The Remaking of Lulu on Stage: Transformations of Character, Music, and Context
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This project seeks to explore the significance of operatic staging in the reinterpretation of past works within new contexts, as well as the creative authority of the stage director, by examining several Lulu productions, revealing the fluid conception of Lulu as it is transformed within various historical and socio-cultural environments. Although much scholarship has been written on Lulu, some of the most radical changes it has undergone have been implemented by stage directors.

The productions explored here include the 1937 Lulu premiere, the premiere of the complete third act at the Paris Opéra in 1979, a 2002 production by the Opernhaus Zürich, 2011 performances by Gran Theatre del Liceau and the Berlin Staatsoper, and the 2012 production by the Komische Oper Berlin. Although this dissertation will primarily focus on post-1980 Lulu productions, the 1937 premiere will be used to compare the composer’s intentions to transformations of the work in modern productions. These comparisons will be made through a semiotic analysis of various staging elements, musical and textual analysis of archival materials, consideration of past Lulu scholarship, and interviews with stage directors and other members of the production team. Furthermore, relevant features of the political, cultural, and social climate of each post-1980 Lulu production will also be considered.

Several Lulu performances discussed in this study explore an area which, even as recently as the publication of Roger Parker’s Remaking the Song, was called “untouched”: that is, the alteration of the operatic text itself. 1 Whether these “updated” works and radical stagings are considered a passing trend or true innovations, the effect of staging on opera-goers is undeniable. By focusing on these reinterpretations, this study also seeks to shed new light on the identity of Lulu herself, as she is transformed and altered for new opera productions.