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Source: *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, Vol. 44, No. 2
(DECEMBER 2013), pp. 303-342

Published by: Croatian Musicological Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23594802>

Accessed: 06-07-2017 19:53 UTC

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International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music

The Adaptability of Opera: When Different Social Agents Come to Common Ground

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Original Scholarly Paper

Izvorni znanstveni članak

Received: October 12, 2012

Primljeno: 12. listopada 2012.

Accepted: January 15, 2013

Prihvaćeno: 15. siječnja 2013.

Introduction

The production of opera has never been about performing a musical work on stage only, but also about performing a highly contested social arena. A short bricolage of some famous statements about opera seems to support this initial assertion. The dictum that opera was »an exotic and irrational entertainment, which has been always combatted, and has always prevailed« given by Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), English poet, essayist, moralist and lexicographer, became worldwide famous. In a letter to Cideville from 1732, Voltaire (1694–1778) scornfully decried opera house as a »public gathering place, where one meets on certain days without quite knowing why« (Watson 1994: 322–24). The definition of opera as »a bizarre mixture of poetry and music where ... the whole piece is sung from beginning to end« was given, in the famous letter of 1677 or 1678 to the second Duke of Buckingham, by influential French writer and moralist of the seventeenth century Charles de Saint-Évremond (1613–

Abstract - Résumé

Adaptability is the key word when referring to the social history of opera, its institutions, its protagonists, its sponsors, its audiences and publics. This paper intends to illuminate only a limited number of certain historical aspects of opera's social life in terms of its publics, audiences, consumers, appreciators and supporters. Opera's social power has been for centuries in service to legitimize the power of authorities, to ensure the prestige of elites, and to heat the passion of masses. By referring to relevant literature and illustrative examples, it will be established at the end of this article that the element that ensured opera's success and long survival was and remains its adaptability to whatever historical contexts, social conditions, economic situations, political regimes and cultural milieus surrounded it.

Keywords: opera • audience • public • history of opera • opera house

1703). This judgment led him to wonder »Can one imagine that a master sings when calling his servant or when giving him an order? That a friend confides a secret to another musically? That deliberations in a council of state are sung? That commands are chanted, and that people are killed melodiously in battle« (Weinstein 1964: 31, 32–33; also Weiss 2002: 53, 56)? Also the claim of German philosopher Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854) that the opera was the lowest caricature of the highest form of art, namely the Greek theater has resonated in the literature. The Russian novelist Leo N. Tolstoy (1828–1910) labelled going to opera as »a complete nonsense and regrettable waste of time and money«. When Verdi was asked by a journalist if he, like Wagner, had a theory about the theatre, Verdi replied, »Yes. The theatre should be full« (Watson 1994: 326). Stendhal (1783–1842), a writer and an ardent frequenter of opera, critically acknowledges that as far as he knows, the only sovereign who positively enjoys spending money on his opera is the King Maximilian I of Bavaria, and adds: »... if the respect humbly due to such a sovereign might permit the expression, I should say that he is a merry and a happy man« (Stendhal 1970: 443). For French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009) opera house was a magical place which transported him far away from *choses terrestres*. Similarly, for French autobiographer and ethnographer Michel Leiris (1901–1990) opera house was the only safe place where he could give his fantasies and delusions free way. And Hitler was swearing upon his soul: »I do not need to ask Göring whether I may go to the opera or not« (Walter 2000: 175). These statements no matter how affirmatively or pejoratively speak for or against opera suggest the historical permanence of highly elevated social status of opera in Western cultures and societies.

Throughout its history, opera has explicated massively its social adaptability; a characteristic which has made its world immune to whatever historical contexts, social conditions, economic situations, political regimes and cultural milieus surrounded it. Even more, opera's ability of being taken as socially highly valued phenomenon in every society in which it was presented enabled opera to communicate or perform a relationship with the elites and the masses, the courts and the crowds, the rulers and the citizens, the publics and the audiences. And to all these often antagonistic social agents opera served not rarely at the same time. As opera has always succeeded to preserve its position in society, it is very suitable at this point to refer to the work of Pierre Bourdieu, whose concept of symbolic domination could be, as Herbert Lindenberger suggests, applied pertinently to the social powers and conflicts within the opera's world of the last four hundred years. A Bourdieu-inspired reading of opera and its history would demand an understanding of macro and micro social contexts, of declarative and hidden elements of cultural landscape of a certain period or time, of social tensions between different national, musical, ethnic, academic and other traditions. It would also demand an immersion into a particular social milieu, with its class biases and its institutional conflicts. If one would apply, Lindenberger writes, the

Bourdieu's model of symbolic domination to the history of opera, it would probably indicate that a study of the social use of opera by various group formations throughout the history of the form to ground their identity or communion and to claim distinction would shed new light on opera from an angle that has been too often ignored or overlooked (Lindenberger 2007: 304–5). However, this article does not aim to follow such enormous conceptual task. Rather, it has much less ambitious intention which is to illuminate only a limited number of certain historical aspects of opera's social life in terms of its publics, audiences, consumers, appreciators and supporters.

Opera as Place of Various Audiences and Publics

Going to the opera was and remains a complex but vivid marker of social distinction, in a Bourdieusque sense (Bourdieu 1984: 516, 327, 362). Opera's social performance has been never meaningless. On the contrary, its institutions, venues and promenades had been turned into a place for seeing and being seen, a place of taste and emotion, but, above all, the place of great signification, creation and enactment of imagined communities, to use Benedict Anderson's famous term from 1983. For centuries opera houses are transnational promenades and multicultural venues where different people represented by different cultural backgrounds, class diversifications, ethnic identities and national belongings gather or meet on one place for one common reason and purpose that is to fulfil their common or similar cultural and symbolic needs. Due to this multicultural, international and transnational character, opera has always surpassed the national borders, the social boundaries and the ethnic and other cultural differences in audience by stimulating cultural migrations, intercultural experiences and multicultural exchanges.

Recently, opera audiences have become one of the liveliest areas in opera studies but they have an increasingly high profile in other social sciences and in the humanities too. The majority of these studies that examine opera from the receptional-participational point of view have appeared within the post-war cultural and academic turns and within the contemporary trend of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research. The shift towards »opera audience studies« has been made between the 1970s and the 1990s in particular when many works and approaches emerged from different disciplines, such as history, sociology, »new musicology«, theatre studies, philosophy, psychoanalysis, anthropology, semiotics, cultural studies, media studies, and gay studies. It seems that everything started with the documentation we find for French theatre audiences and operagoers. This interest¹ for French theatre- and opera-going culture established

¹ See Giuliani 1977, Huebner 1989, Johnson 1995, Kennedy *et al.* 1996, Lagrave 1972, Lough 1957, Mélése 1934, Patureau 1991, Poizat 1986, Ravel 1999, Weber 1993, 2007.

a convincing argument for further research and reflection. Studies of seventeenth- and eighteenth- century opera audiences, such as Enrico Fubini's (1984), Lorenzo Bianconi's (1975: 15–24), Lorenzo Bianconi's and Thomas Walker's (1984: 209–96), Beth and Jonathan Glixon's (2006: 295–322), James H. Johnson's (1995: 9–34), David Hunter's (2000: 33–49), Elizabeth Giuliani's (1977: 159–81) and Michael Walter's (2005: 489–500) offer a clearer image of the complex social processes through which opera was gradually transformed from private court event of European princes and monarchs into the public ceremony of European cities. The cultural transformation of opera from the elitist entertainment of aristocracy and noble people into a popular socializational promenade of bourgeoisie and broader public, which started vividly in the second half of the eighteenth century and ended at the beginning of the twentieth century, has been for different social scenes widely shown by the following authors: Jennifer Hall-Witt's studies (2000, 2003, 2007) explicate how the British aristocratic culture used operagoing as a »fashionable act« in the eighteenth and nineteenth century; Theodore Fenner's study (1994) reveals the complex but permanent relationship between the press, theatres and audiences in London in the eighteenth and nineteenth century; William Weber's (1993: 1519–40; 1997: 678–91) findings lead us to how listening of music and opera in the course of the eighteenth century was conditioned by an emergent bourgeois society; another William Weber's account (2007: 160–80) discusses the fact that opera contributed to the cultural authority of capital cities across Europe; Michael Walter's study (2009: 68–98) well shows how nineteenth-century opera audiences across European continent influenced, intentionally or unintentionally, the development of genre and the creativity of composers; this active involvement of audiences in producing Romantic opera is even more explicitly discussed by historian Carlotta Sorba (2006: 595–614) who reveals that all great Italian composers, such as Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini and Verdi built a tight relationship with their audiences, by using direct communication and other strategies of public or semi-public activities. During the *Risorgimento* their audiences and the general publics literally became the arbiters of their work. Burdened by the huge public expectations of the crowds, the composers were ready to do things that would please the »public« in every sense. Further, the studies of Steven Huebner (1989: 206–25) and Jane F. Fulcher (1987) reveal the complex social status and colourful symbolic geography of Parisian mid-nineteenth-century opera houses and their highly variegated audiences amongst whom the old aristocracy fought the battle with the newly empowered bourgeoisie for its social status and prestige at the opera. Similarly, Bruce A. McConachie (1988: 181–92) explicates in his work how the mid-nineteenth-century operagoing of New Yorkers became created as an elite social ritual for the selected ones. Additionally, in the second half of the nineteenth century, metropolitan opera audiences, as shown by Sven Oliver Müller (2006: 167–87), experienced the development of a new behaviour of listening during the performances. Opera audiences as more or less »inattentive

spectators« increasingly disciplined themselves and gradually turned into »listeners«. The studies that have touched the twentieth-century opera audiences, such as Michael Walter's (2000), David T. Evans's (1999: 389–423) and Claudio E. Benzecry's (2009: 131–51) indicate the social process which turned opera from early-twentieth-century political promenade of dictators towards recent global media spectatorship.

Clemens Risi analyzes the background of operatic stagings of directors Hans Neuenfels and Peter Konwitschny, whose work, from early 1980s on, was regularly accompanied by scandals, furors, uproar and sensation. They undermine traditional concepts of staging of Verdi's most popular operas, such as *Aida*, *Nabucco*, *Don Carlos* and *La Traviata*, and, by doing that, they explicitly put to the foreground of the performances the interaction between stage and audience. Productions that abandoned traditional staging tactics alienated many loyal fans at opera houses where they appeared, but also attracted a totally new crowd and a totally new perspective on works. When they staged Verdi's operas, they staged nothing but the audience: they »staged« Verdians (Risi 2002: 201–20). This example suggests the entirely opposite perspective of the relation between stage and audience that was performed in the past. Before, in the seventeenth- and the eighteenth-century opera houses, the absolutist opera event brought the stage to the auditorium which made the highly distinguished audience feel as if they were on stage. Today, the postmodern opera event is quite likely to be known primarily for the producer, who can bring the auditorium on the stage and, by doing that, become the eponymous hero or villain in the eyes of the people.

There are also important endeavours that approach opera and its social life from a broader social, cultural and historical perspective, such as John Rosselli's (1996: 304–21), John Storey's (2003: 5–36) Bernard Zelechow's (1991: 91–97) and Ruth Bereson's (2002) which promote opera to be seen as trans-historical social occasion, transformative cultural practice as well as result of complex cultural policy. Amongst the authors developing the discourses and concepts, the quantitative and qualitative sociological and historical analysis of the samples of opera audience characteristics in different environments, and ethnographic procedures of following individual practices, are Theodor W. Adorno (1962, 1993: 25–43) and his pioneering sociological analysis of opera audience and frequency of elites and bourgeoisies; Ellen Rosand (1991) and her historical study on public status of seventeenth-century Venetian opera theatres; Rosanne Martorella (1975, 1979, 1982) and her empirical sociological study on the correlation between public opinion, taste, repertoire, cultural consumption, market, and rituals based on the example of the American late-twentieth-century operatic culture; Emmanuel Pedler's (2003: 85–128) and Frédérique Patureau's (1991) research on socio-demographic practices and cultural preferences in France, with an emphasis on the structure of the Parisian and Marseille opera audiences; Susanna Franchi (2006: 19–27) and her analysis of recent opera frequentation in Turin and Milan; Wayne

Koestenbaum's (2001) and David Evans's (2006: 31–55) studies of the gay community around, at and in the opera; Dragana Jeremić-Molnar (2007) and her deconstruction of institutional, ceremonial and religious sites of Wagnerian festivities in Bayreuth. The influence of totalitarian ideology on the recipient, recruiting, and participating opera practices in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, where consumption went from the sphere of an artistic and cultural economy to a political and moral propaganda, has been explored widely by Jeremy Tambling (1996) and Michael Walter (2000).

Recent anthropological and ethnographic studies of opera clientele (Atkinson 2006: 149–159; Kotnik 2010: 144–56) put forward the argument that the opera audience and its peculiarities – with the whole range from the lack of taste and boorishness of the average opera crowd to the eccentricity of connoisseurs and critics – addresses opera not only as a performing art but as an object of consumption. Accordingly, not just in Europe and in the Americas, but on the global level social status and privilege still define operagoing. Their findings strongly support the idea of opera as a social venue through which people not only consume the art of music and spectacle but also show their lifestyle, social status and cultural-mindedness. In other words, opera is a social venue through which people not only consume the art or simply enjoy in music but also express their social, economic and cultural determination.

All these studies mentioned above, which have importantly contributed to the field of opera audience studies and theatre-going research, indicate that operagoing has been throughout the history a source of symbolic value. It has offered cultural capital. It has provided a highly valued and legitimated form of cultural commodity. Accordingly, dichotomies between »serious« and »frivolous«, »high« and »low«, »elite« and »popular« culture have been rooted into wider social constellations established in the European society of the eighteenth and particularly the nineteenth century, and many of them have remained in their entirely rudimentary and barely modified form ever since. Many theorists (Burke 1978; Crane 1992; DiMaggio 1992; Gans 1999; Van Der Merwe 1989) think that, before the nineteenth century, there was only a small difference between highbrow and lowbrow or between high and popular culture. Besides, some of them, among whom Strinati (1995: 45–46), have pointed out that distinctions between mass and high culture were never static, historically constant and clear, but discontinued, historically variable and, above all, often contested. We can therefore conclude that most ideas about opera as an elite thing are also a result of complex confrontations about its social value, which are not only deeply imprinted into our current culture but go far back to the period before the conceptual creation of the delimitation between high and low culture.

Due to this, going to opera has been always socially valued ritual by many individuals, whether or not they themselves actually attended opera performances. Indeed, opera has brought together individuals and interest groups that were

drawn from different social fields, cultural backgrounds, ethnic origins and national identifications. Therefore, as it will be suggested in the following chapter, opera has represented a place for enacting the individual's attachment to the collective and, even more, it has provided the fantasy of the »imagined community« (Anderson 1991[1983]), as it seems that Anderson's famous concept can be well applied in the field of collectivity of opera audiences, crowds, claques and publics. Opera audiences have had throughout history all the characteristics of specific imagined communities. They have always been occasionally limited to particular performances as constitutive acts of opera phenomenon because they have had finite but elastic boundaries beyond which have laid other groups of different interests. They have been also sovereign because the operagoers have gathered together in a communal place by their own will. And they have been imagined as »communities« because they have been conceived as a relatively coherent community of interests, gathered in opera fans' clubs and societies. But opera lovers often meet each other not only at the opera house, or in the open air opera settings, but also outside the opera house walls and beyond operatic performance. And finally, opera audiences have been and remain imagined because every spectator does not know everything about other operagoers, as he or she can have in his or her mind only a personal image of their communion, identity and even difference.

However, many studies mentioned above explicate the cultural contradiction in the production as well as in the social reception of opera, implying that opera could constitute, for instance, a bourgeois form, attended by a mixed populace, while, at the same time, its narratives, themes and organization of events almost homogeneously engaged with the ideological horizon of courtly absolutism or strict class hierarchy. This fundamental contradiction implicated opera as social event in numerous paradoxes. Not just in social peripheries and provincial worlds, but also in cosmopolitan centers of Europe, opera was caught between the pompous splendor of halls and the proverbial indecorum of audiences; between the highly formalized ritual of ruler's presence and the misbehavior of crowds in the theater; between the rigid conventions of the elites and the excessive folklores of the masses. It seems that the element that ensured opera's success and social persistence through all these antagonisms was, as shown further, its adaptability to whatever historical contexts, social conditions, economic situations, political regimes and cultural milieus surrounded it.

Opera as Showcase of Social Interests and Conflicts

Opera has always established the various types of relationship between itself and the social worlds in which, and for which, it has been created. Ruth Bereson in her book *The Operatic State* (2002) examines numerous examples of the cultural, financial, and political investments and arrangements that have gone into the

maintenance of opera and opera houses throughout the history. She analyses opera's nearly immutable form throughout princely festivities, wars, revolutions, political regimes, and vast social changes throughout the world. Bereson argues that by legitimizing the power of the state or of other kind of political formation through the use of ceremonial operatic ritual or spectacle since its beginnings as court entertainments performed in the ducal palaces of Italy in the sixteenth century, then princely and royal spectacles in the opera houses of Paris, Versailles and London of the eighteenth century, then royal operatic spectacles along the Danube and the Rhine under Austro-Hungarian and Prussian Empires of the nineteenth century, then Bolshevistic appropriation of the opera house, to the commercial and corporate magnificence of the Metropolitan Opera in New York or State Opera in Vienna, opera benefited from its multifarious political persistency. Opera's universally recognized and institutionalized ceremonial ritual has enjoyed throughout centuries a privileged status and still enjoys today, often to the detriment of popular art forms. If financial support by the state is the prime yardstick of importance, then opera is treated certainly as the most important of the arts. Where the arts enjoys considerable state subsidy, opera houses receive the most significant share. This is true not only in countries such as Italy, Germany, France and the United Kingdom, where there is a long history of opera, but also in newer countries, both in Europe and outside of it, where there is no »indigenous« operatic tradition. When this kind of investing is practiced, it is usually done by politicians, funding bodies, wealthy patrons and influential personalities. In the past such intense care of opera was executed by royal courts, princely figures, counts, kings and queens.

The relationship between power and pomp was probably nowhere taken to such precision than in Naples. There, the main purpose of the high-cultural pomp of opera was to serve the power of the court. The opera house *San Carlo* has exerted various forms of symbolic power and was a demonstration of the strengthening of social bonds between the monarch and, mostly, exclusive groups of people. A celebrated example of this process at work is provided by Michael Robinson:

Charles III, who built the San Carlo in 1737 to glorify the Bourbon dynasty in Naples, placed the house next to his royal palace; the juxtaposition of the two buildings enabled him at once to advertise the union of art and power and to enter his box without the inconvenience of stepping outside. (Robinson 1972: 7–8)

To paraphrase the message of the Samuel John Klingensmith's book (1993), court ceremony, social life and architecture is here put together in order to prove the utility of ruler's splendour. This notorious example can be taken as occasional ritual which not only advertized the union of art and political power but reaffirmed the relationship between the king and his people. The glittering pomp and rite of

presenting operas on the Neapolitan stage was obviously in service of the reproduction of the social hierarchy and symbolic forms of a royal might and absoluteness (Feldman 1995: 424). This example assumes a purpose, a function and a meaning behind ritual action personified in the form of the king's presence, among people, at the opera house. This has implications for the relationship between ritual, dramatizing the king's presence at the opera house, and society, illustrating the king's relationship with his subjects in everyday life. The strengthening of bonds between king and subjects, through opera spectacles, was a clear demonstration of the strengthening of social bonds, or the legitimacy of authority. That opera is an affair and important spectacle for such cities is clear in the case of Naples. There was no theater active outside the capital of the Kingdom of Naples, the largest state of seventeenth-century Italy (Bianconi and Walker 1984: 264–65). The case of Neapolitan *Real Teatro di San Carlo* is an excellent example of representing the spectacle of monarchy, as the presence of the king in the theater was always the representation of the spectacle of power *par excellence*. It is one of the oldest opera houses, and started operating more than four decades before Milan's *Teatro alla Scala*. The majestic opera house, with its Italian neoclassical-style façade, was a real architectural spectacle of the royal city. In 1737 the Bourbon king Charles III, the ruler of Naples and of the Two Sicilies, annexed the theater to the royal palace. In February 1816, a day after one of majestic court celebrations, when San Carlo was glowing in the light of hundreds of lit candles, the theater caught fire. It burnt to the ground. Its renovation was immediately entrusted to Antonio Niccolini. From the architectural viewpoint, the speed of the theater being rebuilt was a proof of an extraordinary skill. According to Stendhal, the renovation of the theater in 300 days was a *coup d'état* (1970: 154). This event contributed more to the relation between the prince and his subjects than the constitution itself. At the time, the theater San Carlo, with its more than 3,000 seats, was the largest opera house in the world, but was yet no different than other theaters. The shape of the premises was defined by their purpose. When the theater was renovated after the fire, being now equipped with four types of boxes, the public was thrilled. Because of the narrow and simple gateways from the lobby, the visitor was surprised when entering the magnificently decorated auditorium with a large fresco on the ceiling. Thus the pretension of architectural conception was focused on the first sighting, which had to be spectacular, fascinating and breathtaking. On entering the auditorium, the visitor entered the world of light spectacle and decor. Entering the theater was entering the king's spectacle. The auditorium was bathed in the light of candles burning in a majestic chandelier. These candles were not blown out during the spectacle. In this way, the public could be seen and became a constituent part of the show. But the appearance was changed in 1861 when it was painted in a different color. Before that, Stendhal described it as follows: »The hall is painted golden and silvery, while the color of the boxes is midnight blue.« But blue was the color of the Bourbons and after Italy had been united, all the symbols

of foreign reign were removed. Since 1861, the interior of the opera house San Carlo has been predominantly red, while the gold has been preserved (Stendhal 1970: 439, 449–58). The court attributed seats and boxes according to aristocratic titles and social prestige. It was not easy to renounce these seats. A box in the theater San Carlo was inherited. With this, the ruler sent a clear message to his people about the seriousness and the permanence of his power.

However, not just monarchs, royal courts and princely figures executed an intense care of opera. Even their antithetical social agents, revolutionaries, paid much attention to opera. To the Parisian citizen of 1789 the *Opéra*, under the protection of the court, was the very symbol of privilege, and on 12 July – two days before the fall of the Bastille – a hostile crowd demonstrated before the building, effectively closing the *Opéra*. The last performance attended by the royal party was in 1791. In 1793, at the height of the terror of the French Revolution, the Paris Commune supported the view that the opera be maintained, as did Napoleon Bonaparte, who closed the doors of other theatres. Further, immediately after the Russian Revolution in 1917, the new rulers of the USSR determined to keep the *Bolshoi* Opera House intact, while subjecting all the other arts to rigorous reappraisal. During the World War II, between 1943 and 1945, all Ljubljana's cultural institutions, except Opera, were closed due to the so-called »cultural silence« which was announced by the Slovenian Liberation Front, set up on 27 April 1941. Only Opera was allowed to operate in the city in those tempestuous times. The first socialist government in France since the 1930s decided in 1982 that the design and construction of a new opera house, Opéra Bastille, was supreme national importance, developing it under the aegis of a major presidential project. In the late 1960s, the Australian State government decided that an opera house was so essential to post-war Sydney that an international competition be set up to create a stunning architecture which immediately after its completion in 1973 became perceived as the Australian icon and the very symbol of national identification. Yet another example, in the year 2000 the Chinese government ordered to construct a French-designed opera house. The grandiose ellipsoid dome of titanium and glass of Beijing Opera surrounded by an artificial lake was inaugurated in December 2007, meaningfully enough, nine months before the opening of the Olympic Games in August 2008.

These opera venues and many others built in the previous decades and even centuries perform the function of national showcases representing a physical demonstration of each of these states' political, social and economic status or coming of age, through the maintenance or construction of a cultural monument. And not just this, opera houses survived all their power brokers and political authorities in the past. This is most pertinently in evidence in France, where over the past three centuries the state has veered dramatically from absolute monarchy to republic, empire, different forms of constitutional monarchy and democratic enfranchisement, but opera houses whether be opened by a monarch or by a presi-

dent remain a place of fluctuating society. We see the same political persistency of opera house in the perceived home of opera, Italy, which until the nineteenth century was an agglomeration of states and kingdoms, that one of the unifying symbols was that of the opera house, whether it be the opera house of Palermo, where Garibaldi made his first great declaration, or the boxes of the *Teatro alla Scala* in Austrian Milan or *Teatro San Carlo* in Spanish Naples, so frequented by the king Vittorio Emanuele and Mussolini, or *Teatro La Fenice* in Venice, the very symbol of Venice's republicanism. Although the meaning of these opera houses was adapted in terms of social changes and taste, but their political role and social position was at no time fundamentally challenged. Successful revolutions, victories and battles, peace agreements and national commemorations and ceremonies are celebrated in the opera house. One spectacular example of this was on 19 June 1815 on the occasion of the return of the King of Naples to the brilliantly lit theatre of *San Carlo*. One need only look towards the opera house in twentieth-century Europe to find many other examples, as opera houses were turned into venues of state celebrations by those whose aim it was to symbolically reinforce their power. Indeed, the liberation of Milan was announced from the stage of *Teatro La Fenice* in Venice during a performance of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, and the liberation of Hanoi (Vietnam) by The People's Executive Committee was declared from the balcony of the opera. Mussolini, Göring and Hitler understood the importance of such practices well and therefore used opera house in Rome, Berlin or Bayreuth regularly for their propagandistic purposes. Tito, the charismatic leader of socialist Yugoslavia, many times appeared in the presidential boxes of Ljubljana, Zagreb or Belgrade Opera as well. Opera house was often not merely a backdrop for state ceremony but sometimes took an acute political dimension. It is no accident that establishment figure were often targets of assassination attempts at opera houses. In Sweden, for example, in 1792 the reigning monarch Gustav III was shot in the Stockholm opera house. In 1820 the heir apparent to the French throne was fatally stabbed there and Napoleon III survived an anarchist's bomb on his way to the opera. The young Queen Victoria chose to mark her successful escape from an assassination attempt by appearing the following evening in full regalia at the opera (Bereson 2002: 1–5).

In the course of the nineteenth century, when national aspirations arose throughout European continent, opera houses became more than fitting places for the demonstration of such ideas. Opera house became an arena for the legitimization of national and emancipatory political messages. It became a symbol of the nation all over Europe, and in some places even a synonym for the nation. After the national-awakening movements of the March revolution, known as the 'spring of the nations' in 1848, the question of opera was pushed to the foreground, thus putting opera in the position of confirming and affirming political realities, social messages and ideological missions of the newly awakened nations. This is the atmosphere in which the emancipatory ideas of numerous communities in

Europe, from its most Western to its most Eastern parts, were generated by acts of nationalism. The search for typical local musical motifs, national themes, vocal idioms, instrumental modalities, and popular folk rhythms and melodies which were inscribed into the opera works, was an important task. These, or similar, elements, as well as the »principles of the discovery of the national in the transnational« (Thiesse 1999: 182–83) in creating national opera houses, can be detected all through nineteenth century Europe and were addressing the process of national cultural creation of the nineteenth century. However, not all the nations of East-Central Europe or the Balkans established their own vernacular operatic traditions in the nineteenth century although independent nations such as Russia or Poland regarded opera in the national language as a matter of pride, and began to foster it. The subject nations of the Habsburg Empire, such as the Hungarians, the Czechs, the Slovaks, the Slovenians, and the Croats, were closely linked to Vienna and thus to one of the leading musical centres of the period. They also had little trouble grafting vernacular opera on to existing musical traditions. The relation between the capital and the provinces was measured by how Vienna, as the cultural centre, controlled the peripheries. But the situation was less difficult than in the nations emerging from the gradual disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, such as Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece. Here, the contact with the cultural centres of Europe, such as Paris or Vienna, was more tenuous. When the Habsburgs were, in 1867, forced to divide their empire into Austrian and Hungarian territories, the minor nationalities of the Austrian half, such as the Czechs or the Slovenians, flourished as never before under a regime that saw tolerance as a way of keeping the ramshackle empire together (Tyrrell 1996: 157–58).

When the divisions between different ethnic groups and nationals became a crucial matter of social organization, opera house became a place of ethnic separation almost throughout European continent. Each and every ethnic group or national community tried to build its own opera house which would foster a growing national consciousness among its members. Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, was for centuries under Habsburg Empire, and almost all Ljubljana's cultural institutions were under German regency or led by Italian troupes. An anonymous nineteenth-century historiographer wrote: »As for opera in Ljubljana, it was self-evidently accepted that it belonged to the German authorities.« Particularly from the 1860s on, the distinction, and even the institutional separation, between superior German and inferior Slovenian city life was clearly also present in Ljubljana's musical activities. From 1860s on the Slovenian community gave rise to the Slovenian opera, which from 1892 was housed in the new *Deželno gledališče–Landestheater* (the present-day Ljubljana Opera), initially sharing the theatre with the superior German ensemble. By this the dreams of Slovenians to get their first theatrical stage where the performances can be given in Slovenian and not only in superior German language, came true. Immediately after the

opening of the theatre, the building was treated as the national opera house and the cultural temple of Slovenians. All domestic works performed, particularly *Teharski plemiči* [*Aristocrats of Teharje*], the first Benjamin Ipavec's opera, were accepted enthusiastically by the local crowds. After the premiere of Ipavec's opera, composer and critic Karel Hoffmeister laconically noted in the newspaper *Slovenski narod* [The Slovenian Nation]: »Mi vstajamo!« [We are rising!]. The neo-Renaissance building of the Ljubljana Opera became the very symbol of the small, suppressed, still partly-colonized and not yet entirely politically-emancipated nation. After the opening, in 1892, each and every operatic performance given by Slovenian ensemble was considered as a contribution to the nation's aggrandisement. Slovenian newspapers from the end of the nineteenth century report that opera was the most popular of the arts among the Slovenian local crowds. Going to the opera was a clear symbol of national feeling and belonging, and, as such, a ritual of determined political emancipation.

Similar example is from Moravian Brno, city in the Czech Republic. Until the creation of an independent Czechoslovakia in 1918, German speakers preponderated and wielded a decisive influence over the city's cultural institutions. Brno's geographical position meant that its cultural development was closely connected with that of Vienna and German lands. Until the end of World War II theatrical life developed along parallel lines, Czech and German, a state of affairs mirrored in opera, which was divided between two fiercely rival theatres. The example of the Brno Opera is more than illustrative about the fact that the walls of an opera house can give rise to the special atmosphere that has been in Brno perceived with greater intensity and sensitivity than elsewhere. The names given to the building in the first half of the twentieth century symbolize its political and cultural metamorphoses: *Deutsches Stadttheater* (German City Theatre – until 1918 and during the Protectorate), *Divadlo Na hradbách* (Theatre on the Wall) (1918–1945), *Janáček Opera* (1945–1946), *Janáček Theatre* (1946–1965), and, at the present time, *Mahen Theatre* (since 1965; after the new theatre building, which is home to the opera and ballet, was erected in Brno, it is this building that now bears the name *Janáček Theatre*). The history of the Brno Opera can be divided into two periods. The first one is German: the building was built as the German City Theatre, and between 1882 and 1918 it served as the main home of the German theatre in Brno. The second period of this building is Czech: after the *coup d'état* in 1918 (the end of Austrian Empire, a former monarchy, and the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic), the theatre went to Czechs and it became their main theatre building where operas, ballets and operettas were given. After difficult negotiations, two playdays were assigned to the Germans (Monday and Tuesday), while Czech theatre was played on all the other days of the week. The handing-over of the theatre from German hands to Czechs did not go without strong emotions on both sides. For example, when Yuri (Jurij) Baklanov, a Russian bass-singer, appeared on the stage of this theatre as a guest in the German staging of Bizet's

Carmen, a crowd of Czech nationalists broke into the lobby during the performance and tried to disrupt the performance by creating a disturbance. In this way, some Czechs protested against the fact that a Slav appeared as guest at a German theatre. Luckily enough, such petty considerations disappeared with time, peace prevailed and both theatres – the Czech and the German – even started to cooperate in many important cultural events. However, the situation changed again in 1939 after the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia had been established. The German theatre settled in the building again and the Czech theatre was assigned two playdays only. The Czech theatre returned to the building, once and for all, as late as 1945 when World War II terminated. And after all Germans had been removed from the Czech lands, the German theatre in Brno ceased to exist (Tyrrell 1988, Suchomelová 1969).

The cases of Ljubljana and Brno Operas are far from being alone in being public showcases of political struggles and social interests. The famous *Teatro La Fenice* in Venice had a tormented existence, relating not only to the political and historic events of the city of Venice, but also to the relationship between Italians and Austrians in the course of the nineteenth century. Venice had lost its independence in May 1797 to Napoleonic France, which then handed the city over to the Habsburg Empire for eight years, and in 1805 the magical city in the Adriatic lagoon once again came under French rule. However, following the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Venice once again found itself under Habsburg rule. With the fall of the Venetian republic and the subsequent political domination by Austria, France (the kingdom of Italy) and again Austria, the city's economic crisis had a severe effect on the Venetian theatres and *La Fenice* was no exception at this point. Particularly not as it was one of the principal theatres in the peninsula until the unification of Italy. The Fenice was involved in the political vicissitudes of the time: during Manin's rebellion in 1848, the royal box that had been installed for Napoleon in 1807 was demolished and *La Fenice* itself became a symbol in the struggle against the Austrians; it did not stage melodramas in the tragic year of 1849; in 1859, after the treaty of Villafranca had upheld the cession of the Veneto to Austria, the company decided to close the theatre until the situation had changed, and it reopened only in October 1866, when the Veneto had been reunited with Italy; shortly, *La Fenice*, the very symbol of Italian national culture, was closed by popular request for seven years because the public did not wish to be seen enjoying themselves at the opera during the period of oppressive Austrian rule.

Again and again, social contexts and political regimes changed, power brokers and rulers changed, the impresarios of opera houses changed, but their social meaning remained constant. These examples show that opera houses were not only architecture. They were also eminent social venues in which the opera companies *performed themselves*, their institutional sociality, their specific theatrical life, and their communication with audiences and publics. Each and every opera house has had multiple performative functions. It has performed operas for

its audiences. It has produced stories for media. For those same audiences and media publics, it has also enacted its own various identities. Opera houses have performed themselves for their patrons, sponsors, financial supporters and appreciators. In doing so, they have entered into symbolic and material exchanges with all these social agents.

Opera House as Symbol of Identification and Social Positioning

Opera has been, from its beginning at the end of the sixteenth century in Italy, marked by its »multicultural«, »international« or »transnational« character and has never pertained to only one or culturally-homogenous ceremony or community. In the days before the opening of the first public opera house in 1637 in Venice, it was a privilege to be invited to an expensive entertainment, and ever since that date it has been prestigious to be able to afford to support the opera by possessing keys to a box, or simply by buying the best tickets. Many European theatres built in the eighteenth century have a large stage attached to a small auditorium. The noble *Drottningholms Slottsteater*, a summer palace theatre near Stockholm built in 1766 for Queen Lovisa Ulrika, otherwise the sister of King Friedrich II of Prussia, was originally intended only for the royal family, members of the court, and invited guests. The auditorium is therefore quite small. A private theatre in a monarchy could afford the large stage – small auditorium ratio. Similarly, *Markgräfliches Opernhaus* (Margravian Opera House) in Bayreuth, an impressive example of absolutist architecture built from 1746 to 1750, was designed to underline the lordly pretensions of the margravian couple Margrave Friedrich von Bayreuth and his consort Wilhelmine, the elder sister of King Friedrich II of Prussia. The interior is dominated by the elegant auditorium facing the elaborate proscenium, which has an unusually deep stage behind it. A hall of these dimensions could not be justified by vast numbers of expected visitors, but probably by the fact that Margravine Wilhelmine as an opera composer and great music lover wanted an opera house of her own in which to stage the operas she had written. In other words, the household of the ruling couple appeared on the stage.

In the course of the nineteenth century, the sense of possession of a community's opera house can be seen in almost all developed societies. The world's largest opera houses, such as *Paris Opera Garnier*, the Metropolitan Opera in New York, *La Scala* in Milan, the *Teatro Colon* in Buenos Aires, the Covent Garden Opera House in London, the *Staatsoper* in Vienna, the *Bolshoi* Theatre in Moscow, the Sydney Opera House in Australia, and the *Liceu Teatro* in Barcelona, all these opera houses are powerful symbols of national identification of their communities. The *Teatro Liceu*, seating 3500, was built in 1847 when Barcelona had fewer than 175,000 inhabitants, and it was for many years considered too big. Nevertheless, it has been for one and a half century an important Barcelona's cultural

monument and social venue. McDonogh's (1986) account of how the »good families« of Barcelona have used the opera house as a setting for social performance and collective self-presentation – including »bringing out« daughters – is a parallel example of how the opera may provide a site for the circulation of material and symbolic goods. We might be able to find even more illustrative examples of Italian opera houses or at the opera ball taking place annually at the Vienna State Opera. In Naples the first-night at the *Teatro San Carlo* is even today a highly distinguished meeting place reserved almost exclusively for the local Neapolitan nobility and wealthy people in order to exchange and valorize its cultural capital among each other. For tourists or those uninitiated »satellites« the first-night stays difficult to access.

The identification with national opera house can even go beyond its cultural appreciation. There are many Austrians who have probably never seen the Vienna *Staatsoper* and there are probably many Viennese who have never been inside it, but they feel it is theirs. It is theirs not only because they help to support it out of their taxes, but also because it represents the Austrian nation. When the Vienna State Opera was bombed and burnt to a ruin during World War II, many Austrians who had never attended an opera there wept, and their weeping was not mere affectation. When it was reopened in 1955 with Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*, many people who could not get inside for the gala opening stood outside in the rain and heard the music over a loudspeaker system though they could not see the stage. That is what possession of an opera house means. Vienna was in the eighteenth century the centre of baroque *opera seria* north of the Alps and till the beginning of the twenty-first century the capital of Austria successfully keeps its primacy as the operatic centre of Europe. From its opening with Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in 1869 until 1918, the main Viennese opera house was called the *Hofoper* (Court Opera). Since then it has been the *Staatsoper* (State Opera) and as much a symbol and an institution as an opera house. Foreigners and tourists may be heard among the crowds and visitors during the intervals at every performance in any season, and yet the prevailing spirit is so Viennese that one feels that if by some remarkable coincidence a performance took place without a single Viennese present, even in the *Stehplatz* (standing room), there would be no shred of difference in the familiar and pervasive atmosphere. This house is every night fully prepared for tourists and for the uninitiated. For them, the queue for standing room is the magical ritual which can bring them among the initiated. Without a doubt the *Wiener Staatsoper* keeps its status to be the most newsworthy opera house in the world (Mitchell 1970: 5–31).

However, nowhere in the world except Italy are opera houses a real speciality for *il popolo*. There, opera houses are more than concrete, stone, glass, and wood with beautiful decorations. They are symbols of the world's greatest art form, which was born there. Each of them has its own specific character. Some are hidden behind nondescript façades, while others are extensions of splendid

exteriors. In Italy opera houses were built to give cities or towns importance and dignity. The grandeur of the theatre indicated the prominence of the area. Theatres became the focal point of the city's cultural, political, and social life. For rich people they were a home away from home. Many of the opera houses were paid for by the nobility who bought boxes in the theatre. They were known as the *condomini* or *palchettisti* and treated their boxes like their second home. At the beginning of the 1800s, the theatre became a place to express human passions, feelings, and emotions. It reflected the mood of the populace. As the century progressed, it became the hub of political activity. Opera house in Italy is in the beginning of the twenty-first century still a class by itself. The emotion, flavour, passion, and some anachronisms remain. The *Teatro Sociale* in Mantua is such an anachronism as it is still owned and run by the heirs of the *condomini*, who make it clear that outsiders are not welcome. On the other hand, the 17,000-seat, open-air arena in Verona has a tradition of accepting thousands and thousands of opera appreciators from all over the world. The *Teatro alla Scala* in Milan is so special that there is even an unwritten dress code for ladies: do not wear red because your attire will clash with the red seats, and nothing should distract from the beauty of the opera house (Charna Lynn 2005: xi–xii). Tourists and outsiders, who break this unwritten code, are fodder for gossip local crowds well initiated in all kinds of mysteries of this most turmoiled opera house in the world.

Recently, the most notorious Milanese opera scandal was in December 2006, when, at the very beginning of Verdi's *Aida*, the »picky« audience of the Milanese *Scala* hissed the tenor Roberto Alagna, who consequently left the stage in protest. The hostility came mostly from the part of *loggionisti* seating at the gallery who, as reported later, represent the most vociferous and critical part of *Scala* audience. While *loggionisti* who paid the lowest price of the ticket for the performance were shouting, whistling, yelling, and booing, the parts of the audience seating in the boxes and in the parterre were mostly shocked by such misbehavior. Particularly this annoyed some attendees who only wished to enjoy the evening and not to see it boycotted or ruined. Those who paid higher-priced seats and therefore invested much more money into their evening pleasure at *La Scala*, obviously did not share their motives and evening's interests with those of *loggionisti*. Before the third act, the director of *La Scala*, Stephane Lissner, came himself to apologize to the audience. He later explained that, in his opinion, the audience lacked the culture of how to behave in the theater, but he also admitted that the behavior of the tenor was not appropriate. The fiasco was even more widely reported as this luxurious and bold production of Verdi's *Aida*, with a sinfully expensive mask of Tutankhamen above the stage, made out of 200 kg of golden powder, was launched by *La Scala*, with great pomp, several weeks before the opening. As historian John Rosselli points out (1996: 304), only a great fuss around opera can justify the financial costs to perform it.

Another way of understanding this Milanese example is to refer to systems of intersecting opera appreciators, interest groups and elites. Modern cultural organizations like the opera company are, as British social anthropologist Paul Atkinson points out, among the many sites at which members of different social and cultural »elites« and social groups intersect. The members of the elites, but also of the middle class who choose whether to support opera companies in terms of financial contributions or only to appreciate its products in terms of attendance can get the cultural value in return, as there is a strong convergence between the regular cash flow and equally reliable flow of cultural consumption. Opera represents one of the several domains in which the wealthy, the influential, and the intellectual or aesthetic classes can come together on common ground. The *nouveau riche* may invest in opera not just as a display of conspicuous consumption but in order to translate material capital into the symbolic capital. For the rich, their financial contributions can be considered as the investment of a very small portion of their material wealth in order to transform it into cultural and symbolic goods. The cultural return on material investment is not readily calculable in purely monetary terms, but it is clearly very good cultural value in the sense that close association with the highest forms of cultural value, and highly visible excellence, »cost« comparatively small amounts of wealth, when compared with the turnover. Or, indeed, the accumulated capital, as this is the case of an organization like a multinational corporation or a bank. It is a matter of fact that financial corporations and banks in particular are in the opera programs of opera companies all over the world, listed among the sponsors (Atkinson 2006: 150–51). Are contemporary financial dilemmas that accompanied the immensely fruitful global life of opera an obstacle in solving the cultural dilemma of whether opera can once again play a popular and prophetic role in postmodern society? Is it pertinent, still, to catalogue opera as the most elitist of all art forms and urban cultural rituals? Or should we, rather, move away from this homogeneous stereotypization of opera's social character? These questions will obviously not lose their importance in the future, as it is indicated also by the abovementioned Milanese example. The elitist stereotypization of opera is strongly based, still, on the sharp distinction between high art and popular culture. We can accept the fact that opera can be for some people only, to say with Zelechow, that it is »a plaything of the rich and the stamping ground of cultural snobs« (1990: 91). But many episodes from the history of opera's social adaptability indicate that opera has always been far more than just a promenade of elites.

Conclusion

This paper suggests that opera invented many ways, social situations and performative acts that surrounded and contributed to the social performance of a particular theatre or a particular clientele in a particular society. Some of those situations and acts and their outcomes in particular have helped to shape and define the opera house, its reception, and its reputation. One such act has been the communication that opera houses and their clienteles all over the world have performed with different collectives and individuals and, by doing that, transforming them into their benevolent sponsors, loyal audiences, socially-disciplined crowds and culturally-minded publics. Due to its historical persistency, the opera's social performance and social dramaturgy have been pervasive features of everyday life of the opera theatres in performing itself, or of their patrons and, through them, certain communities or even entire nations too, for a variety of audiences, publics and interest groups. Today, also, opera companies as social organizations are enactments of different local clienteles, political issues, cultural migrations, touristic attractions, national aspirations and other social matters.

The secret of opera's success and popularity lies in a specific but multiple phantasm: namely that, throughout four centuries, the opera has been the privileged place for enacting the fantasy of a mythical or »imagined community«: first in the seventeenth and eighteenth century as the supporting fantasy of the absolute monarchy; after that, in the eighteenth century as the illusion of the enlightened society; then in the nineteenth century as the foundational myth of the nation-state, when the previous court opera evolved into the »state opera« (Žižek-Dolar 2002: 3); and in the twentieth century as a record of a lost or missing past that could, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, offer a newly-mediated social venue, whose prominence and status is effectively demonstrated through live TV broadcasts, megaspectacles and mass tabloids. The literature used here and different historical examples elaborated in this article indicate to make a conclusion that it seems that the element that ensured opera's long survival has been its adaptability to whatever historical contexts, economic situations, social conditions or cultural milieus surrounded it. Due to this, it seems that opera's present and future lie in a simple phantasm suggesting that opera still socializes well and that it is still worthy to be socialized.

Appendix

A Short Social History of Opera and Its Audiences and Publics			
Epoch / Place	Genre Phases	Social Contexts	Social Agents
End of the 16th century 1580 Florence	<p>OPERA AS INTELLECTUAL EXPERIMENT OF LATE RENAISSANCE (1580–1607)</p> <p>Literary and musical circle of <i>Florentine camerata</i> (Giovanni and Pietro Bardi, Count of Vernio, Vincenzo Galilei, Jacopo Corsi and others): the project of renewal / revival of ancient Greek classical tragedy</p> <p>The birth of opera as paradox of the dialectics of historical repetition: Renaissance Florentines wanted to re-create ancient ideals of arts, but created something entirely new (opera was at the very beginning caught between the demand of mythical past and the demand of innovation)</p>	<p>THE RISE OF MEDICIAN HUMANISM</p> <p>Renaissance humanism of return to ancient ideals, art, philosophy and life</p> <p>The development of science: new organisation of the view on the world (the turn from geocentric to heliocentric cosmology credited by Galileo Galilei and Nicolaus Copernicus)</p> <p>The retreat of theocentrism / the rise of anthropocentrism: the rise of an idea that the human being and his/her social position are not dependent on the God's will but on his/her own will and his/her activity</p>	<p>SPECULATIVE ATMOSPHERE OF ACADEMIC FORUMS</p> <p>Late-Renaissance academic forums are essential for the development of opera and its audience</p> <p>Speculative foundations of Baroque musical theory represented by humanist and historian Girolamo Mei (1519–1594): to prove the unity and the entirety of ancient musical element called <i>mousiké</i></p> <p>Rationalistic view of philosopher René Descartes (1596–1650): the experience of the new music should be based on the rational judgment as the social significance of the new music should be dependent on its comprehensibility, simplicity and clearness to all</p>
1597/1598 Florence	<p>Jacopo Peri (1561–1633) with <i>Dafne</i> – precursor of opera: dominates simple singing recitative style inferior to libretto</p> <p>Implementation of myth of ancient origins of opera and of myth on the unity of ancient Greek <i>mousiké</i> in practice: composer Jacopo Peri and librettist Ottavio Rinuccini produced a musical work in which singers perform the plot by singing and speaking, accompanied by group of musicians</p> <p>Giulio Caccini (1551–1618) with his opera <i>Euridice</i> (1602), known also as one of the founders of opera</p>	<p>Medician Florence as one of the leading cities in the project of revival of antiquity represents the hegemony of court aristocracy and bourgeois bankership</p>	<p>PLAYING OPERA AS SOCIAL BACKGROUND</p> <p>- the performance as musico-dramatic coulisse to royal event or princely ceremony</p>

<p>1607 Mantua</p>	<p>THE BIRTH OF NEW MUSICAL ART: BAROQUE OPERA (1607–1761)</p> <p>Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643) with his <i>Orfeo</i> – the very first operatic work: inclined to drama and based on speaking word</p> <p>Monteverdian opera is a musically rich recitative with several melodic arias and choruses</p> <p>Monteverdi as the first opera reformer: the work is divided to several numbered units what remains for the next two centuries known as the »number opera«</p> <p>The librettist rules the opera: the composer is inferior to librettist who enjoys public reputation and is often in function of impresario or director of theater what enables him to make decisions whose work will be performed and how</p>	<p>POLITICAL PRAGMATISM OF THE DUCHY OF MANTUA</p> <p>Opera as post-Renaissance invention in favour of display of power of bourgeois aristocracy, and of performance of ruling absolutism of North Italian cities of the 16th and the 17th centuries</p> <p>Opera is presented as humanistic manifest: music, arts, and sciences have a positive effect on humankind</p>	<p>OPERA AS PRIVATE COURT EVENT</p> <p>Exclusively aristocratic status: highly elevated and privileged participants paid much more attention to the drama or the story of the performance and not so much to music itself, as they preferred to identify with the plot, what contributed to the performance an additional, very actual meaning</p> <p>Monteverdi's mythological <i>Orfeo</i> with his beautiful singing did not moved only the gods in order to bring him his dead wife Eurydice back but also his patron the Duke Gonzaga who ensured financial support to composer's operatic projects</p>
<p>Mid-first-half of the 17th century Rome & Naples</p>	<p>The advancement of development of melodic aria: inclined to musical side of work – the central figure of this phase is Baroque composer from South Tuscany Pietro Cesti (1623–1669)</p> <p>In papal Rome is given the opera <i>Sant' Alessio</i> (1632) with music of Stefano Landi (1586–1643)</p> <p>The development of poetics of opera = a theory created to establish the phenomenon as new musical style and genre without a common generic name but known under several denominations: <i>dramma per musica</i>, <i>dramma di musica</i>, <i>dramma in musica</i>, <i>dramma giocoso</i>, <i>favola in musica</i>, <i>opera di musica</i> etc. (the term</p>	<p>THE SPIRIT OF ABSOLUTISM AS DRIVING FORCE OF OPERA</p> <p>Rome, Naples: centers of operatic creativity</p> <p>Naples = great urban royal municipality, also birth place of Renaissance movement in the 15th century</p> <p>Rome = centre of papacy and the place of permanent social power and influence</p> <p>Ideas of universalism: opera as bearer of ideas, as the most perfect of all arts</p> <p>Unification of social, political and artistic worlds: opera is seen as the completion of ideal absolute universe</p>	<p>OPERA AMONG HOLY MEN</p> <p>Pope as generous sponsor: opera audience at papal court is, in accordance with proverbial Vatican political diplomacy and hierarchical excellence, selected with special care</p> <p>The King of Naples welcomed noble audience and distinguished guests from other European courts</p> <p>Opera is able to »transform« its audience not only into consumers of beautiful Baroque music but also into mediators of humanistic and political messages (through the mirror of opera performance Roman <i>Pontus</i></p>

	<p>»opera« as common name used to describe all kinds of operatic genres and sub-genres appeared yet in the course of the 18th century)</p> <p>The patron rules the opera: the one who pays the event rules the stage, or as English proverb says »he who pays the piper calls the tune«</p>		<p><i>Maximus</i> Urban VIII the same as absolute monarchs Charles VI and Charles VII of Naples saw themselves as great pacifists and humanists)</p>
<p>1637 Venice</p>	<p>VENETIAN OPERATIC ADVENTURE (1635–1646)</p> <p>In 1635 opera reaches the cosmopolitan city of Venice</p> <p>In 1637 first public opera house <i>Teatro di San Cassiano</i> (in private property of noble family Tron) is opened what is breaking moment for the future of opera</p> <p>The re-organization of Florentine style: progress of Venetian operatic style (marginalization of chorus, glorification of singer soloist)</p> <p>The most celebrated Venetian composer: Francesco Cavalli (1602–1676)</p> <p>The impresario rules the opera: the explosion of public opera houses needs a new professional profile, the impresario who is director as well as manager of theater (he plans the program, makes contracts with singers and musicians, hires sets and costumes, and tries to be in good contact with owners, sponsors and patrons of his theater)</p>	<p>COSMOPOLITISM OF VENETIAN REPUBLIC</p> <p>The specific significance of social, political, economic and cultural habitus of the lagoon city of the 17th century (due to republican status of the state, centuries-old relationship between people and their state, increased consciousness about the importance of free citizen, extremely open commercial market, numerous contacts with foreign countries, cosmopolitanism, multi-cultural image of the city, etc.)</p> <p>Opera’s success as new musico-dramatic art became so big that ten opera theatres were opened till the end of the 17th century. In the period 1635–1700 more than 350 different opera works were produced and performed on Venetian stages. Owing to this, numerous Venetian opera companies exported opera as public matter with success to France, Naples, Bologna and to other Italian cities</p>	<p>OPERA AS PUBLIC EVENT OF THE CITY</p> <p>Public status: opera is seen as city’s event (accessible to all citizens)</p> <p>Commercial status: the system of tickets is introduced as opera houses began to charge for admission (anyone who could afford to buy a ticket could be admitted)</p> <p>Cosmopolitan status: the access to performances was directly connected with general social atmosphere of the city which promoted freedom, social tolerance, cultural diversity, trade and tourism</p> <p>Carnavalesque status: opera and carnival created a tight social link due to the fact that the Venetian opera houses were operating only during carnival season, the period between Christmas and Lent</p> <p>Academic status: Venetian academies and professional circles began to control the production and watching the reception of operatic works among audiences and publics. Consequently, public opinion became very important for the development of opera as genre. Composers were forced to write music according to the demands and the taste of audience, while singers’ only task was to please the public</p>

<p>Middle and 2nd half of the 17th century</p> <p>French court & elsewhere across Europe</p>	<p>ITALIAN OPERA REACHES PARIS (1647–1677)</p> <p>On March 2, 1647, the first Italian opera named <i>Orfeo</i> and composed by Luigi Rossi (1598–1653) is brought to Paris and given at King's palace</p> <p>Later on, French composer of Italian origin Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687) became the pivotal figure of French Baroque opera and even the musical symbol of the court of Louis XIV</p> <p>The Lully's <i>tragédies en musique</i> or <i>tragédies lyriques</i> were a political matter of the French kingdom</p> <p>After Lully's death his position is taken by composer and musical theorist Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764) who became a dominant figure of late-Baroque French opera scene</p> <p>OPERA CONQUERES EUROPE (1650–1750)</p> <p>Expansion of Baroque opera all over Europe: on territory of present-day Germany, France, England, Spain, Austria, Eastern Europe</p> <p>At the English court, courtiers are amused by semi-operas, called <i>masques</i>, of Henry Purcell (1658–1695)</p> <p>Composers active in the transition from Baroque to Classical era, also known as Early Galante era:</p> <p>Domenico Scarlatti (1685–1757), Johann Adolf Hasse (1699–1783), Baldassare Galuppi (1706–1785), Princess Wilhelmine of Prussia, married as Margravine of Brandenburg-Bayreuth (1709–1758), Nicola Porpora (1686–1768), Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741), Leonardo Leo (1694–1744)</p>	<p>OPERA AS POLITICAL PARQUET OF EUROPEAN MONARCHS</p> <p>The stage of <i>Académie Royale de Musique</i> (known as <i>Opéra</i>) in Paris is weakening under the load of numerous operatic spectacles and pompous ballets</p> <p>In the north of Europe, first opera houses open their doors (first German opera house appears in Hamburg)</p> <p>Opera mirrors the noble society:</p> <p>Opera represents the mirror through which European royal dynasties see their power, imagine political maps and perform their own social dramaturgy</p> <p>Social criticism of late-Baroque and early-Classical theories of opera: music must be inferior to drama and text (argued by French moralists, dramatists, hedonists, essayists and critics Pierre Corneille, Jean de la Bruyère, Molière, Saint-Évremond)</p>	<p>THE KING'S PRESENCE IN THE OPERA BOX AS SOCIAL LAW OF PUBLIC ATTENTION</p> <p>Royal thrones as principal patrons of opera: authorities are portrayed by librettists and composers as idols, as their social position and survival depends exclusively on the influential court sponsors, supporters and protectors. The king Louis XIV is a notorious example of building the communion between opera and politics</p> <p>Opera of the 17th century is marked by social categories of absolute state and of closed court represented as perfect world: the architecture of first opera houses is dictated by a very clear social purpose (forum-like shape of theatrical auditoriums is result of the ideology of closed world, in which the monarch, with his royal opera box, is the centre of people's universe)</p>
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<p>Beginning of the 18th century</p> <p>From Naples and Venice to London</p>	<p>OPERA IS DIVIDED TO ITS SERIOUS AND SERENE GENRE IN ITS HOMELAND</p> <p>Early and middle Classical opera appears in Italy and elsewhere: Naples: formation of late-Baroque <i>opera seria</i> (exclusion of comic scenes from serious opera) = Metastasio's reform named according to Roman librettist and dramatic poet Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782)</p> <p>Predominance of serious type of opera all over Europe (representatives: Alessandro Scarlatti, 1660-1725; Leonardo Vinci, 1696-1730; Niccolò Jommelli (1714-1774), Antonio Sacchini (1730-1786), Georg Friedrich Händel, 1685-1759)</p> <p>Reactions to reform: birth of serene opera, <i>opera buffa</i>, which became autonomous operatic sub-genre (representatives: Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, 1710-1736; Niccolò Piccinni, 1728-1800; Giovanni Paisiello, 1740-1816; Domenico Cimarosa, 1749-1801)</p> <p>The birth of castrati – <i>virtuosi cantabili</i> in Naples and their rise in Venice</p> <p>Multicultural status of the production of opera: naturalized English Baroque composer of German origin Georg Friedrich Händel writes Italian serious operas for audiences of London</p> <p>The castrato rules the opera: composer and librettist are entirely inferior to castrato singer. They are forced to realize all castrato's caprices for the sake of his fame</p>	<p>COURT OPERA UNDER CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT</p> <p>In 1707, the Austrians conquer the Kingdom of Naples which was for two centuries under Aragonese and Spanish dynasties. This brings new fresh wind in the littoral city</p> <p>The ideology of opera as absolute social perfection is replaced by a bunch of new humanistic ideas and categories: human nature, body, sexuality and gender, character, costume and their imaginary systems</p> <p>The influence of French Enlightenment thinking (Voltaire, Jean Le Rond D'Alembert, Denis Diderot, Jean-Jacques Rousseau): French Encyclopaedists and intellectuals condemned the castration as ethically as well as medically unacceptable practice (Vatican, on the contrary, supported it as male sopranists were needed for the purpose of church choirs and liturgical rituals; all this only because women were not allowed to participate)</p> <p>Enlightenment criticism of opera: opera is social-emotional structure, born from the spirit of absolutism. Due to this, it cannot fulfil the expectations of early Enlightenment which appeals to intellect and rationality, while opera supposedly represents an arena where only decorated emotions, falsified poses and sentimental dramas are presented</p>	<p>CASTRATI AND PRIMADONNAS AS STARS OF AUDIENCES</p> <p>Worship of »singing angels«: The opera worlds are dominated by castrati which are result of influential religious and medical discourse</p> <p>First primadonnas on stage: they become symbols of highly eroticized body and »different nature« in comparison to the past exclusive male domination in public sphere. They are more in function of singing masques rather than of integral characters who could be in the eyes of audiences perceived as autonomous public personalities</p> <p>NOISY VENETIAN AUDIENCES</p> <p>Birth of satire and criticism of operatic practices by composer and writer Benedetto Marcello (1686-1738): »ethnographic« approach, based on participant observation, to the systematic research of chaotic Venetian opera activities and reactions of extremely undisciplined, noisy and loquacious audiences interested in nothing but vocal extremes of virtuosi</p> <p>HÄNDEL FASCINATES LONDONERS</p> <p>Händel writes 45 operas for different European theaters: with breathtaking arias »Lascia ch'io pianga« from <i>Rinaldo</i> (1711) and »Ombra mai fu« from <i>Xerxes</i> (1738) charms the audiences at King's theater in London and across Europe</p>
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	Obviously, music is tailored upon singer's voice, talent and demand (castrato is not interested in music so much, his duty is more to show off his voice)		
Middle and second half of the 18th century French, Prussian & Habsburg Empires	<p>LINGUISTIC QUARREL BETWEEN FRENCH AND ITALIAN OPERA (1752-1761)</p> <p>The quarrel about the use of best language in the opera: naturalistic debate about which language is more appropriate for singing in the opera ends with Solomonic solution which says that Italian language is more natural for fluent aria-like singing, while French is more powerful in dramatic expression</p> <p>THE HIGH CLASSICAL ERA (1762-1805)</p> <p>The second important reformer of opera in history: Christoph Willibald Gluck's (1714-1787) reform (<i>Orfeo ed Euridice</i> 1762, <i>Alceste</i> 1767) as a response to Italian type of opera which praised aria and singing exuberance: in the preface of his reforming opera <i>Alceste</i> dedicated to Grande-Duke Leopold of Tuscany he writes: »... I decided to rid it altogether of those abuses which, introduced either by inappropriate vanity of the singers or an exaggerated complaisance of the part of the composers ... I sought to restrict music to its true function, namely to serve the poetry by means of the expression«</p> <p>Gluck's early-Classical reform suggests a radical re-organisation of Baroque operatic subject (consequence: fall of »singing angels«) and gives way to a classical operatic paradigm</p>	<p>THE FALL OF BAROQUE ERA</p> <p>The death of Händel in 1759, the leading proponent of Baroque opera, is accompanied by sharp political war between the adherents of Italian music and French culture, known under the name <i>guerre des bouffons</i>: influential philosopher and composer Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) sides with the Italian faction; due to this, his nationalistic opponents accused him that he betrayed the French country</p> <p>FROM MECHANICAL MACHINERY TO THE ART OF BEAUTIFUL</p> <p>From opera as machinery to opera as art: first, opera was, under the influence of mechanical materialism promoted by the Venetian count and philosopher Francesco Algarotti (1712-1764), taken as geometrically composed mechanical machinery, as <i>ars mechanica</i>, craft, skill, technique. However, in the course of the century, and under influence of new intellectual movements (development of aesthetics, musical historiography, and philosophy of music) opera becomes to be seen as <i>ars liberalis</i>, <i>ars musica</i>. Accordingly, opera is not treated anymore as cultural machinery designed for the production of absolute social effects under control but as a liberal art form in order to produce the beautiful</p>	<p>PRUSSIAN KING CONTROLS OPERA, HIS SISTER WRITES OPERA</p> <p>Frederick the Great (1712-1786), the »enlightened despot« brings opera into the heart of his kingdom. He controls it as carefully as his most important administrative measures, diplomatic manoeuvres and military exploits. His older sister Wilhelmine writes opera and, when married to Bayreuth, builds a new opera house which becomes one of the jewels in the crown of Hohenzollern imperialism</p> <p>GLUCK SURPRISES PARIS</p> <p>On August 2, 1774, Gluck's opera <i>Orfeo ed Euridice</i> was for the first time given at famous royal theater <i>Opéra</i>. When the audience heard Orpheus stunning lamentation »J'ai perdu mon Eurydice« in French, the next morning the entire Paris spoke only about the success at the opera</p> <p>REVOLUTIONARY AUDIENCE</p> <p>At the zenith of revolutionary terror in 1793, Paris Commune decided that <i>Opéra</i> should remain open (later, the same decision was made by Napoleon Bonaparte, while other theatres he ordered to be closed)</p>

<p>Middle and second half of the 18th century</p> <p>French, Prussian & Habsburg Empires</p>	<p>Reconfiguration of view on opera under the slogan <i>prima la musica e poi le parole</i> (triumph of music over libretto): if the 17th century demands that music needs to serve poetry and drama, the 18th century establishes a complete triumph of music over poetry and drama</p> <p>The composer rules the opera: the composer finally gets the position that he deserves (singers and other profiles have to follow his notes)</p> <p>THE LATE VIENNESE CLASSICAL ERA</p> <p>The competition for the musical primacy at the Viennese court between Antonio Salieri (1750–1825) and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)</p> <p>The end of the 18th century: the highlight of Classical opera with Mozart who composes serious and comic operas as well as <i>Singspiel</i></p> <p>The era of Classical opera ends with the only opera of German composer Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) <i>Fidelio</i>, premiered in 1805 in Vienna</p>	<p>THE INFLUENCE OF GERMAN ENLIGHTENMENT</p> <p>Opera as social world made to promote socio-political ideas of new bourgeois social order, such as the idea of social contract, the »Enlightened despot«, personal happiness, liberated subject, value and dignity of the individual towards society</p> <p>FREEMASONIC VISION OF OPERA</p> <p>Mozart's operas as political engagement and as reflection of radical European social changes from the old social order of absolutism and aristocratic privileges to a new social order of bourgeois revolution from which it is expected to bring social equality for all</p> <p>Mozart's political message is powerful, but utopian: only music has a sublime power to reduce social inequalities and to persuade the monarch (as representative of despotic absolutism) as well as the subject (as representative of revolutionary Enlightenment) that love is the only one which could bring reconciliation between them</p>	<p>MOZART'S SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT</p> <p>Mozart with his professional as well as personal example demands the re-evaluation of artist's social status: demand to abolition of figure of private lackey of patrons and impresarios and establishment of the image of public figure of honour</p> <p>FOR NOBILITY »REVOLUTIONARY OPERA« CAUSES UNCOMFORT AND FEAR</p> <p>In <i>Le nozze di Figaro</i> (1786), the servant defeats the count and triumphs over the master precisely in his function as servant. Visionary, Mozart prognoses the parole and the outcome of the French revolution <i>liberté, égalité, fraternité</i>. This political message resonates among European nobility. Three years later, the French revolution began. No wonder that Napoleon said »Figaro's wedding is already revolution in action«</p> <p>In <i>Die Zauberflöte</i> (1791), the Queen of the Night can be viewed as the embodiment of despotism and with her coloratura aria »Der hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen« spasmodically expresses her last gasp before demise. At that time, associations with the Austrian Empress Maria Theresa came up immediately. Mozart's operas namely could not avoid the censorship of Vienna's court</p>
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<p>19th century</p> <p>Along the Danube, the Rhine, the Elbe, the Po, the Seine and the Amazon</p>	<p>THE ROMANTIC ERA (1815-1890)</p> <p>Evolution of different sub-genres in France: heroic opera, <i>grand opéra</i>, <i>tragédie lirique</i>, opera of deliverance, <i>opéra comique</i> – representatives: Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791–1864), Hector Berlioz (1803–1869), Charles Gounod (1818–1893), Georges Bizet (1838–1875), Daniel François Esprit Auber (1782–1871), Léo Delibes (1836–1891), Jacques Halévy (1799–1862), Jules Massenet (1842–1912), Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921), Ambroise Thomas (1811–1896)</p> <p>Operetta on the way: appearance of Parisian (Jacques Offenbach) and Viennese operetta (Strauss family)</p> <p>»Golden era« of Italian opera: comic and serious opera of late Classical opera (Gioacchino Rossini, 1792–1868) reached its peak in the <i>belcanto</i> opera (Vincenzo Bellini, 1801–1835; Gaetano Donizetti, 1797–1848; Giuseppe Verdi, 1813–1901) and ends with late Romantic opera (Arrigo Boito 1842–1918; Amilcare Ponchielli, 1834–1886; Alfredo Catalani, 1854–1893) as an attempt to recreate elements of Baroque opera and castrati opera</p> <p>The primadonna rules the opera: composers are ready to tailor certain roles exclusively for the voice of certain singers</p>	<p>OPERA AFTER THE FRENCH REVOLUTION</p> <p>It is marked by the time of post-revolutionary imperialism of Napoleonic France (1804–1814), which occupies a large part of European continent and has influenced all the way on the south of Pyrenean and Apennine peninsulas, Dalmatia, Istria and Carniola</p> <p>The relations within the artistic world (composer–librettist, work of art–consumer, artist–market) meet significant transformations under the influence of social (the consequences of French revolution), economic (the establishment of free market laws) and cultural changes (the development of bourgeois society)</p> <p>THE RISE OF NATIONALISMS AND THE BIRTH OF NATION-STATES ACROSS EUROPE</p> <p>Opera as a place of the missing state: The epoch of Romanticist ideals and national aspirations contributes to the development of national operatic traditions which got forms of national operas and their composers as national icons: part of the secret of Verdi's and Wagner's great success lies in the fact that they were able to provide the mythological, cultural, national and ideological support to precisely those two nations that had not been able to constitute themselves quite a long time as national states</p>	<p>ARISTOCRACY AND BOURGEOISIE SHARE THEIR COMMON PASTIME</p> <p>Opera makes a long tour from closed exhibition of privileged noble people to open promenade of bourgeois society. It becomes a relatively well consumed art form of the middle class and broader public. The bourgeoisie as new social force sees in opera a sophisticated as well as very effective way of public entertainment in order to go up the social scale. Opera is the place of good manners, morals, taste and aesthetical sense</p> <p>ALL ROADS LEAD TO PARIS, THE CULTURAL CAPITAL OF THE WORLD</p> <p>Parisian opera theaters profusely please the publics: the absolute prince of Parisian opera audiences is the composer of German-Jewish origins G. Meyerbeer, who charms the bourgeois and petit bourgeois taste with grandiose operas. Populism, pomp, splendor and spectacle dominate the Parisian opera scene</p> <p>WAGNER WANTS TO EDUCATE HIS OWN AUDIENCE: THE BIRTH OF WAGNERIAN</p> <p>The Romanticist cult of worshipping includes three types of musical figures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the worship of absolute diva as a good »machine« to produce beautiful singing - the worship of composer as the embodiment of national genius - the worship of conductor as sublime musical virtuoso
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	<p>Rise of German romantic opera: Carl Maria von Weber (1786– 1826), Friedrich von Flotow (1812–1883), Richard Wagner (1813–1883), Engelbert Humperdinck (1854–1921)</p> <p>Richard Wagner = the third opera reformer in history: opera work is not numbered and divided to units but is rather a continuous and uninterrupted totality in which rules a leading semantic musical motive called <i>leitmotiv</i></p> <p>Wagner's concept of opera as Gesamtkunstwerk = fall into a specific ideological form of totality which finds its support in philosophy of Hegelian Absolute and in idealism of German Classical philosophy (opera as <i>Musikdrama</i> – capturing of Absolute, unity of music, drama, time and space)</p> <p>Composers for nations: French, Italian and German traditions represent a fundament for the development of national operas in Europe (opera has been moved to the East, to Slavic nations)</p> <p>Russian opera: Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857), Alexander Borodin (1833–1887), Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881), Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908), Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)</p> <p>Czech opera: Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884), Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)</p> <p>Hungarian opera: Ferenc Erkel (1810–1893)</p> <p>Polish opera: Stanisław Moniuszko (1819–1872), Władysław Żeleński (1837–1921), Zygmunt Noskowski (1846–1909), Henryk Jarecki (1846–1918)</p>	<p>VIVA VERDI, VIVA ITALIA</p> <p>The composer's name Verdi becomes so intensely connected with the political process of Italian unification that his name can be easily read as an abbreviation of <i>Vittorio Emmanuelle Re d'Italia</i></p> <p>The social and political movement of Italian unification called <i>Risorgimento</i> (1815–1871) that agglomerated different states of the Italian peninsula into the single state of Italy gives Italian opera a new social dimension and even more powerful political meaning: when the Italian audiences hear the aria from <i>Attila</i> »Avrai tu l'universo resti l'Italia a me« by which the Roman General Ezio offers the treason to Attila, the barbaric King of the Huns, associations with current Italian political situations come up immediately – this famous verse is by audiences across Italy saluted with unconfined joy and enthusiasm</p> <p>THE HEGEMONY OF MULTIPLE SOCIAL CODIFICATIONS OF OPERA</p> <p>Drama codification: standardization of drama situations, scenes, stage gestures and emotions</p> <p>Vocal codification: redefinition of pre-Romanticist male and female voices (high voices are viewed as domain of woman exclusively, before they were treated merely as metaphor of female or male voice in high register of tones)</p>	<p>OPERA AUDIENCES AS SYMBOL OF NATIONS ACROSS EUROPE</p> <p>Opera as national art form: offers to members of different national communities and ethnic groups a possibility to imagine and express their »spontaneous« collective identification</p> <p>Opera house as symbol of political emancipation: each and every nation wants to build its own national theatre or opera temple in order to fulfill its political and cultural aspirations</p> <p>OPERA AS SYMBOL OF COLONIALISM</p> <p>Opera in service of »best« European autochthonous culture worthy to be exported to the last remote corners of the world: the most monumental proof that the high culture of Europe could legitimize the exploitation that financed the opera house in the first place is found in Brazilian Manaus, the city located in the heart of Amazon rainforest. <i>Teatro Amazonas</i>, an ornate opera house opened in 1896, materializes the physical presence of French and European civilizing power</p> <p>PUCCINI STUNS THE WORLD</p> <p>After Verdi's death in 1901, his operatic throne of popularity is succeeded by Puccini, who moves the global opera audience to tears with astonishing arias put in the mouth of Lauretta, Mimi, Rodolfo, Magda, Madame</p>
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	<p>Croatian opera: Vatroslav Lisinski (1819–1854), Ivan Zajc (1832–1914)</p> <p>Slovenian opera: Benjamin Ipavec (1829–1908), Viktor Parma (1858–1924), Anton Foerster (1837–1926)</p> <p>Serbian opera: Stanislav Binički (1872–1942), Isidor Bajić (1878–1915)</p> <p>Estonian opera: Artur Lemba (1885–1963), Evald Aav (1900–1939)</p> <p>Latvian opera: Jēkabs Ozols (1863–1902), Alfrēds Kalniņš (1879–1951)</p> <p>Lithuanian opera: Mikas Petrauskas (1873–1937)</p> <p>Slovak opera: Viliam Figuš-Bystrý (1875–1937)</p> <p>VERISM AND NATURALISM IN THE OPERA (1875–1920)</p> <p>As a reaction to Wagner's symphonic style and mythological-symbolist opera appeared:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - verism in Italy: Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924), Ruggero Leoncavallo (1857–1919), Pietro Mascagni (1863–1945), Umberto Giordano (1867–1948) - naturalism in France: Gustave Charpentier (1860–1956), Alfred Bruneau (1857–1934) - late Romanticism in Germany: Richard Strauss (1864–1949) <p>Hungarian operetta: Representative: Franz Lehár (1870–1948), a composer, mainly known for his operettas <i>Die lustige Witwe</i> [<i>The merry Widow</i>] and <i>Das Land des Lächelns</i> [<i>The Land of Smiles</i>]</p>	<p>Sexual codification: rigorous division of gendered characters with regard to sex (in the 17th century, men often played female roles; in the 18th century, castrati imperialized the imagined image of female vocal body; all this diversity is in the 19th century abolished – castrated male body is substituted by erotic décor of diva)</p> <p>Ritual codification: stabilization of the course of performances (overture is no more played somewhere between the acts as before, opera work is given strictly in full piece and no more in its part or only with selected arias as high-lights of evening spectacle)</p> <p>Behavioral codification: »civilization« of audience's behavior and reaction (demands of public to get one lovely aria executed by a singer several, even twenty times per evening if requested is not acceptable anymore; repetition of arias is restricted to one bis at most)</p> <p>Socializational codification: opera as urban art form steps into a referential area of bourgeois family as well-regulated scheme of closed world (theater- and opera-going is a way to show off bourgeois accomplishments, values and symbolic capital of family)</p> <p>Repertoire codification: the birth of season's repertoire and the canonization of works on the basis of which opera houses plan their programs and select works to offer</p> <p>Institutional codification: opera gets closed into a »ghetto« of opera houses as institutions of national importance (before it took various social scenes, from private palaces, atriums, gardens to public settings)</p>	<p>Butterfly, Floria Tosca, Mario Cavaradossi and Calaf: when the world listened to his heartbreaking melodies »O mio babbino caro«, »Mi chiamano Mimi«, »Che gelida manina«, »Chi il bel sogno di Doretta?«, »Un bel di vedremo«, »Vissi d'arte«, »Recondita armonia«, »E lucevan le stelle« and »Nessun dorma«, no opera lover could ever imagine opera without Puccini's music</p>
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<p>First half of the 20th century</p> <p>From prosperous USA to Bolshevik Russia and Nazi-Fascist Europe</p>	<p>THE AVANT-GARDE AND MODERNISM OF OPERA (1900–1960)</p> <p>Differentiation of genre development follows trends of art doctrines and modernist aesthetic-musical directions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - impressionism: Claude Debussy (1862–1918) - expressionism: Arnold Schönberg (1874–1951), Marij Kogoj (1892–1956) - serialism: Alban Berg (1885–1935) - neo-Classicism: Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924), Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971), Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953), Béla Bartók (1881–1945), Arthur Honegger (1892–1955), Paul Hindemith (1895–1963), Francis Poulenc (1899–1963), Kurt Weill (1900–1950), Gian Carlo Menotti (1911–2007), Benjamin Britten (1913– 1976) - neo-Romanticism: Hans Pfitzner (1869–1949), Samuel Barber (1910–1981) - eclecticism: Franz Schreker (1878–1934), Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari (1876–1948), Ottorino Respighi (1879–1936), Manuel de Falla (1876–1946), Ernst Krenek (1900–1991) - folklorism: Leoš Janáček (1854–1928), Jakov Gotovac (1895–1982) - lyricism: Luigi Dallapiccola (1904–1975) <p>American composer George Gershwin (1898–1937) writes a »black opera« entitled <i>Porgy and Bess</i>, the very first American opera ever written (combines influences of jazz and black spiritual music)</p> <p>The conductor rules the opera: the profile of conductor in the image of authoritative and perfectionist Arturo Toscanini (1867–1957) gets a central position in the production of opera</p>	<p>OPERA ON THE WINGS OF NEW MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGIES</p> <p>At fin-de-siècle, the USA take the leading role in in developing media communications and technologies: European opera singers test on the American soil the technical efficiency of phonograph and gramophone, two magical devices intended to register and record the sound</p> <p>First global musical stars: Italian-born tenor Enrico Caruso (1873–1921) is the first global musical star of phonograph. His records are sold in several million copies around the world</p> <p>OPERA’S PACIFISM PUT TO THE TEST OF WAR</p> <p>The rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe results in two world wars which influence opera dramatically: Fascism and Nazism abuse opera and arts for their political and propagandistic purposes</p>	<p>MEDIATED OPERA</p> <p>Visiting theater and opera house is not the only chance to experience opera’s world and to enjoy: media communications and technologies transfer opera from theatrical world to media sphere:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - opera is transformed into a record for millions of people - in December 1931 Metropolitan Opera begins to broadcast its performances live by radio - appearance of radio opera, TV opera, filmed opera, video opera – result: redefinition of audience’s taste <p>OPERA AS THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN OF DICTATORS AND REVOLUTIONARIES</p> <p>Opera as an »affaire of state«:</p> <p>During the Russian Revolution the <i>Bolshoi</i> and the <i>Maryinsky</i> Operas, which were the former tsarist court theatres, stay open every night even though all other theaters and arts across the new Soviet state face rigorous censorship and control. Opera is retained by the Bolsheviks as well as by their communist leaders and successors, Lenin, Stalin and Khrushchev</p>
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<p>Second half of the 20th century</p> <p>Vienna, Milan, New York, Sydney</p>	<p>ANTI-OPERATIC PATH FROM MODERNISM TO POSTMODERNISM</p> <p>From opera to anti-opera: By employing experimental modernism, minimalism, post-minimalism, post-modernism, serialism, mysticism and atonality which combine opera with jazz, musical, rock music, pop music, techno, rap and other contemporary musical currents, the genre faces new dimensions: Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990) Hans Werner Henze (1926) Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928–2007) Rodion Shchedrin (1932) Siegried Matthus (1934) Steve Reich (1936) Philip Glass (1937) Louis Andriessen (1939) John Adams (1947) Jani Golob (1948) Daniel Catán (1949) Wolfgang Rhim (1952)</p> <p>The producer rules the opera: the significance of the producer in opera is a relatively modern one, although one can identify key individuals from earlier periods too. But it was in the post-war years that opera producers started to play such a dominant and personally-distinctive, and even controversial, role in the opera house. The great and often scandalous productions of Wagner's operas have been particularly fiercely debated after the WWII and have left their mark not only on our understanding of Wagner but on modern theater as a whole. Adolf Hitler famously appropriated Wagner's performances for his own ends. Wieland Wagner's (1917–1966) radically abstract,</p>	<p>THE AGE OF POPULAR CULTURE AND AUDIO-VISUAL MEDIA</p> <p>Social trends of opera are set by world's leading opera houses, such as <i>Staatsoper</i> in Vienna, <i>Teatro alla Scala</i> in Milan and <i>Metropolitan Opera</i> in New York, which – with support of huge amounts of corporate money – attract the best conductors, the most potent producers and the most famous singers all over the world, and by doing that ensure the most celebrated performances in influential media, and consequently in global public</p> <p>Opera as complex star system: Opera seems to be permanently on the edge of excess, transgression and media scandal. The atmosphere of world's leading opera houses seems overheated. Famous divas, tenorissimi, singing stars, producers, conductors, orchestras and their cliques are in many ways an epitome of a near-hysterical culture of opera, its performers and its appreciators</p> <p>OPERA IN SOCIAL CHANGE</p> <p>Opera under Communism: In the East, self-governing socialism and Communism perhaps totalitarianize the social world of opera and its institutions but continuity remains the key word when referring to the history of opera in this period</p>	<p>OPERA FOR THE MASSES</p> <p>The swing of open air locations and outdoor theatres where summer opera festivals take their place (Roman arenas in Verona and in Orange, <i>Seebühne</i> [lake-stage] in Bregenz and in Mörbisch, one of Europe's oldest quarries in St. Margarethen, baths of Caracalla in Rome, the Peristyle in Split, etc.)</p> <p>OPERA FANS ADORE FEVERISHLY THE PRIMADONNA ASSOLUTA</p> <p>In the 1950s, opera gets its new heroine in history: Maria Callas (1923–1977) is not only a tireless rehearser, capricious singer and notorious primadonna but becomes also a fashion icon, public figure, regular member of global jet set and <i>crème de la crème</i> of Society, and an object of furious media scandals and tabloid scoops</p> <p>AUSTRALIA AS THE OPERATIC CONTINENT</p> <p>In the 1960s, the Australian Federal Government decides that the post-war city of Sydney needs a distinctive building of culture: in 1973 Sydney gets a new opera house of astonishing silhouette. The roof shells which symbolize the white bird with all wings spread immediately becomes not only an iconic architecture of the city but a national symbol for a whole country and continent. The monumentality of the opera house was the proof through which the Australians have created a powerful political and cultural message to which civilization they feel attached</p>
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	<p>denazified productions at Bayreuth were among the iconic manifestations of post-war production values and strategies how to bury the uncomfortable German past</p> <p>The soprano raises opera's standards: Maria Callas's mission is to turn opera from singing as a lovely noise to singing as the expression of text, character and mood. Callas reorients a compromise: the stars would remain, but instead of just producing their lovely noise they would express and personify through the libretto and score</p>	<p>Opera and new cultural policy: In the 1990s, in the period of so called »transition« and democratization the countries of the former Soviet bloc not only emancipate their national communities in political terms but revitalize as well some old national traditions. Opera takes an eminent part in this cultural process of nationalization as the new states need a new cultural image</p>	<p>INTIMATE ENCOUNTER OF TV VIEWER WITH »OPERA'S THROAT«</p> <p>Opera enters the world of film, television and video unscrupulously – consequence: the redefinition of taste and of structure of opera audience (opera lover is not necessarily only the one who frequents opera houses and theaters but also the one who stays at home and listens to performance on radio or watches it on TV, and enjoys in a solitary ritual of anonymity and even domestic intimacy)</p> <p>SOME OPERA APPRECIATORS ARE ALWAYS AT THE BARRICADES</p> <p>The division between the defenders of traditional stage management and the adherents of modern theatre: The everyday life of opera devotees, lovers and fans all over the world is centered mostly in debates about who is who in, at and around the opera – who is the latest opera star, who is better and who is worse, why current producers destroy opera while ignoring its authenticity in music and plot what makes audiences get furious etc.</p> <p>EVERYDAY ARIAS AND NOTORIOUS SINGERS AS THE SOCIAL REFERENCE</p> <p>Die Vermassung of opera: The production of opera for the masses necessarily leads also to a more dilettante consummation of opera without knowing much about it</p>
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			<p>Popularization of opera:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the reduction of opera to a spectacle of arias at football stadiums, on squares and in parks (The Three Tenors: Luciano Pavarotti, José Carreras, Plácido Domingo) - the cross-over of opera and popular music (Freddie Mercury and Montserrat Caballé with the groundbreaking collaboration in the song <i>Barcelona</i>) - trips of opera singers to popular music (Sarah Brightman, Andrea Bocelli, Il Divo etc.)
Beginning of the 21st century	<p>POST-OPERA AND THE »ETERNAL RECURRENCE OF THE SAME«</p> <p>»Multi-culti« opera: The rise of »multicultural« opera which tries to explicate through music, drama and libretto new circumstances of local and global cultural diversity and relate them to a new dialogue (representative: Tan Dun with the opera <i>The first Emperor</i>)</p> <p>»Ethnographic« opera: Contemporary composers are becoming more and more cultural translators and musical ethnographers (representatives: Georges Aperghis with the Lévi-straussian opera <i>Tristes tropiques</i>, Emir Kusturica with his gypsy-punk opera <i>Time of the Gypsies</i>)</p> <p>From modernist opera to electronic and pocket opera: Gregor Strniša (1959) Detlev Glanert (1960) Jan Müller-Wieland (1966) Jens Joneleit (1968) Johanna Doderer (1969) Michel van der Aa (1970) Thomas Adès (1971) Jörg Widmann (1973)</p>	<p>OPERA AS CULTURAL WITNESS OF HISTORICAL CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY OF SOCIAL CHANGE</p> <p>Opera and its social persistence: opera has witnessed the wars, revolutions, totalitarian political regimes and global social changes – and survived</p> <p>OPERA AS TRANSHISTORIC PHENOMEON</p> <p>Opera for all times: Opera with its cultural rituals and ceremonies legitimates all kinds of power and authority of the state or any other form of political formation and social organization:</p> <p>In the 17th century: by taking a form of court entertainments it legitimates the prestige of private noble palaces of north-Italian cities, duchies and republics</p> <p>In the 18th century: by taking an image of princely ceremonies and royal spectacles it legitimates the absolutist courts of Paris, Versailles, London, Milan, Naples,</p>	<p>OPERA AS GLOBAL IMAGINED COMMUNITY</p> <p>Opera is organized as a global arena of mass transnational media audiences and publics</p> <p>THE MISERY OF CONTEMPORARY OPERA'S SPLENDOR</p> <p>Cultural centers vs peripheries: The magnificence of metropolitan opera venues which sometimes notoriously provoke existent social values and current political situations is only one side of the story of opera's success. Opera practiced at peripheries experiences much less glorious and much more down-to-earth reality which is often hidden from the audiences and broader publics. But even in well culturally situated places, opera's splendor and misery go hand in hand</p> <p>OPERA LOVERS ADDRESSED AS CONSUMERS</p> <p>Opera as cultural commodity: opera singers as global megastars (Anna Netrebko,</p>

	<p>OPERA AS MUSEUM OF WORKS</p> <p>Archeology of opera works: The production of new works is constantly subjected to the canonized archive of the 19th-century Romanticist repertoire mostly expanded from Mozart to Puccini</p>	<p>Turin, Vienna, Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Dresden, Sankt Petersburg etc.</p> <p>In the 19th century: by taking a shape of national opera houses along the Danube, the Rhine, the Elbe, the Seine, the Po and the Sava river it legitimates the decay of Austro-Hungarian and Prussian Empires and the rise of the new nation-states</p> <p>In the 20th century: by taking an aura of political arena it legitimates the ideas of Russian Bolsheviks, Italian Fascists and German <i>Führer</i></p> <p>The end of the 20th century: by taking a corporative magnificence of the Metropolitan Opera in New York, Vienna State Opera, Milanese <i>La Scala</i>, the Covent Garden in London, Parisian <i>Opéras Garnier</i> and <i>Bastille</i>, Sydney Opera House, the <i>Teatro Colón</i> in Buenos Aires, it legitimates the power of up-to-date elites</p> <p>At the beginning of the 21st century: by taking a form of megalomaniac constructions of new opera venues in Denmark, Norway, South Korea, China and some other countries it legitimates the authority of modern democratic or supposedly democratic states</p>	<p>Elina Garanča, Juan Diego Flórez, Rolando Villazón etc.) make records of arias and operas in the same way as pop singers and rock stars have done from the 1980s on with their TV musical videos</p> <p>OPERA AUDIENCE AS HETEROGENEOUS SOCIAL CATEGORY</p> <p>Opera audiences and publics around the world are far from being a monolithic social phenomenon: they differ according to several sociological, historical and anthropological parameters and characteristics, such as age, sex, epoch, location, class, social status, wealth, education, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political view, taste, social values, moral conventions, aesthetic sense, symbolic capital, personal cultural economy, family circle, individual and collective itineraries, cultural milieu and national community</p> <p>There are two correlations that determine the nature and the structure of opera audiences throughout history: first, the close relation between social class and taste; and second, close relation between education and cultural consumption</p>
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Sažetak

Prilagodljivost opere: kada različiti društveni čimbenici dođu do zajedničkog interesa

Prilagodljivost je ključna riječ kada se govori o društvenoj povijesti opere, o njezinim institucijama, protagonistima, pokroviteljima, publici i javnosti. Ovaj rad namjerava rasvijetliti samo ograničen broj nekih povijesnih aspekata društvenog života opere u smislu njezine javnosti, publike, potrošača, ljubitelja i podržavatelja. Društvena moć opere stoljećima je bila u službi legitimiranja moći autoriteta, osiguravanja prestiža elitama te uzburkavanja strasti među masama. Na kraju ovog članka utvrdit će se, pozivanjem na relevantnu literaturu i ilustrativne primjere, da je element koji je operi osigurao uspjeh i dug opstanak bio i još uvijek jest njezina prilagodljivost bilo kojem povijesnom kontekstu, društvenim prilikama, ekonomskim situacijama, političkim režimima i kulturnim sredinama što su je okruživali.