

Opera across Borders: New Technologies and Mediatization

Lauma Mellēna-Bartkeviča

Abstract: This article aims to address the impact of new technologies and mediatization of the opera genre in the 2nd decade of the 21st century taking into account the discussion on “liveness” and mediated artistic experiences offered by Philip Auslander and Bruce McConachie. The inquiry outlines three key modalities of interaction between opera and mediatization: 1) multimedia as a part of an opera production, 2) media as channels for opera distribution, and 3) mediatization as a communication tool. Excluding opera films and history of opera recordings, the main focus here concerns HD live and online transmissions of opera performances. Mediatization has introduced notable changes in the perception of this genre of performing arts, questioning the phenomenon of operatic immersion and leading to the transformation of operatic culture.

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The rocketing development of new technologies today has had an impact on every genre of performing arts, even on opera, which is considered one of the most conservative forms of musical theatre. The widespread everyday use of technologies sets forth a new framework of requirements, challenges, and opportunities. Technological innovations, beginning with subtitle machines and ending with live online transmissions, diversify distribution channels and make opera available both beyond the opera house and across social and cultural boundaries. In this article we will consider mediatization in the framework of the definition offered by Friedrich Krotz (2009, 23): “Media is something that modifies communication [. . .] Media operates simultaneously on four different levels: as a technology, a social institution, an organizational machine, a way of setting content in a scene, and a space of experience of the recipient.”

Media offer wide-ranging possibilities for stage directors and producers to make the audience experience the classical opera repertoire anew, through visually impressive productions that offer new forms of interpretation and operatic immersion both directly, in the opera house, and virtually—through live or recorded musical and visual transmissions of opera online, as well as via cinematic platforms and TV. All of these aspects arouse debate on operatic experience today, problematic strengths and weaknesses of mediatization in terms of producing, enjoying, researching and teaching opera, and open up new questions about mediatized artistic experience.

Since the 1990s, these issues have been widely discussed by scholars of media and performance studies, such as Peggy Phelan, Philip Auslander and Bruce McConachie, to mention just a few. Peggy Phelan (1993, 146) claimed that “Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations; once it does so, it becomes something other than performance.” However, along with technological developments, scholars have tended to become less strict regarding the difference between live and mediatized theatrical experiences.

At the end of the 1990s, Philip Auslander argued about the boundaries between live and mediatized experience, in response to the progressive invasion of mediatisation in people’s lives and the performing arts (see also Auslander 1999, 7). Less than a decade later, he wrote:

[. . .] the live was articulated in relation to technological change. Recording technology brought the live into being, but under conditions that permitted a clear distinction between the existing mode of performance and the new one. The development of broadcast technology, however, obscured that distinction, and thus subverted the complementary relationship between live and recorded modes of performance. (Auslander 2007, 526)

In addition, Auslander (2007, 531) claimed that digital technologies have reopened the question about the previously established distinction between the live and the mediatized—“live performance is not recorded”. For instance, HD live transmissions offer the audience engineered sound and image adjustments as recordings; however, such performances are subject to the same unpredictable conditions as live performance “here and now” in the opera house. In several forms, the performance and the experience of the audience can be said to be live and mediatized at the same time.

Nevertheless, media and performance-related theories hardly ever cover opera as a particular, synthetic genre of performing arts, not to speak of its interaction with media. Clemens Risi (2011) has tackled this subject in his research on immersion and bodily participation in opera,¹ Christopher Morris (2015), in his turn, has analysed the latest wave of Italian opera films shot for TV which aim to offer a hyper-real experience to the audience through site- and time-specific conditions.

1 See also Risi’s keynote “Opera and/as bodily participation” at “Operatic Immersions: The Inaugural Conference of Northern Opera Research Network”, University of Huddersfield (UK) 23.04.2016 (https://northernnetwork.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/immersions-programme_forweb.pdf).

Obviously, being fans of live opera performances in the traditional sense, that is, the experience of directly sitting in the opera theatre, opera researchers mostly share the opinion of Berry Kosky, the intendant of *Die Komische Oper Berlin*, that opera in cinemas is like *Starbucks* (Allison 2013). Such scholars regard mediatized opera as a mass-oriented shadow or a surrogate of the “real” opera performance. I would argue instead that opera in cinemas (for instance, HD transmissions), like *Moët&Chandon* champagne in a paper cup, presents noble contents through a mass culture distribution model, and that the difference is actually a matter of reception. This discussion can be closely related to such notions as “liveness” and “engagement” as addressed by Auslander and McConachie. McConachie criticizes Auslander’s view on “live” and “mediated” performances as equals:

[. . .] Philip Auslander in *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, discerns no fundamental differences along the continuum separating “live” and “mediated” performances. Auslander argues that live performances of *The Phantom of the Opera*, for example, especially after its one-thousandth franchised showing, are little different from a film of the same productions; audiences will have much the same experience at both. (McConachie 2008, 57)

In the case of the opera film or recorded transmission (“conserved” or purposefully produced performance), this might be true. However, there is a certain difference in the case of a HD live transmission, where the audience deals with mediated and engineered operatic experience; the “here and now” is happening at the same time and is subject to the same unpredictability in terms of singing and acting qualities as live performance at the theatre. McConachie (2008, 1), rather, admits that “[. . .] engagement happens among live participants in the same space and during the same time, theatre usually has more in common with face-to-face conversations than do other mediated events [my emphasis—L. M.-B.], such as viewing films and Web sites.”

This article aims to outline some of the main problems related to the use of new technologies in opera in the second decade of the 2000s, touching upon issues of collective and individual reception and the development of operatic culture cultivated by means of opportunities provided by new technologies and media. I apply Auslander’s analysis of the historical development of liveness represented in the 2nd edition of his book, quoted above (see Auslander 2008, 61) and use some examples to demonstrate the main changes in operatic reception today.²

2 Analysis of new (and mediatized) forms of opera, such as operas for mobile phones, video operas, silent operas (enjoyed through headphones) will be postponed for a separate article I hope to write in the near future.

There are at least three modalities of how media can amplify an opera production:

- 1) Media integrated into the stage reality, contributing to the aesthetics of the production;
- 2) Media used as opera distribution channels;
- 3) Media as a communication tool.

Apart from these three modalities of mediatization, opera films represent a particular phenomenon, another type of production, where the outcome is more relevant to the context of the film and TV industry. In opera films, the boundaries of two genres of the performing arts (opera and cinema) are merged, but this is not synonymous with “mediatizing” the opera production. Although opera films are not the focus of this article, they deserve a short comment. Since the 1980s, the making of opera films (for example, *La Traviata*, directed by Franco Zeffirelli (1983)), particularly for television, has been enabled by media technology and the possibilities of sound and image montage. Today, the most representative examples are probably the films initiated by Andrea Andermann and shot in the setting and location featured in the opera libretto to intensify immersion through cultural context. Examples include *Rigoletto in Mantua* (directed by Marco Bellocchio (2010)); *Tosca in Rome* (1992), *La Traviata in Paris* (2000) and *La Cenerentola in Turin* (2012)). In his article dedicated to *Rigoletto in Mantua*, Christopher Morris discusses the issues of temporal and spatial immersion provided by cinematic tools. The city itself and its sightseeing objects serve as a set for the production and create a “real life” effect, both using typical exterior and interior spaces specified in the libretto, as well as requiring strong involvement of media technologies. Technically, singers perform followed by the cameras, meanwhile the orchestra is located somewhere else and is linked to the soloists through monitors and headphones. Morris claims that opera films usually insist on hyper-presence—emphasizing the “here and now of the text”—and sometimes on hyper-liveness. For instance, *Rigoletto in Mantua* linked the time markers of the libretto to the broadcasting schedule: the first act was broadcast in the evening, according to the time setting of the libretto; the second act was broadcast during the day and the last in the evening again according to the action-time suggested by the libretto (Morris 2015, 52). Opera films usually offer a cinematic type of immersion with distance views and close-ups, rotating cameras and different angles of view, increasing the sense of presence for the spectators.

To a certain degree, these effects are also a part of the live HD transmissions I will examine below. Christopher Morris writes:

Television establishes a new representative compact, substituting scenery flats with flat screens and dispersing spectatorship across myriad domestic spaces, each a theatre in and of itself. "Rigoletto in Mantua" plays on these ambiguities, situating living bodies in ever-shifting visual and acoustic tension with their monumental surroundings. At first glance, bereft of any obvious critical intent, the production actually poses questions that offer to unsettle some entrenched thinking about performance and media technology, presence and absence, animate and inanimate. (Morris 2015, 53)

In opera films, being conscious of the engineered reality, the spectator is subjected to seduction by the immersive effects of cinematic technologies similar to Hollywood movies on TV. Yet, in terms of Auslander's classification of liveness, opera films, along with CDs and DVDs belong to the category of "live recordings", characterized by a "temporal gap between production and reception; possibly of infinite repetitions" (Auslander 2008, 61).

Media integrated into stage reality

The first and the simplest modality of integrating media into stage reality uses visual media technologies as a means of expression or an artistic tool within the framework of the in-house opera production. Nowadays, this usually means on-stage video projections, background screens, live-camera projections and so on, that form a part of the stage reality along with the sets, organizing the space or providing visual support to the director's concept. Currently, video or computer graphics projected on screens located on the stage or curtain screens is common practice in opera productions, and the video designer has become an almost irreplaceable member of the team along with the lighting, sets, and costume designers. The distinguished theatre theoretician Patrice Pavis (2012, 137) writes: "Multimedia performance is not simply an accumulation of arts (theatre, dance, music, projections and so on); it is in its true sense the merging of technologies in the space-time of representation." As for video applied in dramatic theatre, Pavis comments:

From the 1990s, theatre artists such as Robert Lepage, Peter Sellars, Giorgio Barberio Corsetti and Frank Castorf began a new phase in the use of video: video is no longer limited to the margins or used as mere provocation, but takes its place at the heart of a stage set-up, and instigates a new way of telling stories by means of theatre. In this sense, video has become no longer an end in itself, but a new departure point for unknown lands. (Pavis 2012, 139)

The use of video, animation, collage, 3D, and different hybrid techniques on stage reshapes the spatial and conceptual *mise-en-scène*, changing audience per-

ception and increasing the degree of immersion through visual images, sometimes competing with aural effects provided by the orchestra, chorus and soloists.³

The idea of reshaping the *mise-en-scène* finds its quintessence in such productions as Giorgio Barberio Corsetti's *Fra Diavolo* by Daniel Auber (Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, 2017) or *Don Pasquale* (Latvian National Opera and Ballet, 2018). In *Don Pasquale*, the video art and animation collage strive to amplify the fantasy of the audience during arias and ensembles, instead of serving as an illustration of the text or music. Further examples include Marie-Eva Signeyrole's *Carmen* by Georges Bizet (Latvian National Opera and Ballet, 2017) or Krzysztof Warlikowski's *Don Carlo* by Giuseppe Verdi (Opera Bastille, 2017). These performances combine video recordings, film, computer graphics and live or recorded on-stage camera projections to merge several levels of fictional realities in the visually perceivable part of the production. Giorgio Barberio Corsetti states:

As any opera stage director, I have the utopic ambition to make music visible. Theatre for me is the place where it is possible to see the invisible and to hear the not hearable, to bring the hidden in the lights. Mostly, it happens through visual images, moving images. (Mellēna-Bartkevica 2018)

Nowadays, opera is more insistently visual than it ever has been before. Sometimes the question is raised of the difference between the overwhelming visual vs musical experience. However, to a certain degree, the increasing diversity of visual media on the opera stage is a 21st century development of Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, since visual media contribute to the synthesis of different arts in opera, and they are incorporated into the totality of the production.

Mediatization as an opera distribution tool

The second type of mediatization in opera relates to the distribution of an art product. In Auslander's classification of liveness, this means both recording and broadcasting. These two categories differ only in terms of the temporal conditions of production and reception. The first refers to the temporal gap, as in the case of opera films; the second, to simultaneity.⁴ In the sense of the typology offered in this article, "mediatized" opera generally means all kinds of "opera packaging" or recordings (audio and video) available on different data carriers ranging from vinyl

³ Except for off-stage musical scenes in some operas, the sound amplification in opera theatres is a marginal phenomenon.

⁴ Auslander lists them vice versa, but my aim is to skip the long history of opera sound recordings; therefore I prefer this sequence.

discs to MP4 files. Their main value today is the status-conferring value of the documented history of opera performances, legendary casts and voices. Both sound and video recordings currently serve more as collectors' items or research materials for scholars than art consumed by large audiences. The culture of records has been replaced by the culture of HD transmissions in cinemas and TV, as well as by live streaming online and archived streaming records online that can be replayed for a couple of months, depending on the conditions of the initial agreement. There are still full radio transmissions available, yet nowadays this type of mediatized experience provides only a very partial and insufficient impression of an opera production, again serving mostly informative purposes (for instance, about the success of role debuts for singers, if relevant). In such a context, mediatization as an opera distribution tool approaches the next type in Auslander's classification of liveness, which he actually borrowed from Nick Couldry⁵ in 2004—Internet liveness—characterized by the sense of users' co-presence.

At first glance, this term might seem inadequate for HD transmissions in cinemas, yet is an intermediate form between traditional and collective live opera theatre experience on the one hand, and mediatized operatic adventure on the other, engaged in individually or in a group in front of a computer or other electronic device. Currently, several opera houses, for instance, the MET, Teatro alla Scala, Bolshoi, and the Vienna State Opera offer worldwide HD transmissions in cinemas and on-street screens outside the opera house—, thus reaching large audiences worldwide for a bargain price or even free of charge, while keeping the idea of opera as a collective artistic experience.

Auslander writes:

The default definition of live performance is that it is the kind of performance in which the performers and the audience are both physically and temporally co-present to one another. But over time, we have come to use "live" to describe performance situations that do not meet those basic conditions. [. . .] The liveness of the experience of listening to or watching the recording is primarily affective: 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. (Auslander 2008: 60)

What we always have to remember in the case of any "live" transmission, is that we are dealing with *engineered* presence and liveness. The sound and image

5 Auslander refers to Couldry's "Liveness, 'reality', and the mediated habitus from television to the mobile phone" (2004).

are mediatized to adapt them to the particular distribution channel, whether this be the broadcasting set of cinemas or online platforms. Patrice Pavis (2012, 140) writes about the “change of scale, well known in photography and in cinema, leading to a spatial and corporeal disorientation for the spectator”. In Latvia, for instance, opera transmissions are streamed using top-notch film technologies. HD transmissions from the MET are broadcast in the so-called Space Auditorium at the cinema (Kino Citadele), equipped with “Barco 4K” laser projectors for a wider range of colours; better contrast proportion both for light and dark frames; 3D effect on large and curved screen, and, a “Dolby Atmos” sound system with 87 loudspeakers located in the ceiling all over the auditorium. However, the presence effect provided by the aforementioned technologies sometimes turns into an “operating theatre effect” (what a homonymy between arts and medicine!): often the camera angles and close-ups approximate to a voyeuristic position, producing too naturalistic an effect. It might be a matter of individual taste, yet seeing the drops of sweat rolling down the face of the singer, counting all his or her wrinkles under the make-up or catching yourself following the strap of the bra slipping off the singer’s shoulder can sometimes make one feel rather uncomfortable. Besides, the all-around sound tends to produce a kind of exaggerated resolution, similar to the colour intensity on some smartphones, as when striving toward a “real” effect results in an over-real or overly zoomed experience.

Nevertheless, in comparison to live streaming and online recordings, HD transmissions imitate the real theatre experience in a way that it remains a collective artistic experience in a dark room shared with hundreds of strangers. Therefore in-theatre reactions, such as applause or bodily participation signs can sometimes be observed. For instance, in Latvia, in the cases of HD transmissions of MET productions with the participation of Latvian opera singers, such as mezzosoprano Elīna Garanča, sopranos Kristīne Opolais and Marina Rebeka, and tenor Aleksandrs Antonenko, the audience often applauds collectively after the transmissions, although they are aware of the absence of the traditional “energy exchange” attributed to live performance in an opera theatre.

On the contrary, live streaming and online video recordings, such as www.operaplatform.eu (since 2008—www.operavision.eu), and the websites of different opera houses, for instance, *Théâtre La Monnaie* in Brussels, and the Vienna State Opera turn opera into an individual and virtual experience, where the spectator is not obliged to dress up, displace themselves, nor observe any particular code of behaviour. On the one hand, this can be considered a privilege enabling the avoidance of the “champagne and salmon” society side-effects that often have little to do with the arts; on the other hand, a clear alienation and virtualization effect takes

place in which collective experience (euphoric or disappointing) is replaced by individual or shared experience adaptable to the consumer's time, habits, and preferences. For researchers, however, the availability of mediatized opera is an irreplaceable bank of findings, rich source material incomparable to ephemeral performances. As a method, the re-examination of recordings often beats the documentary protocol with respect to details and in-depth analysis of the production.

Communication about and around opera

The third type of opera mediatization is the use of media as a communication tool. This is also a relatively recent phenomenon. In the marketing communication of opera companies, this refers to materials such as official videos, teasers, highlights, backstage insights, scenes from productions, interviews and rehearsals that offer wide-range information on ongoing or forthcoming opera productions. Such information is made available online on webpages and social media accounts, often also at opera houses, where it is projected on large screens inside and outside the building. Media technologies allow the combining of different kinds of montage that tease the spectator's imagination; for instance, mixing scenes from performances, artistic videos, and documentary with behind-the-scenes interviews with cast members during the rehearsal process, thus creating the illusion of presence behind the scenes. This makes the spectator feel more privileged, involved, and engaged, in comparison to the theatre audience which lacks such an opportunity to look behind the scenes.

For example, the teaser for the production of Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* at the Royal Opera House of Covent Garden (2015, directed by Tim Albery) consists of the following elements. First, a video of a stormy ocean (an obvious imaginary speculation associated with the music); second, fragments of the production starring the Welsh bass-baritone Sir Bryn Terfel in the title role; third, a the backstage interview with the soloist dressed in a regular T-shirt, telling about the role in the larger context of his career, and interpretations of the character. There are plenty of similar examples in almost every webpage or social media account of opera theatres, agencies and singers themselves.

Another form of mediatization, this time on the audience side, concerns social media—shared information platforms (including unofficial videos and records), news, audience feedback, comments, and the creation of fan groups. Actually, YouTube alone deserves a separate research project examining its wide range of opera-related contents. I will limit myself to a well-known example which clearly demonstrates the splitting of reception of the operatic audience, confirming McConachie's statement about the immersion of the spectators:

On the one hand, spectators collaborate with blended actor/characters when they are immersed in the affective flow of the performance. Audiences happily adjust their perceptions to accommodate theatre artists, who push the blend toward the actor or the character end of the continuum. On the other hand, if spectators are considering the person on stage simply as an actor or are thinking about the character written by the playwright apart from the performer playing the role, they have momentarily reversed the blend; its component parts fall into the separate concepts of actor and character. We oscillate between these inside and outside positions throughout all theatrical performances. And, as with all forms of conscious attention, we can shift from inside to outside perspectives in a matter of milliseconds. (McConachie 2008, 47)

A dedicated operagoer seldom goes to the theatre to see something new in terms of repertoire. Mostly s/he is interested in the performance of particular singers in particular roles. Operatic audiences often follow names that guarantee vocal virtuosity and the artistic quality of performance. Thus hearing “E lucevan le stelle” performed by Jonas Kaufmann is more relevant than revisiting the well-known dramatic tale of *cavaliere* Cavaradossi in Puccini’s *Tosca*, Parsifal, or de Grieux on stage. Audiences gather to see and hear Kaufmann.

Let us recall the video from the Vienna State Opera, dated 20 April 2016⁶, when Angela Gheorghiu, a lead singer in “Tosca”, missed her entrance in the third act after Jonas Kaufmann, at the audience’s demand, repeatedly performed the Cavaradossi hit aria “E lucevan le stelle”. Hearing Tosca’s musical motif in the orchestra and not seeing Gheorghiu on stage, Kaufmann first looked truly confused, and then found a solution in an improvised recitativo “Oh, non abbiamo il soprano!”,⁷ which made the audience laugh. This accident definitely broke the integrity of the operatic performance in terms of space and time, and, while the backstage staff looked for the lost diva, Kaufmann apologized to the spectators in German. Once Gheorghiu finally appeared on stage, the performance was continued from the bar where it was stopped to the end.

This particular video has been shared hundreds of thousands of times; it was reproduced in all news, and social networks. Therefore this information not only reached the few thousands of spectators present in the theatre house that evening, but also a much broader audience, producing widespread social discussions as to whether this was a case of professional jealousy, an attempt at sabotage, or just an accident. Social media have made possible the participation of audiences in operatic

⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NnT4QTdzP_I

⁷ “Oh, we don’t have the soprano” (in Italian).

discourse through virtual platforms and communities. Opera fans can take advantage of following their idols, communicate with them directly or indirectly, watch their communications, as well as upload information, including illegal videos (most opera houses and other producers prohibit recordings during the performance).

Illusions of closeness?

To conclude, mediatization in opera leads to notable changes in this genre of the performing arts, particularly in relation to its perception, encouraging both the audience and scholars to reflect on new topics; for instance, questioning the phenomenon of immersion, comparing the in-theatre situation to the media-modified experience in cinema or online. On the one hand, mediatization leads to some degree of “democratization” of the opera genre in terms of availability of the top-class opera performances worldwide for a bargain price or even for free. Currently, to a certain degree, mediatized opera has moved closer to people than ever before, at least in terms of the opportunity to experience the emotional effects of the genre virtually, where such experience consists of a synthesis of various arts. On the other hand, it can be asked whether mediatized opera experience can replace in-house experience in terms of live presence, unmodified sound and visual effects, and collective experience. Due to different types of mediatization, the relation between reality and the virtual experience of opera is becoming more and more sophisticated, deserving new research and analysis. Each time the moderators of the MET HD transmissions remind us: “Nothing compares to live performance. So, come to the MET or visit your local opera company!”. However, if you had the choice to pay the same price for mediatized MET transmission from New York or for any local opera production where the quality of the live performance is not always competitive, which would you choose? Direct experience in-house or a mediatized performance? Unless you belong to the community of the so-called “opera travellers”, who book entrance tickets, hotels and flights to come to Vienna, New York, Berlin, Munich, or Paris in order to visit the world’s most famous opera houses or to follow their favourite opera singers, or unless you are a professional, you would probably consider the mediatized opera as an option without calling it “surrogate”. However, I am sure that the relationship between opera and mediatization is not limited to the three modalities I have suggested in this article. It is still a phenomenon in progress, which in the nearest future will affect this genre of performing arts significantly, raising new topics for exploration and new theories to develop.

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Piire ületav ooper: uued tehnoloogiad ja mediatiseerimine*Lauma Mellēna-Bartkeviča***Märksõnad:** ooper, publik, mediatiseerimine, uued tehnoloogiad, elav ettekanne, immersioon

Artikkel käsitleb uute tehnoloogiate ja mediatiseerimise mõju ooperižanrile 21. sajandi teisel aastakümnel, võttes arvesse Philip Auslanderi ja Bruce McConachie arutelu elava ettekande (*liveness*) ja vahendatud kunstilise elamuse üle. Uurimus visandab kolm olulist ooperi ja mediatiseerimise vastastikust toimet puudutavat modaalsust: 1) multimeedia ooperi lavastamise osana, 2) meedia kui ooperi levitamise kanalid, 3) mediatiseerimine kui kommunikatsioonivahend.

Uute tehnoloogiate ülikiire areng mõjutab tänapäeval kõiki esituskunstižanre, isegi ooperit, mida peetakse kõige konservatiivsemaks muusikateatri vormiks. Tehnoloogiate laialtlevinud igapäevakasutus loob uue nõuete, väljakutsete ja võimaluste raamistiku. Tehnoloogilised uuendused, alates subtiitrimasinatelt ja lõpetades elava esituse *online*-ülekannetega, varieerivad levikukanaleid ja teevad ooperi kättesaadavaks väljaspool ooperimaja, hoolimata vaatajate kultuurioludest ja sotsiaalsetest piiridest. Meedia annab lavastajatele ja produtsentidele ohtralt võimalusi, kuidas klassikalise ooperirepertuaari kogemist publiku jaoks uudseks muuta ja pakkuda neile visuaalselt muljetavaldavaid lavastusi. Publik saab ooperit vaadata, tõlgendada ja sellesse süüvida (*immerse*) nii otse, ooperimajas kohal viibides kui ka virtuaalselt, elava voogesituse või salvestatud ooperietenduse *online*-esituse kaudu, aga ka kinoseanssidel ja TV-saateid jälgides. Kõik need aspektid algatavad tänapäevase ooperielamuse üle väitlusi, mis käsitlevad mediatiseerimise nõrku ja tugevaid külgi ooperi lavastamisel ja nautimisel, teaduslikul uurimisel ja õpetamisel ning mis uurivad mediatiseeritud kunstielamust.

Meedia ja esitamisega seotud teooriad käsitlevad harva ooperit kui konkreetset sünteetilist esituskunsti žanri ja selle suhteid meediaga. Clemens Risi puudutas seda teemat, uurides ooperisse süüvimist (immersiooni) ja sellest otseselt osavõtmist, Christopher Morris on analüüsinud televisiooni jaoks valmistatud Itaalia ooperifilmide viimast lainet, kus püütakse publikule pakkuda hüperreaalset elamust asukoha ja toimumisajaga seotud eritingimuste kaudu. Üldmainitud Auslander ja McConachie arutelu järgides pakun ma välja tüpologia selle kohta, kuidas meedia võimendab ooperi lavastamist.

Esimene modaalsus puudutab visuaalsete meediatehnoloogiate kasutamist väljendusvahendina või kunstilise abivahendina ooperi lavastamisel ooperimajas. Tänapäeval tähendab see enamasti video projitseerimist laval, taustekraane, veebikaamera projektsioone jne, mis on koos dekoratsioonidega osaks lavategelikkusest, korraldavad lavaruumi või pakuvad lavastaja taotlustele visuaalset tuge. Teist tüüpi mediatiseerimine on ooperi puhul seotud kunstitoote levitamisega. Autor keskendub HD-ülekannetele kinos ja ooperimajast väljaspool tänavaekraanidel – see on üle maailma laiali paiknevate suurte vaatajahulkade jagatud, soodushinnaga või hoopis tasuta saadud mediatiseeritud kogemus, kus ühtlasi säilib ettekujutus ooperist kui kollektiivsest kunstielamusest. Publik peab siiski meele pidama, et igasuguse „elava“ ülekande puhul on tegemist planeeritud ja produtseeritud kohaloleku ja elavusega, modifitseeritud heli ja kujunditega, mis võivad immersiooni võimendada või hoopis vastu-pidi, ebamugavaks muuta. Kolmas ooperi mediatiseerimise tüüp on meedia kui kommunikatsioonivahendi kasutamine mitte ainult turundamisel, vaid ka publiku poolt, sotsiaalmeedias – see on jagatud info platvormidel (publiku tagasiside, kommentaarid, jne).

Ooperi puhul viib mediatiseerimine märgatavate muutusteni eriti just selle tajumises, mis julgustab nii publikut kui teadlasi mõtisklema uutel teemadel, näiteks uurima sellist nähtust nagu immersioon või võrdlema teatris toimuvat meedia poolt modifitseeritud elamusega kinos või veebis.

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