

In diesen heil'gen Hallen:
**Mozart's *Magic Flute* and the Mediatized
Space of Opera**

A thesis

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to address how technology and film have come to influence operatic staging practices in recent years. It begins first with an assessment of opera's place in the cinema by looking at how two film versions of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*—Ingmar Bergman's *Trollflöjten* (1975) and Kenneth Branagh's *Magic Flute* (2006)—both strive to fuse the theatrical and the cinematic into a hybridized artform, capable of engaging audiences as a combination of opera and film. The second chapter shifts focus to staged opera, but with an eye towards space and place and their interaction with filmic technologies. As a whole, this project seeks to confront what I see as a fundamental problem in the way scholarship has thus far approached the subject. This thesis argues for the need of a more integrated approach to how we think and write about operatic mediatization and intermediality in the twenty-first century.

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In diesen heil'gen Hallen:

Mozart's *Magic Flute* and the Mediatized

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Introduction

Operatic Death Threats

“Hollywood films are killing opera!” So Zachary Woolfe, writing less than a year ago for *The New York Times*, would have us believe.¹ But remarks lamenting the state of the industry—that the genre is a “dying artform” or that its repertoire has become stagnant beyond repair—remain all too common amongst well-meaning journalists and even some music and film scholars who wish to serve as defenders of this “underdog” genre. To make such broad claims about opera’s seemingly-impending death, however, is to refuse to acknowledge the many ways in which the genre has adapted to and learned from newer modes of entertainment. In reality, opera is thriving like never before, both in United States (as Woolfe discusses) and abroad. To cite one such example, the Metropolitan Opera’s *Live in HD* telecasts have been crucial in garnering continued exposure to the artform by making it much more accessible to the general public, as it has brought dozens of repertory classics and new productions alike into cinemas the world over since its inception seven years ago. With millions of tickets sold per season, these broadcasts are a boon not only to those living in cities without thriving opera houses, or beyond the major urban centers where opera is typically performed, but also for people who might not otherwise be able to afford the trip to such a venue.

Likewise, opera directors have begun incorporating cinematic technologies into their stage productions and have been bringing these works of

¹ Zachary Woolfe, “How Hollywood Films Are Killing Opera,” *The New York Times* (16 August 2012), C1.

theatre to places and spaces well beyond the operatic stage, often in an attempt to garner fresh perspectives of tried-and-true works. Two directors have even gone so far as to create big-budget opera-films exclusively for the “Big Screen” in that same seven year time span since the Met’s simulcasts began airing in theatres. Add to this picture the exponentially increasing amount of “live recording” opera titles available for purchase on DVD and Bluray, opera’s continued presence on public television and radio, and the proliferation of online opera streaming (both free and subscription-based), and this hardly sounds like the description of a dying genre.

With an eye towards contemporary endeavors such as the ones mentioned above, this thesis will address not only events taking place *inside* the “*heil’gen hallen*” of the world’s most technologically ambitious opera houses, but will widen the space of these “halls” to consider events occurring outside its traditional boundaries as well. That is to say, the scope of this thesis encompasses contemporary approaches to operatic mediation and mediatization both from the side of the stage and from the screen. It seeks to address what I see as a fundamental problem in the way scholarship has thus far handled the discussion of operatic intermediality and re-mediation in the twenty-first century, and will offer a new way of thinking about the subject. Not only will it concern itself with notable attempts at creating “opera-films” (cinematic adaptations of repertory classics) over the course of the past thirty-five years, but it will also include a discussion of the ongoing relationship between the two genres. The very “place” of operatic spectatorship will be called into question, too, as the adoption of these

technologies and practices have resulted in an environment in which viewing opera has become equally possible on the stage, at the movies, or in the home.

Writing not long ago in *The Opera Quarterly*, Emanuele Senici conceded that “in the last decade, the arrival of DVDs, and more recently of the so-called HD simulcasts to movie theatres, have placed videos as the center of the experience of opera in contemporary society.”² Similarly, David Levin has stressed the “growing interest” and “ongoing importance” of mediation in the world of opera production.³ Yet, recent scholarship has done little to actually address twenty-first century approaches to operatic intermediality and remediation as a whole. Well-known books by authors such as Marcia Citron, Jeremy Tambling, and Jeongwon Joe have documented the genre’s adaptation to and influence upon the world of cinema; scholars such as Philip Auslander and Christopher Morris have tackled more recent questions of liveness and DVD recording, but little to no scholarship attempts to bridge the gap between these various approaches to mediated and re-mediated opera.⁴ It is through such an integrated approach to current forms of operatic representation that I hope to demonstrate how cinematic, filmic, and directorial trends of the past thirty-five years have influenced and impacted one another. By focusing on more than just

² Emanuele Senici, “Porn Style? Space and Time in Live Opera Videos,” *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Winter 2010), 63.

³ David Levin, “The Mise-en-scène of Mediation: Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung* (Stuttgart Opera, Peter Konwitschny, 2000-2005),” *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 2-3 (Spring-Summer 2011), 219.

⁴ Representative works by these scholars include Marcia J. Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Jeremy Tambling, *Opera, Ideology and Film* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987); Jeongwon Joe and Rose Theresa, ed., *Between Opera and Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* [1999], Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 2008); Christopher Morris, “Digital Diva: Opera on Video,” *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Winter 2010): 96-119.

one medium—such as “cinematic adaptations of opera” or “opera on DVD”—and *across* varied media platforms, this thesis will look at how different mediatic systems of representation have, taken as a whole, contributed to an integrated twenty-first century approach to multimedial operatic dramaturgy and spectatorship.

Generally speaking, scholars have thus far tended to address these issues in one of two ways. Larger works by authors such as Citron and Tambling tend to focus on the sub-genre of the opera film, customarily by offering close readings of these films and in a teleological fashion that sees operas as an original narrative that gradually unfurls as it enters the realm of cinema. As such, it often remains fixated on the filmic side of this hybridized form of operatic representation without addressing the theatrical *and* cinematic practices at work simultaneously in these endeavors. Likewise, shorter writings on the subject—mainly articles and book chapters by authors such as Richard Will and Christopher Morris—tend to be equally narrow in scope, focusing only on a specific issue such as dramaturgy and *mise-en-scène* or camerawork in recorded productions of live opera without acknowledging that these, too, are not necessarily isolated phenomena incapable of influencing and impacting one another.

With these things in mind, I argue here for the need to replace this teleological, “master narrative” approach to dealing with mediated and re-mediated opera with one that takes better account of the vast landscape that these stage and film directors traverse in attempting to reconcile the worlds of opera and film. In each chapter, I meet the scholars who write about such endeavors on

their own terms—at least initially—by addressing first the close reading technique of analyzing opera-film and, later, the case study approach to staged opera. In each instance, however, I suggest that these analytical methods can be problematized, pushed further, or need to be reconsidered altogether. Only through such an integrated approach to operatic intermediality, I argue, can one begin to chart the path that opera and film have taken together in the past forty years.

The first chapter will provide an in-depth look at two notable attempts to combine the worlds of opera and film through cinematic realizations of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*: specifically, those works directed by Ingmar Bergman in 1975 and Kenneth Branagh in 2006. The former represents one of the earliest (and arguably most successful) endeavors to bridge these two artforms, prompting a handful of directors such as Franco Zeffirelli, Jean-Pierre Ponelle, Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, and others to further adapt opera for the Big Screen in the decade that followed. Branagh's film, on the other hand, represents one of the most recent pursuits in the tradition of the opera-film. In each case, I will argue, the two directors systematically make alterations to the original libretto—by translating the work into the vernacular, omitting dialogue and music, and even altering the storyline—with the aim of recapturing the original “popular” element of the work and making the classic more approachable for contemporary audiences. In this chapter, I also contend that Bergman's and Branagh's films engage with Mozart's *Singspiel* in such a way that demonstrates a concerted effort to combine the worlds of operatic and cinematic practices to the extent that the boundaries

between the two begin to erode. Instead, I propose, they present us with a hybridized genre that functions no differently from the blending of stagecraft and technology on the opera stages in live performance. That is to say, they all act in such a way as to work towards a new understanding of the relationship between theatre and cinema in current modes of operatic production.

No longer exclusively fixed on the screen, the second chapter takes into account productions that have gradually worked to resituate the “space” and “place” of the operatic production elsewhere than the traditional stage, also relying on technologies of mediation and strategies of mediatization. Auslander defines this term as “the process whereby the traditional fine arts. . .come to a consciousness of themselves as various media within a mediatic system.”⁵ I here adopt a similar definition, albeit one modified in light of Christopher Morris’s more recent discussions on “hypermediacy,” a similar term he defines as “remediation that declares itself,” and, when more specifically applied to opera studies, a case of “artistic reflection on art.”⁶

With six case studies that encompass the chronological interval between Bergman’s and Branagh’s opera-films, the second chapter considers how stage directors have adhered to or departed from the paradigm established by Bergman in 1975. I will thus concern myself not only with how these *reggisseurs* have chosen to integrate the filmic and the theatrical to convey their messages to contemporary audiences, but also, owing to the nature of stage performance, how

⁵⁵ Philip Auslander, “Liveness, Mediatization, and Intermedial Performance,” *Degrés: Revue de sythèse à orientation sémiologique*, No. 101 (Spring 2000), 8.

⁶ Christopher Morris, “Digital Diva: Opera in Video,” 108-109.

their works speak to the fact that the very natures of operatic “authenticity” and “liveness” have been continually re-negotiated during this time period.

Mozart’s operas were among the first to enjoy nearly-unbroken performance histories from the time of their creation to the present. Logically, then, I hypothesized that the number of different approaches to Mozart’s works would be statistically higher than many other composers, if only because of his firm placement within the operatic canon for the past two hundred years (longer than any other composer in the standard repertory of operatic works).

Operabase.com, a website that, among other services, provides a statistical analysis of productions being staged throughout the world, confirms this fact, as a greater number of Mozart’s operas have been performed in the past five seasons than any other composer, save for Giuseppe Verdi.⁷ Moreover, Mozart’s works account for three of the top ten most frequently performed operas over the past five seasons, with *Die Zauberflöte* ranking first among those three (alongside *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*), and number four overall.⁸

Of course, this makes perfect sense, as Mozart and Schikaneder created the piece with middle-class audiences in mind, working not with the traditions of Italian opera, but within the more folk-oriented, Austro-German genre of the

⁷ In the site’s own words, “Composer and opera tables are based on counts of performance runs over the five seasons from 2007/8 to 2011/12, i.e., how many times a work was programmed, not the number of performances.” For more, see <http://operabase.com/top.cgi?lang=en&break=0&show=composer&no=50&nat=> (Accessed 4 April 2013).

⁸ According to the site, *Die Zauberflöte* is currently the fourth most performed opera in the world, with 571 performances in the past five years. *Don Giovanni* ranks in at number six (494 performances) and *Le Nozze di Figaro* rounds out the Top 10 (433 performances), but six of the composer’s works rank within the Top 50. <http://operabase.com/top.cgi?lang=en&break=0&show=opera&no=50&nat=> (Accessed 4 April 2013)

Singspiel. As a work created for popular rather than court entertainment, its continued resonance with spectators today is easy to understand, given the opera's likeable characters, tuneful melodies, and fairy tale storyline. Thus, considering the sheer number of performances of *The Magic Flute*, it seemed only obvious that many noteworthy stagings would arise over the course of time. Considering as well the significance that Bergman's adaptation of the work had in the history of opera's mediation and *Trollflöjten* seemed like the ideal place to begin this study. What remained, then, was deciding on which other productions would be specifically discussed.

In the first chapter of his monograph on operatic dramaturgy and performance theory in the twenty-first century, David Levin justifies the use of his examples as follows:

In selecting the productions that I will discuss here, I have been guided not only by a sense of their interpretive achievement and theoretical significance, but also by a pragmatic consideration, namely, their availability in recorded form, on video or DVD—that is, their availability for my readers to experience via the mediation of a TV or computer screen.⁹

I have here been guided by similar principles. I selected works that would be accessible for home viewing, though even the number of available recordings of *Die Zauberflöte* leaves one with dozens of stagings from which to choose.

Availability, however, was not my only guiding factor—indeed, two of the examples considered herein (Keneth Branagh's *Magic Flute* from Chapter 1 and Felix Breisach's *La Traviata* in Chapter 2) are only available on DVD in Europe

⁹ David Levin, *Unsettling Opera: Staging Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, and Zemlinsky* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 7.

at present and thus less accessible to those in the United States. Rather, my overriding goal was to select productions that would introduce readers to the greatest variety of staging practices and approaches to dealing with technologies of mediation. Some of the works will likely be familiar to readers, such as Bergman's opera-film or Peter Konwitschny's setting of *Don Carlos*, as a number of authors have addressed them recently, but some will be less familiar. Theodor Herzl's open-air staging of *The Magic Flute*, for example, has been seldom discussed but remains of crucial importance when considering many of the issues to be tackled here.

Also worth mentioning are the dates of the productions in question. Another goal of this thesis was to chart the path that operatic mediation has taken over the past thirty five years; I therefore wished to ensure that the productions considered would cover this time span at least somewhat evenly. Thus, the seven main examples (two instantiations of *Die Zauberflöte* from chapter one, three more from chapter two, plus two operas by Giuseppe Verdi) can be broken down as follows: one each from the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, and three from the present century. Supporting these seven primary examples are shorter analyses of additional works by Hans-Jürgen Syberberg from the 1980s, Peter Sellars from the 90s, and Bill Viola in the new millennium, with two further *Flute* productions from the 90s and 2000s discussed in lesser detail as well. Add to this list other examples drawn from the realms of opera and theatre over the past three decades and the cross-section of the ideas that have shaped opera's interaction with the cinematic over the years becomes quite clear.

The productions I have chosen here all aid in re-contextualizing the role of multimedial technologies on the operatic stage of today. It is my belief that these works all help to effect a change in the way twenty-first century audiences experience opera. These not only should prove useful in creating a new understanding of the relationship between stage, screen, and video in current modes of opera staging, but also should provide us with a renewed perspective on the genre itself.

Chapter 1

Opera-Film Hybridization in

Ingmar Bergman's and Kenneth Branagh's *Magic Flute* Films

As a work of cinema, Ingmar Bergman's *Trollflöjten* (1976) has been widely discussed across many disciplines, and a number of opera scholars and musicologists have also recently begun to address the director's widely-acclaimed take on Mozart's final *Singspiel* by situating it within a larger, teleological narrative of operatic intermediation. Their scholarship often focuses on explaining the film's role in the history of the genre's move from stage to screen, but few studies, give consideration to the internal structure and finer mechanics of Bergman's film. In this chapter, I argue that the techniques utilized in Bergman's *Magic Flute* warrant further study for opera and film scholars alike, as the work stresses a unique blending of cinematic and theatrical practices. Moreover, Bergman's influence on later instantiations of opera-film is apparent in Kenneth Branagh's own take on *Die Zauberflöte*, which was first screened in cinemas in 2006, and which similarly attempts to bridge the gap between opera and cinema by freely intermingling techniques usually considered specific to one genre or the other.

At a time when opera's presence on television, in movie theatres, and on home video has brought the genre far beyond the stage, Branagh's take on *The Magic Flute* would seem to present scholars with an ideal occasion to discuss this increasingly mediated artform. Yet, despite Branagh's notoriety as actor and director, his production has so far generated very little critical commentary. The

second portion of this chapter will thus focus on Branagh's *Flute*, as the director's approach to narrowing the divide between high culture and popular entertainment offers scholars and critics a chance to assess how much has (or has not) changed since Bergman's *Magic Flute* ushered in the "age of the opera-film," nearly forty years ago.

Lastly, the final portion of this chapter will bring the two films side-by-side with the purpose of analyzing an element much neglected in current studies on operatic mediation: sound itself. As both directors were thoroughly committed to presenting audiences with works that were markedly different from those that could be *seen* on a typical stage, it should come as no surprise that the two similarly adopted a variety of *aural* strategies not likely to be employed in the opera house as well. This chapter will thus close with a brief consideration of the way speech and song are presented to audiences in both cinematic adaptations of Mozart's *Singspiel*. Taken together, these analyses of both sight and sound in Bergman's and Branagh's *Flute* films demonstrate the many ways in which opera and cinema continue to learn and borrow from each other in the twenty-first century.

I. Bringing Opera to the Cinema

Speaking to a newspaper reporter on the eve of his *Magic Flute*'s first large-scale North American premiere, Kenneth Branagh justified his vision for the film by quoting W.H. Auden, who himself had adapted the work for a mass-media production some fifty years earlier, by arguing that "no opera quite requires a

directional philosophy or idea more than *The Magic Flute*.”¹⁰ As Branagh’s take on Mozart’s *Singspiel* removes much of the fantasy and places the action squarely in the trenches of a World War I battlefield, there can be little doubt that audience members would get a strong feel for the pacifistic, anti-war “philosophies and ideas” the director’s vision entailed. However, Branagh had been very clear about his desire to modernize and “popularize” Mozart’s opera from the start. In an interview with BBC news shortly after the movie’s premiere at the Venice Film Festival, the director stressed that he did not want his rendition of the *Magic Flute* to come off as “a recording of a great performance” and that his goal was rather “to use cinema to get people in and give them a taste of opera, not as a bit of cultural medicine.”¹¹ He followed up on this thread a year later as well, asserting that “some Mozart fans will turn up their noses at these changes, but this film is not designed for them. I’m trying to tell the story as if it were new, for a new audience and I’m sure that Mozart would not feel betrayed.”¹² Of course, the desire to disseminate opera “classics” such as this to broader audiences is hardly new, nor is Branagh the only one who sought to use cinema to “give people a taste for the opera.” Indeed, large-scale multimedia ventures are increasingly proving to be the ideal way to go about popularizing the genre.

¹⁰ John Terauds, “Branagh’s Flute Has Military Magic.” *The Toronto Star*, 19 March 2009, accessed 14 September 2012, <http://www.thestar.com/Entertainment/article/603824>. For more on W.H. Auden’s English-language adaptation of the work (commissioned by NBC for television broadcast in 1956), see Joseph Kerman, “Auden’s *Magic Flute*: Postscript to a Bicentennial,” *The Hudson Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Summer 1957), 309-316.

¹¹ Emma Jones, “Branagh Turns from Bard to Opera,” *BBC News*, 13 September 2006, accessed 14 September 2012, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/5339836.stm>.

¹² As quoted in Ariana Finos, “My Magic Flute is Unfaithful Because It Doesn’t Want to Betray Mozart,” *Il Venerdì di Repubblica*, 22 June 2009. The article has been archived in digital form (and in English) at http://www.branaghcompendium.com/artic-tmf_repubblica2009.html, Accessed 14 September 2012.

By the time Branagh's *Magic Flute* had begun its trek across the international film festival circuit, the Metropolitan Opera had launched its *Live in HD* telecasts, which had already brought a handful of the company's productions to cinemas across the country through live video streaming. Shortly after the program's inception, Metropolitan Opera General Manager Peter Gelb claimed that his goal in starting the project was to update the opera-going experience by "taking advantage of new digital and satellite technology to beam the spectacle of live opera in high definition to potential new audiences in new venues."¹³ Just like Branagh, Gelb stressed his desire to make the opera-viewing experience more accessible and modern, and he argued that the *Live in HD* telecasts represented "the twenty-first century modernization of that experience."¹⁴ Judging from figures recently released, Gelb's experiment seems to be a success; ticket sales for their screening of Michael Mayer's new *Rigoletto* production, for example, reached nearly 240,000 worldwide, which equates to approximately thirty percent of the Met's in-house ticket sales for an entire season.¹⁵

In looking for an opera that could thus appeal to the widest audience possible and showcase such a modernized theatrical experience, it should come as no surprise that the Met *also* chose Mozart's ever-popular *Singspiel* to inaugurate its HD telecast series, and also chose to do so in an abridged, English-language translation. More specifically, Peter Gelb and the Met elected to premiere Julie

¹³ As quoted in James Steichen, "The Metropolitan Opera Goes Public: Peter Gelb and the Institutional Dramaturgy of the Met: 'Live in HD,'" *Music and the Moving Image*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Summer 2009), 25.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Anthony Tommasini, "A Success in HD, But at What Cost?," *The New York Times*, 15 March 2013, C1.

Taymor's take on the opera, still relatively new at that point, which also promised striking visual effects and scenery to attract movie-goers of all ages. Both Branagh and Taymor, in striving for broader audiences, chose to present the work to audiences in the vernacular and decided to make some cuts to the libretto so as to offer Mozart's nearly three-hour opera to moviegoers in a less cumbersome manner. The English-language dialogue would clearly prove more approachable for those unwilling to sit through several hours of subtitle-reading in the cinema, and it is of course analogous to the conventions of *Spingpiel*, a mode of popular (i.e., vernacular) entertainment for a decidedly less aristocratic audience. However, to discuss Branagh's film as an independent, isolated endeavor—even with reference to the concurrent Taymor production at the Met or W.H. Auden's 1956 English-language adaptation for NBC studios—is to neglect the elephant in the room: namely, Ingmar Bergman's 1975 cinematic adaptation, one that has been hailed by some as “the finest screen version of an opera ever produced.”¹⁶

I.i. Filming a Stage/Staging a Film

While many musicologists and media scholars such as Citron and Tambling have discussed Bergman's work (with several even acknowledging that *The Magic Flute* was far from Bergman's first foray into the world of opera), they choose to analyze the film in light of the director's other movies, or within a somewhat teleological narrative of opera's journey from stage to “big screen.”

¹⁶ I am here referencing a line penned by Peter Cowie from a comment accompanying the twenty-fifth anniversary DVD release of Bergman's film, but am quoting Cowie as his commentary appears in Irving Singer, *Ingmar Bergman, Cinematic Philosopher* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 68. From the language he adopts in his book, it seems safe to say that Singer seems to agree with Cowie's statement.

Some tend to emphasize the more progressive, cinematic qualities of Bergman's film, while others cite the work as promoting a "rather conservative meaning" and accordingly reduce its status as "essentially filmed stage production" at best or decry its "naïve or ridiculous" at worst.¹⁷ Certainly, there are many nods to the traditional opera-going experience in Bergman's *Magic Flute*, and even critics wishing to see the film in a more progressive light will sometimes concede this fact, but it is still often only one side of these conservative-progressive dichotomies that are stressed rather than focusing on both. Even in the relatively new area of film studies, the piece is usually treated more with a sort of reverence for its past achievement—again, as a landmark in opera-film, as the "first great opera film" and so on, but these arguments, too, seem to point towards a teleological reading of the work, as representative of filmed opera's transition from television to cinema.¹⁸ Rather, it seems to me that Bergman's film continues to have a resonance with audiences (not to mention a contemporary relevance to the world of opera filming) because the work stresses a hybridization of cinematic and operatic practices—both aural and visual—that still weigh heavily on the way we as spectators think about mediated works of theatre.

From the very start, in fact, the worlds of cinema and opera seem to co-mingle. As the shot-by-shot figure below shows (see figure 1.1), the film begins

¹⁷ On Bergman's staging producing a "fairly conservative meaning," see Jeremy Tambling, *Opera, Ideology and Film*, 131ff. Peter Davis's while largely praising the film, still reduces it to being "essentially a filmed stage production" in his review "Ingmar Bergman's *Magic Flute*: Ingmar Bergman's 'Magic Flute'" in *The New York Times*, 9 November 1975, D17. William Morritz's review of the movie for *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Autumn 1976), 45-79 is one of the more negative critical reactions to the work, though the present "naïve or ridiculous" quote, attributed to Morritz, can be found in Paisley Livingston's *Ingmar Bergman and the Rituals of Art* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982), 242.

¹⁸ Marcia Citron, *Opera on Screen*, 41.

with several still shots of the brooks and fields adjacent to the Drottningholm Court Theatre in Stockholm, with the music to the overture beginning approximately forty seconds into these pastoral scenes.¹⁹ After another twenty seconds pass, the film cuts to a girl (in reality, Bergman's daughter), on whose face alone the camera focuses for nearly a minute. The camerawork would lead us to believe that the girl is in the theatre, though, in reality, filming was not done at Drottningholm, but in a reconstruction of the court theatre on a soundstage. At this point, the camera's focus quickly changes to capture a detail of the fresco adorning the theatre's ceiling, but almost immediately redirects viewers back to the image of the young girl. After another minute of this close-up on her, Bergman chooses to focus the camera almost exclusively on the audience for remainder of the overture, with quick cuts among the theatregoers, often in tune with the music. Around five and a half minutes into the movie, the camera switches to a brief sequence of still frames outside the opera house once again and then quickly back inside to a glimpse of the curtain, at which point it returns to additional shots of the audience members, continuing to focus upon them until the nine minute and twenty-four second mark, which signals the beginning of the overture.

¹⁹ The version of the DVD I am using as a reference is the twenty-fifth anniversary edition, issued as part of the Criterion Collection in 2000.



Figure 1.1 Cinematic break-down of images accompanying Bergman's overture.

These shot/countershot techniques that Bergman utilizes for the overture seems already to point towards the film's unique standing within the history of mediated opera. Many live recordings similarly feature cuts between audience members and the orchestra when there is no stage action occurring, or even external shots of the opera house before the work begins, but Bergman's decision to replicate these techniques in the cinematic realm, where "the live" was no longer simply being recorded, seems to point instead towards a more metaphorical

meaning. Aiding this interpretation is the fact that Bergman takes these techniques to greater extremes than the typical recording would: not only does he focus on the audience, but he often keeps the camera on one person in particular, and the external shots appear much more frequently and atypically framed than in standard productions. Whereas DVD recordings from the Metropolitan Opera House often feature still shots of the venue's façade and videos of Bayreuth Festspielhaus productions oftentimes begin with a cinematic journey up the Green Hill to the opera house itself, these are almost always silent sequences shown on the recording before we have moved into the opera house proper, whereupon the orchestra will begin tuning and/or performing. We never leave the venue once we've entered it. During the overture to Bergman's film, however, the internal world of the theatre, represented by the seated audience, the orchestra playing, and so forth, is constantly placed in opposition with a more "cinematic" (that is to say, "realistic") focus on the landscapes, sunsets, architecture, and frescoes surrounding the theatrical experience itself, which would seem to demonstrate that Bergman, like Branagh after him, wished to emphasize that his *Magic Flute* would not simply be a "recording of a great performance." Rather, his would be a production in which cinema and live theatre co-exist as one fluid entity.

Marcia Citron simply states that Bergman's film is "structured to be a play-within-a-movie," but, as I think the overture establishes already, it seems to be much more complex than that. Bergman's equal stress on both the theatrical world of the opera and the very real world surrounding the stage complicate matters a bit more than Citron's reading would suggest, especially since her

analysis here tends to fit into the generally teleological reading accorded to most *Trollflöjten* discussions I mention above (as a “landmark of filmed opera” that helped begin blur the line between opera for film and television).²⁰

Irving Singer similarly imbues the spectators with metaphorical meaning and purpose, arguing that the staged audience as a whole likely served as a metaphor for the universal appeal of Mozart’s music, and that the young girl to which the camera so frequently returns is in fact representative of “everyone else who is present and entranced by this opera, whether in the film or in a movie house looking at a screen, or at home looking at a monitor.”²¹ While these nods to Bergman’s ethnically-diverse, staged audience hold up well enough as cinematic metaphors for the universality of Mozart’s music (or music in general), I instead see Bergman’s continued return to reaction shots of the audience not as a reminder of the universalizing aspect of *The Magic Flute*, but as one facet of many that help the director re-iterate the dual theatrical/cinematic motif so prevalent in his opera-film. After all, we not only *see* the audience, but we hear them as well, with their applause recurring several times throughout the film, and this further entrenches them in the diegesis of the production.

As a sort of sub-category within Bergman’s cinema/theatre hybridization, the director establishes several subordinate hybrids to further reinforce his vision as well. One of the first such amalgamations I wish to stress is the contrast

²⁰ Marcia Citron, *Opera on Screen*, 46, 57ff.

²¹ Irving Singer, *Ingmar Bergman, Cinematic Philosopher*, 78ff, though he is not the only one to discuss the generally-agreed upon metaphorical meaning of the overture’s diversity. William Morritz, for example, actually criticizes this aspect of the film for “cheapening and [limiting] the durability of Bergman’s film as film.” See “The Magic Flute, 47 for more.

between “sets” and “scenery.” That is to say, while several of the opera’s ten scenes highlight the theatricality of the staged production with fully-functioning sets, costumes, and props, such as the opera’s opening number and the Queen of the Night’s first appearance in Act I, other parts are conversely filmed on sets meant to look as realistic as the establishing still shots with which Bergman opened his film. Thus, at many instances (Pamina’s suicide attempt, Tamino’s trials by fire and water, etc.), Bergman completely eschews the theatrical pretenses of this happening on a stage and instead adheres to a strictly cinematic depiction of reality, at least as far as the opera’s fantastic plot would allow. Seen, for example, in Figure 1.2 below, Pamina’s suicide attempt could easily have been depicted in a more traditionally operatic manner (i.e., on the reconstructed Drottningholm stage), but instead the director chooses to frame it in a much more cinematic way, with camerawork and scenery meant to evoke the outdoors rather than the stage. This in turn highlights the much more theatrical manner in which Papageno’s own suicide attempt is later filmed and helps to foreground how differently the two scenes could be handled in such a medium.



Figure 1.2 The contrast between “set” and “stage” in Pamina’s and Papageno’s suicide scenes

I.ii. Special Effects or Theatrical Effects?

Related to the set/scenery hybridization is Bergman's mixture of special effects and more authentic (or at least "authentic-looking") theatrical effects throughout. Just as Bergman freely moves from filmed stage to naturalistic set, so too does the director intersperse both cinematic and theatrical effects, though the relationship between the two is not always a direct one. Thus, even while still adhering to the "staged production" look at the beginning of the opera, Pamina's portrait becomes animated through the use special effects during the Act I aria "*Dies Bildnis*," while the three young boys (the "genii") are clearly shown working an eighteenth-century smoke and fog machine amidst an otherwise very realistic set to accompany Tamino and Papageno's trial of silence in Act II. However, that is not to say that Bergman always chooses to emphasize this hybridization by coupling cinematic special effects and the theatrical stage, or by using stage machinery on realistic sets; his amalgamation is more nuanced than a direct mixture between the set/scenery and special/theatrical effects sub-categories. Tamino's trials by fire and water, for example, are set amidst a very realistic set meant to evoke the catacombs of an ancient castle and, in each instance, the director utilizes special effects that would lead one to believe the enlightened couple was, in fact, walking through the fire and water Mozart's stage directions describe. Thus, in these instances, Bergman adheres to the cinematic side of both dichotomies in that the scene employs a set and makes use of more "realistic" or cinematic effects. Much like the overture's constant cutting between stage and audience—the world of the theatre and the world outside it—Bergman's

combination of set and stage, special and theatrical effects works to further his goal of fusing operatic and cinematic practices together in this film without ever conforming to the boundaries of either for too long.

It also bears nothing that, even within the “theatrical” side of this opera/film hybridization, Bergman chooses to incorporate staging practices not only from Mozart’s time, but also from later schools of thought. Thus, even if one were to adhere to the opinions of critics and scholars like Tambling who argue in favor of a conservative meaning in Bergman’s *Magic Flute*, or to the film’s essentially being a filmed stage play, one must at the very least concede that it is by no means representative of the sort of stage play with which Mozart and Schikaneder would have been familiar. Without even addressing the filmic sets and special effects, many instances in Bergman’s *Magic Flute* point towards Brechtian techniques, which is rather far-removed from the world of the original composer and librettist. On the most direct level, Bergman’s frequent recourse to having characters hold up self-referential placards (seen in Figure 1.3), which act as a sort of subtitle card for both filmed audience and those watching at home (or in a movie theatre), is quite clearly a reproduction of the distancing *Verfremdungseffekt* so prominently advocated by Brecht in the early twentieth century (not to mention its similarity to the title cards present in many silent films of the era as well).



Figure 1.3 An example of the placards held up by the characters

Thus, if Bergman wanted to present this strictly as theatre, it would have been a self-referential theatre at the very least. Morritz mentions a similar point in his review of the film, claiming that Bergman's use of the title cards were the director's "filmic version of that common '*Verfremdung*' device of the eighteenth century, the 'aside' to the audience."²² However, Morritz seems to be conflating the *Verfremdungseffekt* with an aside in an attempt to link it to a practice with which Mozart would have been familiar. Bergman still leaves in many of the original, *actual* asides within the opera, though, and the "estrangement" effect of these diegetic subtitles within the film seem much more in accord with twentieth century theatre practices than with those of Mozart's and the eighteenth century.

For Jeremy Tambling, Bergman's take on the opera is also clearly aligned with Brecht's sense of opera as "culinary art." Just as the twentieth century playwright believed that the typical operatic score "washes over the privileged spectator, increasing and heightening the sense of unreality and unclearness," so, too, does Tambling argue that Bergman's take on the story robs Schikaneder's libretto of its allegorical and narrative merits, leaving behind only the culinary

²² William Morritz, "The Magic Flute," 47.

aspects of the work, meant solely for consumption.²³ Through changes to the libretto, he asserts, Bergman ends up presenting “a rarefied Mozart, not the demotic composer who wrote for the Theater auf der Wieden in the suburbs of Vienna, far from the court,” further speculating that, in so doing, Bergman forces the film to become a part of the director’s own dialectic within *his* oeuvre more than remaining true to Mozart and Schikaneder’s original.²⁴ A more detailed analysis of Brecht’s influences on Bergman and the latter’s take on *The Magic Flute* lies outside the bounds of my present argument, however. Rather, I bring up these influences here to stress the multiple levels of hybridization occurring within the director’s opera-film. Not only does Bergman freely combine cinematic and theatrical idioms within his *Trollflöjten*, but even the theatrical elements he chooses to incorporate have themselves been culled from multiple schools of thought that span several centuries. In so doing, the director further removes his work from simply the filmed, traditional stage production with which scholars often equate it, on par with something Mozart himself may have staged.

I.iii. On Matters of Authenticity

And indeed, the question of how Mozart may have staged his *Singspiel* was one that weighed heavily on the minds of musicians and scholars around the time Bergman’s opera-film was released. It should also be taken into consideration that *Trollflöjten* came into being when musicologists and early music performers alike were beginning to take a vested interest in “historically

²³ The quote specifically comes from Jeremy Tambling, *Opera, Ideology and Film*, 130, though the entire chapter (pp. 126-139), entitled “Opera as culinary art: Bergman’s *Magic Flute*,” deals with this concept.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

informed performance practice,” and that this may account for some of the field’s initial reactions to the movie at the time. While the intense scholarship and research on how works might have been performed or sounded in their original context did not begin to proliferate until the 1980s, performers and academics alike had clearly begun debating the issue in the previous decade as well. Scholars such as Richard Taruskin have argued against the merits of such notions as “historically performed performances,” positing that the question of “what is authentic” is problematic in and of itself.²⁵ Nevertheless, and despite Taruskin’s warnings, surely some of the more “traditional” aspects of Bergman’s take on the opera lend themselves well to considerations of historical accuracy.

At the most basic level, Bergman’s choice of the Drottningholm Court Theatre as the stage on which his opera ostensibly takes place provides the most easily-identifiable visual signifier of “tradition.” The opera was filmed on a studio reconstruction of the opera house (due to concerns that the actual venue would be ill-equipped to handle the quantity of film and studio equipment Bergman would have required to shoot there), but Tambling goes so far as to argue that “*only* [Drottningholm] proved necessary to make a studio reconstruction” fitting the director’s image of tradition he wished to evoke.²⁶ While this line of reasoning may be questioned (I do not necessarily agree that Bergman simply wished to evoke tradition for the sake of edifying familial stability at the New Year’s holiday, during which his movie premiered, for example), simply taking the venue

²⁵ One of Taruskin’s more succinct discussions on the topic, for example, can be found in Richard Taruskin, “The Authenticity Movement Can Become a Positivist Purgatory, Literalistic and Dehumanizing,” *Early Music*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Feb. 1984), 3-12.

²⁶ Jeremy Tambling, *Opera, Ideology and Film*, 128 (emphasis mine).

at face value gives proponents of historically-informed performances something to latch onto, as the “drops, falling flats, and curtains” all call to mind the still-operating theatre that utilizes technology from around the time the opera was originally written.²⁷ Add to this the period attire with which the cast is dressed at the end of the opera, for example, and the *mise en abyme* with which Bergman presents audiences may seemingly reflect one’s experiences at, if not the Drottningholm Court Theatre itself, a “traditional” production at the very least.

While the insistence of Bergman’s opera-film as representative of “traditional stagings” may have been understandable at a time when musicologists were newly and heatedly debating the notions and merits of “historically informed performance practice,” music and film scholars writing today have dozens upon dozens of filmed stage productions towards which they can look and which provide ample alternatives to what a more traditional staging of Mozart’s *Singspiel* would have looked like should Bergman have wanted to take that approach. Göran Järvefelt’s 1989 production—one that *was*, in fact, filmed at the actual court theatre in Drottningholm—could serve as the *locus classicus* for traditional *Magic Flute* productions. Järvefelt’s take on the opera will be discussed more in the following chapter, but it should also be noted at this point that a production need not exhibit all of the characteristics of Järvefelt’s to still promote a “traditional” agenda, or to at least serve as representative of traditional stagings in place of Bergman’s film. Two such examples of more recent productions, David McVicar’s at Covent Garden (1996) and Benno Besson’s for

²⁷ Peter Davis, “Ingmar Bergman’s Magic Fluke,” D17.

the Opéra national de Paris from 2001, can be seen in Figure 1.4. Both evoke tradition in their own way while still providing audiences with two very different takes on the work, and they do so without resorting to dressing the members of their orchestra in period attire, using period instruments, and so forth.²⁸



Figure 1.4 McVicar's (left) and Besson's (right) approaches to "traditional" stagings

While a detailed examination of these productions lies beyond the scope of my present study, I mention them here to emphasize the fact that stagings such as these can still evoke a sense of *Werktreue* without strict adherence to the doctrine of historically informed performance practice. Yet, for me, matters of "authenticity" do not seem to be a major concern in Bergman's take on *The Magic Flute*. As a director who takes many liberties with the original libretto, going so far as to make Sarastro Pamina's father, Bergman seems more intent on remaining true to his *own* vision above all else.²⁹ But by thus knitting together operatic and filmic techniques so seamlessly, and in a way that occasionally champions the

²⁸ Both productions are available on DVD. For the former, see Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte* [1996], DVD, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, directed by David McVicar, Opus Arte OA 0886D (2003). For the latter, see Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, DVD, Opéra national de Paris, directed by Benno Besson, TDK: DWW-PPMFP (2007).

²⁹ Though many productions leave the relationship between Sarastro and Pamina ambiguous (often as a result of trimming down or cutting the Queen's dialogue prior to "*Der Hölle Rache*," wherein she mentions the death of Pamina's father), the potential father-daughter relationship still remains only an implied one. Bergman, however, chooses to re-work the libretto to make this connection explicit.

director's own vision at the expense of the libretto, *Trollflöjten* in many represents an early solution in the realm of opera-film that would be taken up by directors in subsequent decades to present mediated works of art through the realm of film and video recording.

Before moving on from Bergman's cinematic adaptation of the opera, one more important aspect must be addressed: namely, its simultaneous role as both a landmark in "opera-film," and also as television opera. After all, Bergman himself stressed in an interview that it "was not a film" but "made as a television play," and its role as such is an important one.³⁰ The history of television opera, defined both as "opera commissioned for television" and, more broadly, "opera on television" has been well-documented by scholars such as Citron and Barnes, who deal with the genre from its inception through the present day, but what I want to stress here about Bergman's *Magic Flute* is less its role in the narrative history of the opera-film and more its importance with regard to expanding opera's audience base and its potential for ushering in a new way of marketing the genre.³¹ That is to say, by finding success both on nationally-syndicated television (the opera was commissioned for Swedish Radio in celebration of its fiftieth anniversary and set to air on television New Year's Day 1975) and then shortly thereafter in cinemas (both in Sweden and abroad), Bergman's film gained the ability to reach far wider audiences than any filmed opera endeavor prior. The movie's subsequent release

³⁰ As quoted in Lise-Lone Marker and Frederick J. Marker, *Ingmar Bergman: Four Decades in the Theatre* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 232.

³¹ The third chapter of Citron's *Opera on Screen* deals with this matter and has been previously cited, but see also Jennifer Barnes, *Television Opera: The Fall of Opera Commissioned for Television* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2003) and her contribution (as well as Tambling's) to Jeremy Tambling, ed., *A Night in at the Opera: Media Representations of Opera* (London: John Libbey & Company, 1994)

on VHS (and later, DVD) resulted in even further domestic exposure, as this meant it could now be watched and re-watched at leisure. Perhaps more importantly, though, it also points towards a marketing strategy that would prove highly successful for companies such as the Metropolitan Opera, whose “Great Performances at the Met” television broadcasts presaged its current *Live in HD* telecasts, with both now regularly employed by the company for additional profit and brand exposure.³² When one considers the Met’s further DVD releases of this material as well, not to mention the existence of the company’s own on-demand opera streaming website, “Met on Demand,” and the cross-media marketing campaign employed by Bergman’s film can be seen as indicative of strategies that would be employed by companies such as the Met to both reach wider audiences than they would otherwise be capable of doing if confined simply to the opera house, and to maximize their profit while doing so.³³

Because Bergman’s *Magic Flute* found success in utilizing these varied media platforms to reach a larger audience than the average opera production ever would, the release of his film makes a good starting point to address matters of mediation and mediatization with regards to its role in current modes of operatic spectatorship. Through its dissemination across television, radio, cinema, LP record, and VHS, all within the span of a few short years, audiences were able to engage with the artform in more ways than ever before, and all without ever having to set foot in a traditional theatre. This will be the focus of the following

³² James Steichen gives an account of the Met’s “Live in HD” telecasts—and the company’s recent marketing and financial strategies in general—in his article “The Metropolitan Opera Goes Public”

³³ More information on Metropolitan Opera’s on-demand video streaming service can be found at its website: <http://www.metoperafamily.org/ondemand/index.aspx> (Accessed 20 September 2012).

chapter and will draw on more than just Bergman's film as an example, but before delving into matters of operatic mediation, intermediality, and mediatization more thoroughly, I will now turn to *The Magic Flute*'s other "big screen" cinematic adaptation: that of Kenneth Branagh's.

II. A Return to the Big Screen: Opera-Film in the Twenty-First Century

More than thirty years after the success of Bergman's *Magic Flute*, the question of whether or not filmed opera could attract a cinematic audience was still being asked. In fact, Lee Marshall, reviewing the premiere of Kenneth Branagh's cinematic take on the same opera, posed just that question. His answer? "Probably not," but he admits, perhaps as some sort of conciliatory gesture, that "Kenneth Branagh's sumptuous new version of 'The Magic Flute' comes as close to crossover as a meeting of these two great light-and sound-artforms ever will."³⁴

Writing two years later, Mark Swed, a columnist for *The Los Angeles Times* expressed a more optimistic outlook:

At a time when filmmakers are being invited into the opera house in record numbers and when the Metropolitan Opera and other companies can sell out HD broadcasts to movie theaters, taking a chance on the "Flute" hardly seems like taking a chance. Lots of movies don't do well. They're junk, and everybody knows it from the start. This "Flute," on the other hand, could be a surprise modest success.³⁵

Yet this comes at the very end of an article lamenting the fact that, three years after the film's release, Branagh's *Magic Flute* had yet to see any mainstream success, or even a wide-spread domestic screening in cinemas. Even now, seven

³⁴ Lee Marshall, "The Magic Flute," *Screen Daily*, 7 September 2006, reproduced at "The Branagh Compendium" archives, accessed 24 September 2012.

http://www.branaghcompendium.com/artic-tmf_screendaily2006.html.

³⁵ Mark Swed, "Branagh's Magical, Mistreated 'Flute,'" *The Los Angeles Times*, 24 August 2008, accessed 24 September 2012. <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/aug/24/entertainment/ca-flute24>.

years after its Venice Film Festival debut, and despite its appearance in numerous film festivals since, the movie has garnered very little attention both popularly and academically and has yet to receive an U.S. distribution on DVD or Blu-ray. Indeed, in order to even watch Branagh's take on the opera here in the United States, one would need to purchase an international DVD player and look to releases from England or France.³⁶ The film's failure to reach large audiences (like Bergman's take on the work) remains perplexing given the movie's sizeable budget and the notoriety of Branagh as both director, stage actor, and more, but its failure to engender any serious academic discussion is even more puzzling. Given the recent trend in operatic mediation, the silence with which Branagh's rendition of the opera has been met is as confusing as it is unjustified. Thus, a detailed look at Branagh's foray into the world of opera-film would prove useful on at least two grounds: not only would a critical assessment of the movie begin to remedy the silence with which academia has greeted a film that much to offer it, but also, by placing it in dialogue with Bergman's *Magic Flute*, one can trace the path that opera and film have taken over the ensuing decades.

Branagh, like Bergman before him, set out to offer audiences more than just a filmed version of an opera. Building off of his previously-cited 2006 comment on his desire not to simply "present a great performance," Branagh stressed a similar point on the eve of his *Magic Flute*'s much-delayed release in American cinemas: "The aim was not to film an opera, but to make a film in

³⁶ This will soon change, however, as Branagh's movie is scheduled for a domestic DVD release (through Revolver Entertainment) in June 2013.

which the elements of opera were present.”³⁷ That Branagh’s was to be no simple “stage production,” a criticism levied by several reviewers and scholars towards Bergman’s rendition of the tale, should be obvious from the very opening of the movie.

Branagh also chose to film an opening sequence to accompany Mozart’s overture, and one that was also relatively timed to the pace of the music, but even at the most basic cinematic level, the two directors could not have taken more different approaches. For the first six minutes and forty-six seconds of the movie, Branagh chooses to accompany the overture with one long tracking shot, following at first a soldier picking a flower in a field and an errant butterfly in the air, then over the trenches to grassy hills where the camera encounters a military band (illustrated in Figure 1.5 below).³⁸ We then return to the site of a World War I battlefield, and the camera follows the action there until the beginning of the first act, at which point smoke from a gas bomb thrown into one of the trenches takes the form of the dragon chasing Tamino and the story proper begins.

³⁷ As quoted in John Terauds, “Branagh’s Flute Has Military Magic.”

³⁸ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *The Magic Flute*. DVD, 134 minutes, directed by Kenneth Branagh. Revolver Entertainment (2006). As mentioned above, however, the film has yet to receive a domestic DVD release; the information here is from the British version of the film release.

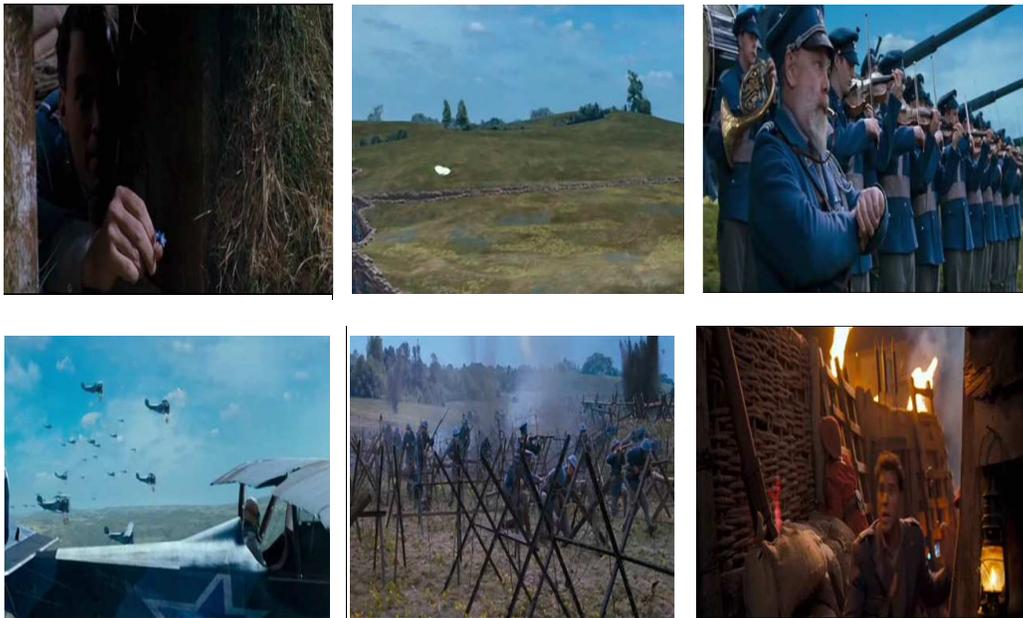


Figure 1.5 Images accompanying the overture to Branagh's *Magic Flute* (2006)

As with Bergman's adaptation, the footage Branagh chose to accompany Mozart's overture is often in time to the music, with soldiers polishing guns, walking, marching, and charging into battle all choreographed accordingly. However, *how* these two directors choose to go about eliciting a sense of motion in their films is completely different, at least as far as the overture is concerned. Even with the many fast cuts in Bergman's *Magic Flute*, the opening seems relatively static in comparison. Conversely, Branagh's long tracking shot calls to mind other famous long takes such as Orson Welles's *A Touch of Evil* (1958). Branagh films the opera's finale with an extended tracking shot as well (though shorter), and the use of these long takes, fades and other such filming techniques places the director's opera-film in a more cinematically-adventurous position than Bergman's, if only as far as camerawork is concerned.

II.i. Cutting, Zooming, Fading, and the Impact of Camerawork

That is not to say the use of frequent cutting is absent in Branagh's *Magic Flute*; on the contrary, Tamino's opening number, "Zu Hilfe, Zu Hilfe!" presents a stark contrast with the overture. During the aria's instrumental introduction, a mere seventeen bars of music, there are already nineteen cuts—more than once per bar of music, and nearly one cut per second (the seventeen bars play out over twenty-three seconds in Branagh's version). Once Tamino begins singing, the editing becomes less agitated, with only four additional cuts over the ensuing twenty-three bars of music (twenty-two seconds in real time). Taking the specifics Branagh's adaption into consideration, I would assert that the director uses quick cuts to heighten the sense of conflict and confusion war engenders on the battlefield. The Queen of the Night's Act II aria and Tamino's trial by fire (and, to a slightly lesser extent, the trial by water as well), seems to reinforce this notion, as both use quick cuts and shot/countershot techniques to heighten the tension of the action at hand—the militancy of the Queen in the former, and the more literal confusion and apprehension as Tamino and Pamina cross No Man's Land into the opposing trenches in the latter.

For the sake of comparison, "Der Hölle Rache," the Queen of the Night's second aria in Bergman's film, contains only eleven cuts and begins with a slow zoom-in on the jilted mother's face. The first cut does not happen until approximately one minute after the number has begun (at measure forty-two in the aria), with the additional ten cuts occurring over the subsequent three minutes that the Queen is singing. McVicar's and Besson's stagings, discussed earlier,

employ a similar number of cuts as well (ten in the former, with the first cut occurring at measure 35, and nine in the latter, with the first cut at measure 7). Conversely, the number of cuts in Branagh's film, which offers a far less psychologically-nuanced and much more bellicose interpretation of the Queen, remains much more difficult to count (owing to the frenetically-paced camerawork during the number). During the two-and-a-half-minute aria, Bergman utilizes between eighty to ninety cuts, with the first occurring only six seconds after the aria had begun (measure six in the score). Clearly, the fast-paced nature of the scene underscores the urgency and militancy with which the Queen acts in Branagh's interpretation, but the trials by fire and water offer a similar comparison in terms of camerawork as well in that both seem to be in accord with the director's comparatively higher reliance of cuts to convey tension and action within the world of his *Magic Flute*.

In both Branagh's and Bergman's films, the music for Tamino and Pamina's trials by fire and water are symmetrically divided, with each lasting approximately forty-seven seconds in the former production and fifty-eight seconds in the latter. During each trial in Branagh's *Magic Flute*, the director employs thirty to forty cuts (thirty-four in the former trial, thirty-nine in the latter), which is in stark contrast with Bergman's realization of the scene thirty years prior. The editing becomes much more frenetic in the Swedish director's rendition of the trial by fire, but even *its* eleven cuts seem far less hectic than Branagh's, which features three times that number. The trial by water more is even more inactive in this regard, with only three cuts during the fifty-eight

seconds of music (though this is because Bergman elects to film most of Tamino and Pamina's journey with a slow tracking shot in this instance). While the numbers here are far less extreme than in "*Der Hölle Rache*," the point remains that Branagh repeatedly uses the quick cut in his film to heighten the political, military, and personal tension in his rendition of the opera, whereas Bergman prefers to dwell on faces and shots for longer periods of time.³⁹ This in turn encourages a more introspective, psychological reading of the characters in *Trollflöjten*. In fact, Branagh himself makes a similar comment when discussing the divergent paths his and Bergman's respective takes on *The Magic Flute* took: "His was more intimate, almost psychoanalytical; mine on the other hand, is more choral and political."⁴⁰ Nevertheless, these contrasting approaches to camerawork in Bergman's and Branagh's opera-films may also point towards contemporaneous changes in filming staged operas.

Using recorded video productions of *Don Giovanni* as his point of departure, Richard Will recently addressed the subject of how camerawork can drastically alter a viewer's experiences of a given opera production.⁴¹ In the article, he asserts that television is capable of heightening or slowing down the sense of urgency within a given scene, depending "principally on shot length and

³⁹ Of course, this predilection towards close-ups is not exclusive to Bergman's *Trollflöjten* and likely tied into what Irving Singer refers to as the director's "expertise in using the camera for zoomed-in fixations upon the human face." For more on this technique within Bergman's oeuvre, see Irving Singer, *Ingmar Bergman, Cinematic Philosopher*, 75ff.

⁴⁰ As quoted in Ariana Finos, "My Magic Flute is Unfaithful Because It Doesn't Want to Betray Mozart."

⁴¹ Richard Will, "Zooming In, Gazing Back: *Don Giovanni* on Television," *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Winter 2011), 32-65.

distance, and on the relative emphasis on the drama versus the performance.”⁴² He goes on to argue that “by breaking up vocal phrases into multiple shots,” and by the camera’s occasionally focusing on a character other than the one singing, that the video production in question will inevitably “establish a visual complexity to rival the music.”⁴³ Although Will’s article deals strictly with filmed stage productions presented on television, the parallels between his observations on filmed opera stagings and Bergman’s and Branagh’s opera-films are clearly worth considering.

Embedded within the larger scope of Will’s article is a call for more imaginative filming techniques for digitally-recorded stage productions. In general, he notes a gradual trend towards “quicker cuts and closer close-ups,” but insists that directors “could easily employ more immersive camera techniques such as point-of-view or tracking shots, as television drama has long done.”⁴⁴ “That they instead uphold a practice now found mainly in news and sports,” he continues, “testifies to the depth of their commitment to liveness.” Perhaps Will would be encouraged by a viewing Branagh’s *Magic Flute*, as the cuts, fades, tracking shots and other filming techniques underscores the director’s decided break from this tradition and reinforces his claim that he was not looking to merely capture an operatic production on film but to create a movie in which stage elements were present. This “commitment to liveness” once again points towards themes to be taken up in the following chapter, in which Will’s

⁴² *Ibid.*, 41-42.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

arguments will play into discussion of operatic mediation and mediatization, but before embarking on that path, a bit more can be said about Branagh, Bergman, and the genre of opera-film in general before widening the scope of this paper to consider the world of filmed opera as a whole.

II.ii. CGI, 3D Video Projections, and other Twenty-First Century Technologies

Related to Branagh's break with traditional operatic camerawork is his clear embrace of the filmic medium to render certain scenes in the opera through Computer Generated Imagery (CGI), or to otherwise use special effects much more readily than would be possible in a normal, staged production of *Die Zauberflöte*. Indeed, one columnist even mentions that the film contains five hundred visual effects shots.⁴⁵ From the talking sandbags that sing the priest's chorus in Act II to the star-formed heart in the sky with Tamino's and Pamina's initials and the re-animated trees populating the former battlefield at the end of the movie (pictured in Figure 1.6), Branagh's rendition of the opera makes sure to keep some "magic" in the *Magic Flute* despite its more realistic (or at least more historical) setting.

⁴⁵ John Horn, "Comic-Con 2010: In Search of the Next Christopher Nolan," *The Los Angeles Times*, 26 July 2010,. Accessed 26 September 2012.
<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/news/la-et-comiccon-directors-20100726,0,591133.story>.



Figure 1.6 Two examples of CGI in Branagh's opera-film

In a likely nod to Bergman's execution of the scene, Pamina's portrait in "*Dies Bildnis*" is even animated. In Bergman's version of the film, Pamina herself becomes animated as Tamino gazes into the portrait the Queen's Ladies have given him. She moves about with some trepidation, and we even see Monastatos menacingly glare at her at one point. In Branagh's version, the portrait itself becomes animated and flies across the screen and throughout the trenches and as Tamino chases it down. Clearly, effects such as these are much more difficult to pull off in a theatrical performance, and, even in some instances where they *could* be affected, that is not to say that they *should* be. Put another way, what works on the big screen may either be less practicable or, at the very least, less visible to audience members on a television screen, or even in a traditionally staged production for that matter. Dave Paxton, a London-based reviewer writing several weeks after the film's UK premiere, issued a similar warning, asserting that Branagh's *Flute* "must be watched at the cinema, and will not come across well on the small screen" due to the sheer size and grandeur of the director's vision (his argument continued with an analogy: "imagine watching *Once Upon a Time*

in America on a black and white television, or hearing *Das Rheingold* on a portable stereo”).⁴⁶

Yet some reviewers were quick to lambast Branagh’s indulgence in CGI, often while simultaneously re-enforcing the notion of Bergman’s rendition of the tale as the “traditional” alternative. “Ingmar Bergman’s famous 1975 ‘Flute’ was partly a *billet-doux* to opera houses such as Stockholm’s Drottningholm Court theatre” Robert Everett-Green wrote in March 2009, but “Branagh’s film is head over heels with CGI effects, used to generate a style of fantastical realism in which nothing, ultimately, looks real.”⁴⁷ Nor is Everett-Green alone in his criticisms: one journalist argues that “the CGI visuals effects go over the top” towards the end of the movie, and another claims “the odd computer-generated sequence looks more *Shrek* than *Somme*.”⁴⁸ But is it necessarily a bad thing for Branagh to embrace the mediated nature of his endeavor?

Opera houses are increasingly turning to digital imaging and video projection on their stages, and it may not be long before the worlds of film and video, much like in Bergman’s *Magic Flute*, have blurred into one seamless entity. Perhaps the largest proponent for the use of digital media in stage productions is Canadian director Robert Lepage, whose name has garnered much

⁴⁶ Dave Paxton, “Kenneth Branagh’s ‘The Magic Flute.’” MusicOMH.com, 20 December 2007. Accessed 25 September 2012. http://www.musicomh.com/opera/branagh-flute_1207.htm.

⁴⁷ Robert Everett-Green, “Mozart In the Trenches – Sometimes Ludicrous, Never Boring,” *Globe & Mail*, 20 March 2009. Archived at the Kenneth Branagh Compendium and accessed 25 September 2012. http://www.branaghcompendium.com/artic-tmf_globemail_20march2009.html

⁴⁸ For the former quote, see John Terauds, “The Magic Flute: A Rollicking Good Two Hours,” *The Toronto Star*, 20 March 2009. Accessed 25 September 2012. <http://www.thestar.com/printArticle/605270>. For the comparison to *Shrek*, see Lee Marshall, “Peppy...Kenneth Branagh’s ‘Magic Flute,’” *The Guardian*, 8 September 2006. Accessed 25 September 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2006/sep/08/festivals.venicefilmfestival2006>.

attention recently since his invitation to direct the Metropolitan Opera's latest attempt at a complete staging of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Lepage's *Ring*, which premiered in its entirety during the company's 2011-2012 season, is rather indicative of the director's proclivity for such mixed-media productions. In *Siegfried*, the third part of Wagner's tetralogy, for example, reviewers praised the work (which has otherwise been met with some criticism on the whole) for its uniqueness by enticing audiences with "computerized projections that interact with the set and create an optical illusion that we are watching the singers against a living, three-dimensional backdrop," illustrated in Figure 1.7 below.⁴⁹



Figure 1.7 Lepage's use of interactive scenery in *Siegfried* (Metropolitan Opera, 2012)

Elsewhere, Anthony Tommasini, despite referring to the Cycle as "the most frustrating opera production [he] ever had to grapple with," still concedes that Lepage's "machine," the large, rotating set piece upon which all of the opera's visuals were projected, represents "a breakthrough in stage technology."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Mike Silverman, "'Siegfried': Lepage's 3-D Opera Is Eye-Popping," *The Huffington Post*, 28 October 2011. Accessed 25 September 2012.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/28/siegfried-3d-opera_n_1064704.html.

⁵⁰ Anthony Tommasini, "Met's 'Ring' Machine Finishes the Spin Cycle," *New York Times*, 26 April 2012, C1. The Cycle is also available on DVD and Blu-ray. For the images above, see Richard Wagner, *Siegfried*, Blu-ray, Metropolitan Opera, directed by Robert Lepage, Deutsche Grammophon: 073 4854 (2012).

Without becoming too bogged down in the specifics of his recent *Ring Cycle* production, the point I wish to stress here is that scholars and opera house directors alike have acknowledged Lepage as “a leading proponent of video/theatre hybrid,” and it is in this sense that Branagh’s cinematic approach to *The Magic Flute* seems to overlap with these sorts of modern theatrical practices.⁵¹ Thus, when Gieskam writes that the Canadian director creates productions that “frequently have a cinematic feel to them” even when they do not feature heavy use of video, one begins to see the reverse side of that “stage to film” teleology arguably represented by Bergman and Branagh’s movies, though these directors clearly do more to ensure that their visions of Mozart’s opera take full advantage of the newer medium than simply relying on cinematic or special effects to enhance the story.⁵²

III. Seen, But Not Heard? Speaking Softly and Internalized Singing as Cinematic Effects

As I have mentioned previously, the hybridization of stage and screen evinced in Bergman’s and Branagh’s opera-films extends beyond what we can see on the screen. Though seldom discussed in scholarship on operatic mediation, the audio can oftentimes play just as important a role in underscoring this blending of operatic and cinematic idioms as the visual can. Irving Singer notes that, in Bergman’s *Magic Flute*, for example, the director often has his characters talk in

⁵¹ Greg Giesekam, *Staging the Screen: The Use of Film and Video in Theatre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 218. The quote comes from Giesekam’s chapter on Lepage specifically, but the entire book provides an insightful look at the increasing interplay between live theatre and multimedia.

⁵² *Ibid.*

a whisper,” with the scholar further asserting that this technique “renders their utterance into the dramatic suggestion of a soliloquy or interior, voiceless, monologue.”⁵³ Thus, when the director has Monostatos slyly whisper to Pamina regarding the Queen’s newly-hatched plan to use her daughter to murder Sarastro, Bergman imbues the character with a “three-dimensionality that he rarely has in staged presentations of this opera.”⁵⁴ Not only does Bergman’s recourse to whispering here (and at other points in the film as well) work in tandem with the director’s aforementioned proclivity for close-ups and his tendency to favor longer cuts than other interpreters of the opera, but it also speaks to his desire to take advantage of techniques not feasible in an actual stage production. After all, it hardly needs mentioning that speaking at such a low volume would amount to unintelligibility in a large opera hall (or even a smaller one, as might be the case with older opera houses). Thus, the advantages here seem to be twofold: not only does the technique further advocate for the psychological reading of Bergman’s rendition of the story, as argued by Branagh and others, but it also serves as yet another example of the Swedish director’s desire to use a hybrid of theatrical and cinematic techniques to realize his vision of the tale.

Bergman was not alone in this regard, however, as characters in Branagh’s film often speak in whispers, too. At various points in the movie, the priests speak in hushed tones to Papageno, Sarastro, and others, and the Queen’s servants who rescue Tamino at the beginning of the opera also interact with the young hero through whispers, though these instances likely further a different (though not

⁵³ Irving Singer, *Ingmar Bergman, Cinematic Philosopher*, 71.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

unrelated) goal than they do in Bergman's rendition of the opera. In several interviews, Branagh emphasizes that one of the strong points of his *Magic Flute* is the verisimilitude of the acting and reacting done by the cast onscreen. "We really stressed the plausibility and the realism of the cast's acting" he asserted in one interview, and in another, he stresses his desire to capture the vulnerability of Mozart and Schikaneder's characters because of the excitement in seeing "how the camera allows us into characters from opera that we might not see in the same way in a theatre."⁵⁵ Branagh further explains in the same interview that he urged his performers to place as much emphasis on their singing as the actions they performed while *not* singing. In the director's own words, "when the camera's on you, there has to be a specific reason behind every action, emotion and word."⁵⁶ Because of the degree to which filmed opera stagings currently account for a majority of the (opera) DVD market, some might argue that today's opera singers are thus forced to confront these issues as well, but the likelihood that similarly-shot close-ups such as can be found in Bergman's and Branagh's film—that is, ones filmed with the intent to advance the narrative and add character depth—are still far less likely to occur in a recorded stage production than they would be in a purely filmic environment. After all, the stage director must first and foremost convey the story to the audience at hand; employing a tactic that will only cater to spectators viewing a simulcast or DVD recording would mean ignoring the live

⁵⁵ The former quote is taken from an interview included in a press kit for the film's opening in France on 13 December 2006. An archived version of the interview, which does not credit the original interview, can be found at http://www.branaghcompendium.com/tmf_entrevue2006.html (accessed 26 September 2012). The latter quote is also available online through "The Kenneth Branagh Compendium" website. For the full interview see Kristin Hohenadel, "A Little 'Magic' for the Masses," *The Los Angeles Times*, 11 June 2006. Accessed 26 September 2012. http://www.branaghcompendium.com/artic-tmf_calendarlive_june2006.html.

⁵⁶ Kristin Hohenadel, "A Little 'Magic' for the Masses."

audience at the theatre itself, which, for opera houses, still remains a significantly greater focus than DVD sales and movie tickets. Thus, Branagh, like Bergman before him, explicitly foregrounds tactics such as the whisper and the close-up to underscore the fact that what they have created is quite distinct from the “recording of a great performance,” both aurally *and* visually speaking. In both cases, the directors take full advantage of the medium in which they are working to enhance the theatrical/operatic experience in ways that could never be done within the opera house itself.

Before concluding this chapter, however, I wish to highlight yet one more cinematic device Branagh employs in his film for the purpose of providing audiences with a rendition of *The Magic Flute* not likely to be reproduced at the opera house, and that is the technique of the voiceover. Citron refers to the device as applied to its usage in opera-films as “interior singing,” and, while this is not a technique Branagh inherited from Bergman in his *Trollflöjten*, it is nevertheless one utilized to great affect by French opera director Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, especially in his cinematic adaptations of *Madama Butterfly* (1974) and *Le Nozze di Figaro* (1975).⁵⁷ Much like Bergman’s emphasis on whispering, close-ups and slower camera movement to create a psychologically-nuanced production or Branagh’s similar usage of whispers and realistic reaction shots to emphasize a more naturalistic (i.e., not “operatic”) form of acting, Citron argues that interior singing provides directors with a way to reveal more about their characters: “at

⁵⁷ Citron addresses the matter in her chapter dedicated to Ponnelle’s opera-films in *When Opera Meets Film* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), and she also covers the matter as it relates specifically to his adaptation of *Figaro* in “The Elusive Voice: Absence and Presence in Jean-Pierre Ponnelle’s Film *Le Nozze di Figaro*,” *Between Opera and Cinema*, 133-153, ed. Jeongwon Joe and Rose Theresa (New York: Routledge 2002).

the simplest level,” she claims, “we become privy to internal thoughts and there is a suggestion that the character has chosen to keep things from other characters.”⁵⁸ This notion of the aural takes on considerable meaning in Branagh’s *Magic Flute*, as he elects to use interior singing only once in his film—during Pamina’s aria “*Ach, Ich Fuhl’s*.” Coming immediately after Tamino and Papageno refuse to speak to her (owing to their ongoing trial of silence), the song acquires a new significance when it becomes internalized soliloquy. That is to say, in this production, Pamina’s aria no longer evokes images of a scorned Eurydice hoping to elicit at least one final acknowledgement from her beloved Orpheus, but it instead depicts a more contemplative and emotionally-fragile portrait of a woman whose later suicide attempt would seem all the more credible in light of her demonstrably suppressed feelings earlier on in the opera.⁵⁹ Thus, even though Citron argues that interior singing in Ponnelle’s hands works towards a more subjective emphasis within his opera-films and “leads to new interpretations of famous repertoire” her claims could just as easily be applied to Branagh’s *Magic Flute*, wherein its deployment likewise “strengthens opera’s effectiveness in a filmic environment” and helps create new and inventive relationships with the medium that are just as deserving of scholarly attention as Ponnelle’s opera-films of the 1970s.⁶⁰

The questions Citron asks of Ponnelle’s movies remain highly relevant to considerations undertaken here with regard to Bergman’s and Branagh’s films,

⁵⁸ Marcia Citron, *When Opera Meets Film*, 121-122.

⁵⁹ And it makes more sense dramatically as well, as her suicide attempt, if taken at face value in the original, seems less rational given that it happens shortly after an acknowledgement by the priests that she would soon be reunited with her beloved.

⁶⁰ Citron, *When Opera Meets Film*, 122.

however, and to questions of operatic mediation on the whole. In her earlier work on the subject, for example, Citron asserts that the instances of interior singing in Ponnelle's *Figaro* "make us think about our status in relation to the audio-visual events—what do we hear of what we see, and what do we see of what they hear...and how does that tell us what they know and what they allow us to know?" and these are certainly questions that can be asked about the relationship between audio and visual elements of other opera-films as well.⁶¹

IV. Conclusion

While not speaking to works like Bergman's and Branagh's specifically, Citron's assertion that techniques such as internal singing expand the overt intermedial relationship between opera and film by "muddying the strength of opera's signifiers" looks towards issues taken up in the following chapter, wherein issues of mediation and intermediation, liveness, and mediatization—while still filtered through the lens of *Die Zauberflöte*—will all come to the fore.⁶² The focus of this chapter, however, has been specifically on Bergman and Branagh and their ability create a synthesis between opera and film in a way that provokes audiences to reflect on each artform separately and in tandem with one another. For Bergman, this meant creating a hybrid opera-film in the truest sense of the phrase: theatrical scenery mixed freely with cinematic sets, close-ups and whispers that added a psychological depth unavailable to spectators in a traditional theatre, and camerawork meant to evoke both the feeling of being at an

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, "The Elusive Voice: Absence and Presence in Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's Film *Le Nozze di Figaro*." In *Between Opera and Cinema*, 134.

⁶² *Ibid.*, *When Opera Meets Film*, 134.

opera house and watching a movie at the same time. Branagh in many ways took his lead from Bergman's film, but also stressed the hybrid nature of his *Magic Flute* by relying more readily on computer generated imagery and voiceover singing to provide audiences with something that was "more than just a recording of a great performance." As stressed throughout, both directors wished to broaden the audience base for Mozart's *Singspiel* beyond the opera house by bringing the tale into homes and theatres throughout the world. In so doing, they have engendered critical reflections on what their contributions to the genres of opera, film, and opera-film have been.

Chapter 2

The Displaced Spectator: Or, Space and Place in Mediatized Opera

This chapter aims to address broader issues of operatic mediation and mediatization. After all, to only speak of these sorts of intermedial relationships in the two director's opera-films is to ignore the thirty-year gap that exists between the release of the former and the premiere of the latter. It should hardly need mentioning that many significant approaches to bridging the gap between the operatic and the cinematic have been attempted in the interim, and that the natures of operatic "authenticity" and "liveness" have similarly undergone several ideological shifts during that time period. This chapter will give a sense of the changes occurring between these two filmic book-ends of operatic intermediality. Through several case studies, I will address the ever-changing meanings that "liveness" and "authenticity" have taken on for audiences, directors, and opera houses alike, and what this constant renegotiation meant for each successive production.

Of course, there are many approaches one could take in attempting to construct a narrative that chronicles the shifting ideological approaches to operatic mediation from the 1970s through the present. I will begin with a brief overview of several possible threads, such as the drive towards operatic intermediality as a mode of popularizing the genre, and several attempts at re-negotiating the relationship between stage and technology through mixed media experimentation and improvisation. The majority of the chapter, however, will focus on how issues of space and place may affect the staging of such works both inside the opera

house and beyond. This path seems to prove most fruitful, as, in many instances, directors use these spatial-temporal shifts (both literal and metaphorical) to reinscribe and reinforce the ideological goals to be considered below and thus are intimately connected with the dramaturgical emphasis on “the live” and/or “the authentic” in operatic performance.

Only three of the six case studies to be considered below will once again focus on Mozart’s final *Singspiel*, while the rest will venture beyond eighteenth-century opera to consider two recent productions of Giuseppe Verdi’s: *La Traviata* and *Don Carlos*, both of which uproot the operas from the stage and transport the action to its surrounding environs. Lastly, the space and place to be considered will become more abstract, as I will discuss the cinema as a “place” for opera. With many productions now very much camera-ready and staged for screenings in movie theatres the world over, the last case study focuses on how endeavors such as the Metropolitan Opera’s *Live in HD* telecasts work towards a convergence between opera and cinema, and how the latter seems to gradually be taking on the role of an alternate place to view opera. Through such a narrative of late twentieth- and early twenty-first century performance histories, I hope to chart a path towards a view of operatic intermediality in the present day, and in the process, perhaps point towards what is in store for the genre both on the stage and on the screen.

I. Pathways from Bergman to Branagh: Popularization

That Ingmar Bergman and Kenneth Branagh sought to reach the broadest audience possible with their respective cinematic adaptations of *The Magic Flute* should come as no surprise. Both were abridged renditions, sung in the vernacular, and strove to appeal to spectators by offering cinematic “tricks” that no opera house could offer. But between 1975 and 2006, many other attempts at expanding the genre’s audience base emerged as well. For instance, I have already mentioned how, in the late 1970s and 1980s, Jean-Pierre Ponelle’s opera-films strove for a similar popularization of the operatic genre in the wake of Bergman’s success. While a considerable body of scholarship on Ponelle’s work already exists, many of the analyses fail to address the influence media would come to have on the world of opera (and theatre as a whole) starting around this time, and this influence would become even more evident in subsequent decades. Scholars writing on Ponelle’s opera-films in particular have been quick to analyze the intermedial relationships between opera and film, as Citron has done, and as I have attempted to do with Bergman’s and Branagh’s films in the previous chapter. They however do little to address what Philip Auslander describes as the gradual mediatization of the operatic genre. Defined as “the process whereby the traditional fine arts . . . come to a consciousness of themselves as various media within a mediatic system,” the increased mediatization of opera over the past thirty years has been largely neglected within the realm of academia, and this has only recently begun to change—a fact made all the more curious when one

considers that scholarship has continually been engaging with Bergman's film from the time of its creation until the present day.⁶³

While Bergman's fusion of opera and film worked in subtle ways, stressing certain characteristics of each medium to demonstrate how the theatrical and cinematic realms could mutually reinforce one another's public image, not all directors wished to minimize the audience's awareness that cinematic technology could in fact enhance the theatrical mode of representation, and thus made the "fusion" less subtle. Indeed, it may even be argued that the decision to foreground the use of technology in filmic representations of opera could represent another path towards popularizing the genre in the sense that its public display assured audiences that operatic practices could still engage with current technology to offer an experience similar to—yet unique from—one that could be gleaned from an actual stage performance. Such a foregrounding of technology is already evident in Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's adaptation of Wagner's *Parsifal* in 1982, eight years after Bergman's *Magic Flute* was released. With front-projections used for many background images throughout the movie, the nuanced set/scenery dichotomy at play in Bergman's opera-film becomes much more overt in Syberberg's film. When a doll and a toy horse (with visible strings) gallop over a clearly painted backdrop to represent Kundry's initial descent from the night sky, and when a green screen background facilitates a display of religious iconography alternating with realistic landscape photography and paintings of Nordic Valkyries during the "Transformation Music" (both seen in Figure 2.1), the

⁶³ Philip Auslander, "Liveness, Mediatization, and Intermedial Performance," 8.

director's foregrounding of the modes of production do not seem altogether different from Bergman's *Trollflöjten*, where the Three Boys can be seen operating fog machines and artificial backdrops alternate with more naturalistic ones as well.⁶⁴



Figure 2.1 A doll and toy horse depicting Kundry's first appearance (right) and Parsifal's journey with Gurnemanz (left) as they appear in Syberberg's *Parsifal* (1982)

Syberberg, however, was not the only one to emphatically embrace video technology and the mediatized realm of the theatre. Peter Sellars's well-known staging of Mozart's three "Da Ponte Operas" (i.e., *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan Tutte*) for the PepsiCo Summerfare in 1989 may have initially been produced for the stage, but his trilogy was subsequently recorded in-studio to become arguably the best-received instantiation of "TV Opera" to date. Modernized and set within various New York locales, Sellars recorded on a set built expressly to be filmed for television broadcast, with camerawork and lighting not altogether different from that of a sitcom. Indeed, though the production may already look a bit dated to contemporary audiences, watching one of the Sellars productions on TV (or, subsequently, on DVD) has the feel of

⁶⁴ Richard Wagner, *Parsifal* [1982], DVD, 265 minutes, directed by Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, Image Entertainment: ID4580CODVD (1999).

watching a sitcom sung in Italian. With this in mind, it becomes clear that Auslander's assertion that early television strove to adopt theatrical strategies, but that this trend has been more recently reversed, rings true with the Sellars productions. The reciprocal gesture in his "made-for-TV" opera productions thus seems obvious: here, theatre is striving to be "televisual."⁶⁵ Endeavors such as Syberberg's and Sellars's not only aimed at "popularizing" the genre in the same vein as Branagh's and Bergman's opera-films, but they also pointed towards newer ways of engaging with the genre of opera as a stagework connected with mass media technologies.

II. Mixed Media, Experimentation, and Improvisation

If the path from Bergman's opera-film to Branagh's can be traced through directors like Ponelle, Syberberg, and Sellars and their respective attempts to reach greater audiences by making the genre more approachable, a different narrative can also be told by looking in the reverse direction. Opposing the "populist" approach, avant-garde artists and directors in both spoken theatre and opera alike similarly aimed to revitalize the appeal of the stage, but through a more experimental fashion with mixed media and improvisation. As Greg Giesekam discusses in his *Staging the Screen*, the increasing use of filmic technologies had also begun permeating the world of theatre at large during the seventies and eighties. One prominent example for Giesekam is the work done by the Wooster Group, a New York-based performance organization that emerged during this time and which has incorporated video into every one of its stagings

⁶⁵ Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, 12.

since its 1981 production of *Route 1 & 9*, a play based on Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* (1938).⁶⁶ Gieseckam, for instance, describes their production of *House/Lights* (1998) as “a more complex interplay between live and mediated, mixing publically released film with prerecorded and live relay material, and playing with CG effects and cyborgian interfaces between live and mediated performers.”⁶⁷ These lines could just as easily be evoking comparisons to the work done by Syberberg in the eighties or Robert Lepage in the present decade. Thus, Syberberg and other directors of opera-film in the seventies and eighties were not alone in their desire to fully embrace newer audiovisual technologies in their attempts to impart to the genre a continued relevance in the twentieth (or twenty-first) century, but, as thirty years still separate these works from this current writing, the question must be asked: what of twenty-first century projects that aim to combine opera and video? It is here that Bill Viola's *Tristan Project* comes into the picture.

Staged by Peter Sellars in 2005, Bill Viola's *Tristan Project* represents a melding of artistic genres very much in line with those discussed above. Preceding Sellars's staging, the work was premiered in a concert performance the previous year, and it was subsequently featured as a multimedia installation in numerous art galleries. Though each of these iterations of *The Tristan Project* would warrant its own consideration in a case study of operatic mediation in the twenty-first century, I will here focus on the 2005 staging by Peter Sellars.

⁶⁶ Greg Gieseckam, *Staging the Screen: The Use of Film and Video in Theatre*, 80.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.

Viola's project combines the music and stage action of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* with three video sequences (one for each act). These video sequences of the actors and their surrounding environments play out independently from the live action on stage as devised by Sellars. The footage accompanying each of the three acts is only ten minutes or so in length, slowed down to last the duration of each act. The video images are projected onto a ten-meter-tall screen that serve as the backdrop for Sellars's staging, with the onstage action rather restrained and blocking so minimal as to grant Viola's images the status of the "main visual context of the opera."⁶⁸ The result, as Jeongwon Joe describes, was a "visual strategy for challenging the linear and irreversible temporality of clock time," which she claims both Wagner and Viola inherited from their shared interest in the teachings of Buddhism.⁶⁹ Furthermore, as Lawrence Kramer asserts, "neither music nor image . . . can claim priority in the presentation; each is both text and gloss, substance and supplement," and he argues earlier in the chapter that Viola's images perform a "complementary process of 'visualizing' the music not in the sense of adding a visual gloss to it, . . . but by making the music's auditory presence present concurrently in visual form."⁷⁰ Even Viola himself stresses the importance of the interplay between sound, music, video, and actors in *The Tristan Project*, with color schemes and lighting designed to "reflect the video," and attempts to make the video light "appear to be pouring out of the screen onto

⁶⁸ Jeongwon Joe, "The *Tristan Project*: Time in Wagner and Viola," in *Wagner & Cinema*, ed. Jeongwon Joe and Sander Gilman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 366.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 366ff.

⁷⁰ Lawrence Kramer, "'The Threshold of the Visible World': Wagner, Bill Viola, and *Tristan*," in *Wagner & Cinema*, ed. Jeongwon Joe and Sander Gilman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 382-384.

the stage.”⁷¹ Not surprisingly, Viola sees his ideas as highly resonant with those of Wagner, asserting that the legacy of the Romantic composer’s vision is “embedded in today’s media age”: Viola also goes so far as to claim that Wagner “would have loved video” on the basis that “it naturally, ontologically, embodies his idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the place where all senses are engaged and the various art forms coexist.”⁷²

Giesekam similarly draws attention to recent productions by Station House Opera, a London-based performance group that endeavored to combine live performers and pre-recorded action on the stage. Their approach is quite different from Viola’s, however—and from the Wooster Group’s, too, for that matter—but their work also chose to take the experimental, avant-garde route in its pursuit of embracing the mediatization of the theatre. In one such project, for example, Gieskam discusses how the performance group projected videotaped *doppelgängers* of live performers “interacting in a sort of parallel world” with the actors on stage.⁷³ This type of interaction between the live and the prerecorded is echoed in Auslander’s writings as well, as when he discusses *Pôles*, a work produced by the Pps Dance of Montreal wherein the performers interact with holographic projections of themselves and where distinguishing live from video is nearly impossible at times. Of relevance to the present discussion is Auslander’s assertion that we now experience works such as this “in terms of fusion, not confusion,” and as “a fusion that we see as taking place within an essentially

⁷¹ An interview with Viola is included in the appendix to Joe and Gilman’s *Wagner & Cinema*, cited above. The interview can be found at the beginning of the appendix, pp. 441-440; here 437-438.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 431-432.

⁷³ Greg Giesekam, *Staging the Screen: The Use of Film and Video in Theatre*, 201.

televisual digital environment that incorporates both live and recorded elements indiscriminately as raw materials.”⁷⁴ Though where does Mozart’s *Magic Flute* fit into all of this?

I mention these works by visual artists, avant-garde theatre companies, and opera directors alike to indicate that the ways in which one can now experience a “live” opera performance have undergone immense changes since Bergman’s *Trollflöjten* aired on Swedish television that New Year’s Day in 1975, and, in the same vein as Auslander, I wish to assess what “liveness” in operatic performance means in the twenty-first century. How might a mediatized and mediated consummation of the genre change when faced with “traditional” productions? Radical ones? Here, Mozart’s last *Singspiel* will once again serve as a lens through which to begin such an investigation.

III. “Authentic” (Re)constructions?

The first such production to be considered in this regard is Göran Järvefelt’s 1989 staging of *The Magic Flute* at the Drottningholm court theatre in Sweden. Whereas Bergman’s opera-film aims to present viewers with an accurate representation of what a performance might have looked like at the court theatre, Järvefelt’s production—most likely influenced by Bergman’s opera-film—promises a truly “authentic” experience to spectators, to borrow from the back of the DVD cover.⁷⁵ Thus, even though issues of “authenticity” and “Historically

⁷⁴ Philip Auslander, “Liveness, Mediatization, and Intermedial Performance,” 10.

⁷⁵ For Bergman’s influence on Järvefelt, see Andrew Porter, “Mozart on the Modern Stage,” *Early Music*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (February 1992), 135. For the production in question, see Wolfgang

Informed Performance” (HIP) warranted only slight attention in the previous chapter, they will move to the foreground here.

If, as Peter Cowie suggests, Drottningholm was ill-equipped to handle the demands of a film production company in the theatre’s halls in 1975, perhaps the advance in technology over the ensuing fourteen years made this task more feasible.⁷⁶ After all, the size and bulk of recording equipment had surely shrunk down in the interim, and, with the smaller forces of a production company chosen by those at Drottningholm itself (as opposed to an entire movie crew), the directors of the theatre were likely more in direct control over the number of personnel required for filming. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding how this recording came about, though, the fact remains that Järvefelt’s production, as one performed on “authentic period instruments” and recorded in a venue whose original stage layout, sets, and costumes have all been continually re-furbished and utilized since the eighteenth century, leaves viewers—both live and watching subsequently on VHS and DVD—with a production steeped in the tradition of “Historically Informed Performance” practices.

While, according to some definitions, the movement towards historically informed performance practice, particularly as applied to “Early Music” (typically pieces dating from the pre-Baroque eras, though the term has invariably extended to Baroque compositions as well) can be seen as beginning in the 1950s, it was not widely practiced until the late sixties and early seventies. With its attention

Amadeus Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte* [1989], DVD, Drottningholm Court Theatre, directed by Göran Järvefelt, Image Entertainment: ID9309RADVD (2002).

⁷⁶ Peter Cowie, *Ingmar Bergman: A Critical Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1982), 295-296.

focused squarely on treatises, manuals, and other forms of documented performance practices dating from the time period in question, performers, conductors, and scholars who aligned themselves with this movement strove for the utmost “historically-correct” approaches to the music, from instrumental construction to bowing styles and dynamics, articulation, ornamentation, and more. To begin with a more local example, the Boston Early Music Festival, a bi-annual celebration with an international draw, features many performers who adhere to the tenants of the movement described above, and the centerpiece of each festival is often a fully-staged Baroque opera, complete with period costumes, “historically-correct” gestures and, when applicable, even “authentic” dance movements.

As I have hinted in the previous chapter, however, these ideas were not without their detractors. Richard Taruskin, one of the most prominent American critics of HIP, took up the issue at length in a 1987 symposium on Authenticity and Early Music that was later re-published and expanded in his 1995 monograph *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance*. The main thrust of his argument is that “virtually no congruence exists between our performing and listening habits” when it comes to musical works written centuries ago.⁷⁷ Owing to the fact that twenty-first century listeners have been affected by several hundred years worth of reified attitudes towards performance, Taruskin argues, the fact of the matter is that the average listener—even a well-informed and Classically-trained

⁷⁷ Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 254. The original is published as “The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past,” In *Authenticity and Early Music: A Symposium*, Nicholas Kenyon, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 139-208.

one—will still *listen to* the works of Caccini or Strozzi in the same manner as they would to Stravinsky’s Neo-Classical compositions: that is to say, with “modern ears.”

Supporters of the movement such as Laurence Dreyfus argue that the specific practices of the Renaissance and Baroque eras are not important, nor is the way we technically *hear* the pieces. Instead, he argues for a practical view of the Historical Performance movement as one that should “[reconstruct] the musical object in the here and now, enabling a new hitherto silenced subject to speak,” and that its main goal should be to offer a survey of these “seemingly discrete moments within early music” and to show their connections to both past and present.⁷⁸

Though the authors I reference above focus primarily on the aural aspects of the Early Music movement, questions of historical performance remain relevant here from the visual perspective, too, and in more than one sense. At the most basic level, stagings such as Järvefelt’s that strive to recreate an “authentic experience” for spectators must consider not only questions of instrumental construction, tuning, and technique, but also costume design, dancing, gesticulation, and more. If, as Taruskin argues, the Historically Informed Performance movement is misguided because our ears cannot hear the music as an earlier audience would, I propose that this question must be asked of the visual aspects of such a performance as well. Can the way we as audience members

⁷⁸ Laurence Dreyfus, “Early Music Defended against its Devotees: A Theory of Historical Performance in the Twentieth Century,” *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 3 (Summer 1983), 304.

really approach the visual elements of authentic stagings in the same way an eighteenth century audience could? If the answer is no, does this make the performance less effective? Moreover, these issues take on an even greater significance when discussing historical performance as represented specifically in mediated and mediatized stagings. Whereas audiences at Järvefelt's production had the venue of the Drottningholm Court Theatre to "set the mood" and aid in perpetuating the illusion of historical accuracy, can audience members watching on a DVD at home really be so easily convinced? Issues such as these are important and must be kept in mind, for, despite the preponderance of writing on the Early Music movement, much more has been made of how we *hear* the music and not how we *see* it when it is performed.

Are all of the minutiae of eighteenth century staging practices really necessary in order to appreciate a production that can be read as "traditional" and thus more "authentic" than, say, a staging such as Kušej's (to be considered later in this chapter)? It is my contention that opera directors today need not maintain this strict adherence to the doctrines of Historically Informed Performance in order to create a production of *The Magic Flute* (or any opera) that would be understood as a "conservative reading" of the work; the previously cited productions by David McVicar and Benno Benson are proof enough of that. Both directors, in their recent stagings—McVicar's, filmed at Covent Garden in 2001, Benson's with the Opéra nationale de Paris in 2006—have approached the *Singspiel* from rather different angles, yet both could be understood as "traditional" in some sense. McVicar's, for example, though a bit darker and more

brooding than the traditional fairy tale atmosphere that permeates most productions, still maintains set and costume design consistent with what Mozart's contemporaries could have seen at the Theater auf der Wieden, both on stage and off. On the other hand, Besson's *mise-en-scène* seems much brighter and more family-friendly, and, like Järvefelt, chooses many flat, two-dimensional sets that appear and disappear from the wings of the stage, seen in Figure 2.2 below.



Figure 2.2 McVicar's and Besson's respective takes on *Die Zauberflöte*

This seems to be completely in line with Jonathan Miller's somewhat tongue-in-cheek assessment that the "traditionalist" mentality would require producers *tout court* to "assume the role of a self-effacing restorer, bending his ingenuity . . . to the faithful reproduction of the staging which realized the composer's original intention" even though there are many opportunities to strip away much of the "actual" magic and enchantment of *The Magic Flute* while still presenting a "helpful and indeed legitimate" reading of the work.⁷⁹ Miller continues on by justifying ways in which the priests in Mozart's *Singspiel* might benefit from taking on the guise of actual eighteenth-century Masons, how the Temple could be transformed into a Masonic Library, and how a Papageno

⁷⁹ Jonathan Miller, "Doing Opera," *New York Review of Books*, 11 April 2000, 49.

costume that replaces feathers with the clothes of a simple-but-happy peasant might be just as convincing.⁸⁰

And yet, Järvefelt's Drottningholm production follows Miller's "traditionalist" approach almost to the letter: spectators are treated to period attire, period instruments, period scenery and theatrical techniques. Even the conductor and orchestra members are clad in the manner of eighteenth century livery! (See Figure 2.3)



Figure 2.3 Traditional costuming, stagecraft, and scenery in Järvefelt's production for the Drottningholm Court Theatre in 1989

Nor were critics were remiss in pointing out this drive towards the authentic: in an October 1994 review of the production's release for home video in the United Kingdom, Julian Rushton mentions the word "authentic" at least three times (once even in contrast to "inauthentic" productions).⁸¹ "Period instruments" are also mentioned, as is the "unfamiliar and refreshing" approach to tempi and orchestration: in short, all of the buzz words so readily associated with the movement appear—and this all within the bounds of a review barely five

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

⁸¹ Julian Rushton, Review "Mozart: *La Clemenza di Tito* and *Die Zauberflöte*," *The Musical Times*, Vol. 135, No. 1820 (October 1994), 650-651.

hundred words in length. But what might staging choices such as Järvefelt's mean within the context of mediated and mediatized opera productions? As Dreyfus concedes, there is an undeniable emphasis on the *visible* aspect of these "unfamiliar" instruments. This unfamiliarity, or defamiliarization principle, he argues, helps reinforce the idea of rescuing these "authentic" and "forgotten" instruments for aesthetic purposes (both visual and aural) for the contemporary concert-goer. He goes on to name some of the "visible tools of the trade": "both antique and reconstructed viols, "baroqued" violins, plucked lutes, harpsichords and organs, winds of endless variety, and a vast array of percussion" are all common sights that, taken together with the treatises and other "documentary evidence," provide the supposed keys to understanding the building blocks of the movement.⁸²

Though many of the instrumental signifiers mentioned above receive little screen time on the DVD recording of Järvefelt's production, the packaging is quick to include references to them as a selling point on the back cover of the product. In light of the theatre's construction itself, these instruments would be highly visible to audience members in attendance, as Drottningholm's orchestra plays on level ground with its spectators—that is to say, there is no "pit" to hide the orchestra from the public's view; they are all in plain sight. Thus, these visual cues still remain an important factor in considering the "Early Music as Defamiliarization" effect discussed in Dreyfus's writing. And of course, since the

⁸² Laurence Dreyfus, "Early Music Defended against its Devotees: A Theory of Historical Performance in the Twentieth Century," 299.

work under consideration is one for the stage, the period costuming and set designs are meant as clear signifiers of an “authentic,” period staging as well.

This is also not to say that every detail of the Drottningholm production of 1989 was completely historically accurate. Without even quibbling over such issues as the usage of modern electrical lighting and equipment and the like, the house lights were still dimmed for the performance and, as even a cursory glance at any production sketches of the original opera would show, the choice of costuming for the two “bird-people” was nothing close to the original.⁸³ In this production, Papageno wears a faded, dirty green shirt, tattered leather jacket and a rope belt, and Papagena similarly dons a long green dress and white blouse with a pink apron covering herself, on top of which is often draped an oversized brown robe. Even the opera-within-a movie staging of *Die Zauberflöte* in Miloš Forman’s *Amadeus* (1984) provides a more “historically informed” rendering of the feathered costuming for these characters, as a comparison between Järvefelt’s and Forman’s interpretations of Papageno with the original production sketch from Mozart’s time demonstrate in Figure 2.4.

⁸³ See, for example, the cover illustration of Schikaneder’s original libretto in his *Die Zauberflöte* (Vienna: Ignaz Alberti, 1791).



Figure 2.4 Papageno as he appeared on the cover of the original libretto compared with realizations in Järvefelt's staging and Forman's film.

Do these details, then, affect how one views Järvefelt's production? Is it any less authentic? Jonathan Miller argued that a Papageno dressed in just such a manner as in Järvefelt's production could conceivably be justified as "authentic" on different grounds as well.⁸⁴ This seems to lend credence to the fact that directors need not adhere to every principle of the movement in order to present audiences with a traditionally-minded performance. After all, critics clearly viewed Bergman's opera-film as historically informed and highly conservative in meaning, and the same would certainly hold true of Järvefelt's production. But what of those not in the actual Drottningholm theatre on that day in 1989, or those

⁸⁴ That is, by keeping in mind or favoring "historical authenticity" rather than "operatic authenticity." See Jonathan Miller, "Doing Opera," 63-64 for more.

who have never set foot in the theatre? What do issues of historical accuracy mean to those viewing Järvefelt's production through the mediated form of a DVD recording?

Despite the ahistorical quirks listed above, few would argue against the fact that notions of HIP unabashedly influenced the Drottningholm production. Yet, as conservative as it is, the video recording, directed by Thomas Olofsson, is less traditional. Though the camera angles may be far from revolutionary or as unconventional as those of other operatic productions discussed by Christopher Morris in a recent edition of *The Opera Quarterly*, for example, the cuts and close-ups remain less unobtrusive than the old-fashioned, unwavering full-stage view that would alternate with a few close-ups and three-quarter shots. To be sure, the latter shots *do* appear in the film; in fact, Oloffson seems to overindulge in the close-ups more than may even be desirable for many, thus contradicting what Morris asserts has been the traditional dictum for opera filming: "get out of the way."⁸⁵ For example, during the Act I quintet, the camera often focuses on the Queen of the Night's three servant women at the expense of Papageno and Tamino, whose stage actions, while seen by audiences at the venue, remain a complete mystery to those watching at home. This happens again during the Priest's Act II choral reprise of "*O Isis und Osiris*," wherein other principle characters are excluded from the camera for prolonged periods of time. While close-ups (and even three-quarter shots) such as these remain points of contention in many discussions of the positives and negatives of live versus mediated

⁸⁵ Christopher Morris, "Digital Diva: Opera on Video," 109.

performances, the rate at which they occur in Järvefelt's production warrant mention here given that the overriding quest for "authenticity" is at times hindered when viewed on DVD and viewers are thus left guessing at what may be transpiring at potentially important dramatic moments in the opera (or even during the specific musical numbers themselves, as mentioned above. One particularly problematic scene in this regard was the Act I quintet, where Papageno and Tamino are often excluded from the screen despite the singing parts they have at certain moments). This seems very much to resonate with an issue taken up by Emanuele Senici in a recent issue of *The Opera Quarterly*, where the author is commenting on the typical argument against videos of live performance. as discussed through a blogger's reaction to the Met's *Live in HD* simulcast of Richard Strauss's *Salome*. The blogger's critique begins as follows:

The fancy camerawork (zooming, hovering, etc.) is sometimes visually interesting, but it detracts from the experience. The camera thinks for me and decides for me where my interests lay, and I don't appreciate that. So much is lost when the camera zooms in when, really, a character needs to be seen and heard as part of the whole and not focused upon, porn style, in the most exciting moments.⁸⁶

Again, while this problem may exist for any given video recording of an opera or theatre piece, the issue takes on additional significance when considering Järvefelt's production. Here, the question concerns a mediated replication of an "authentic experience" that defines itself—and thus its authenticity—not from the general basis of "live event" versus "recorded event" (*pace* Auslander) but through a specific set of regulations governing instrumentation, costuming, stagework, and more, that would make one live production more or less authentic

⁸⁶ Emanuele Senici, "Porn Style? Space and Time in Live Opera Videos," 63.

than the rest. If part of the drive towards historically informed performance, at least insofar as theatrical works go, is predicated upon the specific venue (owing to the unique way in which older theatrical stages and sets operate), the question of whether or not mediatized versions of that venue can count as historical experiences at all is one that must be asked. If the answer is no, wherein lies the draw—financial or otherwise—in DVD recordings such as this one? Issues of consumerism and the economic profitability of specific “types” of opera recordings is a theme to which I will return later, but for now, I wish to consider another production that widens the gulf between live and mediated experiences even further: Robert Hertzl’s open-air staging at the St. Margarethen Festival.

IV. Opera Outdoors

Filmed outdoors in an old Roman sandstone quarry located in present-day Austria, Hertzl’s 1999 production still ostensibly takes place on a stage, though the performance space is much less defined than most other productions considered here. The venue is capable of accommodating audiences much larger than an opera house would, and, as the Figure 2.5 shows, the St. Margarethen Festival did attract such crowds.



Figure 2.5 A view of the stage from afar showcasing the massive audience at a production of Herzl's Zauberflöte

Additionally, the performers take full advantage of their greater freedom to roam and explore, with Tamino rappelling downwards from the “mountainside” at the beginning of the opera, Papageno’s running through rows of audience members in Act II, and a lighting display that turns the several-stories-tall temple into a dress for the Queen of the Night upon her arrival, again, reproduced below (Figure 2.6).



Figure 2.6 Tamino’s mountainside descent to the stage and the set’s transformation into the Queen’s dress in Act I

The performers are not the only one with increased freedoms in this production, however. Filming outdoors and with a less-defined “stage” to restrict the opera’s boundaries, Herzl and his production team were able to have the Queen’s attendants ride in on horseback to vanquish the serpent in Act I (and they reappear in a similar fashion during Tamino and Papageno’s trial of silence as well), the trials by fire and water featured an on-stage effigy and water fountain (respectively), and audience members were treated to a small fireworks display towards the end of the opera during which the Priests were harnessing the “power of light” to vanquish the oncoming forces of the Queen of the Night. Two of these scenes are pictured in Figure 2.7.

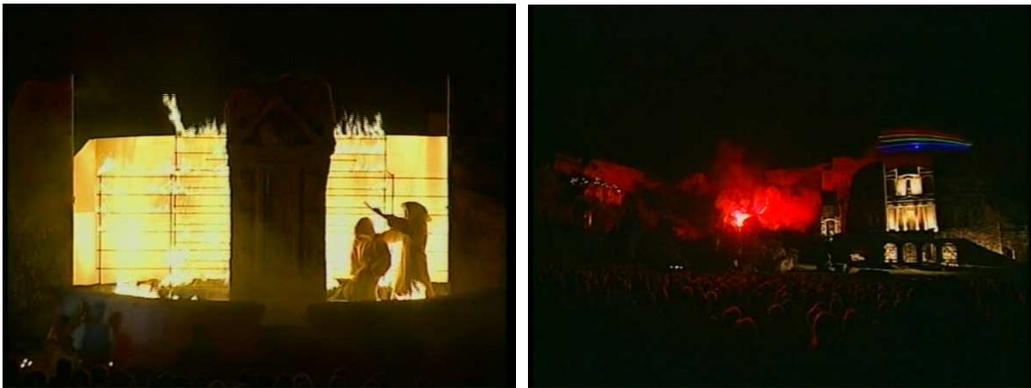


Figure 2.7 The Trial by Fire and the pyrotechnical display that vanquishes the Queen’s forces at the end of the opera

One might argue that the specific example of Papageno running through the audience may not appear to be particularly novel in and of itself (I can think of several “traditional” opera productions featuring a similar breaching of stage boundaries). These trends, taken as a whole, point towards the move some directors have embraced in recent decades to bring the spectacle of opera off the stage and, in some cases, even outside the opera house, resulting in new and

original forms of performer/audience engagement. Peter Konwitschny's 2001 production of *Don Carlos* and Felix Breisach's Opernhaus Zürich *Traviata* (2008) represent two excellent recent examples of opera's emancipation from the stage and, like Robert Herzl's 1999 *Zauberflöte*, bring to our mind how questions of space and place might change our interaction with the artform.

More specifically, Herzl's production introduces a third possible venue into the equation of differing modes of spectatorship. The event is outdoors and takes every advantage of that to produce an opera in a way that would be unmanageable within the confines of a typical European stage. Thus, one must consider how viewing this production would be different not only from the perspective of "in the theatre" or "in the home," but also "outdoors," where different special effects can be expected.

Scaling down walls and mountains, burning an enormous effigy, threefold horseback riding, and a literal fireworks display are all atypical events in a normal theatrical experience, or at least an operatic experience, so the first thought we must confront is: how is the allure of this endeavor different from those presented inside an opera house? The economic draw for a production of this caliber is unquestionably larger than the Drottningholm staging discussed above. Whereas the HIP movement caters to a specific audience of specialists, or at the very least wishes to attract people who will appreciate the novelty of "period attire" and the like, spectacles such as Herzl's are more likely to draw in broader audiences, and is also more family friendly owing to the dazzling theatrical practices he employs. In this way, the visual aspect of the opera is emphasized in a way much akin to

Julie Taymor's current production of *The Magic Flute* at the Metropolitan Opera, where dazzling visuals and giant dancing puppets are meant to enchant the entire family. Even though these two productions may have similar goals, Herzl's once again has the advantage of space and place over Taymor's, which still operates within a traditional venue and thus has more constraints on the modes of spectacle at her disposal.

Not only was Taymor's production chosen to inaugurate the Metropolitan Opera's *Live in HD* simulcast series, but it has thus far retained a place in almost every Met season since its premiere as well.⁸⁷ The Met has also released the abridged, English-language version both on DVD and through their on-demand internet service, "Met Opera on Demand." Compared to the star power, name recognition, and high production values the Metropolitan Opera has invested in marketing the mediated version of this performance, the recording of Herzl's staging has suffered from a far harsher fate. Boasting only a simple, low resolution (and highly pixelated) graphic of Papageno on the cover, the open-air festival performance is presented to DVD viewers in an abridged version, though whether or not this was the case at the actual performance remains uncertain. The editing is obvious, as virtually all applause between numbers is cut, and very little dialogue remains to connect the arias and choruses on this DVD. There are also no "A-list" singers, orchestras, or opera companies attached to the production, and its near-invisibility in the larger opera DVD market, not to mention its low selling

⁸⁷ Historically speaking, Taymor's production has lived a sort of double life at the Met. In some seasons, the abridged, English-language version was replaced with a full-length staging and sung in German as well, but all other factors in the production remained constant.

price (I obtained a new copy for under \$4), are all indicators that the video recording was not meant to be widely marketed, though perhaps the producers knew an event of this sort was not *meant* for marketing in the same way Taymor's would later be.⁸⁸

A commercial video release such as this complicates Auslander's claim that live recordings "allow the listener a sense of participating in a specific performance and a vicarious relationship to the audience for that performance not accessible through studio productions."⁸⁹ When we are unsure even of the extent to which the performance was originally broadcast (i.e., was it abridged in performance as well, or edited down post-production for commercial release), and when much of the "audience participation" (i.e., the applause) is cut as well, our sense of participating alongside opera-goers at the St. Margarethen Festival must be called into question. Granted, it is also possible to include oneself in the "imagined community" of opera-goers (to borrow a phrase from Benedict Anderson), and Morris adds credence to this thought with his assessment that "even this solitary consumption of video is a form of performance that involves the community" of owners, consumers, and fans, but I mention this here to show that Auslander's claims may not always hold water in every case of operatic mediation.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte: Excerpts* [1999], DVD, 100 minutes, Opera Italiana, directed by Robert Herzel, Classic-World Classical: CWP-1337 (2004).

⁸⁹ Philip Auslander, Digital Liveness: A Historico-Philosophical Perspective, *Journal of Performance and Art*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (September 2012), 5.

⁹⁰ Christopher Morris, "Digital Diva: Opera on Video," 107.

In keeping with a discussion of Auslander's scholarship, another claim of his regarding the effects of the televisual and mediatization on our current modes of media-consumption needs to be addressed here: namely, his argument (borrowed from Walter Benjamin) that "the desire of contemporary masses to bring things 'closer' spatially and humanly" is one reason why television has become the dominant medium in today's culture, and why our subsequent thoughts on liveness have changed, causing us to consume live events differently.⁹¹ Much of his recent writing revolves around this premise, and writers like Morris take up the matter as it pertains to other sorts of live events, such as sporting events and Rock concerts, too. The argument is convincing enough, and may hold true for opera performances generally speaking, but what about Herzl's production? Since many of the shots are from afar—presumably to demonstrate the grandeur of the outdoor stage—the action on the stage is often dwarfed, and the recourse to close-ups is certainly lower than in any other production considered herein, and this is not even taking into account occurrences such as the aforementioned firework display, which would have certainly been seen closer-up for audiences in attendance than on this DVD recording.

As mentioned previously, the unique nature of this production requires us to expand the "opera house versus television" dichotomy to include outdoor performance as well, and, when seen on DVD, many of the allures this staging offers seem to disappear. Whereas the recording of Järvefelt's *Magic Flute* may be the only way some viewers are able to catch a glimpse of what a historical

⁹¹ Philip Auslander, "Liveness, Mediatization, and Intermedial Performance," 6.

opera house might have looked like or to hear period instruments, fireworks, horseback riding, and conflagrations on a television screen are decidedly less awe-inspiring than on the stage and surely nothing new in the twenty-first century when these phenomena may appear in movies, reality television shows, the local news, or any other manner of programming. The video recording of Herzl's staging may in fact be more along the lines of how one might view events transpiring in Bergman's or Branagh's opera-films then, as these events and "special effects" are far more familiar to us when viewed on-screen rather than in person. Regardless, it remains clear that the experience at the St. Margarethen Festival is thus unique in that it presents something that is not only different from what conventional theatres might be able to offer at any other live performance, but, at the same time, it is also staging an event that will lose its draw when entering a mediatized environment, as the spectacle (and its attendant value) are severely diminished in this form. While this might be the case for Herzl's production, however, it may actually prove to be the exception rather than the rule.

V. Another Outdoor Opera: Breisach's *Traviata im Hauptbahnhof*

More recently, the Opernhaus Zürich, in conjunction with the Swiss television channel Schweizer Fernsehen and the Franco-German station Arte, staged a much more ambitious production of Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata* that transported its performers well beyond the realm of the opera house. Under the direction of Felix Breisach, the company wished to provide television audiences with a "merging of art with everyday reality" and thus filmed their production of

the opera throughout Zürich's main train station, with additional scenes taking place in nearby cafés, malls, and yes—even on the trains themselves, as the images in Figure 2.8 show.⁹² Unlike Herzl's outdoor production, though, Breisach's *Traviata* seems to explicitly cater to audiences at home.



Figure 2.8 Alfredo boards the train in Act I of Breisach's *Traviata* im Hauptbahnhof (2008) and speaks with Anina outside a Zürich café regarding Violetta's whereabouts in Act II

Spectators at the St. Margarethen Festival faced the same dilemma as regular theatre-goers in the quest for premium seating, since all of the action was still localized to one place, even if several times larger than the typical venue. With a staging like the one at Zürich's Hauptbahnhof, however, audiences that may have had an excellent view for the *Brindisi* may have found themselves less

⁹² The website for Arte TV has a promotional article written about the event. For more, see "'La Traviata' im Hauptbahnhof Zürich: Wie ein Bahnhof zur Opernkulisse und zum Fernsehstudio wurde," 28 August 2008, last modified 7 May 2010, <http://www.arte.tv/de/la-traviata-im-hauptbahnhof-zuerich/2198746.html>, accessed 28 January 2013.

fortunate as Alfredo and Violetta made their way towards the train tracks or ducked into a café. Some audience members chose to follow the action and relocate themselves, while others elected a less mobile approach and watched through television monitors that tracked the action back at the central train station, where the orchestra was positioned.⁹³ As Christopher Morris argues, a production such as this helps to relocate liveness in the sense that it “plays to and for the camera, while the audience in the train station are given only partial glimpses,” and he goes on to assert that the audience’s capacity to witness the production as a whole depended on their ability to “jostle with other spectators and indeed with less-interested commuters, who are pictured attempting to make their way through and around the assembled crowds.”⁹⁴ Upon watching the production, this certainly seemed to be the case.⁹⁵ Even the producers of the event recommended that the opera would be better viewed from home, with one reporter at the time claiming that, while singers would be wearing microphones for the broadcast, “it could be difficult for people in the station to hear the performance.”⁹⁶ This seems to be what the opera house’s upper management had in mind from the beginning, though, as Alexander Perreira, the general director of Opernhaus Zürich, espoused similar sentiments in an interview with *The New York Times*, claiming that “this

⁹³ It should be noted that the orchestra was the only part of the staging to not be mobile.

⁹⁴ Christopher Morris, “Digital Diva: Opera on Video,” 111.

⁹⁵ Though the production was only intended for television and digital broadcast in Europe, the Opernhaus Zürich’s dramaturge, Beate Breidenbach, has graciously furnished me with an archival recording of the event on DVD, for which I am exceedingly grateful.

⁹⁶ Bradley S. Klapper, “Opera to Go? *La Traviata* Performed Live at Swiss Train Station, *USA Today*, 30 September 2008, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/travel/news/2008-09-30-train-station-opera_N.htm, accessed 28 January 2013.

‘Traviata’ was created for television and could only be seen there” and, along similar lines, “people who watched it on site just saw tiny pieces of the puzzle.”⁹⁷

What we have with the Hauptbahnhof *Traviata*, then, seems to be the exact opposite of the St. Margarethen *Zauberflöte*, despite the fact that both were endeavors to transplant opera into an open-air setting where a greater number of spectators could experience the work, and in ways impossible to reproduce on a conventional stage (and with the promise of an even greater draw, to boot). With Breisach’s take on Verdi, the television screen seemed to provide the ideal vantage point for consumption, whereas in the case of the latter, the camerawork and the enormity of the stage seemed to dwarf the action when the opera was viewed in its mediated form. Though this outdoor production was likewise not conceived with DVD sales in mind, economic concerns may still have been a factor, and indeed, this *Traviata* only came about due to the company’s success the previous year with a television broadcast of *Die Zauberflöte*. This 2007 production, it should be noted, was simultaneously aired on TV both as staged opera on one channel and as a behind-the-scenes footage documentary on another, with ratings far greater than the company expected.⁹⁸ In charting the course of operatic mediation from Bergman to Branagh, however, the next case study will once again focus on matters transpiring inside the opera house, though our displaced spectator will not yet have reached a point where he or she will be able to focus solely on the stage itself.

⁹⁷ Matthew Gurewitsch, “Operatic Style Designed to Suit Your Living Room,” *The New York Times*, 7 February 2010, AR22.

⁹⁸ Bradley S. Klapper, “Opera to Go? ‘La Traviata’ Performed Live at Swiss Train Station.”

Konwitschny's *Don Carlos*

As one of the foremost proponents of *Regietheater* today, Peter Konwitschny's stagings have often caused a stir, for better or for worse. His unconventional take on *Tristan und Isolde* for the Bayerische Staatsoper in 1999 is described on its subsequent home video release as "an optimistic work about two people who succeed in finding love"(needless to say, this raised more than a few eyebrows throughout Europe), and his more recent production of *Lohengrin* (2006) for the Gran Theatre del Liceu, though more favorably received, transplanted Wagner's tale of the wandering Swan Knight from the Middle Ages into a twenty-first century classroom where the characters were all portrayed as schoolchildren.⁹⁹ Of interest at the present moment, however, is Konwitschny's 2001 staging of *Don Carlos*, a production not quite as readily dismissed as "concept opera" or "Eurotrash" when compared to some of his other endeavors, but one that nonetheless caused quite a bit of discussion after its premiere.¹⁰⁰

With his setting of *Don Carlos*, Konwitschny deliberately manipulates and undermines the conventions of theatrical space by uprooting the performance from the stage.¹⁰¹ In the process, he grants spectators the option of choosing where to fix their attention—on the screens in the lobby, on the orchestra pit, on the chorus members (dressed in eveningwear) on the stage, at the prisoners being

⁹⁹ Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde* [1999], DVD, National Theater Munich, directed by Peter Konwitschny, Image Entertainment: ID9277RADVD (2001). Richard Wagner, *Lohengrin*, DVD, Gran Theatre del Liceu, directed by Peter Konwitschny, EuroArts: 2056008 (2006).

¹⁰⁰ For more on the notion of the "Eurotrash" concept, see Frederic Jameson, "Regieoper, or Eurotrash?" *New Left Review*, Vol. 64 (July-August 2010), 111-129.

¹⁰¹ Giuseppe Verdi, *Don Carlos*, DVD, Wiener Staatsoper, directed by Peter Konwitschny, Arthaus Musik: 107 187 (2010).

marched through the theatre, on the “Royal Couple” entering through the main doorway, and so on—and all locations seem equally worthy of our gaze. However, as Clemens Risi argues, the true point of contention with some critics and opera-goers was not Konwitschny’s modernizing tendencies (the king and queen are depicted as present-day celebrities, the finale of the *auto-da-fé* scene barrages the viewer with photos of modern combat and warfare, etc.), but with its ambiguity. Here, Risi argues, the viewer is left wondering where and when the actual musical action took place. “Which events counted as part of the ‘real’ action,” he asks: “inside or outside the hall?”¹⁰² Perhaps the answer is “both.” What’s more, Risi argues, the work also “[poses] challenges to the frame of representation and the limits of performance.”¹⁰³

Much like Herzl’s *Magic Flute* production, the bulk of Konwitschny’s *Don Carlos* still plays out on a stage, but, also like Herzl, we see an attempt at breaking away from the confines of that same stage. Furthermore, while not quite accomplished through the same means as Breisach’s *Traviata*, we also see with Konwitschny’s take on Verdi an attempt to “[pull] the audience out of their passivity” by transforming the act of spectatorship into a more dynamic process.¹⁰⁴ And active is perhaps the best word for the audience’s engagement with his rendering of the *auto-da-fé* scene, as theatre-goers can be seen on the

¹⁰² Clemens Risi, “Shedding Light on the audience: Hans Neuenfels and Peter Konwitschny stage Verdi (and Verdians),” *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 1/2, “Primal Scenes: Proceedings of a Conference Held at the University of California, Berkeley, 30 November-2 December 2001” (March 2002), 205.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 206.

¹⁰⁴ While I do not necessarily agree that audience members are engaging in an inherently passive act while in the theatre, Risi is here grounding his argument in older attempts at opera and theatre reform (dating back at last as far as Wagner) that see theatre-going as an experience requiring the active participation of its audience members. For more, see *Ibid.*, 207.

DVD recording hurrying back inside the auditorium as the orchestra unexpectedly began the opening bars of the scene before the intermission had ended, only for some of the audience members to run right back out upon discovering that the prisoners were being marched through the theatre and that the stage merely presented spectators with chorus members singing and enjoying a coffee break while the rest of the action took place elsewhere.

But with all of these separate points of interest, how could audience members be expected to keep track? Though this was seemingly a point of concern or criticism for many, those in attendance were not left entirely on their own. Much like Alexander Perreira's exhortation for spectators at the Hauptbahnhof to view his company's *Traviata* on their home television screen (or, for audience members in attendance at the train station, via the video monitors near the orchestra), so too did the Hamburgische Staatsoper have words of advice for its audience members at the premiere of Konwitschny's *Don Carlos*, which I quote in full below:

Ladies and gentlemen, King Philippe II will make a personal appearance at the Staatsoper during tonight's performance in order to participate in the *auto-da-fé* that we have arranged for your exclusive enjoyment. In order to ensure that events proceed smoothly, we ask you to heed the following guidelines: 1. Until the arrival of the King, you may follow events comfortably from the screens in the lobby. If it is important to you to experience the music to the fullest, you may wish to take your seat in the auditorium once the music begins. 2. The music will begin about five minutes after the third announcement. 3. We ask that you resume your seats in the auditorium at the latest after the entrance of the royal couple. 4. Please do not seek out your assigned seat, but sit wherever there is a free place. Those who enter the hall are asked to take seats towards the middle of the rows. 5. Immediately following this scene there will be a 25-minute interval. At that point you will have ample time to move to your assigned seat before the beginning of the fourth act. 6 Once he has reached the stage, the King will deliver a short but important address. From this point to the end of the festivities, please show your

respect for the gravity of the events by observing silence in the auditorium. Thank you for your cooperation.¹⁰⁵

Thus, the Hamburgische Staatsoper's presentation of the *auto-da-fé* scene, as with their production of *Don Carlos* as a whole, represents another attempt by opera houses to fully embrace the mediatization of the live event not only by engaging in practices that take advantage of the interplay between stage and screen technologies, but by going one step further and foregrounding those relationships and conscripting them into the service of the stage. Though on the surface leaflets such as the one utilized here by the Hamburg State Opera company helped provide guidance for guests wishing to make sense of the many simultaneous events occurring during the intermission, they also serve another purpose: they help underscore Konwitschny's attempt to capitalize on the twenty-first century interaction between the live and the mediated by reversing the relationship—if only temporarily—that was seen by Auslander as clearly one-sided. Whereas the live had long since been subsumed within the mediated in Auslander's mind, (with the televisual having been declared the winner in the debate), here we see that this may not always be the case. Instead, Konwitschny managed to produce a unique event that effectively stages the screen as the camera simultaneously screens the stage, thus “blurring of the boundaries between stage and auditorium, art and life.”¹⁰⁶

In a grand set-up for the *auto-da-fé* scene described above, the Hamburgische Staatsoper employed an actor to serve as a television

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 205, fn. 5.

¹⁰⁶ Gundula Kreuzer, “Voices from beyond: Verdi's *Don Carlos* and the modern stage,” *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (July 2006), 178.

anchorwoman to stand in the central foyer for the purpose of announcing the “arrival” of the Spanish King Philippe at the opera house, with the anchorwoman additionally promising a “pyrotechnical sensation” for those in attendance. If this had been solely a televised (or digitally-streamed) event like the Hauptbahnhof *Traviata*, or even one along the lines of the Met’s *Live in HD* telecasts (wherein a hostess *does* actually serve as an anchorwoman to give audiences watching in cinemas a “backstage tour” during the intermission), then Konwitschny’s *Don Carlos* would be doing nothing more than these other events that only serve to underscore Auslander’s point. However, by *staging* the (fake) live event rather than having an actual live broadcast, Konwitschny has conscripted the idea of the mediated spectacle (i.e., a television report) to underscore and serve his (live) production, as shown in Figure 2.9 below.

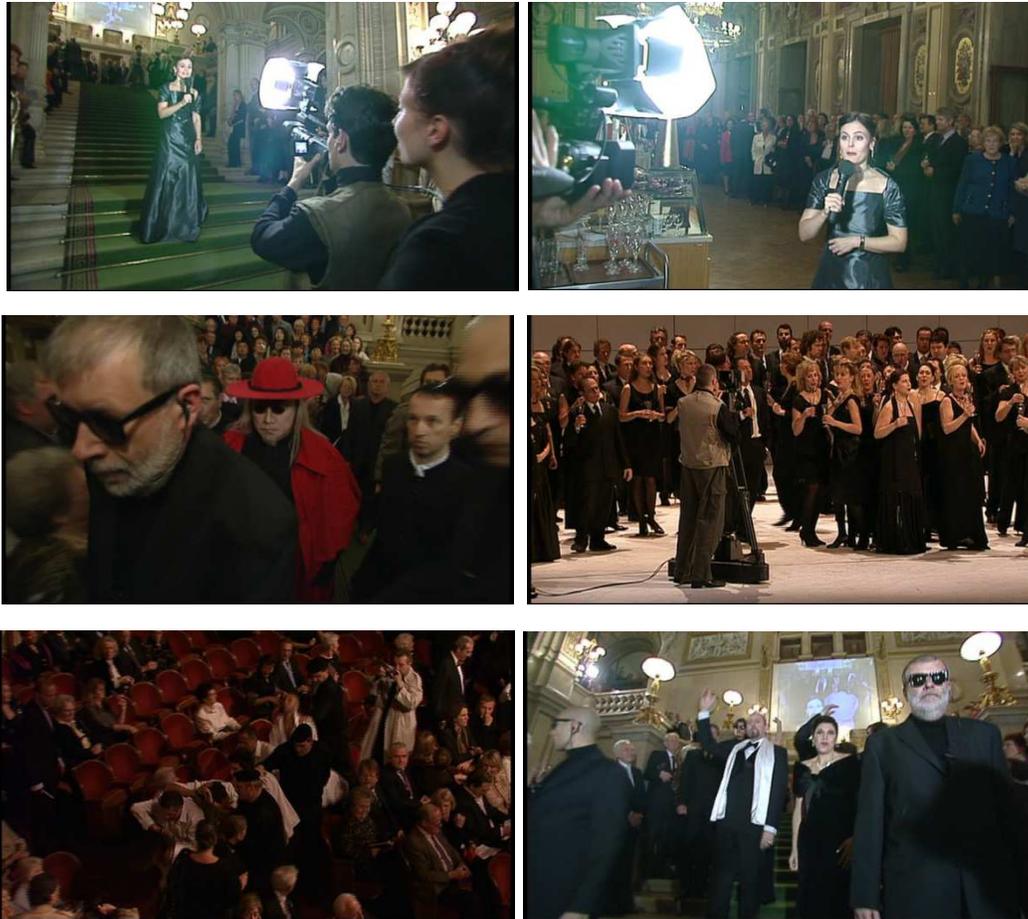


Figure 2.9 The auto-da-fé as media event in Konwitschny's *Don Carlos* (Hamburgische Staatsoper, 2001), with a fake anchorwoman and news crew on hand to chronicle the arrival of the Grand Inquisitor, the condemned prisoners, and the King of Spain

Thus, although the live may always seem to be in service to the visual in our twenty-first century mode of spectatorship, the setup for the *auto-da-fé* scene, with its staged television broadcast, has seemingly reversed the roles of theatre and television, with the mediated event of a television broadcast filmed and staged as a part of the live staging. While to some this may seem to enforce Auslander's point rather than undermine it—after all, might not this be taken to show theatre's desire to be subsumed by the visual?—skeptics must at the

very least concede that Konwitschny's production of *Don Carlos* asks us to reconsider the roles stage and screen play in our current modes of spectatorship.

VII. A Foray into *Regietheater*

Taken together, Herzl's *Zauberflöte*, Breisach's *Traviata*, and Konwitschny's *Don Carlos* all point towards greater liberties accorded to the world of opera production in recent decades. Not only are stagings such as these indicative of the fact that the genre has occasionally managed to emancipate itself from the stage in some instances, endowing audiences with an abundance of new ways to interact with the artform in the process, but it also underscores how differing venues and modes of delivery can change our conception of what opera is and how we interact with what we are seeing. Although the previous examples in this chapter have dealt with concrete shifts in space and place for the productions in question (outdoors, in a train station, throughout the theatre, etc.), I now wish to consider a more metaphorical shift in place among newer opera productions: that is to say, by looking at the increasing trend of operatic *reggisseurs* to update, modernize, or otherwise relocate and displace the typical settings of these works, I will consider what implications these decisions might have on our current mode of operatic spectatorship.

Austrian director Martin Kušej's *Magic Flute* production was in fact the same work Schweizer Fernsehen had broadcast on European television in 2007 as both staged opera and "behind the scenes tour." Again, the success of this dual broadcast was the precipitating factor for the Opernhaus Zürich's decision to

venture even further afield from traditional operatic practices, as seen in Felix Breisach's 2008 *La Traviata* at the Hauptbahnhof and his 2009 *La Bohème*, filmed "in the suburbs." But what about this production was so successful? Was it really just the backstage tour that attracted audiences? Clearly, this could not have been the case, as Thomas Beck, a producer from Schweizer Fernsehen (and one of the key people in bringing these events to home viewers) has been quoted as saying that "after the show we got over 1,000 messages and e-mails, mostly from people who said that they never go to the opera . . . but they had dared—they used this word—to take a peek at the backstage reportage and had become so fascinated that they switched to the main program and watched until the end."¹⁰⁷ The work was thus clearly a captivating theatrical event in its own right, but part of what makes this interesting is the specifics of the staging; Kušej's production transported the fairy tale magic of Mozart's opera into a small, labyrinthine mental ward and looks quite unlike almost any other production of *The Magic Flute* on record.¹⁰⁸ Did its shift in location aid in its success for Kušej and the Opernhaus Zürich? If so, how? My goal in considering this staging is to address how the world of opera production may be moving closer to the cinematic practices of Hollywood, but, before looking at the production up close, as well as its parallels outside the opera house, a few finer points on the phenomenon of *Regietheater* should be addressed.

¹⁰⁷ Matthew Gurewitsch, "Operatic Style Designed to Suit Your Living Room," AR 22.

¹⁰⁸ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, DVD, Opernhaus Zürich, directed by Martin Kušej, Deutsche Grammophon: 00440 073 4367 (2007).

Defined by Gundula Kreuzer as a mode of operatic production that “supposedly cares little about stage directions in the score or ‘authenticity’ in matters of scenery, costume design and other details of production,” the concept of *Regietheater*, alternatively referred to as “director’s theatre,” may be seen as the antithesis of the Historically Informed Practice movement, discussed earlier.¹⁰⁹ Within this more “progressive” movement, the most successful *reggisseurs* of the day have sought to tap into the psychological, political, or social aspects of the work in an attempt to provide audiences with stagings that contain a contemporary relevance to their lives rather than seeing “the same old thing.” Much like the HIP movement, the origins of *Regietheater* practices are difficult to pin down, with various scholars proposing different starting points. Clemens Risi sees Hans Neuenfels’s 1981 production of *Aida* for the Frankfurt opera house as the birth of the movement, whereas David Levin and Gundula Kreuzer both cite Patrice Chéreau’s centenary production of Wagner’s *Ring* cycle at Bayreuth as “the flagship of this trend.”¹¹⁰ Risi does confess, however, that the battle lines may have been drawn as early as 1972, “when a German operatic audience reacted with profound disapproval to Götz Friedrich’s innovative staging of a repertory classic, *Tannhäuser*, which featured an almost naked Gwyneth Jones as Venus.”¹¹¹ Broadly speaking, however, the forward-looking movement began

¹⁰⁹ Gundula Kreuzer, “Voices from beyond, Verdi’s *Don Carlos* and the modern stage,” 151.

¹¹⁰ For Clemens Risi, see “Shedding light on the audience: Hans Neuenfels and Peter Konwitschny stage Verdi (and Verdians),” 201. For Kreuzer’s “flagship” comment, see “Voices from Beyond: Verdi’s *Don Carlos* and the modern stage, 150. David Levin’s discussions on the origins of the movement can be found in his *Unsettling Opera: Staging Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, and Zemlinsky*, 5.

¹¹¹ Clemens Risi, “Shedding light on the audience: Hans Neuenfels and Peter Konwitschny stage Verdi (and Verdians),” 201.

roughly around the same time that questions of historical performance began cropping up in theatres and concert halls.

Perhaps this should come as no surprise, as even Laurence Dreyfus recognizes in the drive towards historically informed performance practice an antithetical response towards the avant-garde in artistic and musical circles at the time. In his own words, “one might say that both Early Music and early modernism occupy nearly analogous positions with regards to the Mainstream. Whereas the avant-garde strode forward in advancing the cause of historical time, the Early Music took an equidistant leap in the opposite direction.”¹¹² To be sure, Dreyfus is concerned more with the Early Music movement as a result of the European middle-class rejection of Modernist musical expression in the 1970s, but the dichotomy between questions of historical performance and *Regietheater* still create a convenient spectrum with which audiences were able to assess the aims of any given operatic undertaking during this time.

Returning to the point at hand, the underlying conceptual definition of *Regieoper* has already been outlined by Kreuzer, cited earlier, and I have supplemented her definition with a few points of clarification of my own. Also worth considering, however, is Michael Steinberg’s assessment of the movement, as his (somewhat-cynical) description of *Regietheater*’s “anti-cuddly and anti-sentimentalizing mode” describes well Kušej’s *Zauberflöte* staging, which will be

¹¹² Laurence Dreyfus, “Early Music Defended against its Devotees: A Theory of Historical Performance in the Twentieth Century,” 305.

taken up shortly.¹¹³ He goes on to assert, however, that the practice *also* argues for a “defamiliarization” and a “desentimentalization of the past and its alleged securities,” with the *regisseur*’s newly-conceptualized production, if successful, providing “a reorientation and a newness, a *raison d’être*, to the dialogue of past and present.”¹¹⁴ Perhaps it should also be noted at this point that the shared interest in creating a feeling of defamiliarization for spectators is yet another link the HIP and *Regietheater* movements have in common, but, returning to Steinberg’s argument, the concept of modernization as a means of defamiliarization and desentimentalization is one that will remain important in dealing with Kušej’s staging.

Rounding out our definition of this concept, a mention of the nearly-inevitable “shock factor” of many *Regietheater* productions is a must, with reactions to Konwitschny’s works already cited in support of this sentiment. Thus, Clemens Risi’s assertion that “the provocative statements advanced by [Hans Neuenfels’s and Keter Konwitschny’s] powerful images regularly elicit bewildered reactions” by “continually undermining traditional concepts of operatic staging” would work equally as well when applied to the other directors mentioned above, too, and to the practice of *Regietheater* as a whole.¹¹⁵ Having thus examined the origins of the movement, I wish to return to the world of *The Magic Flute* and, in another case study, examine Kušej’s staging for the

¹¹³ Michael P. Steinberg, “A Season in Berlin, or, Operatic Responsibility,” *New German Critique*, No. 95 (Spring-Summer 2005), 58. Of note, Steinberg’s article also provides a more in-depth look at the origins of the *Regietheater* movement as a whole for those seeking a greater understanding of some of its founders, which space limits me from discussing here.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Clemens Risi, “Shedding light on the audience: Hans Neuenfels and Peter Konwitschny stage Verdi (and Verdians),” 201.

Opernhaus Zürich as a specific example of this trend. Seen through such a lens, I will then address how issues such as modernization and defamiliarization may connect with opera's general trend towards a more cinematic (that is to say, Hollywood-esque) approach to current staging practices, and what this might mean for the genre's future.

As mentioned earlier, Kušej's staging was surprisingly well-received by audiences watching at home—especially so when considering the radical departure from typical stagings of the work—but critics at the theatre seemed to be in agreement with those watching the live broadcast, too. While one may expect comments gleaned from the back of the DVD cover to be inherently positive, the quotations from *Der neue Merker* describing the work as “unusually thought-provoking, both musical and dramatically” and *The Art of Culture's* appraisal of the work as “consistently ingenious” reflect well the critical reception of the director's staging, which, again, was rather unlike the responses to other such departures from the norm, which usually garnered mixed reviews at best. Branagh's *Magic Flute* film comes to mind in this regard, as does Konwitschny's previously-mentioned *Lohengrin* production, for example. As Thomas Beck points out in his interview with Matthew Gurewitsch, “we were hoping for perhaps a 12-to-15 percent market share on the first channel and 5 to 8 percent on the second channel. We never dreamed we would double those expectations,” and Alexander Perreira, the Opernhaus Zürich's general director seemed equally surprised (and delighted) with these figures.¹¹⁶ In an interview with *USA Today*,

¹¹⁶ Matthew Gurewitsch, “Operatic Style Designed to Suit Your Living Room,” AR 22.

he expressed his shock at obtaining a thirty-six percent audience capture rate for the television broadcasts: it was “similar to a Champions League soccer game” he tells us. As their previous broadcasts *had*, in fact, only managed to attract an average of five percent of viewers in Switzerland, this was a change almost as radical as Kušej’s production was itself.¹¹⁷

But how “unjustified” was the Austrian director’s dark and dreary vision of *The Magic Flute*? Simply because a majority of productions tend to emphasize the fairy tale-like aspects of the work does not mean that directors who chose to approach Mozart’s opera from a different perspective are necessarily abandoning the concept of *Werktreue* whole-heartedly. After all, as Michael Steinberg reminds us, *Die Zauberflöte* was not created to be a children’s opera per se, nor was it classified as such in the ensuing decades after the composer’s death. Therefore, he goes on to assert, the work does not (or does not *yet!*) “share the marketing destiny” of a work like Humperdink’s *Hänsel und Gretel*, which was created with a younger audience in mind (or at least one more family-oriented. The image of Papageno attempting to hang himself, one must admit, is hardly well-suited to young audiences, even in productions like Bergman’s that are more “family-friendly”).¹¹⁸

So what would an adult *Magic Flute* look like? Steinberg posits that the staging would “portray a world fraught with danger, resolved by contradiction.” Though writing at a time prior to the premiere of Kušej’s staging, Steinberg could

¹¹⁷ Bradley Klapper, “Opera to go? ‘La Traviata’ performed live at Swiss train station”

¹¹⁸ Michael Steinberg, “A Season in Berlin, or, Operatic Responsibility,” 57.

very well be describing the director's take on the *Singspiel*.¹¹⁹ Though the specifics don't coincide ("Tamino's serpent is probably a hocus-pocus act devised by the Queen" and Sarastro's trial scenes "are presumably a play within the play" in Steinberg's hypothetical production), the work does retain the "anti-cuddly, anti-sentimentalizing mode" the scholar associates with the *Regietheater* model as a whole.

Tamino is not alone as the overture ends in Kušej's production (illustrated in the Figure 2.10), and the prince begins singing the opening lines of the introduction not as the soon-to-be dinner for a large, angry serpent, but as one of many people beset by a plague-like infestation of small, black (poisonous?) snakes. As the serpents coil about him, Tamino's opening dilemma has already become defamiliarized and disenchanting, with the fairy tale depiction of man-versus-dragon reduced to a (perhaps not unwarranted) case of ophidiophobia.



Figure 2.10 Tamino and others struggle to free themselves from the snakes onstage in Kušej's production

Nor is Pamina alone in her struggles within Sarastro's temple. In Kušej's *Zauberflöte*, the servants working under Monostatos have seemingly been transformed into other women who have been taken captive in the same manner

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

as Pamina, thus giving audiences cause to question whether or not there may be more to the Queen's initial assertion about Pamina's abduction than the Temple Guardians would like to admit. Moreover, by preserving the dialogue but changing the visual appearance of the slaves in their Act I appearance (prior to the trio "*Du feines Täubchen nur herein*"), their apprehension at the impending return of Monostatos and their glee over hearing that Pamina's escape may cause trouble for their overseer re-casts their role as hardly noticeable "underlings" (indeed, many productions often cut the appearance and dialogue of the slaves of the scene in question) to women hoping that the princess's flight may signal their own eventual freedom and release.

Communal experience seems to be an underlying theme in Kušej's *Flute* on the whole. In addition to Tamino's fellow sufferers and the other women held captive alongside Pamina, the initial trio for the Three Boys is changed to a mixed chorus of children, and, during his Act II aria "*Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen*," Papageno is tempted by other women on stage as well. Seen in tandem with the priests often following Sarastro and the Queen's Three Ladies (all blind in this production), nobody would seem to be alone on stage for very long. Despite his penchant for substituting the more enchanted parts of Mozart's opera with a staging that favors psychosis and neurosis, Kušej at the very least allows the characters to suffer together.

With the trial by fire scene taking place in a room full of highly flammable chemical containers and the trial by water staged with Tamino and Pamina's "wedding car" submerged underwater (shown on the stage via video projection

and with the couple inside the car of course), the other “defamiliarization” tactics taken by the director begin to point towards the general trend in *Regietheater* productions to imbue the works with a more contemporary resonance for audiences in attendance. With the final victory of Sarastro’s priests over the Queen’s forces, the “light that drives out the darkness” is in fact a conflagration caused by the same flammable chemicals from the previous trial scene (seen in Figure 2.11). Kušej thus makes the concerns of the protagonist far more relatable to an audience for which chemical warfare and other such hazards may be of far greater relevance (to say nothing of believability) than Mozart’s original staging of magical walks through fire and water. And this is all without altering the gravity of the situation at hand for Tamino and Pamina.



Figure 2.11 Tamino and Pamina successfully endure their trial by fire, but the Queen and her servants are not as fortunate

Even if this change in metaphorical space on the opera stage has not fundamentally altered the operatic experience of a *Magic Flute* production (aside from perhaps drawing in a broader audience), I have dwelled on these specific practices for several reasons. In transporting Mozart’s fairy tale opera into the grim reality of a mental institution, the displacement and *Verfremdung* enacted by Kušej’s production seems to work towards the same goals as the Historical Practice movement, but by moving in the opposite direction since it presents

audiences with something strange because of its modernity, not because of its antiquity. Yet the trend seems to signal more than just a desire for defamiliarization and desensitization. Rather, I would argue that stagings such as Kušej's also point towards another trend in recent operatic ventures, and one may that be more indicative of its future than many of the other productions considered above: namely, the genre's increasing preference for the "cinematic" and "Hollywood-esque." Thus, in my final case study, it is the venue of the cinema itself that will be assessed, not only in light of the gradual convergence of the two media, but also as a potential "place for opera" in the twenty-first century.

VIII. The allure of the cinema

The thought that opera could "go Hollywood" is of course no longer revolutionary, though it may seem unrealistic at this point in time. While Bergman's breakthrough success with his *Magic Flute* in 1975 ushered in a sort of "golden age" for television opera and opera-film in the following decade, as evidenced by the works of Joseph Losey, Franco Zeffirelli, Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, and more, the genre's presence on the Big Screen has been rather scarce. True, Branagh's *Magic Flute* of 2006 represented a rather high-profile attempt to bring opera to the masses in this fashion once again, but its lukewarm reception history in the past six-plus years within the realm of academia (and its absence in the domestic DVD market altogether) might suggest that this idea has failed.¹²⁰ Swedish director Kaspar Holten has similarly tried his

¹²⁰ As of this writing, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, Branagh's *Magic Flute* continues to be unavailable on Region 1 DVD, but Revolver Entertainment has recently acquired the rights to sell the work domestically, with a projected release date of 11 June 2013. Still, the fact that it is

hand at modernizing *Don Giovanni*, once again by abridging and translating it into English, but this, too, has gone relatively unnoticed.¹²¹

Yet, despite the genre's seeming inability to draw audiences in with big budget opera-films, the cinema's allure still attracts opera houses and *regisseurs* in other ways. Despite its firm rooting in the practices of *Regietheater*, productions such as Kušej's may just as indebted to cinematic adaptations and modernizations of classic stage works such as Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo+Juliet* (1996) and Tim Blake Nelson's *O* (2001), both of which took famed works with centuries worth of performance histories behind them and attempted to modernize them. In both instances, these films sought to attract broader, younger audiences who may not have otherwise been interested in such "classics." In this regard, and in light of the previous two Shakespearean modernizations mentioned above, Branagh's *Magic Flute* adaptation is once again relevant, given the British director's well-known role as both actor and director in a number of Shakespearean productions, both for the stage and on the screen as well.

As the recourse to fireworks, mountain-climbing, effigy-burning, and horseback riding showed in Herzl's production, theatre directors are now able to transport into the realm of opera events that spectators had long been seeing as special effects in film. Not surprisingly, Branagh's film is replete with just such spectacles, as the use of CGI and other effects treat viewers to fireworks,

only now being released, seven years after its premiere, further underscores the lackluster reception with which Branagh's *Flute* has been met both critically and academically.

¹²¹ Aside from its limited theatrical run in the States, the opera-film, entitled *Juan* (2010) has yet to achieve a release on domestic DVD but is available throughout Europe. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Juan* [2010], DVD, directed by Kaspar Holten, Axiom Films: AXM644 (2012).

horseback riding, fire, and more. Stagings such as Breisach's *Traviata* and Konwitschny's *Don Carlos* demonstrate that the intervention of the cameraman in the opera house might not always be a disadvantage or an intrusion, and so we likewise began to see an increasing role played by the camera in stage productions. Kušej's camera-ready staging for the Opernhaus Zürich points towards this greater engagement with the "cinematics" of twenty-first century opera stagings, and his modernizing tendencies mesh well with other filmic practices as well.

David Schroeder asserts that cinema now seems to inspire opera. "The idea of music at the heart of the experience gives way to something fundamentally cinematic," he argues, going so far as to claim that, in some cases, the music may even be marginalized for the sake of the action on screen (or on the stage, we might add).¹²² Certainly, this seems to be the case with productions such as Kušej's, wherein Mozart's original music may in fact only serve as an entry point for exploring the *regisseur's* own, personal take on the work. Perhaps this is to be expected; consider, after all, that *Regietheater* is so named for the importance accorded the *director's* vision, not the original composer's or librettist's. If Schroeder were addressing the movement specifically in his monograph, perhaps he would be sympathetic to this trend, as he is quick to point out that "virtually no opera since the beginning of the medium has ever remained unchanged when performed in different cities or even for different productions," and he comes to

¹²² David Schroeder, *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure: The Operatic Impulse in Film* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002), 322.

the conclusion that “the least authentic approach to opera is the one that insists on one correct reading.”¹²³

Seen in this light, one might argue that Kušej’s production, or those by other proponents of *Regietheater* such as Neuenfels and Konwitschny, may look just as much to modern cinematic practices as to other trends within the theatrical world, but is originality and freedom from the constraints of *Werktreue* really at the heart of the movement? Not according to Christopher Morris, who argues that *Regietheater* practices *constrain* spontaneity. “As much as the rise of the director and the concept production has opened up novel and challenging dimensions of theatricality to opera,” he claims, “the subordination of stock gestures and hammy expressiveness to directorial vision has introduced a form of standardization, not between productions, but between the performances in a production.”¹²⁴ However, I do not find this criticism altogether valid when applied specifically to the *Regietheater* phenomenon, as this recourse to “reproducibility” and replication can be seen not only among standard operatic productions, but also across the medium of much classical theatre as well. Rather, I think the most useful way of addressing Morris’s criticism may actually be to apply his reasoning to the main focus of his article (and, to an extent, one of the main focuses here, too): that is, how audiences experience opera when viewed in mediated form.

In a world where the genre’s presence on DVD is constantly expanding, this standardization and reification of movements and gestures within

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Christopher Morris, “Digital Diva: Opera on Video,” 101.

contemporary stagings may evoke comparisons to live recordings of Rock albums, wherein performances are similarly standardized, and indeed, several authors have made this claim.¹²⁵ Alternatively, the increased drive towards standardization may also serve as a testament to the idea of the “production as a work,” which carries with it many implications, particularly of the aesthetic and economic varieties, though others hover nearby. David Levin thus approaches the practice of *Regieoper* as a “performance text” to be analyzed (as opposed to the “opera text”—its libretto, the score, and other such signifying systems).¹²⁶ Looked at in such a way, the pre-emptive mapping out of these stagings may be approached from other directions than Morris’s, which seems to make no distinction between the concepts of “performance” and “production.” Perhaps this shift towards reproducibility is demonstrative of a re-focusing of the genre’s intended demographic, at least as far as its mediated forms are concerned. To say nothing of the cost it would take a young person to attend an opera at some of the better-known stages across the country, the spectators of the present generation who have grown up with television programming and twenty-first century filming practices as their main source of entertainment may actually *welcome* the standardization practices Morris decries above. Rather, the recourse to pre-established choreography and blocking, and the lack of spontaneity in modern opera stagings, may in fact be signaling a desire to replicate what audiences

¹²⁵ Auslander devotes the third chapter of his book to a discussion of liveness and its connections to Rock concerts and recordings, and Christopher Morris, channeling Auslander, applies these concepts to the realm of Popular music in his article “Digital Dia: Opera on Video” as well.

¹²⁶ The terminology can be found throughout the first chapter of Levin’s *Unsettling Opera: Staging Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, and Zemlinsky*, cited above. Gundula Kreuzer addresses the topic, too, in her “Voices from beyond: Verdi’s *Don Carlos* and the modern stage,” 153.

would experience if they were watching any other video or TV program in their homes.

Seen in this light, might Kušej and the realm of *Regietheater* show us the path opera's future might take? I do not mean to suggest here that traditional stagings will disappear, replaced with bizarre and oftentimes confusing or contrite works of theatre by individuals who have no place on the operatic stage, but certain aspects of the movement *do* seem to be more and more commonly accepted in the opera houses of today.

At the very least, productions like Kušej's, which have a decidedly cinematic aura about them, point towards the same sort of cultural hybridity Philip Kennicott discusses when addressing the topic of the Met's *Live in HD* telecasts, but, as James Steichen asserts, some critics have been quick to acknowledge endeavors such as the Met's not only as a "cultural hybrid," but as a new artform entirely.¹²⁷ Is this sort of hybridity completely unique to the *Live in HD* experience, though? Steichen's later scholarship argues that, "unlike previous instances of opera on-screen . . . the Met's HD broadcasts are explicitly invested in foregrounding the site and means of operatic production," but stagings such as Breisach's *Traviata* and Konwitschny's *Don Carlos* similarly emphasize these types of relationships between the live and the mediated.¹²⁸ Regardless of where these practices originated, it remains clear that opera productions in the twenty-first century are becoming more and more shaped by considerations of

¹²⁷ As discussed in James Steichen, "The Metropolitan Opera Goes Public: Peter Gelb and the Institutional Dramaturgy of the Met: Live in HD," 24.

¹²⁸ James Steichen, "HD Opera: A Love/Hate Story," *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Autumn 2011), 446.

camerawork. Though not exactly discussed in such terms, David Levin similarly points out that, with increasing frequency, present-day opera productions seem to be “prepared and performed with an eye to its medial dissemination” which in turn allows us to assess how a given production may reflect and render its own “medial condition.”¹²⁹

As the genre begins gradually accepting its mediatization, the once separate realms of opera and film thus seem to converge in ways not altogether dissimilar from the opera-films of Ingmar Bergman and Kenneth Branagh. In each instance, movie directors and opera houses alike have allowed considerations of the once-sacred “stage space” to be supplemented with questions regarding camerawork and the cinematic stage as well—from the costuming and makeup of singers to camera-ready sets and lighting—with both playing an equally-important role in the dramaturgies of their productions.

IX. Conclusion

The productions discussed so far all aim at displacing the spectator from their customary seats in the auditorium in one form or another. Järvefelt transports us back two centuries in time to experience an operatic undertaking that Mozart himself may have plausibly overseen. Robert Herzl takes audiences beyond the spatial confines of the theatre with his outdoor staging, an expansion pursued to an even greater extent by Felix Breisach’s *La Traviata*, as Herzl’s production at least still ostensibly maintains *some* sort of stage. Breisach’s *Traviata* instead

¹²⁹ David Levin, “The Mise-en-scène of Mediation: Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung* (Stuttgart Opera, Peter Konwitschny, 2000-2005),” 223.

abandons the theatre altogether and moves to a busy train station, with spectators and commuters alike sharing both stage space and frame. This staging underscores the ever-increasing importance accorded to the operatic cameraman and his role in conveying the story to audiences not just in the theatre, but in the home as well.

This trend was made evident in Konwitschny's *Don Carlos* where climactic events such as the *auto-da-fé* scene relied heavily on the work of the camera crew, and the spectators in attendance were often left guessing as to where the action proper was taking place or where they should be focusing their gaze. Moreover, the adoption of expedients such as the fake newswoman to announce the arrival of King Philippe of Spain underscores the increasing role of mediation in opera production and reception.

In Martin Kušej's *Magic Flute*, the spectator is not displaced physically, but metaphorically, with the change in locale happening within the confines of the opera stage. Here, questions of mediation and mediatization are at first addressed less directly and with an eye towards the production's initial impact on the Opernhaus Zürich's subsequent multimedial endeavors. The enormous success of the opera house's decision to broadcast a "behind the scenes" look at the director's staging on Swedish television paved the way for Zürich's even more ambitious endeavors in the following years, including (but not limited to) Breisach's *Traviata*, mentioned above.

Kušej's *Zauberflöte* forcefully brings to the fore the issue of *Regietheater* and its impact on opera's current status, but it also helps to highlight the genre's relationship with film as well. Despite cinema's lukewarm handling of big-budget operatic endeavors in recent years, the cinema may now conceivably be thought of as yet another location for opera houses to consider when addressing questions of space and place in their endeavors.

I have variously hinted at the economic implications in nearly every one of these cases, as well as in Bergman's and Branagh's opera-films. These issues still remain important ones when considering the future of opera on film and opera *as* film, and the economics of such intermedial endeavors need to be considered too. As Kreuzer and Risi assert, the genre clearly seems to be moving into an "era of digital remediation," ushered in by the Metropolitan Opera's HD broadcast of *Die Zauberflöte* in 2006, and, as Steichen has shown, the economics behind such an undertaking have played a large role not only in subsequent productions at the Met and their *Live in HD* simulcasts, but they have also influenced other opera houses as well.¹³⁰ Besides the telecasts by Zürich's opera house discussed above, several other theatres such as Bayreuth, Glyndebourne, Covent Garden, La Scala, and the Teatro Real have begun streaming select productions as well.

It would seem, then, that such questions of economics and external revenue generation (i.e., "merchandising") points to yet another intersection between the worlds of contemporary opera and film: both have sought to remain

¹³⁰ Gundula Kreuzer and Clemens Risi, "A Note from the Guest Editors," *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 2-3 (Spring-Summer 2011), 152.

cognizant not only of the “event,” but also of how opera and film maintain a cultural presence. In their introduction to a recent issue of *The Opera Quarterly*, Kreuzer and Risi talk of contemporary “performative and medial transitions” on the operatic stage by situating them within the history of “remarkable transitions” the genre has undergone in the ensuing four hundred years since its inception.¹³¹ I would argue that the latest transformation has not happened *on* the operatic stage, but has happened *to* the stage itself. With the genre no longer confined to the space and place of any given opera house, perhaps the “sacred halls” Sarastro sings of in the *Magic Flute* can be just as convincingly applied to the movie theatre auditorium and our own living rooms.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 149ff.

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