Eunuchs, mutes and the performance of anxiety in orientalist plays

Authors:
Cortese, Beth Rebecca

Editor:
Greenfield, Anne

DOI:
10.4324/9781003005407-5

Abstract:
The eunuch, popularized through England's introduction to the Italian castrati in opera, became a figure of fascination onto which sexual and political anxieties were projected in late seventeenth-century tragedy. This chapter argues that the verbally castrated mute and the sexually castrated eunuch in tragedies with Eastern characters and settings are portrayed as unsettling in Western drama because they symbolize a threat to the Symbolic Order of masculine control. This chapter will explore the representation of eunuchs and mutes as monstrous images of emasculation, which threaten patriarchal power structures in William Congreve's The Mourning Bride (1697) and as an alternative feminized community in Mary Pix's Ibrahim (1695). The sign language used by mutes in the Ottoman court is depicted as a confusion of sign and signifier within Congreve's tragedy The Mourning Bride (1697), which threatens patriarchal order. Through analysis of the dialogue song between a virgin and eunuch in Ibrahim, I argue that Pix's preoccupation with castration through spectacle is part of a wider anxiety about the visual and musical language of European opera. The chapter broadens the interpretation of castration to consider how scenes depicting bodily gestures employed by mutes, eunuchs, and female characters generate a sense of powerlessness within masculine subjects onstage, performing a kind of castration.

ISBN:
9781003005407, 9780367437398

Type:
Book chapter

Language:
English

Published in:
Castration, Impotence, and Emasculation in the Long Eighteenth Century, 2019, p. 88-104
Mathematics anxiety (MA), a state of discomfort associated with performing mathematical tasks, is thought to affect a notable proportion of the school age population. Some research has indicated that MA negatively affects mathematics performance and that girls may report higher levels of MA than boys. On the other hand, some research has indicated that boys' mathematics performance is more negatively affected by MA than girls' performance is. As previous studies suggest, this time pressure is not expected to have a differential effect on the performance of individuals with low and high maths anxiety [26]. All participants were tested in groups of 80 to 200, under examination conditions in their school exam hall.

A eunuch (ˌjuːnək/ YOO-nək) is a man who has been castrated to serve a specific social function. The earliest records for intentional castration to produce eunuchs are from the Sumerian city of Lagash in the 21st century BC. Over the millennia since, they have performed a wide variety of functions in many different cultures: courtiers or equivalent domestics, treble singers, concubines or sexual partners, religious specialists, soldiers, royal guards, government officials, and guardians of Performance anxiety affects everyone differently, as not everyone responds to stress and anxiety in the same way. In addition to ED, performance anxiety could lead to: premature ejaculation, an inability to orgasm, a lack of interest in sex. Research also suggests that heterosexual people who experience performance anxiety may be more likely to seek sexual experiences outside of a steady relationship. It may also help for a person to be open with any sexual partners about their feelings of performance anxiety. Doing this can reduce stress, and the partner can help the person find solutions to relieve their anxiety. When to see a doctor. If symptoms do not improve with lifestyle and relaxation techniques, or if they worsen over time, medical treatment may help.