals are much more common in the United States and the United Kingdom, where there is a more entrenched tradition of private participation in support of the cultural sector, often as a result of specific policies developed at a national level (tax deductions and incentives for businesses and individuals who sponsor the arts).

Ticket sales is one of the most significant indicators of an opera house's operating capacity. The process of ticket sales depends above all on the price policy adopted by the theatre itself. The price is established according to the levels of demand (typology of the potential audience), the type of production (a 'popular' opera will of course have more success than an experimental opera) and the size of the auditorium (the number of available seats). Of course, the price policy is also influenced by the national and local cultural policy frameworks, as well as by related commercial activities (merchandising, radio/television rights, etc.).

The budget that is therefore necessary for an opera theatre to function depends principally on the size of the organisation itself (in particular the typology and the amount of hired personnel). One of the most evidently critical elements is the inability (and impossibility) for opera houses to cover their costs through their own revenues alone. The models according to which opera theatres currently operate cannot work if external interventions from the public and/or private sector are removed. In other words, an opera theatre will never have the ability to sustain itself solely through ticket sales, let alone operate at a profit.

Over the last 15 years, around 10 new opera theatres and performing arts centres have been built in the Middle East and North Africa, and many others have been restored and modernised. From the Maghreb to the Arabian Peninsula, governments are allocating tens of millions of euros to provide financial support for new cultural growth. Cultural precincts, City of Culture statuses, and multifunctional complexes are becoming the main centres of attraction and production in both old and new cities, which are increasingly using art, theatre, music and live performances as the focus of not only a cultural but also an economic, social and touristic rebirth of their countries.

In particular, the opera theatre, which recently has been frequently seen as being in crisis in the Western world, seems to be fulfilling a new strategic role in Arab and Middle Eastern societies. The opera house has become a place for dialogue between cultures, a gateway to the world, a platform to gauge local talent, a way of creating new jobs, a facilitator of economic development and social growth, a tourist attraction and a way to increase the value of the area. It appears that nowadays, in an advanced and civilised city, it is not possible for there not to be an opera theatre.

However, there are some profound differences between the opera theatres built in the 21st century and their European antecedents: the multifunctional, cutting-edge buildings; the frequent sight of theatre halls integrated inside enormous complexes; dramatically more varied artistic programmes; an absence of professional resident companies; and a lack of defined, long-term business strategies. In short, it seems that despite these countries' extraordinary engineering and entrepreneurial capabilities, they do not have corresponding proficiency in the planning of sustainable and scalable administrative and business models. Every theatre, city and country is, of course, a unique case. It will be useful, therefore, to treat them individually, one by one.

This book is the first structured and complete research work undertaken on opera theatres across the entire Middle East and Arab

world. Until now, no single study has looked at every theatrical and musical institute in these countries. Many of the opera theatres that are examined in this work have had very little written about them at all in Italian or English. This work aims to fill this void in order to attempt to provide scholars and practitioners in the sector with the first reference work on the subject that might help our understanding of the evolutionary process that has led – and continues to lead – all the countries in the MENA region to equip themselves with an opera theatre.

The historical spectrum of this work is relatively wide, ranging from opera theatres built in the 18th century to those that were either built in 2017 or are currently still under construction.

All the existing literature that is currently available on the opera theatres under study has been consulted. The majority of these studies have only been published in French or Arabic, or sometimes in English. Almost none are in Italian. Particular attention has been paid to collecting as much recent statistical data as possible; the analysis of the statutes, strategic plans, budgets and programmes published by the theatres themselves; the study of websites and official social media accounts; and the local, national and international press.

Access to the relevant data or information did not always turn out to be easy or even possible. In some countries, in fact, a considerable amount of statistical data is not made public, nor are the management plans or operating principles of many cultural institutions officially published. Where possible, I therefore turned to obtaining interviews and testimonies directly from people who held senior positions (managers and directors) in the organisations under study here – which sometimes provided access to confidential documentation – in an attempt to obtain as much information and data as possible in order to facilitate the fulfilment of a complete and rigorous study.

This book is intended to be the first contribution towards more in-depth and systematic research on the distribution of opera houses in the MENA region, which I intend to pursue further in the near future.

In this study, I intentionally do not enter into the merits of one or more aspects of the detail of this research, as I considered it more appropriate, due to the lack of pre-existing studies, to take an overview of the current situation and treat aspects of the general context at the historical, socio-economic and political levels (as well as from a musicological point of view). An initial analysis of the operating models of individual opera houses has therefore been carried out, the focus of which is principally on management, scheduling and promotional (communication, marketing,

fundraising) strategies. This research is therefore a useful aid to dealing with more specific investigations on individual opera theatres, providing a greater awareness of the context in which the institution itself is placed.

The book is divided into 22 chapters, each of which analyses and reconstructs the main historical, social and economic events linked to the presence of an opera house in the country in question and to the operation and positioning of the theatre itself. The geographical area under investigation is the Middle East and North Africa. The main body of the research is preceded by an introduction to the forms of opera performances, a brief history of opera, and an analysis of the concept of opera in the MENA region. The book ends with a chapter detailing the author's conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO

OPERA IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

The diffusion of a modern theatre culture, in a European mould, across the Middle East and North Africa occurred during the colonial period. Starting in the 19th century, with the presence of the great European powers initially in the countries of the Maghreb and then spreading across much of the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula, a process of Westernisation took place – one of the strongest in modern history.

The adoption of foreign languages and the spread of the colonising powers' traditions and customs radically transformed the socio-cultural profile of the entire Middle East. So it was that, starting in the early 19th century, the first theatrical and operatic performances began to be promoted and organised by European companies in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. Before long, the region's first opera theatres were also under construction. The history of opera in the MENA region had begun. In order to understand the characteristics of this diffusion and development better, it is useful to conduct a brief review of the principal phases of this art form's evolution.

2.1 A brief history of opera

Opera was born in Italy at the end of the 16th century and has since spread throughout the world, becoming one of our national culture's most appreciated forms of art.

The first opera, which is still performed today, was *La Favola d'Orfeo*, composed by Monteverdi in 1607. The earliest operas, which wanted to put the music at the service of the text, were a succession of recitatives with a short instrumental accompaniment, linked together by musical interludes. After Florence and Rome, Venice soon became the heartland of opera and, in 1637, the Teatro San Cassiano opened in the city, the world's first public opera house which made this art form accessible to a wider audience. Opera spread rapidly throughout Europe

and by the early 1700s, Naples, Vienna, Paris, London and Hamburg had become the most important centres for the promotion of this art form.

In the 18th century, two forms of opera developed: *opera seria* (serious opera) and *opera buffa* (comic opera). *Opera seria* was often inspired by mythology and contained elements of tragedy. The important arias were often sung by famous castrati. *Opera buffa*, on the other hand, was comical and featured everyday characters and light-hearted subjects. The main roles in *opera buffa* were usually performed by tenors or basses.

While early operas sought to give greater value to their lyrics, the end of the Baroque period saw the development of the great *bel canto* arias, which gave absolute priority to vocal virtuosity. Then, at the end of the 18th century, a simpler style that was strictly bound to the text and the music thrived. Classic operas put singing at the service of the dramatic aspect, not vice versa, and used the choruses and ensembles to illustrate the collective nature of human emotions. This musical reform began with Christoph Willibald Gluck (*Iphigénie en Tauride*, 1779), and influenced numerous composers.

As feelings of nationalism intensified, operas began to be composed in local languages in various countries. The Romantic period began with the operas of the German composer Carl Maria von Weber. This genre combined the characteristics of the serious and comic forms while adding aspects of classical music to them on themes inspired by contemporary life or recent history. In the second half of the 19th century, opera was revolutionised by Richard Wagner, from *Der fliegende Holländer* in 1843 to *Parsifal* in 1882, with the four works of the famous *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1869-1876) in between. Wagner combined music, theatre, poetry and direction in what he called his 'music-dramas', in which even the orchestra was a protagonist. Wagner had created a *leitmotiv*, a specific musical phrase associated with a character, event or idea.

In Italy, the role of the voice remained predominant. The *bel canto* tradition continued, combined with the roles and themes of *opera buffa*. This can be found in the operas of Rossini (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, 1816), Bellini (*Norma*, 1831) and Donizetti (*L'elisir d'amore*, 1832). The greatest Italian composer of the 19th century was Giuseppe Verdi. With a vigorous, passionate style, Verdi composed operas that not only put on a grand spectacle, but also displayed some of the innermost feelings of the human soul (*La Traviata*, 1853; *Aida*, 1871).

A separate tradition was developed in Russia and Eastern Europe, inspired by great historical events or national literature. In France,

'grand opéra' flourished, which mixed large stage effects, action and ballet. Even the lightest form of *opéra comique* (comic opera) was very successful. This contained spoken dialogue and, despite its name, sometimes depicted tragic themes, such as in Bizet's *Carmen* (1875).

The trends of the late 19th century continued into the early 20th century. Puccini was the last great Italian composer: he composed, among other works, *Tosca* (1900), *Madame Butterfly* (1904) and *Turandot* (1926).

Subsequently, rather than general trends, individualised operas began to appear. The sombre works of Alban Berg (*Wozzeck*, 1925) contrasted with the operas of Kurt Weill (*Die Dreigroschenoper*, 1928), which were inspired by jazz and popular music. Benjamin Britten, meanwhile, composed traditional operas such as *Peter Grimes* (1945), as well as chamber works.

Today, the operas available for us to choose from are more varied than ever. Direction and staging have become essential elements of new productions. The great operas of the past, which are constantly revisited, continue to be huge successes and are still offered in theatre schedules alongside new works.

Opera is therefore a form of living art, capable of renewing itself over time, and often of adapting itself to contemporary tastes.

Italians and Europeans, who are committed to ensuring the overwhelming majority of historic and traditional opera houses remain operative, have not planned the construction of any new theatrical buildings of any particular relevance in the last 30 years (save for very few exceptions), limiting themselves almost exclusively to dealing with restoration and modernisation work. Conversely, since the late 1990s and early 2000s, opera and the other major European forms of live performance have spread throughout various developing countries, with the consequent construction of new, cutting-edge theatrical buildings in many cities. Most notably, China, which in recent years has invested heavily at a national level in the construction of numerous opera theatres, has even occasionally committed itself to projects outside its own borders. The framework of the foreign aid programme sanctioned by the Chinese government in 2011 in fact clearly specifies China's financial commitment, in the form of grants or loans, to supporting civic aid schemes for the construction of cultural structures in other countries

(such as in Algeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Mauritius, Senegal, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Trinidad and Tobago).¹

As will be shown later on, even various countries in the MENA region have supported and invested in the construction of new theatres in recent years.

2.2 An overview of opera theatres in the Middle East and North Africa



Before proceeding with a study and analysis of opera theatres in the MENA area, it is useful to present a breakdown of the principal organisations and theatrical entities in the region that offer opera performances during their seasons. All countries belonging to the League of Arab States have been included, as well as Iran and Israel.

¹ GOV.cn. *China's Foreign Aid*. 2011. http://english1.english.gov.cn/official/2011-04/21/content_1849913.htm.

Tab. 1

	Country	City	Theatre	Year of inauguration
1	Algeria	Algiers	Imperial Theatre of Algiers	1853
2		Algiers	Municipal Theatre of Algiers	1887
3		Algiers	Algerian National Theatre	1963
4		Algiers	Algiers Opera House	2016
5	Bahrain	Manama	National Theatre of Bahrain	2012
6	Egypt	Cairo	Khedivial Opera House (Royal Opera House)	1869
7		Cairo	Cairo Opera House	1988
8		Cairo	El Gomhouria Theatre	-
9		Alexandria	Zizinia Theatre	1863
10		Alexandria	Mohamed Aly Theatre	1921
11		Alexandria	Sayed Darwish Theatre (Alexandria Opera House)	1952
12		Damanhour	Farouk Cinema and Theatre	1930
13		Damanhour	Municipal Cinema	1962
14		Damanhour	Damanhour Opera House	2009
15	Iran	Tehran	Roudaki Hall	1967
16		Tehran	Vahdat Hall	1988
17	Iraq	Baghdad	Baghdad Opera House*	1956
18	Israel	Tel Aviv	Tel Aviv Performing Arts Center	1994
19	Jordan	Amman	National Center for Culture and Arts	1987
20	Kuwait	Kuwait City	Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre	2016
21	Lebanon	-	-	-
22	Libya	Benghazi	Berenice Theatre	1928
23	Morocco	Rabat	Théâtre National Mohammed V	1962

24	Oman	Muscat	Royal Opera House Muscat	2011
25	Palestine	-	-	-
26	Qatar	Doha	Opera House Katara Village	2010
27	Saudi Arabia	Riyadh	Riyadh Opera House	1969
28	Syria	Damascus	Damascus Opera House (Dar Al-Assad for Culture and Arts)	2004
29	Somalia	Mogadishu	National Theatre of Somalia	1960
30	Tunisia	Tunis	Théâtre municipal de Tunis	1902
31	United Arab Emirates	Dubai	Dubai Opera House	2016

* Project not completed

2.3 Opera in Arabic

As pointed out above, the diffusion of the culture of opera in the MENA region occurred contemporaneously with the processes of European colonisation. Starting in the second half of the 19th century, local communities also found themselves playing a strategic role in the promotion and development of this ‘foreign’ form of art. Numerous musicians, singers and artists of Arab-Middle Eastern origin began, in fact, to study the art of opera singing and to improve their skills in various theatrical professions, often undertaking training experience in some of the most prestigious musical institutes of Europe, before then returning to their own countries and being actively involved as artists or administrators within the nascent opera houses.

Among them were also various innovators who have repeatedly tried, in recent years, to give life to opera in Arabic, first by undertaking serious translations of the original librettos of the European operatic repertoire, and then by promoting a new art form; this took its inspiration from grand

opera, and responded more directly to traditional sentiments about Arab culture in the narrative, the text of the libretto, the musical composition, the production and the staging.

The first opera in Arabic could be said to be one of the works of the Lebanese composer Wadih Sabra; *The Two Kings*, with a libretto by Marun Ghusn, was performed for the first time in Beirut in 1927. The score has since been lost.

In the modern era, there are many examples of Arabic operas, the librettos of which were written in Arabic and the scores then written accordingly. Sherif Mohie El Din, an Egyptian composer, orchestral conductor and director of the Damanhour Opera House, has written numerous Arabic operas. His opera *Miramar* was publicly performed for the first time in Cairo in 2005.

The Dutch composer Michiel Borstlap was commissioned by the Emir of Qatar to write the opera *Ibn Sina*, based on the life of Avicenna, which was performed in Qatar in 2003.

The Arabic monodrama *Dream She Is* was composed in 2008 by Joelle Khoury, a Lebanese composer, and was written for a female singer (it has been performed by Fadia Tomb el-Hage).

In July 2009 in Ramallah, Daniel Barenboim's youth orchestra, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, performed the opera *The Sultana of Cadiz* (later named *The Arabian Princess*), based on a musical pastiche by Juan Crisóstomo Arriaga and a libretto by Paula Fünfeck, and inspired by an Arabic fairy tale. The opera was commissioned by Anne-Sophie Brünig of the Barenboim-Said Foundation, and the Lebanese composer Iyad Kanaan wrote an opera in three acts, titled *Qadmus*, on a libretto by Said Akl.

This cultural diffusion of the operatic art form (both the Western version and the 'experimental' Arabic language version) was accompanied by political and economic decision processes which have led many states in the MENA region to build numerous opera houses and/or performing arts centres in recent years.² This book will now study each of these on a case by case basis.

² The Economist, "Opera's Middle Eastern conquests", *The Economist*, June 16, 2016, <https://www.economist.com/blogs/prospero/2016/06/overtures-not-oil>.

CHAPTER THREE

ALGERIA



Opéra d'Alger, Algiers, Algeria

3.1 Théâtre Impérial d'Alger

The creation of a theatre in Algiers dates back to the first few months after the city had surrendered to the invading army of the Kingdom of France during the reign of Charles X, a process which began on July 5, 1830.

The idea came from General Bertrand Clauzel, a leading figure in the military who was well aware of the need to support the morale of his troops in a hostile and restless city, which could offer very few distractions to the French troops.¹

On November 12, 1830, the general issued a decree, made up of three articles:

Art 1. A performance hall will be built in the city of Algiers.

¹ Fernand Arnaudès, *Histoire de l'opéra d'Alger. Episodes de la vie théâtrale algéroise, 1830-1940*, Ancienne imprimerie V.Heintz, 1941.

- Art 2. The choice of the location, the estimated cost and the work required for its construction will be subject to the approval of the General in Chief.
- Art 3. The Quartermaster is charged with the execution of this order.

After careful and laborious research, a site that was considered to be ideally suited to being converted to a theatre was identified, a large room on the Rue des Consuls. Later, for reasons of strategic convenience, the theatre was moved to a room on the Rue de l'Etat Major, a prestigious location where the National Library of Algeria now stands.²

The room was quite functional and welcoming. Journalists readily gave it the name 'Bonbonnière' for the intimacy and warmth that it offered.

The Algerian public immediately became familiar with the great works of the Italian repertoire, the staging of which was authorised by the same decree of November 12, 1830 from General Clauzel:

Italian operas will be performed at the theatre in Algiers. Ballets could equally be performed as well.

Rossini, Verdi, Donizetti and Bellini were some of the great Italian composers whose works were performed for the first time in Algeria on the Rue de l'Etat Major.

The theatre soon became a landmark in the colony's high society. However, the small dimensions of the room soon became an obvious limitation. The rapid increase in the number of spectators convinced the administrators to initiate expansion works in 1850.

However, redesigning and redeveloping the hall on the Rue de l'Etat Major would not have been sufficient. The (French) citizens, in fact, strongly felt that it was necessary to construct a suitable building that was worthy of the city.

The impresario Sarlin presented the city council with a project conceived by the two architects Frédéric Chassériau and Justin Ponsard, which had a fully neo-baroque style. The plan was approved and a new site was selected (a former Turkish guard barracks on the Place Charles Bresson, the current Port Saïd Square), and construction of the building commenced in May 1850 and lasted until September 1853.

The new theatre, named the Théâtre Impérial d'Alger and nicknamed the Théâtre de Chassériau, opened its doors on September 29, 1853 in the presence of the Governor-General of Algeria, Marshal Jacques Louis

² From "l'Algérieniste", *bulletin d'idées et d'information, avec l'autorisation de la direction actuelle de la revue "l'Algérieniste"*, Issue 40, December 1987.

Randon, the prefect Charles Lautour-Mézeray, and the mayor Jean-Baptiste Vincent de Guioye. The institution was equipped for the first time with a resident orchestra of 38 musicians and three companies of actors/singers: Opéra-Comique, Divertissement, and Comédie, Drame et Vaudeville.

On May 10, 1865, Emperor Napoleon III visited the theatre and watched a performance of the opera *Rigoletto*, staged by an Italian company.

Unfortunately, a fire destroyed the theatre on March 19, 1882. The archives, the library, and the storerooms with the costumes and scenery props were all destroyed. Only the outside walls were spared while the foyer, fortunately, was not damaged.

In just one year, the architect Oudot, charged with the task of reconstructing the building, gave the city its theatre back, which opened, in an enlarged form, on December 1, 1883.

In 1887, the 'Imperial' Theatre became a 'Municipal' Theatre, thereby losing the stipend of 30,000 francs which it had been guaranteed by France up until that point.

The building was modernised by the Algerian architects Raymond Taphoureau and Emmanuel Guermonprez, who won a national competition to do so in 1936. The work started in 1937 and finished in 1941.

Between the 1940s and the 1950s, almost all the shows on the bill included performances by French artists, who came from the opera houses of Bordeaux, Lyon, Marseille, Strasbourg and Toulon to perform the great works of lyric opera (*La Traviata*, *Othello*, *Faust*, *Carmen*, *Rigoletto*, *Tosca*), ballets, concerts and a few comedies.³

3.2 Théâtre National Algérien

From 1962, following their independence from the French, the entire Algerian theatre system transformed radically.⁴ As a result of decree n.63-12 of January 8, 1963, the Théâtre Municipal d'Alger became the Théâtre National Algérien and came to be recognised as "a public institution of an industrial and commercial nature, endowed with legal rights and financial autonomy. It is under the supervision of the Ministry of Information".⁵

³ From the 1948-1949 season programme of the Théâtre Municipal d'Alger.

⁴ Amar Mohand-Amer and Belkacem Benzenine, eds., *Le Maghreb et l'indépendance de l'Algérie* (Paris: Karthala, 2012), 89.

⁵ Ministère de la Culture de la République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire, judicial decree n.63-12 of January 8, 1963.

The new institution's main task was to contribute to cultural development through the production and diffusion of dramatic and choreographic performances of an educational and cultural nature.

However, Algeria's national independence revealed an enormous gap in the sphere of its theatrical heritage, since any attempt prior to 1962 to perform authentic works, of non-European derivation, had been systematically prevented during the colonial period. Writers, dramatists and directors thus had to create the foundations of a genuine and completely new and original dramaturgy during the period following independence.

In those years, important work also began on the organisation of all the country's most important cultural institutions.

The first legal text reference for the systematisation of Algerian theatre is decree 63-12 from January 8, 1963.⁶

The Théâtre National Algérien was made into a national public service, regulated by:

- Assigning a permanent headquarters
- Creating a permanent troupe
- Planning defined activities, including:
 - Theatrical research and invention
 - The development of theatrical and dance activities across the country
 - Organising popular culture festivals
- Appointing a management team with a three-year mandate, composed of:
 - A director
 - An administrator
 - A stage manager
- Establishing an advisory body: the National Committee of the Algerian Theatre (le Comité National du Théâtre Algérien), independent from the Ministry of Culture, which was charged with determining the theatre's direction and selecting, promoting and disseminating works to the masses.

The decree also set out plans for the recovery of other theatres located in large cities (Constantine, Oran, Annaba and Sidi Bel Abbès) as well as the Ministry of Information and Culture's direct supervision of:

⁶ François Rouchard, *Le Théâtre National Algérien*, UNESCO Technical Report, Paris, 1980.