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Review Article
When Media Meet

Marcia J. Citron, *When Opera Meets Film*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Héctor J. Pérez, ed., *Opera and Video: Technology and Spectatorship*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2012.

To chart opera's health as an art form and cultural institution, one might turn to its depictions in film. Indeed, this is what Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker do in the final chapter of *A History of Opera*, and the picture they paint is not pretty. Where once operatic subjects were reliable money-makers for Hollywood, and high-culture stuffiness inevitably faded before the universal beauty and transformative power of operatic singing, films since the 1960s have depicted opera more rarely and less flatteringly. The 'new truth is exemplified' for Abbate and Parker by Frederico Fellini's *E la nave va* (1983), in which operatic singing takes the ludicrous form of a Russian bass 'hypnotising a chicken with his low notes'.[1]

In *When Opera Meets Film*, Marcia J. Citron presents a more varied and optimistic view of what opera in film has to tell us. The book comes as a follow-up to Citron's *Opera on Screen* (2000), which examined opera-films and the consequences of visual media for operatic texts and spectatorship (a topic that has gained renewed attention in recent years). *When Opera Meets Film* takes up what might be considered another major strand of 'mediatised opera studies': the meanings and functions of opera within the world of cinematic and televisual representations.

So, what happens when opera meets film? Citron provides many answers rather than one. As she writes, *When Opera Meets Film* is 'fundamentally a "perspectives" study', seeking to lay out various analytical methods and theoretical frameworks for understanding the workings of opera in particular films, rather than to provide 'any sort of unitary viewpoint' (13). The preference for approaching opera in film on a case-by-case basis, and a suspicion of overarching narratives, has been expressed by other scholars in the field as well.[2] Citron's primary interests lie with 'the aesthetics of the opera/film encounter in its various incarnations' (99), and with the cooperation of opera and film in the production of meaning. Both are to be found in the interplay of plot, image and operatic music, which she analyses in detail.

Citron applies three main interpretative lenses – style, subjectivity and desire – developing each in a pair of chapters; an example of each lens in action may serve to illustrate the range and nature of her analyses. First, in Franc Roddam's treatment of Wagner's 'Liebestod' in the 1985 film *Aria* – a collection of music video-like treatments of numbers from multiple operas – Citron tracks the coordination between

[1] Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, *A History of Opera* (New York, 2012), 516–19.
[2] See, for example, Jeongwon Joe and Rose Theresa, eds., *Between Opera and Cinema* (New York, 2002), ix–x.

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music and image, and highlights a scenic shift from driving to sex that responds to a shift in Wagner's text from seeing to hearing. The 'generative force' (76) of music establishes a relation between music and image similar to that characteristic of opera-films, she suggests, but without the focus on 'opera's performative element' that draws filmic and musical style together in that genre (75). Later, in a chapter on the opera-films of Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, Citron argues that many of the director's techniques aim to enhance spectators' awareness of the characters' subjectivity. To this end, Ponnelle employs not only traditional filmic means such as 'point of view' shots, but also a specifically opera-filmic technique Citron calls 'interior singing'. This technique, which consists of shots in which singing characters deliberately do not lip-synch, 'reconfigures the playback system by removing the image of the music's vocal production' (122), and relocates the singing into characters' minds, thus enhancing the sense of access to their inner lives. Finally, in *Sunday, Bloody Sunday*, Mozart's 'Soave sia il vento' helps 'define the paths of desire' between Bob and his two lovers, Alex (a woman) and David (a man). While Bob is with Alex, David is shown putting on a record of the trio and looking at the art installation Bob has built in his yard. The music continues as the scene cuts to Bob asleep with Alex looking at him. After Bob's face is seen in conjunction with a 'hair-raising' diminished-seventh chord, the repeated words 'ai nostri desir' give voice to what the shots of David's and Alex's gazes imply: a shared desire for Bob.

Words such as 'ai nostri desir' present thorny questions for the aesthetics and meaning of the 'opera/film encounter', since as a rule operatic singing in film does not receive subtitles. *La Cérémonie* – a film directed by Claude Chabrol in which the revelation of a housekeeper's shameful secret of illiteracy leads her to murder her employers while they watch *Don Giovanni* on television – prompts Citron to address the issue of verbal comprehension directly. Reiterating the need to consider each case individually, she concludes that the scene involving Mozart's opera assumes greater meaning when the text is understood, but that viewers nevertheless have 'sufficient aesthetic information to grasp the parallels and irony between the opera and the film' thanks to the 'expressive particularity of Mozart's music' and to the camerawork (164). At the same time, the film's theme of illiteracy gives the absence of subtitles, and consequent barrier to understanding, significance in its own right (163). While Citron prefers for us to hear operatic singing as laden with verbal meaning, here she also shows that words structure scenes in ways that may remain hidden to viewers, and that singing in a language we do not understand can itself be essential to the aesthetics and meaning of an opera/film encounter.

To provide a framework 'that can lead to larger observations and encourage comparative discussion' about her various case studies, Citron turns to 'the theory of intermediality', and thereby connects her work to a thriving field of inquiry that has to date been driven mainly by scholars of literature and theatre. Because Citron is among the first to introduce this theory into musicological scholarship, it merits further discussion. Broadly speaking, 'intermediality' refers to the participation of two or more conventionally distinct media in a single cultural artefact. The prefix 'inter' (as opposed to 'multi', 'trans' or 'intra') points to boundary crossings between

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the participating media. 'Media', meanwhile, encompasses both traditional fine arts such as music, literature and theatre, and 'technical media' such as photography, phonography and film. Scholars engaged in 'intermedial studies' have linked its importance to the increasingly intermedial nature of cultural expression in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, while also recognising that transgressions of medial boundaries have a long history (the 'ut pictura poesis' tradition providing one early example). As Irina Rajewsky writes, the concept of intermediality points 'less to new types of problems *per se*' than to 'new possibilities for presenting and thinking about them' and 'a heightened awareness of the materiality and mediality of artistic practices and of cultural practices in general'.[3]

Citron's key reference on intermediality is literary scholar Werner Wolf's *The Musicalization of Fiction: A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality* (1999).[4] Wolf aims to understand how the signifiers of one medium interact with those of another such that both participate in the production of meaning – an endeavour that first requires the establishment of the boundaries that normally separate the media in question. Wolf thus prefaces his intermedial analyses with a history of aesthetic theory on the relation between music and literature, identifying the eighteenth-century 'emancipation' of music from words and the rise of music to 'supreme art' as essential preconditions for the practices of 'musicalising' literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[5] Wolf further uses his survey of aesthetic theory to identify 'features which were historically regarded as typical of music and less of other media... even if in some cases, such as emotionality and harmony, their typicality may seem dubious from a strictly theoretical point of view' (108). Having established the relevant theoretical and historical background, Wolf goes on to demonstrate how certain authors 'musicalised' their fiction through structural analogies and sensory qualities, among other means.

Though it has not tended to be branded as 'intermedial analysis', study of the relations among medium-specific techniques and signifiers already plays a significant role in opera and cinema scholarship. In the edited volume *Wagner and Cinema*, for example, David Neumeyer discusses film composer Max Steiner's development of an 'effective treatment of music appropriate to the new medium of sound film'. While Steiner himself claimed to write his scores 'like an opera', Neumeyer argues that Steiner additionally drew on popular melodrama and operetta.[6] The discussion turns not only on the historical fact of Steiner's compositional background, but also

[3] Irina O. Rajewsky, 'Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality', *Intermédialités* 6 (2005), 44.

[4] Citron also mentions Italian studies scholar Bernhard Kuhn, who draws on theories of intermediality developed by Wolf and Rajewsky (in ways different from Citron) in *Die Oper im italienischen Film* (Essen, 2005), and articles including 'The film-opera *Aida* (1953): intermediality and operatics', *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance* 2 (2009), 19–33.

[5] Wolf relies heavily on John Neubauer's *The Emancipation of Music from Language* (New Haven, 1986) for his historical account of the relation between music and words.

[6] David Neumeyer, 'The Resonance of Wagnerian Opera and Nineteenth-Century Melodrama in the Film Scores of Max Steiner,' *Wagner and Cinema*, ed. Jeongwon Joe and Sander Gilman (Bloomington, 2010), 114–15.

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on the properties of these other 'media'. Film, melodrama and operetta – but not opera – share two fundamental conditions: that the actors speak rather than sing, and that the music is intermittent. Neumeyer's attention to these factors enable him to distinguish between melodramatic and operatic modes in Steiner's scores.

Rather than connect the theory of intermediality to existing concerns in opera and cinema studies, however, Citron uses it to introduce a new topic for consideration. For her, Wolf's study of intermediality 'offers a simple and elegant system to categorise the relative importance of media when they combine'. Citing Wolf, she explains that there are two main types of medial combination. Overt intermediality occurs when 'both media are directly present with their typical or conventional signifiers'. Covert intermediality, by contrast, occurs when 'two conventionally distinct media' participate 'in the signification of an artifact in which, however, only one of the media appears directly with its typical or conventional signifiers', the other being 'indirectly present "within" the first medium'. In situations of covert intermediality, one medium – the one directly present – is considered 'dominant', while the medium appearing within the other is 'non-dominant' (7–8).

In practice, Citron's application of this framework to her case studies takes the form of recurrent meditations on whether opera remains recognisable *qua* opera in its filmic contexts. Arias, we learn, tend to 'signif[y] strongly as opera' and thus to function as overt mediality (87). Instrumental numbers, by contrast, may be heard as conventional film music, in which case 'opera's signifiers lose their meaning as opera' (86). In the case of *Sunday, Bloody Sunday*, Citron suggests that different volume levels of Mozart's trio might alter their intermedial status by affecting the 'presence and impact of the operatic music' (233). Ultimately, however, she reasons that the number 'may not have to be loud to be identified as the operatic music'. She also entertains the possibility that repetitions of the trio might naturalise it 'into the movie's medial realm as film music', but concludes that 'it remains a signifier of opera and represents one of the two media of overt intermediality' (234). Lest we think operatic singing be the decisive factor in establishing 'overt' status, Citron finds in *Moonstruck* that when instrumental arrangements of numbers from *La bohème* accompany a character's speech, the new combination of music with text and emotional gestures also 'reinforces the ontology of opera and creates an entity that signifies "opera"' (187).

Citron's concern with determining overt or covert status has little to do with Wolf's analytical project. It does, however, call to mind other work on intermediality. As Jay Bolter has written, 'if intermediality is in general the study of relationships of one medium or media form to others, remediation describes a particular relationship in which homage and rivalry are combined. In a remediating relationship, both newer and older forms are involved in a struggle for culture recognition.'[7] A type of intermedial analysis that dealt with the combination of homage and rivalry – with the struggle between newer and older forms – might prove a fruitful avenue to develop

[7] Jay David Bolter, 'Transference and Transparency: Digital Technology and the Remediation of Cinema', *Intermédialités* 6 (2005), 13–14.

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Citron's framework, leading to new understandings of the dynamics of opera/film encounters, and of the cultural work they perform.

Citron's own study, meanwhile, might have benefited from a more considered engagement with intermedial studies than is evident here. Theoretical and historical reflections on the relation between the signifying systems of opera and film – two desiderata of Wolf's brand of intermedial analysis – would, for example, have strengthened her discussion of *The Godfather* trilogy, which hinges on what it means to be 'operatic'. As Citron shows, director Francis Ford Coppola and critics alike recognised an 'operatic' quality in the *Godfather* films. Unfortunately, however, these figures' comments serve to authorise rather than to inform Citron's discussion of 'operatic style' in the films, which unfolds as a search for their every conceivable resemblance to opera, rather than as an investigation of which aspects are demonstrably more typical of opera than of other media. Thus we are told that the films feature 'a Classical shooting style' similar to that of Jean Renoir and Orson Welles, but also that the shooting style 'suggests the spaciousness and elegance of grand opera'; that the style of cinematographer Gordon Willis was grounded in photography, but that the resulting 'urge towards reflection might be likened to opera's ability to encourage reflection through the unfolding of music in time' (26–7). And when we read that the 'dark visual tone' of the films has an 'aesthetic appeal [that] lifts it beyond mass media into a more consciously beautiful realm, such as opera', or that the use of colour in general 'gives a feeling of artfulness. This itself is operatic', we learn more about the author's subjective views on beauty and art than about what constitutes the operatic mode (32).

Where Citron discusses the opera/film encounter in specific rather than abstract terms, by contrast, her analyses work well in revealing a significant 'intermedial' phenomenon: the tendency of opera to spill over from the stage or recording medium that would contain it, into the filmic narrative and discourse. Such medial boundary crossings are especially salient in films that incorporate staged operas, and which thereby have the ability to code certain combinations of music, speech and image as operatic. Thus in *The Godfather III*, the Easter procession that takes place in the performance of *Cavalleria rusticana* provides a means of 'operaticising' the San Gennaro parade in *Godfather II* (48). In *Moonstruck*, the instrumental arrangements of music from *La bohème* – an opera the main characters listen to on record and attend at the Metropolitan Opera – serve as underscoring for emotionally overwrought speech, making the imitation of the operatic discourse explicit. In *La Cérémonie*, a telecast of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* merges with the scene of the (soon-to-be-murdered) family watching it. After Don Giovanni sings 'De vieni alla finestra, o mio tesoro, deh vieni a consolar il pianto mio' ('Oh come to the window, my treasure, oh come and heal my pain') the mother of the family moves to the window and looks outside (156). Such elaborate interconnections between opera and film – involving a range of techniques and a variety of aesthetic effects – attest to the more than casual nature of the opera/film encounter.

Citron's selection of films is wide-ranging. They come from America, France and Britain, and include drama and comedy, full opera-films as well as MTV-like

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treatments of individual numbers. Chronologically, however, the selection is more limited: all the films date from 1970 to 2005. That this period provides Citron her requisite 'films of recognised quality or influence', in which opera 'provides access to the very meaning of the film' (2) is surely not coincidental. Films of this 'post-classical' era lend themselves to auteurist readings, and the notion that a film realises its director's creative vision guides Citron's discussions. Citron frequently relates the treatment of an opera to the director's style (the relation between *Don Giovanni* and filmic events reflects Claude Chabrol's trademark 'opacité', for example), while saying nothing of the work of sound editors or music supervisors (sound editor Walter Murch's decision to mute Michael Corleone's cry for greater emotional impact at the end of *Godfather III* is hidden in an endnote). Citron also calls for a new understanding of *auteur* that would extend to opera-film directors such as Ponnelle, so that they might be considered 'just as imaginative and individual as *auteurs* of film' while also being recognised as obedient to the music (134).

The ability of opera and film directors alike to realise the essential meanings of an opera makes possible what Citron sets forth as the overarching argument of *When Opera Meets Film*: 'that opera can reveal something fundamental about a film, and film can do the same for an opera' (1). It is worth comparing this position with Michal Grover-Friedlander's, that the transposition of opera into film 'reveals the specificity of each [medium], in ways that a consideration of opera or film on its own terms cannot'.[8] Where Grover-Friedlander deals with the essential characteristics of media (the nature of the operatic voice, for example), Citron deals instead with the essential meanings of operatic works. Thus examining the use of 'Soave' in *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* and *Closer* 'contributes to the understanding of each film at its deepest level, which like *Così* resides in those mysterious places of desire', or again, 'the examination of one operatic number in multiple films … expands our sense of why directors choose a particular operatic piece, and how that piece contributes something fundamental to the film and provides access to its core' (213). Citron's 'opera/film encounters' are the work of auteurs: they result from visionary directors engaging with (or perhaps intuitively understanding) great music.

We might dwell further on that idea of the 'opera/film encounter'. It represents one of several evocative characterisations of the relation between opera and film in the scholarly lexicon, and highlights the distance between the two media. The title of Joe and Theresa's book, *Between Opera and Cinema*, for instance, suggests at once an overlap and a gap: hybrid forms may be found in the space between, but this 'between' exists only because opera and cinema remain apart. Grover-Friedlander's 'attraction of cinema to opera' adds directionality to the distanced relationship. It is meant to 'suggest that films deal with opera as an object of desire that may also be perilous to their autonomy or strict cinematic identity'.[9] While cinema may approach opera, however, opera remains aloof, untouched by cinema's aspirations. The combination of 'opera/film', with its slash between the media, and 'encounter', with

[8] Michal Grover-Friedlander, *Vocal Apparitions: The Attraction of Cinema to Opera* (Princeton, 2005), 1.
[9] Grover-Friedlander, *Vocal Apparitions*, 2.

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its association with alterity, makes the point most strongly. Their long history of interaction notwithstanding, opera and film remain alien to one another. When opera meets film, it is perpetually as if for the first time (leaving one to wonder whether this is the reason for, or the result of the field's preference for case studies).

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In his introduction to *Opera and Video: Technology and Spectatorship,* Héctor J. Pérez writes not of encounters, affinities or betweens but of 'convergence', offering an alternative way to conceptualise the relation between opera and film in its multiple formats. To speak of 'convergence' is to invoke the wider technological and cultural context in which opera and film circulate today. As Ithiel de Sola Pool wrote in 1983, 'A process called the "convergence of modes" is blurring the lines between media … so the one-to-one relationship that used to exist between a medium and its use is eroding.'[10] Pérez points to the fact that opera arrives through media that also deliver other types of experiences, and that these media make opera on screen available anywhere one can access the internet. 'Convergence has knocked on opera's door', Pérez writes, 'and the answer can be experienced in what is on offer' – from the Teatro Madrid's service for delivering opera to subscribers' computers or mobile devices, to the Metropolitan Opera's HD broadcasts to cinemas. The conditions that once identified opera with a particular kind of environment and experience no longer pertain.

Convergence (according to one of its leading theorists, Henry Jenkins) 'refers to a process, not an endpoint'.[11] When this process first knocked on opera's door, Pérez does not say, but his essay collection – spawned by the international workshop on opera and video held at the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia/Instituto Valenciano de la Música in 2010 – seeks to provide a historical perspective, thereby putting today's convergence in light of the longer relationship between opera and audiovisual media, and between spectators and technology. For the most part, its authors avoid repeating conventional wisdom about the realism of cinema and television and artificiality of opera, or about the immediacy and presence of live performance and inferiority of mediatised forms, instead attending to the ways opera and audiovisual media have interpenetrated and assimilated one another since the turn of the previous century.

Gabriela Cruz, for example, focuses on an aspect of mediatised opera often overshadowed by screens, cameras and viewers: sound recording. Taking as a point of departure the new scholarly consensus, crystallised by Christopher Morris's 2010 *Opera Quarterly* essay 'Digital Diva: Opera on Video', that technological mediation is 'essential to lyrical fruition today' (14), Cruz examines earlier moments at which human voice and technology came together in the production of 'bel canto' (a term she uses not to refer to a specific style of operatic singing but rather to embrace types of idealised singing that evoke wonder). Disney's *Cinderella* (1950) offers a telling case

[10] Ithiel de Sola Pool, *Technologies of Freedom* (1983), cited by Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York, 2006), 10.

[11] Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 16.

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for its deliberate juxtaposition of poor and ideal singing. For the poor, Cinderella's step-mother and sisters play together as a trio of voice, flute and piano, the sound quality matched to the parlour environment. For the ideal, Cinderella sings while scrubbing the floor, her voice possessing qualities of evenness and proximity peculiar to sound recording, and typical of telephone and radio – a kind of 'hyper-real vocality'. Additionally, she sings in harmony with herself thanks to multi-track recording. 'The historical point made by the singing voice of Cinderella', Cruz writes, 'was that already by 1950 the natural voice was an object of the past' (19). Cruz goes on to find this modern condition anticipated by Kurt Weill's *Der Zar läß sich photographieren* (1928), which with its scene wherein characters sing over the gramophone play-back of Weill's 'Tango Angèle', 'presents lyrical beauty as an object arising from the collaboration between a singer and a gramophone' (15).

Discussing the first thirty years of opera on Italian television (1954–84), Emanuele Senici examines three moments that illustrate a trajectory from 'production' to 'documentation', as well as the influence of television upon opera. Initially, opera on television was produced in the studio and 'characterised by a profound tension between a traditional operatic aesthetic and an incipient television one' (57). As 'the medium of the close-up', television heightened the need for accuracy in lip-synching while also being 'foreign to the visual aesthetic of opera as performed in the theatre' (a questionable assumption, perhaps, given the historical importance of opera glasses). Being put to use without thought to its relation to traditional operatic aesthetics, the close-up had an impact on the selection of performers: they now had to be about the same age as the characters they played, and good looks were prioritised over acting ability. Senici's main idea, however, is not that television failed to respect traditional operatic aesthetics, but rather that the 'question of what is "realistic" or "anti-realistic", "natural" or "artificial"' is medium specific (54). The point is made by a video production of *Don Pasquale* directed by Alessandro Brissoni: the presentation of the overture includes elements of the theatrical experience (showing the orchestra and a theatre curtain), but also includes the four main characters fading in and out as televisual apparitions. Senici finds that the orchestra and theatrical apparatus acquire an artificial cast while the 'elements belonging exclusively to television seem somehow more "natural," more "real"' (57). By the 1970s, however, 'the ideology of liveness, that "I-was-there" fever' (61) had taken hold, resulting in broadcasts of theatrical productions dominated by long shots of the stage that left the visual dimension incomprehensible on the small television screen. This ideology continued to (and beyond) Senici's final moment, in 1984, when Luca Ronconi staged Rossini's *Il viaggio a Reims* as a television event, putting cameras on stage and outside the theatre to relay images to an on-stage screen. The video of the production, however, alternated long-shots of the stage with medium-shots of the singers, in the process losing the production's television-event concept. While television strove to present the live event, opera challenged its ability to do so, thereby exposing television's claims to documentation.

True to the book's subtitle of 'technology and spectatorship', several contributors discuss ways in which video techniques alter the ratio between the senses, or the

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quality of engagement with opera. Comparing the temporality of opera in the theatre and on film, Delphine Vincent suggests that the alternation between action and set pieces in the theatre corresponds to an alternation between the dominance of vision and hearing – an alternation erased by the consistently visual dominance of video (83). Gaia Varon examines video sequences for overtures, identifying four main ways the image content and editing treat the music: as background music, film music, programme music, or (absolute) symphonic music. Each of these sound–image relationships implies a certain mode of listening, respectively: absent-minded, 'unhearing', semantic, or some selection of analytical, emotional, immersive and contemplative. Jaume Radigales compares the use of lip-synch in Joseph Losey's *Don Giovanni* (1978) and Hans Jürgen Syberberg's *Parsifal* (1982). Losey aimed for a 'natural' connection between sound and image (at the great logistical cost of recording the recitatives in the film's various locations for proper acoustics), while Syberberg deliberately mismatched sound and image, pairing an adult male singing voice with a boy's body. In this context, Radigales observes that the mismatch of voice with on-screen body undermines naturalism and creates a distancing effect for the spectator.

Turning to a more contemporary phenomenon, Áine Sheil examines the interviews and commentaries by stage directors included as bonus features on opera DVDs. The results show that Citron's expectation that directors reveal the essence of an opera is widely shared. As Sheil writes, '21st-century opera directors are as likely as ever to trace their authority to the intentions of dead composers' (130). Thus Calixto Bieito justifies his production of Berg's *Wozzeck* in terms of its fidelity to the composer's ideas: his transformation of soldiers into refinery workers amounts to 'a superficial detail. Deep down it's just the same. I've kept the essence' (135). Such claims – which assume that operas have an 'original essence' – partake of the 'vexed history' of the work concept (133). They also make possible a kind of 'extreme interpretation' at odds with the 'conservation' some critics call for (135). Even as they uphold the 'perceived sanctity' of the composer's intentions, DVD bonus features also celebrate the director as an artist. Both elements are captured by the production aesthetics of DVD features in addition to directors' words: thus Nicholas Hytner is filmed in the library at Glyndebourne surrounded by an authorising canon, while a zoom-in on Bieito's eyes emphasises the creative vision and authority of the director. Sheil comes to the conclusion that 'even though music-making on the whole, and opera in particular, involves elaborate chains of collaboration and reception, and even though poststructuralist criticism has long questioned the stability of texts and idea of exclusive authorship, the need for authority and authorisation persists to this day within opera' (149).

The book concludes with two contributions from practitioners: an interview with Pietro D'Agostino, video director at the Gran Teatre del Liceu; and an essay by composer José María Sánchez-Verdú on his *Libro de las estancias* (*Book of Abodes*, 2009). The presentation of Sánchez-Verdú's composition as the endpoint of this book on opera and video seems a kind of provocation. Nowhere does Sánchez-Verdú refer to the work as an opera; it is, rather, a 'musical, architectural and visual

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installation', involving the careful distribution of singers, instrumentalists and electronics in space, as well as the projection of colored lights. It calls for a special manner of using the voice he calls 'intimate singing', in which the voice sets another body vibrating, such that one cannot hear the original. Sánchez-Verdú also had a new instrument developed for the work, called the auraphon. It consists of four tam-tams and four gongs distributed in space and controlled from a mixing table (precisely how, Sánchez-Verdú does not elaborate). The spatial arrangement of sound, as well as the ability of listeners to move about are essential to the work. As Sánchez-Verdú writes, 'the audience is free and autonomous to see, to hear, to approach the sound source or keep at a distance; it reacts to sound and light individually, according to each one's own free choice' (169).

With its mobile listeners in three-dimensional space, *Libro de las estancias* cannot be distributed through today's mass media without drastic alteration to its intended modes of looking and listening. Of the many implications one might draw, one is that the audiovisual technology adequate for *Libro* is soon to arrive. In response to a question about HD, the video director D'Agostino remarks, 'it might sound strange, but what is interesting about opera on video is that we are always on the cutting edge of technology development', as evidenced by the early adoption of HD, and current experimentations with new 3D technologies (156).

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With *When Opera Meets Film* and *Opera and Video*, mediatised opera studies gains a host of valuable case studies. Additional studies may yet be needed, however, before a more comprehensive picture emerges – one in which traditions, trends and transformations in the relations of opera to audiovisual media, and in the state of opera itself take meaningful shape. Senici observes the new challenge before us: where once 'opera on television' was synonymous with 'opera on video', it is now necessary 'to distinguish between different types of videos, different media through which they are disseminated, and different screens on which they are seen, which of course entail different modes of fruition' (65).

The critical vocabularies and methodologies developing around opera on screen, meanwhile, are not only crucial for grappling with opera cultures of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. They could also open up new approaches to the more distant past. In 1641, in the wake of the great success of *La finta pazza* at the Teatro Novissimo in Venice, there appeared a publication entitled *Cannochiale per la finta pazza – Telescope for La finta pazza*. In fifty-five pages, it described the visual dimension – the machines, costumes and actions – of the opera for the benefit of those who missed it. As Ellen Rosand writes, its author 'hoped that even the remotest of readers would be able to imagine what was seen by the front-row audience in the theatre'.[12] A conceptual blend of print and telescope, *Cannochiale* suggests that to explore further 'the history of the relationship between opera and audiovisual technology

[12] Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Creation of a Genre* (Berkeley, 1991), 95.

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from its origins to today' (9), as *Opera and Video* seeks to do, we might need to go back to the beginnings of opera itself. Thus while the literature on opera and film in its multiple formats continues to grow, there remain centuries of history to which mediatised opera studies might also productively turn.

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