

Jelena Novak

**OPERA U VREME MEDIJA
(OPERA IN THE AGE OF THE MEDIA)**

The opera works of Philip Glass, Robert Wilson, Louis Andriessen, Peter Greenaway, Steve Reich, Beryl Korot, John Adams and Peter Sellars, which have been created in the last thirty years and which are the subject of this study, have attracted our theoretical attention primarily by the deconstructive attitude towards the tradition of the opera. These operas have ‘seduced’ us by how they failed to live up to traditional operatic expectations. Their authors do not favour the trained voice, the stage text of these works is not static, the libretto is not a place for presenting banal content, they are not a sphere of mutual trust between the institution of the opera and middle-class society, and they are not in crisis as explained by Adorno. It is even possible to ask the question of the justifiability of using ‘only’ the term opera for these works. It under-defines the difference, the ‘breach’ they commit with regard to opera tradition. It would be more precise to use the term *postopera* and, for definition purposes, make use of the analogy with the relationship established between the works of post-dramatic and dramatic theatre.

What also proved to be challenging was the transfer and counter-transfer that may be perceived between the world of contemporary theory of art and the analyzed works. Let us cite just a few typical examples: examining *the death of the author* in the opera *Rosa*, *The Death of a Composer* which is used to refer to Arthur Danto’s concepts of the end of art, or Roland Barthes’ death of the author, toying with simulation and its products in the opera *Writing to Vermeer*, establishing dialogue with Jean Baudrillard’s theory of simulation, examining the contextualization of opera in the age of its Benjaminian mechanical/electronic reproduction in the opera *The Photographer*, etc. The context in which operas are created, performed and perceived has been drastically changed in the age of the media. A devotee of the opera becomes a consumer of the opera, and his attitude towards the world of the opera becomes similar to the one he has towards the world of film – not the attitude of a participant in a spectacle, but that of a spectator.

The introductory analyses (*Opera after Opera*, *A Break with Opera Tradition: Glass/Wilson*, *Einstein on the Beach*, *The Posthistory of Opera*, *Contemporary Opera and Theoretical Reflection*) outline the ‘fields’ within which we move: *The Redefining of the World of Opera in the Age of the Media*, *The Ideology of Mass Opera Culture*, *Opera and the Age of its Mechanical/Electronic Reproduction* and *Postopera as a Media Spectacle*.

Similar to Mladen Dolar's assertions, the first phases of the work reach out to the 'distant' operatic rituals of Western culture in the latter stages of capitalism, like anthropologists who enter rainforests to discover the remnants of the social rituals of ancient tribes. Autoreflexive works are chosen as the subjects of the study, which in the author's opinion symptomatically analyze and discuss opera in the age of the media. Unlike, for instance, John Cage's *Europeras*, a work in which Cage 'dissolved' the opera by dismantling the entire institution whose fragments he recombined by chance operation, Glass/Wilson, Andriessen/Greenaway, Adams/Sellars and Reich/Korot reconstruct the opera spectacle, modernizing it through an intensive and dynamic inter-reacting with the epoch of the mass media in which they work.

This study examines different aspects and stages of that inter-reacting. Firstly, the introductory analyses examines opera's break with tradition, embodied in the work *Einstein on the Beach* and conceptualizes opera after opera, as well as the posthistory of the opera. The second chapter, *The Redefining of the World of Opera in the Age of the Media*, examines opera from the point of view of techno-aesthetics, the influences of technological means on the opera 'body' for which the directors of opera primarily deserve credit, and also analyzes in detail the opera poetics of Wilson, Greenaway and Sellars. The third, central chapter of the work, *Ideology of Mass Opera Culture*, discusses two key operatic 'texts' that are established by tradition – the libretto and the music. The opera voice appeared as a signifier. One of the central and the most provocative questions which, it seems, will continue to be raised by the opera is related to the establishing of opera music as a representational or performing art. Furthermore, paraphrasing Walter Benjamin, the study examines the functioning of the institution of the opera in the age of its technical/electronic reproduction by analyzing several works which dynamise in different ways the relationship between opera and film: Glass/Cocteau, *La Belle et la Bête*, Andriessen/Greenaway, *Rosa*, *The Death of a Composer*, Adams/Sellars, *The Death of Klinghoffer*. Last but not least, there is an interpretation of the 'documentary video opera' *Three Tales* by Reich and Korot as a media spectacle.

This study 'discusses' contemporary opera on the one hand, and possible ways of establishing a contemporary theory of the opera on the other. As mentioned in the work, the author prefers to view the questions of the 'birth' and 'death' of the opera as an issue of the 'birth' and 'death' of particular types of the theory of the opera. Opera in the age of the media has been treated as opera after opera, the *postopera* whose concept is established in the introductory analyses. The postopera was constituted after the completed European 'project' of the opera, in operatic posthistory. Its world also includes the rather small corpus of theoretical literature in which the authors establish a discourse ready to declare, interpret, define, discuss postopera works as media systems, but also as systems of performance mediation in the new media.

This study is not conceived as a complete, linear setting of the opera project in the epoch of posthistory: it is one possible fragmentary view, guided by the symptoms of intertwining and blending the boundaries between mass culture and 'high' art; it bears witness to the opera in a reality that is based on ideas

generated through the mass media. The operas that are the subject of this study provide but a smattering resemblance to their 'elitist' modernistic past and show an ambition to enter the world of mass art and further provoke theorizations of the contemporary world of opera which appears as an 'exotic', interdisciplinary, heterogeneous, yet still insufficiently examined field.

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Translated by Jelena Nikezić