

# The Spell of Live Performance:

## HD Opera and Liveness Today

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at HD opera events, with the purpose of revealing how they reshape our understanding and usage of the concept of liveness. The popularity of *The Met: Live in HD* series in the last decade inspired other art companies (theatre, ballet, and even museums) to follow the same model and broadcast live in movie theatres. Together they seem to have shifted both our understanding of, and attitude towards, liveness. The discussion about liveness in the last century has revolved around the distinction between live and recorded, and around the co-dependent opposition between original and copy. Recently, liveness and the discourse about it have been influenced by a now blurry distinction between live and recorded, and by the emergence of online media. The emergence of HD events, which reposition liveness in a rediscovered environment – the movie theatre –, brings liveness to a new theoretical impasse, which I am tackling in my thesis.

My investigation follows liveness through the lens of the long debated relationship between classical music and technology. I approach this relationship by having a close look at the production and reception of live broadcast events, starting with the radio in the 1920s, and focusing on HD opera as a new medium. Furthermore, I identify trends in how liveness is constructed, evaluated and perceived, taking into account the fact that over the decades, the understanding of liveness evolved with media usage, and also within its cultural and social context. My research shows that liveness as a concept does not stand and evolve only in relationship with the production and reception of live broadcast events, and as constructed by broadcasting media, but that it is

rather continuously shaped and redefined by its rapport with what I call *liveness practice*, a set of expectations and practices related to liveness that are common to all mediated events, and acknowledged by consumers as such. I claim that, by encompassing public venues, HD events expand our concept of liveness practice. Consequently, they render liveness in classical music as a fully accepted alternative to live performance.

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continuous interest in my work and his encouragement helped me in key moments of my program. During our reading course together, I was so inspired by his passion for media studies and technology and by the dynamic discussions driven by it, that my perspective on my thesis topic shifted from a primarily musicological and aesthetic approach to a media centred one. As a member of my committee, he reminded me to think philosophically about media and technology, and to ask simple but highly relevant questions, advice that guided me throughout my writing process. I am indebted and really grateful for all his help and support.

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## Introduction

In 2006, the Metropolitan Opera in New York started to broadcast successfully its productions in movie theatres. They are now reaching over three million spectators in 64 countries. Today, many opera houses around the world follow the Met in HD series model and broadcast their productions. Moreover, pop concerts, sports events, theatre, ballet, and even museum exhibitions can be enjoyed on cinematic screens around the world, which shows that live broadcasts of cultural events in movie theatres have become viable and popular in less than a decade. The key feature that connects all these events and actually constitutes the attraction of this constructed new medium is the fact that they are *live*. The visual technology used in the movie theatre is not completely new, nor is the location a new venue; what is new is the valuable experience of *liveness* enjoyed in the familiar public space reserved for many decades now for recorded materials – movies. Indeed, these events attract their audience by bringing live transmissions in the familiar public venue of the movie theatre. While the movie theatre redefines its function, our perception of live performance, live broadcasts, and our understanding of liveness are challenged once again.

The relationship between the Metropolitan Opera and live broadcast is not new. In fact, it is almost impossible to talk about the history of the Metropolitan Opera in the last century without acknowledging live broadcast as one of the most important technological tools that the institution used to maintain and augment its popularity. Similarly, one cannot discuss the history of live broadcast and liveness without recognizing the impact of live classical music and opera transmissions on the radio culture of the 1920s. Starting

with the first live broadcasts in 1910, which since 1931 became the weekly Saturday afternoon live radio transmissions that still run today, and continuing with the telecasts in the late 1970s and 1980s, the Met shared a mutually influencing relationship with live broadcast that is now also sustained through the Met in HD series. The collaboration between broadcasting media and the Met greatly influenced the emergence of the concept of liveness in classical music, as well as its development and ongoing transformation throughout the decades. The concept of liveness and its value in classical music revolve around the distinction between live and recorded, reflecting the long-lasting debate about the original and its reproduction as initiated by Walter Benjamin in his 'decay of the aura,' and continued by Theodor W. Adorno in various writings about classical music and its relationship with radio.

Regardless of the fact that in the last century classical music relies heavily on technological mediation through both recordings and broadcasts to preserve its cultural status and presence, the value of live performance in classical music is apparently untouched. Other genres of music, such as popular music, and other types of performative arts, such as theatre and musical theatre, integrate mediation on stage with ease. However, classical music institutions, and opera halls especially, take pride in the fact that they use minimal or no mediation during the performance. That unmediated performance is essential in opera production is confirmed by the numerous controversies and the backlash that various opera houses receive whenever they try to use even the most harmless sound technology in their productions.<sup>1</sup> The pristine state of live

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<sup>1</sup> During HD transmissions, sometimes the Met needs to use body microphones, but only for certain scenes when the sound is not picked up properly due to the placement of the singers on the stage. The voices are heard properly in the opera house, and thus the actual live performance is not mediated at all. Even though the body microphones are used for broadcast purposes only, and scarcely, the Met still makes sure to

performance offers to live broadcast the opportunity to continually negotiate the relationship between the value of live performance and mediation.

In my argument, I will not try to reinforce the value of live performance within the complex cultural context of classical music. My intention is rather to highlight liveness as a phenomenon that continues to exist, evolve, reshape and transform together with the surrounding media, while still functioning as the most important reminder of the value of live performance in classical music and of the never ending tension between classical music and mediation. Since liveness is constructed around what we perceive as valuable when attending a live performance, an analysis of the Met in HD series puts into perspective this relationship in the context of today's rapidly changing media.<sup>2</sup>

It is undeniable that broadcasting media also share a valuable relationship with other genres of music, such as popular music. While the production of live broadcasts of popular music concerts is similar to other events, such as classical music or sports, and feature simultaneity in time with the event, they are theoretically challenging. Popular music can be easily a mix of live and recorded, with its hybrid nature having a direct impact on its liveness. The relationship between popular music and liveness is thus reflective of the development and use of sound technology in popular music, and also on the evolution of musical trends. Because of that, a clear distinction between live and

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explain thoroughly when and why they use them. Anthony Tommasini, "Wearing a Wire at the Opera, Secretly, of Course," in *New York Times*, June 28, 2013, at [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/30/arts/music/wearing-a-wire-at-the-opera-secretly-of-course.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/30/arts/music/wearing-a-wire-at-the-opera-secretly-of-course.html?_r=0) (accessed on August 10, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> I acknowledge the dramatic effect that recordings have had on classical music culture and listening practice since the late 1800s until this day, as well as their role in how classical music discourse negotiates the tension between classical music as a performative art and sound technology. However, while I will take advantage of the abundant and valuable literature dealing with this phenomenon, it is not my intention here to showcase the undeniable impact that recent media has on recordings and their accessibility, mobility, etc. and how that compares to live broadcast.

recorded can be challenging, even in live concerts. In his book, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (2008), Philip Auslander makes an interesting analysis of the difficulty in defining live performance in popular music as distinct from recordings. In his view, the relationship between live and recorded is that of “a competitive opposition at the level of cultural economy,” which does not necessarily derive from the intrinsic characteristics of live and mediated performances, but is a result of cultural and historical contingencies.<sup>3</sup> Auslander argues that, in the context of current usage of media and sound technology in music, we have no reason to see the live as preceding the mediatized anymore, and that the relationship between live and mediatized should be defined as one of mutual dependence, and not of opposition as it is often erroneously perceived.<sup>4</sup>

While Auslander’s approach holds true for the genres that he investigates (pop and rock music) and offers a valuable starting point for a discussion about live broadcast of classical music and opera today, the concert culture of classical music and its “high art” aesthetic values require a slightly different approach that has to take into consideration live performance as a technologically unmediated event. Even though mediated listening practice of classical music and in some cases learning practice resemble those of other genres of music, performance and production practice still revolve around live unmediated performance. This aspect obviously plays differently into our notion of liveness with regards to classical music than with most other genres of music that are subject to live broadcast.

But our notion of liveness is not challenged only by the blurry distinction between live and recorded as present in popular music. Traditional broadcasting media and its

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<sup>3</sup> Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

usage, such as television, but also new online media, change and make liveness more theoretically complex than ever before. Two recent and notable contributions to the discussion about liveness in relation to old and new media are Andrew Crisell's *Liveness & Recording in the Media* (2012), and Paul Sanden's *Liveness in Modern Music. Musicians, Technology, and the Perception of Performance* (2013). While none of them touch on liveness in relation to classical music or the Met, they offer a starting point in the investigation of liveness as a concept and as a phenomenon.

Crisell makes an analysis of how both live and recorded materials are present in live broadcast today by showing in detail how live television broadcasts are actually pervaded by recorded segments. Moreover, Crisell talks about privacy and domesticity as some of the most striking features of broadcasting: "it is convenient to see broadcasting as part of that great movement towards an individualism of ownership and consumption that has developed over the last 100 years and more,"<sup>5</sup> but he also acknowledges that live broadcasts of some major events can be enjoyed "in pubs and clubs, not to mention open spaces like town squares and stadiums."<sup>6</sup> Both issues discussed by Crisell are important aspects that actually play a significant role in the construction of liveness in the Met in HD series. As I will show in my analysis, unlike the experience of attending an opera production in the opera hall, the live transmission uses recorded segments before the performance and during the intermission, a practice that is intended to connect the spectator with the presence of the Met as an institution. Furthermore, by bringing live broadcast to the public space of the movie theatre, the Met in HD series offers to the

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew Crisell, *Liveness and Recording in the Media* (London; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

audience the opportunity to engage in various social interactions associated with attending any live opera production, thus creating a completely new liveness experience.

The investigation of the concept of liveness is continued by Paul Sanden, who examines a wide range of musical genres and practices, from live electronic music to televised hip-hop performances. Sanden considers that while *traditional* liveness “may have succumbed to mediatization over the past half century,”<sup>7</sup> several new “categories” of liveness emerge, all based on elements of traditional live performance. He shows how the complexity of liveness grows together with online media. His analysis offers theoretical tools that will help understand and shape a definition of liveness in the new context of opera broadcasts in movie theatres. My goal in this thesis is to further theorize the phenomenon of liveness within this specific context. I am interested to explore the impact that this newly redefined liveness has on HD opera<sup>8</sup> and its popularity. Furthermore, I hope to unveil if and how liveness in HD opera reshapes and renegotiates the relationship between classical music and technological mediation in the wake of the latest media developments.

As with other types of live broadcast (radio, television), liveness continues to constitute one of the essential connectors between the distant spectator and what is still commonly perceived as an authentic operatic experience (i. e., attending a live performance in the opera hall). The liveness of HD events also helps distant audiences to

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<sup>7</sup> Paul Sanden, *Liveness in Modern Music. Musicians, Technology, and the Perception of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> In this paper, I will use the following terminology, sometimes interchangeable: *HD opera* for the new form of opera event presented by the Met, *HD transmission* for live broadcasts in movie theaters, *HD event*, for any kind of event (theatre, ballet) that uses the same concept for live broadcasts, and *HD medium* to identify the combination between broadcasting technology and the venue – the movie theatre – employed by HD events. By keeping HD as a particle in all my terminology, I am able to maintain a connection with both the title of the series that inspired my research – *The Met: Live in HD* –, and also with the enabling technology that created an opportunity for these events to emerge.

value the operatic experience despite sometimes obvious technical issues, such as transmission interruptions, low sound volume in the movie theatre, and even temporary lack of sound. Moreover, liveness functions as an intermedial link between cinema and live broadcasts, by offering to the spectator in the movie theatre what movies or live television broadcasts cannot: continuous, uncut action in real time, in a contained public space, and on the big screen. But I hope to show that liveness not only functions as a specific characteristic that differentiates between regular movies and an opera event in the movie theatre. HD opera claims back the movie theatre as a space for liveness, while extending the territory of live broadcasts from domestic and individual space (radio, television, internet) to public and shared space. My claim is that, by changing what used to be a constitutive element of liveness – live broadcast as a private and personal experience – into an experience that is shared with the community in a public venue, HD events contribute to a shift without precedent in what I call *liveness practice*.

The concept of “liveness practice” is a theoretical tool that I employ in order to look at liveness from the perspective of the audience. My choice to introduce a new concept was motivated by the need to look at liveness from a wider perspective, one that would not see liveness through the lens of the media involved in live broadcasts or that of the characteristics of the content provided. In my view, the audience is instrumental in the evaluation and validation of liveness. While over the decades, media and the manipulation of content have varied greatly in live broadcasts, the audience has had a long-standing, determinant role in how live broadcasts, and consequently liveness are received. It is therefore also through the eyes of the audience that we need to look at liveness.

Considering that before HD events the traditional media used for live broadcasts – radio and television – placed the experience of liveness in the environment of the domestic space, the listeners and the spectators at home had no choice but to see liveness as a private experience (but shared with distant others). Even when a wider audience would listen or watch live broadcasts as a group, such as sporting events in pubs, they would know that while the broadcast was meant for a wide audience, it was conceived for home viewing. Nor was the pub a venue dedicated primarily to live broadcast, and neither were the live broadcasts conceived primarily to be enjoyed in public spaces. The expectations and behaviours generated by experiencing liveness mainly at home shaped liveness practice to comprise real, live events, meant for a wide, but dispersed audience. HD events change the experience of liveness for the audience: their expectations now include the possibility of enjoying the event in a public venue. The audience is now able to validate the liveness of the event as a community, as it happens traditionally with live performance. To grasp this significant change in how liveness is currently enjoyed, I define liveness practice as the multitude of expectations and practices that surround live broadcasts, as acknowledged and experienced by the audience.

My work is twofold: the first two chapters are dedicated to classical music live broadcasts and liveness in their historical development, and the last three chapters focus on the new HD medium and the relationship between HD opera and liveness today. While my investigation will look at various moments in the history of liveness and liveness practice, it is not an exhaustive attempt to identify all their stages of development. In order to accurately contextualize HD opera and liveness practice in its

current form, I will carve out pivotal moments in the history of live broadcasts and will flesh out relevant ideas and opinions that make up the reception of liveness during these times. Through my analysis, I hope to highlight the tremendous change happening recently in classical music culture, while also offering a new theoretical tool for the investigation of liveness as an artistic, cultural, and – not less important – social phenomenon.

My starting point is an analysis of live performance, which I develop in my first chapter, “Music and Technology: The Value of Live Performance.” More specifically, I am interested in revealing the underlying premises of liveness, by understanding how live performance was constructed as a unique and valuable event in classical music, once sound technology became available at the end of the nineteenth century. In order to do that, I will look briefly at player pianos and the phonograph, not from a historical perspective, but rather focusing on how these technologies are presented to the public, the relationship between natural sound and reproduced sound, and the growing interest for sound fidelity. My analysis shows that the discourse on the original and copy as constructed in the attempt to popularize newly emerged sound technologies reflects an underlying concern about mediation that is also present in aesthetic debates about the value of the work of art, such as Walter Benjamin’s discussion of the aura in his 1935 article, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” or R. G. Collingwood’s debate about the social role of live performance (1938).

Moreover, I show that the ambivalent attitude towards technology in relation to the arts is actually rooted in a wider social, cultural and philosophical context where the impact of technology on society is acknowledged. A close look at today’s views on live

performance reveals that the value of live performance as established at the beginning of sound reproduction still holds strongly and has an impact on how we understand liveness, even though sound technology is dramatically improved and diverse now. Theoretical views that approach the production of music invite us to see live performance from different angles. While James Lastra (2000) argues that the original is an aesthetic construct, Emily Thompson (2002) points out that practical aspects of live performance, such as acoustics, have an important impact on the reception and perception of sound. Regardless, I argue that live performance still represents a valuable and necessary element of classical music culture, which reinforces and contributes to the continuous legitimization of recordings, and also of liveness practice today.

My second chapter, “Classical Music and Live Broadcasts in the 1920s,” is an in-depth analysis of the impact of radio on classical music culture, with the purpose being to emphasize the cultural context where liveness actually emerged. My investigation of the beginnings of radio emphasises the mutual impact between classical music practice and the newly developing radio culture. I show that while classical music and opera play an undeniable role in the development and popularisation of the radio, they are also visibly transformed and challenged by the nature of the live broadcast. The nature of the radio involves the presence of live music in the home, which constitutes a big change from live performance which usually happens in a public place, and it contributes to the establishment of liveness practice as a dramatically different experience.

Radio opens a new chapter in the democratization of classical music, an issue that is intensely debated not only by theorists, such as Theodor Adorno, but also by music critics such as Thomas Archer, musicians such as Leopold Stokowski, and radio and

opera producers. In my analysis, I show that discussions revolve around the limited nature and the quality of live broadcasts. I also emphasise that the attitude towards democratization influences the reception and critique of radio in general and of the value of liveness in classical music in particular. Concerns regarding the status of classical music most often precede those about the quality of technology. Similar concerns are still present and become more transparent today, as debated by Peter Kivy (2001) in his discussion about the complexity of classical music.

In my third chapter, “HD Opera as a New Medium,” I launch a thorough investigation of HD opera as a newly constructed medium. My intention is to theorize HD opera from the perspective of its relationship with other pre-existing media, which inform our understanding of liveness in HD events. This choice is also motivated by the very nature of the HD events, which draw upon technology and practices long used by television and cinema. In my analysis I show that the presence of opera in movie theatres is actually not new, and that early cinema successfully hosted the first attempts to balance between the theatricality of the opera and the expected realism of the big screen. However, it is only with the HD events that would emerge a hundred years later that the relationship between opera and the big screen is thoroughly explored and improved upon.

My research reveals that HD opera emerged as a constructed intermedial medium, that engages in what Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin call *remediation* and *hypermediacy*, with the purpose of offering an experience that involves practices previously widely popularized by news and sport events. Furthermore, I show that HD events participate in and take advantage of current social media trends by engaging with their audiences, and also by mimicking the touring practice in popular music. My

analysis gives me the opportunity to identify the specificity of HD opera as a medium, and also its contribution to live broadcasts through innovation. By promoting a simulated aura and mediating the venue of the opera hall, HD events take full advantage of the movie theatre as a venue. Most importantly, HD events position liveness in a public space, which, as I show in subsequent chapters, constitutes a turning point in the recent transformation of liveness practice.

“Liveness in HD Opera” is the chapter where I discuss liveness in HD opera from a variety of perspectives: I am interested to see how liveness is constructed in these events, but also how it is received by the audience. Moreover, I am interested to see how the liveness of HD events shapes HD opera criticism and discourse. Last, but not least, I investigate the impact of HD liveness in recent live broadcast classical music events. This chapter outlines the basis of what I will come to define in my last chapter as liveness practice. It is the cultural impact of HD liveness and the changes brought by the HD medium to the experience of live broadcast that throw a completely new light on liveness.

In the analysis of the construction of liveness I show that the visuals take a determinant role in HD events. Cameras and how they are used in transmission become one of the most important elements that convey liveness. Liveness is also reinforced by how the performance is framed through the introductory and the intermission discourse and tone of the presenters. An examination of recent surveys and studies done on the reception of HD events, such as Martin Barker’s Report to Picturehouse Cinemas (2010) or NESTA’s “Beyond Live. Digital Innovation in the Performing Arts” (2010), shows that the liveness techniques used by HD events are highly efficient; respondents acknowledge the value of liveness in how they experience HD events. Most importantly,

my examination in this chapter reveals that the HD events generated a shift on how liveness is integrated in classical music culture: liveness becomes a valid, valuable and necessary alternative to live performance, and it is now seen as the new platform through which classical music connects closely with listeners around the globe.

In my last chapter, “Liveness Practice Today,” I propose and define liveness practice as a conceptual tool that allows me to see liveness from a wider perspective, somewhat detached from broadcasting media and live broadcast practices. I emphasise and build upon theories advanced by Philip Auslander and Nick Couldry, which position the audience at the centre of the liveness experience, but not from the perspective of reception and perception, but rather from the perspective of how audiences today engage with liveness. After looking closely at liveness through the lenses of various disciplines, Martin Barker (2013) concludes that “we need to explore directly the *rise of the new manners of participation*, to see the ways in which audiences communally produce new ways of ‘doing liveness’.”<sup>9</sup> To a certain extent the concept of liveness practice addresses this challenge, as it enables me to look at HD events and other new forms of live broadcasts through the lens of the audience and its experience with liveness. However, liveness practice is not constituted only by the practices that have developed over time around liveness and continue to do so with every new medium, but also by the expectations of the audience with regard to the experience of liveness. In the light of this new perspective, I show that HD events together with social media contribute to an unprecedented change in liveness practice. The location of liveness becomes variable: live broadcast can still be enjoyed in the private space of the home, but now it can also be

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<sup>9</sup> Martin Barker, *Live To Your Local Cinema: The Remarkable Rise of Livecasting* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.71.

experienced in the public space of the movie theatre and shared with the community. Moreover, immediacy becomes flexible and, surprisingly, accepted and valid even in classical music practice: by engaging audiences in public venues, captured live and encore presentations of HD events contribute successfully to liveness practice.

My “Conclusion” expands on characteristics of liveness practice that could become topics of future research. At the same time, I conclude by emphasizing the importance of the aspects that I chose to look at in this thesis: the value of live performance, radio, and HD opera. The history and cultural status of all three encompass the emergence, the essence, and the evolution of liveness practice, and thus constitute necessary points of departure in any discussion about liveness today.

## **Chapter I: Music and Technology: The Value of Live Performance**

A great deal of classical music is accessed today through recordings and broadcast rather than through live performance. Exposure to live classical music concerts is limited for most listeners interested in classical music, but that doesn't affect their appreciation and understanding of music, given the plethora of media that makes music so accessible today. It is thus not the live performance that creates the relationship between classical music and its broader audience, but mediation. Listeners are able to become experienced and knowledgeable not only because they are exposed to classical music recordings, but also because they take advantage of recordings as a medium, which can be listened to whenever, wherever, and as many times as the listener wishes. Regardless of this undeniable reality, music professionals and theorists as well as music listeners still value and praise live performance as a superior form of contact with the musical event. As I will show in this chapter, the attachment to live performance as an authentic experience is present today both in contemporary theories, as well as in the discourse of music professionals and institutions. Moreover, live concerts of popular and classical music continue to have a large audience, even when they use substantial technological support, which renders the experience a mixture of live and mediated visual and sonic elements.

In this context, it is not surprising that the status of live performance in musical culture is the starting point of any thorough discussion about live broadcast. More than being an intrinsic element of live broadcast, live performance as a value has been at the core of many aesthetic and musicological debates about classical music and technology since the first sound technology efforts were made. Musical culture in general has always

been intrigued by sound technology and reproducibility, which have been perceived not only as a challenge, but sometimes even as a threat to classical music and its reception by the public. In this context, historically, live performance has been regarded as a standard for any authentic musical experience, even though to some extent it is a product of mediation and technology, even more so today.

My analysis of live performance will reveal that there is a historical tradition of idealizing live performance and its aura in classical music that survived all media. The dichotomy between live and mediated initiated by how player pianos and phonographs were promoted at the beginning of the twentieth century was continued by theoretical accounts in the following decades. I will show how views such as Benjamin's "decay of the aura" became engrained in classical music discourse, thus making live performance a phenomenon central to any discussion about classical music and technology.

### **1. The Emergence of Live Performance as a Unique Event**

A musical work of art is as fleeting as the moment in which it is performed. Once one gains access to a reproduction of a performative work of art, he or she knows that unmediated contact with the original is not possible any more. A recording functions as a death mask, a testimony of the fact that the event already took place. One can still have unmediated access to the place and maybe to the performers involved in that particular live performance, but not to that specific performance in that particular moment in time. This detail might not seem important at first, but limiting the access to the uniqueness of the work of art to a sheer moment in time and space increases the value and impact of the unmediated experience. While contemporary technology pervades most cultural and

social experiences today, the fine line between a live experience and a mediated one can still be easily identified by audiences, even if contemporary production techniques may blur that line at times. Even though any live music event is actually subject to a degree of mediation given by the conditions of its production, experiencing live performance is still seen in opposition with enjoying a recording.

A live event consists of two necessary and non-negotiable elements: performing artists and an audience. A performative event cannot be defined as a live event if it does not involve human presence on stage and in the audience, and human performance. A live event can incorporate recorded and transmitted material and still be live; however, whenever technology is used to replace one of the intrinsic elements, the event becomes something else. A musical event without an audience is a rehearsal, a recording session, or a transmission; an event without live music is either lip-synched or playback or both,<sup>10</sup> and an event without performers (i.e., holographic events or fully digital performances) is seen as a multimedia, experimental event.

Historically, the discussion about live performance as we know it today was established by the first sound recordings. As I will show, the emergence of the phonograph and its usage brought a new perspective on live performance. By using live performance to promote and legitimate recordings, musical events were redefined and placed in a category of cultural events that were labeled as ‘live’ or ‘original’. But, in the same period, the idea that technology could and should offer a valid alternative to live performance was also reinforced by the popularity of a particular mechanised music

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<sup>10</sup> However, a combination of live singing with recorded background music would be categorized as a live event.

object – the self-playing piano.<sup>11</sup> These pianos promised an identical experience to both the performer and his audience, and were indeed advertised as the equivalent of a live performance:

Only the artistic interpretation, the musical versatility, and the wonderful scope of the living fingers of a master pianist can compare with the exquisite playing of the Tel-Electric, [...] it permits you to interpret perfectly world-famous compositions with all the original feeling, all the technique, and all the various shades and depths of expression as intended by the composer.<sup>12</sup>

The intention was to provide an approach that would enable the public to overlook mediation and the lack of uniqueness of the performance, to give the impression that there was no real difference between a live performance and a performance produced by the mechanical piano. In this way, mechanically produced music would gain the same status and value as any other piano performance. Their presence in the home and the impact that they had on the relationship between consumers and music has to be considered when talking about the how live performance was seen when sound technology emerged. The popularity of the player pianos was notable: 800,000 pianos were in operation by 1918 east of the Mississippi River alone.<sup>13</sup> Craig H. Roell documents R. F. Delderfield's story about how common player pianos could be in certain areas:

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<sup>11</sup> According to Craig H. Roell, the first player piano was sold in United States in 1897; the first recording of a recognized artist was made 1888 by Josef Hofmann. Craig H. Roell, *The Piano in America 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 40 and p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> Advertisement from *Country Life in America*, November 1912. From Jody Berland, "The Musicking Machine," in *Residual Media*, ed. by Charles R. Acland (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 310.

<sup>13</sup> Craig H. Roell, *The Piano in America 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 52.

If you chanced to pass along the avenue on a summer evening [...], you could in effect have anticipated the radio and television eras. Identical snatches of melody issued from every open window.<sup>14</sup>

By offering mechanised music to all who could afford to buy the instrument, - player pianos created an alternative to live performance. But it was with recordings that the debate about live performance vs. “canned music” started. As the quest for sound fidelity initiated by phonograph companies shows, recordings needed live performance for validation, and thus constructed live performance as a co-dependent opponent. In order to assign value to their products, many associated reproduced sound with the concept of sound fidelity. Edison’s *Tone Tests* offer one of the most illustrative historical examples in that direction. Starting in 1915, the Edison Company sponsored a series of over two thousand recitals where the audience could compare live performances with their recordings. Once the Diamond disc technology became available, Edison’s sound fidelity claims “hinged on the inability to distinguish between the recorded and the live.”<sup>15</sup> The company claimed that “three hundred phonograph experts found themselves incapable of distinguishing between the sounds produced by Belgian singer Alice Verlet and the re-creation of her voice with the New Edison Phonograph,”<sup>16</sup> and invited listeners to test the product themselves.

Sound fidelity of Edison’s innovation could be also tested in music stores, by taking “The Edison Realism Test.” Failure to “get the same emotional re-action experienced when you last heard the same kind of voice or instrument,” was blamed on

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>15</sup> Steve J. Wurtzler, *Electric Sounds: Technological Change and the Rise of Corporate Mass Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 123.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

“the fact that you have not wholly shaken off the influence of your surroundings,”<sup>17</sup> thus excluding the quality of the technology as a possible cause. The main goal of Edison’s test was to have reproductions accepted as authentic cultural acts. Consequently, according to Emily Thompson, listening to reproductions would be “implicitly accepted as culturally equivalent to the act of listening to live performers.”<sup>18</sup> Tone tests became “a tool, a resource that enabled them to transform their conception of what constituted ‘real music’ to include phonographic reproduction.”<sup>19</sup> The idea and the constructed value of sound fidelity helped new audiences to overlook mediation and consider the possibility of perceiving phonograph sound as live sound, despite obvious technical issues. As Jonathan Sterne points out, this was possible since there was a widespread desire for the phonograph to replicate sound successfully, but also because listeners had “a basic level of audile technique, [...] abilities to separate foreground and background sound in the reproduction itself.”<sup>20</sup>

I agree with Jonathan Sterne’s view that the claim made by any new and improved medium that it has “the ‘best-sounding’ or ‘perfect’ sound reproduction,” is indeed an unsustainable narrative. As Sterne points out, such a statement ultimately implies “vanishing mediation, where sources and copies move ever closer together until they are identical.”<sup>21</sup> But even though the goal is unattainable, consumers seem to enjoy every

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<sup>17</sup> Mark Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 22. The quotes are from the actual “Edison Realism Test” instructions.

<sup>18</sup> Emily Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1930* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), p. 238.

<sup>19</sup> Emily Thompson, “Machines, Music and the Quest for Fidelity: Marketing the Edison Phonograph in America, 1877-1925,” in *Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 79 (1995), p. 160.

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 261.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

new development towards such a goal. An idealistic perception of sound fidelity that indirectly keeps the sound of live performance in high regard continues to exist.

Kyle Devine points out that the myth of increasing fidelity has been continuously “inflated” by popular culture and advertisements, but also denied by scholarly writings, which see fidelity as “a socially constructed category: less a final destination than a moving target.”<sup>22</sup> While fidelity is indeed a functional concept, well defined by Sterne as “a set of procedures and aesthetics [that] had to be developed to stand in for reality within the system of reproduced sounds,”<sup>23</sup> I see fidelity also to function as a reflection of the value of live performance. Eric Rothenbuhler and John Durham Peters argue that the values of the audiophile are motivated by the perceived possibility of perfection. They suggest that fidelity functions as a transcendent value, which in some way connects the listener with the source of music: “For the audiophile, the endless hours of listening and tweaking and comparing and talking and worrying both prepare for and occasionally bring him or her into contact with the transcendent; it is a moment of fidelity when the equipment disappears and the pure music flows through.”<sup>24</sup> By being caught in the myth of fidelity, the listener is also engaging indirectly with live performance and its “perfect” sound. The underlying desire for the valuable live performance is confirmed by Steve Wurtzler: “The audiophile enjoys a fetishistic relationship to the means of representing, the means of reproduction, as the desire for ever greater fidelity hinges on the perception of an increased access to an original performance event.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Kyle Devine, “Imperfect Sound Forever: Loudness Wars, Listening Formations and the History of Sound Reproduction,” in *Popular Music*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (May, 2013), p. 162.

<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 285.

<sup>24</sup> Eric Rothenbuhler and John Durham Peters, “Defining Phonography: An Experiment in Theory,” in *Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 81, No. 2 (Summer 1997), p. 253.

<sup>25</sup> Steve Wurtzler, “She Sang Live, but the Microphone was Turned Off: The Live, the Recorded, and the

As I will show in my second chapter, the radio as a medium will build on the debates initiated by recordings, and will strive to improve sound fidelity by engaging in a completely new musical practice involving special studios and musical techniques. Indeed, the first decades at the beginning of the twentieth century feature a remarkable change in the status and practice of live performance, which was made possible by the emergence, development and popularisation of player pianos, phonographs and radio. In this context it is not surprising that theoretical accounts of the value of the original work of art became the focus of classical music discourse.

One of the most dominant lines of thought that surround the discourse about the original in art and that impacted musical discourse for decades was that inaugurated by Walter Benjamin in his 1935 “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” Benjamin’s view in relation to art revolves around human perception. In the context of the changes brought by reproduction technology, Benjamin argues that “the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity’s entire mode of existence.”<sup>26</sup> Our irremediably changed perception “can be comprehended as decay of the aura.” Aura is a quality attached to the original work of art and is defined as “the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be,” and is characterized by “presence in time and space, [and] its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.”<sup>27</sup>

Benjamin connects aura with authenticity, which is “outside technical reproducibility,” and is defined as “the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it

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Subject of Representation,” in *Sound Theory/Sound Practice*, ed. by Rick Altman (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 88.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936), in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, transl. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 222.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

has experienced.”<sup>28</sup> Aura is referring to the “here and now” of the work, to its spatial and temporal coordinates, and thus to its uniqueness and authenticity. Since “the presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity,”<sup>29</sup> no work of art can be considered authentic, unless it is presented in its original form. Not only is it that reproduction cannot render the aura of the work of art in its authenticity, but, having become so familiar with technical reproduction, we are now unable to see any work of art as auratic.

I agree with Susan Buck-Morss, who emphasizes that Benjamin’s article is not as much about “mass culture” as it is often interpreted, but about the faith of art in an age of industrialism.<sup>30</sup> The democratization of the arts constitutes an important part in the debate about reproduction to this day, and my investigation of the radio and the HD medium will showcase that in detail. But Benjamin’s theory of the aura, which is still reflected in musicological contemporary accounts, as I will show, is first and foremost about the aesthetic value of a work of art, and about how that aesthetic value can be experienced. Benjamin is not alone in his undertaking. A similar approach is that of R. G. Collingwood, who published his *Principles of Art* book, a revised version of his earlier *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art* (1925), two years after Benjamin’s article, in 1938. Like Benjamin, Collingwood is preoccupied by the invasive reproduction technology. But, like Adorno,<sup>31</sup> he considers live performance still valid as an authentic work of art. In the case of interpretative arts, like music and theatre, Collingwood emphasizes the importance of live performance, as the only way a performative work of art may accomplish its social

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 222.

<sup>30</sup> Susan Buck-Morss, “Benjamin’s Passagen-Werk: Redeeming Mass Culture for Revolution,” in *New German Critique*, No. 29 (Spring-Summer 1983), p. 212.

<sup>31</sup> I will discuss Adorno’s take on technology and classical music in my next chapter.

role. He considers that reproduction technology cannot offer a satisfactory experience, but merely a poor copy of the original, “what we get out of these machines, therefore, is not music itself but a photograph of music.”<sup>32</sup> In order to reach its goal, a work of art has to be grasped as a whole, and as it actually is: as the painter painted it, or *as the musician plays it*.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, like Benjamin, Collingwood sees the gramophone or the cinema as “perfectly serviceable as vehicles of amusement or of propaganda, for here the audience’s function is merely receptive and not concreative; but as vehicles of art they are subject to all the defects of the printing-press in an aggravated form.”<sup>34</sup>

It is only in the collaborative process of live performance that art is able to reach its goal. The audience is a crucial part of the process:

the position of the audience is very far from being that of a licensed eavesdropper, overhearing something that would be complete without him. Performers know it already. They know that their audience is not passively receptive of what they give it, but is determining by its reception of them how their performance is to be carried on.<sup>35</sup>

Collingwood’s position is very similar to what Benjamin describes in theatrical performance: for an auratic experience, the actor has to be able to “adjust his performance to the audience,”<sup>36</sup> and for the spectators the aura cannot be separated from the presence of the actor on stage. At core, both Benjamin and Collingwood revive the

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<sup>32</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, ed. by David Boucher, Wendy James and Philip Smallwood (Oxford: University Press, 2005), p. 294.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. My italics.

<sup>34</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1958), p. 323.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 322.

<sup>36</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936), in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, transl. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 228.

debate about the impact of technology on human culture in general. In my view, their discussion about the interaction between technology and art and the challenges derived from it, as well as their theoretical attitude towards this relationship, are directly connected to the more general historical context within which society and culture negotiated technology at the time.

The impact of technology in general and media in particular has been widely debated at the beginning of the twentieth century and it was not limited to arts or classical music. The results of these debates converge widely towards the same idea: technology challenges our connection with our social and economical order, our power to control the evolution of our society, our perception of the real, our understanding of time and space, our idea of communication, our mental processes. For example, in his 1934 book about new technology, *Technics and Civilization*, Lewis Mumford finds that, by promoting a new type of order, technology influences our perception of life and world. The automaticity of modern technology reorganizes human time and space, through mechanical time and the possibility of controlled mass production of goods. Artificial time schedules have an impact on daily life: “a population trained to keep to a mechanical time routine at whatever sacrifice to health, convenience, and organic felicity may well suffer from the strain of that discipline and find life impossible without the most strenuous compensation.”<sup>37</sup>

The discussion will continue until decades later. In 1954, Martin Heidegger writes “The Question Concerning Technology,” where he points out again that modern technology influences our way of perceiving and interacting with the outside world. Technology modifies the previously existing order by challenging our relation to the

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<sup>37</sup> Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1934), p. 271.

truth, since it “puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored as such.”<sup>38</sup> Even though Heidegger sees technology as enframing our view of the world, he considers that “in technology’s essence roots and thrives the saving power,”<sup>39</sup> as technology might actually provide a unique opportunity for man to gain further insight into the essence of truth. Heidegger discusses modern technology from a rather philosophical perspective, but his conclusion is similar to Mumford’s: technology influences our perception; in this case, our ability to look for the truth. Such views reveal an intrigued yet rather cautious attitude towards technology that resists technological improvement. In this context, it is only natural that the relationship between music and sound technology carried the debate about live performance vs. recordings along the decades, with lively debates on the topic to this day.

## **2. Live Performance Today**

Contemporary accounts in the old debate about the value of live performance put our concept of reproduction and its value in a new perspective. For example, James Lastra argues that the idealization of live performance as an authentic experience is rather determined by a particular theoretical approach that isolates the original from both the process of its production and from the conditions of its consumption as a cultural product. In Lastra’s investigation of the relationship between a sound recording and the sound it intends to depict, he actually identifies two main theoretical trends: theories that try to argue that there is no significant difference between the sound and its technologically

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<sup>38</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” in Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. by D. F. Krell (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993), p. 320.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334.

reproduced counterpart, and theories that regard the original and the copy as totally different objects. The first position focuses rather on the meaning of sound, where a recording has a “functional or narrative sense.” Lastra indicates Christian Metz’s example for whom “it is not a question of there being no *literal* difference between [original sound and its reproduction], but rather there being no difference in *meaning*.”<sup>40</sup> In the case of the second position, “the non-identity theory,” which has actually been the dominant theoretical approach since sound reproduction emerged, any difference between the original sound and its reproduction becomes significant, thus “positing an unbridgeable gulf between original sound and copy.”<sup>41</sup> According to Lastra, this type of evaluation of sonic events puts pressure on “uniqueness versus recognisability or event versus structure,” thus creating a space for debating “different ideals of ‘good’ representation.”<sup>42</sup> By setting a clear standard for all sonic events – that generated by the original live event –, non-identity theory also “introduces an unacknowledged hierarchy of more or less appropriate forms of listening.”<sup>43</sup>

From a strictly theoretical standpoint, I find Lastra’s take on the original as an aesthetic construct to be easily applicable to music. However, as I will show, even genres of music that extensively use sound technology to generate the ‘originals,’ still need live – audience witnessed – performance to validate the value of their works. While it has been argued that the distinction between live and recorded is difficult to identify in such genres, the distinction between a studio production and a live concert one is as relevant as it is in classical music.

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<sup>40</sup> James Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 126.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

Philip Auslander talks about how authenticity in rock music is ratified exclusively through live performance. This might seem strange, especially since rock music is a genre that depends on technology for its existence. Paradoxically, the aura continues to exist even when the musical event incorporates heavy use of sound technology. No doubt, as Auslander points out, “this process is at once a challenge to and a symptom of what Benjamin describes as the ‘decay of the aura’.”<sup>44</sup> Authentication of rock music through live performance works twofold: while proving that reproduction technology affects the aura, hence the need for authentication, it also proves that live performance is still auratic enough to guarantee for the authenticity of the performance.

It is in this context that what Lastra calls ‘the non-identity theory’ will always have a privileged place and role. This is also why Benjamin’s 1935 article had a strong impact on many theorists of the twentieth century, and why his view on the destroyed aura constitutes the subject of many debates even today. The echoes of Benjamin’s influential debate about the aura are still heard in contemporary musical discussions about live performance, with several anthologies, articles, and special issues of journals printed in the last two decades.<sup>45</sup> Some theorists took Benjamin’s decay of the aura as a valid argument. Some others favour the idea of aura survival, and propose interesting concepts like *virtual aura* and *mediaura*, trying to accommodate new forms of art, as well as to adjust the aura theory to contemporary terms.<sup>46</sup> But what is relevant here is that they

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<sup>44</sup> Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 83.

<sup>45</sup> Especially after 1990 and 1992, which mark the fiftieth anniversary of Benjamin’s death and the one hundredth celebration of his birth, respectively. Noah Isenberg, “The Work of Walter Benjamin in the Age of Information,” in *New German Critique*, No. 83 (Spring-Summer 2001), p. 121.

<sup>46</sup> For *virtual aura*, see Susan Hazan’s “The Virtual Aura – Is There Space for Enchantment in a Technological World” at <http://www.archimuse.com/mw2001/papers/hazan/hazan.html>. For *mediaura*, see Samuel Weber, “The 1992 Mari Kutna Lecture on Film: Mass Mediauras, or: Art, Aura and Media in the

all acknowledge the existence of the aura and its intriguing relationship with reproduction.

The ambivalence with regard to the resistance of the aura in its contact with mediation is reflected on musical accounts of the issue. On the one hand, aura is viewed as being inherent only to live performance. Lawrence Kramer insists that the aura of the opera resides in live performance only and it is constituted by “the representation of the virtuoso body as a medium for a unique voice perceived in its most acute transitoriness: *this* voice in *this* aria on *this* night at the opera.”<sup>47</sup> He makes a distinction between *aura* and *glamour*: while in the opera hall we participate in the operatic aura, all we can experience in other mediated performances is only operatic glamour. He indicates that synchronous soundtrack of opera film promotes glamour as operatic aura by offering to the spectator “presence, depth, and feeling.”

On the other hand, aura is something that survived reproduction and that actually can be transferred to a recording. As Jeremy Tambling argues, mechanical reproduction did not affect the aura of the operatic performance, but offered propitious conditions for the aura to be preserved. He points out that there is no coincidence that “the growth of opera as highly specialised, unique phenomenon, with the invention of tradition attending on it, should have occurred just at the time when ‘mechanical reproduction’ makes possible the breaking of this aura, and so the democratization of art.”<sup>48</sup> The emergence of mechanical reproduction marked a new beginning for the status of opera: “the use that the establishment has put opera to preserves something of the myth of art as hallowed, as

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Work of Walter Benjamin,” in *Mass Mediauras. Form, Technics, Media*, ed. by Alan Cholodenko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>47</sup> Lawrence Kramer, “Glottis Envy: The Marx Brothers’ *A Night at the Opera*,” in *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), p. 135.

<sup>48</sup> Jeremy Tambling, *Opera, Ideology and Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 16.

separate: it belongs to the *l'art pour l'art* ideology, with which it is historically synchronous, aestheticizing art.”<sup>49</sup> Douglas Davis also considers that “the aura, supple and elastic, has stretched far beyond the boundaries of Benjamin’s prophecy into the rich realm of reproduction itself.”<sup>50</sup> In a similar way, Steve Wurtzler denies the death of the aura and claims not only that live events have an aura, but that their recordings are able to render the aura in a commodified form.<sup>51</sup>

The theoretical value of Lastra’s viewpoint is also reinforced by how live performance is actually produced. Unlike a visual work of art, music of any kind is actually dependent on a long series of factors for its production. The musical work of art is continuously changing in the case of classical music from the moment the composer writes the piece. Between the composer and the listener there are actually many filters, with the score, the instrument, the performer, and the venue being some of the most important. In this context, it is rather difficult to identify where the original of a classical music work of art resides. Regardless, the discourse on live performance, as showed above, takes live performance as a wholly unmediated event. But, as Lastra points out, that happens because non-identity theorists are actually interested in emphasising the involvement of technological mediation, and thus they choose to ignore the mediations that are already embedded in sonic events.<sup>52</sup> In fact, music was always a reproducible art form, whose objects were transferred from a medium to another by the multiplication of scores and through the act of performance. Samuel Weber observes how in music “the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Douglas Davis, “The Work of Art in the Age of Digital Reproduction (An Evolving Thesis: 1991-1995),” in *Leonardo*, Vol. 28, No. 5 (1995), p. 381.

<sup>51</sup> Steve Wurtzler, “She Sang Live, but the Microphone was Turned Off: The Live, the Recorded, and the Subject of Representation,” in *Sound Theory/Sound Practice*, ed. by Rick Altman (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 89.

<sup>52</sup> James Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 126.

‘here and now’ of the aura seems to be entirely compatible with the proliferation of its material embodiments (books, performances, scores, etc.).”<sup>53</sup> Indeed, aura is not questioned from one performance to another of the same piece, even though all “the copies” are imperfect, since no performance is identical to another, not even when the same performer is involved. Similarly, scores were always revised, transcribed, corrected by composers, conductors or performers. Antoine Hennion and Bruno Latour notice how, in the twentieth century, because of the unstable nature of musical scores, “considerable time and effort on the part of many publishers and two or three generations of musicologists have been required to transform scores from being merely tools for amateurs [...] into “exact *Urtext* copies of an original piece written by a particular composer.”<sup>54</sup>

The venue is another major factor that impacts any live performance of classical music, which transforms the sound and its reception. Lastra acknowledges that an original event can be already mediated or transformed by its own production conditions, “potentially identical in kind and in effect to those wrought by the sound recording and reproducing apparatus.”<sup>55</sup> He points out that acoustic space is the first to alter sound, thus generating a real “technology of sound manipulation, as important as any microphone or loudspeaker.”<sup>56</sup> In this context, the live event is not only mediated, but it can be perceived differently, depending on the position of the spectator in the concert hall. In this context,

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<sup>53</sup> Samuel Weber, “The 1992 Mari Kutna Lecture on Film: Mass Mediauras, or: Art, Aura and Media in the Work of Walter Benjamin,” in *Mass Mediauras. Form, Technics, Media*, ed. by Alan Cholodenko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 90.

<sup>54</sup> Antoine Hennion and Bruno Latour. “How to Make Mistakes on So Many Things at Once – and Become Famous for It,” in *Mapping Benjamin: The Work of Art in the Digital Age*, ed. by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Michael Marrinan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 95.

<sup>55</sup> James Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 133.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

the so-called “original” is not only mediated, but it also has several different versions going on at the same time.

Furthermore, as Emily Thompson points out, starting with the 1930s, new reverberation standards brought new ways of listening: “as people self-consciously consumed these new products they became increasingly ‘sound conscious’ and the sound that they sought was of a particular type.”<sup>57</sup> As a result of new sound expectations on the part of the listeners, “acousticians had begun to promote new acoustical criteria that minimized the significance of reverberation and emphasized the direct transmission and clear reception of sound.”<sup>58</sup> Soon enough live sound in modern spaces became similar to reproduced sound. In this context, for many decades now, many live classical music performances are filtered through acoustics that mimic technology and make the musical pieces sound more like recordings.

Today, live sound is actually manipulated to accommodate the expectations of the listener who is continuously exposed to sound mediation. The contemporary need for a sound that seems technologically mediated is visible in various genres of music. Auslander offers the example of contemporary Broadway musical practices: “on Broadway these days even nonmusical plays are routinely miked, in part because the results sound more ‘natural’ to an audience whose ears have been conditioned by stereo television, high fidelity LP’s, and compact disks.”<sup>59</sup> In this case, the natural voice needs to be modified in order to sound “natural” to the technologically affected ear.

In a similar way, visual aspects of live performance are modified to fit the

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<sup>57</sup> Emily Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1930* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), p. 233.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>59</sup> Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 34.

expectations of the modern spectator. Auslander points out that our perception is so irrevocably changed by the presence of media that theatre directors are trying to offer performances that resemble the mediatized ones. Indeed, this applies to opera as well: in many of its recent productions, Metropolitan Opera has worked with film directors (Franco Zeffirelli, Anthony Minghella, Zhang Yimou) who embedded cinematic elements in the performance for the audience in the opera hall. Anthony Minghella, who worked on the Met production of *Madama Butterfly* in 2005, points out that “in organizing the grammar of the physical production, we have tried to shape the stage space in ways that were cinematic – creating wide, epic shots in which a single character dominates the entire stage and then narrowing the space down to provide an opera-house version of a close-up.”<sup>60</sup>

The presence of technology and its influence on live events is even more palpable in the case of contemporary music pieces that embed recorded materials within original works. While operatic institutions today try to minimise the use of technology in the production process by limiting the employment of sound technology in opera halls, contemporary pop music makes full use of the available technology. Apart from depending on sound technology in live concerts and even in the so-called “unplugged” performances, popular music challenges even more the old definition of the ‘original’ and contributes to the blurring of the distinction between an original work of art and its reproduction. A relevant example of this phenomenon is that offered by original works that actually consist in recordings, and that are not based on a live performance. Steve J. Wurtzler discusses how sound manipulation technology used in the recording studio

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<sup>60</sup> W. Anthony Sheppard, “Giacomo Puccini: *Madama Butterfly*,” in *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol. 24, Nos. 1-2 (2009), p. 142.

becomes a constitutive element in the process of creation, pointing out that recordings are conceived as “the dismantling of any sense of an original event and the creation instead of a copy for which no original exists.”<sup>61</sup>

My take on this is that, in the context of existing media and how they are used today, one has to take into account the original event as shaped by the process of its production and not necessarily as defined by the live elements involved in the original performance. I consider that, to a certain degree, contemporary use of technology almost removes the equivalence between live and original: while decades back an original musical event meant a live performance, today an original simply denotes the first performance, the first layer of representation of what the author had in mind when creating the respective work of art. As I will show in my subsequent chapters, moving the accent from live performance *per se* to understanding the original as the result of production efforts plays an important role in how liveness practice is reshaped by contemporary live broadcast. The attachment to live performance is mostly justified by the *hic et nunc* element of live performance as phenomenon, and its essential social component, factors that are transferred to our appreciation of live broadcast as well.

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<sup>61</sup> Steve Wurtzler, “She Sang Live, but the Microphone was Turned Off: The Live, the Recorded, and the Subject of Representation,” in *Sound Theory/Sound Practice*, ed. by Rick Altman (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 93.

## Chapter II: Classical Music and Live Broadcasts in the 1920s

Philip Auslander points out that, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word “live” was not used in relation to performance until 1934. Auslander’s interpretation of the fact is that radio challenged the complementary relationship between live and recorded, as established by recording technology: “unlike the gramophone, radio does not allow you to see the sources of the sounds you are hearing; therefore, you can never be sure if they are live or recorded.”<sup>62</sup> Indeed, in a cultural context where the aura of the live event was transferred upon reproductions through discourse, radio was the first medium to actually offer on a large scale co-presence in time of the audience with the event, and thus pin down the notion of liveness. Through its liveness, live broadcast became an extension of the live event, not only a copy of it. While live broadcast participated and reinforced the privileged status of live performance in musical culture at the time (and it still does), at the same time it helped consolidate and reaffirm the important role of sound technology in the relationship between classical music and opera and their audience.

Before having a closer look at how live broadcast was received by the musical milieu, a short survey of the relationship between classical music and radio in the 1920s is necessary. The development of the radio phenomenon in its first decade of existence shows a continuous interaction between the new medium and classical music. Since liveness constituted the most striking characteristic of radio (as compared to its predecessor, the phonograph), the relationship between classical music and radio shaped

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<sup>62</sup> Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 59.

itself around liveness, as reflected by both radio practice and classical music practice in the 1920s. I will show how the need to accommodate live transmissions had a strong impact on how radio stations were built and managed, and also on how music was performed in the studio, generating various live broadcast practices.

Liveness during the first radio years had a great impact on the activity of musicians, as well as on how music was listened to at home. This made for a highly complex social, economic, and cultural context within which the status of classical music and classical music practice changed under the very eyes of the various music critics and theorists. As I will show, the aesthetic and musicological challenges identified by them illustrate the irreversible changes that classical music underwent while actively participating in the development of radio as a mass communication and entertainment tool. These changes are reflective of the impact of the radio, but they are also relevant for the HD medium a hundred years later. My discussion about radio is thus a necessary preamble to how HD opera reshapes our notion of liveness.

The musicological and aesthetic discourse around early radio generated a vast literature, which I could draw on in my research of the relationship between classical music and radio. Aside from that, my methodology also included archival research, which was meant to offer me a broader perspective on how live broadcasts of classical music were depicted in the media and received by the public. I focussed my archival research on North American newspapers (Canadian and American): the *Toronto Star* (Toronto), *The Globe* (Toronto), *The Gazette* (Montreal), and the *New York Times* (New York). Additionally, I looked at the contextual data included in the database constructed by the Canada Century Research Infrastructure (CCRI), a database that gathered

information surrounding the Canadian Census in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>63</sup> Having been a part of the team that built the contextual data side of the CCRI project (2007-2009),<sup>64</sup> I was able to use similar research methods when doing the archival work on the aforementioned newspapers.

## 1. Classical Music and Radio in the 1920s

By the time live classical music broadcasts became popular in the 1920s with the development of radio stations, the relationship between classical music and sound technology already had a long history. Not only recordings, but also music broadcast emerged five decades earlier. The telephone was actually the first medium that inaugurated broadcast through live transmissions in Europe and the United States. Broadcast services such as Electrophone Ltd. in London, the Paris Théâtrophon in Paris, and the Telephone Herald in Budapest, functioned in Europe from the 1880s. In fact, the first broadcast of the Telephone Herald in 1882 was an opera transmission from the National Theatre to a grand ball in Budapest.<sup>65</sup> By 1896, opera was part of the daily programming: a “Presentation of the Royal Hungarian Opera House, or Performance of the Folk Theatre” was scheduled at 6:00 pm every day.<sup>66</sup> The service, which also provided daily news, concerts, lectures functioned until 1925, when it became a part of the Hungarian Radio Broadcasting.

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<sup>63</sup> Canada Century Research Infrastructure (CCRI), at <http://www.yorku.ca/ccri/> (accessed on January 19, 2016). Radio was included for the first time in a Canadian census question in 1931.

<sup>64</sup> CCRI, “Census in Context : Documenting and Understanding the Making of Early 20th Century Canadian Census,” CCRI, at [http://ccri-cd.cieq.ca:8080/fmi/webd/#IRCS\\_CONTEXTDATA\\_WEB](http://ccri-cd.cieq.ca:8080/fmi/webd/#IRCS_CONTEXTDATA_WEB) (accessed on January 19, 2016).

<sup>65</sup> Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 224.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

In the United States, similar broadcasts were hosted by various telephone companies, such as Milwaukee's Wisconsin Telephone Company (starting with 1886) or the New Jersey Telephone Herald Company (starting in 1911).<sup>67</sup> These services featured broadcast of music through telephone lines, adopted mostly in public spaces, which make them an interesting and unique precursor to the HD medium. While this type of service was not widely spread, it continued to develop until 1929,<sup>68</sup> thus sharing a couple of decades of co-existence with radio broadcasts. Another transmission medium developed in the 1920s was that used by Muzak, which brought music into the home through electric power lines. Muzak, a company still successful today,<sup>69</sup> offered three music channels at the time.<sup>70</sup> The existence of such services is very important when trying to understand the impact of the radio on the public and on the musical milieu. Radio was not a medium that emerged in a vacuum; it offered a possibility of music consumption – continuous transmission - that was in fact already initiated by other services both in Europe and North America. But it is true that the radio was the medium that popularised live broadcast for a wider audience.

The big radio boom in the 1920s, when live broadcast became strongly connected to radio as a medium, was preceded by the intensive activities of radio amateurs, who for more than a decade experimented and tried out the possibilities offered by the new technology. The crystal set, which was an inexpensive and simple radio receiver, became

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<sup>67</sup> Jonathan Sterne, *Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 194.

<sup>68</sup> Paul Théberge, Kyle Devine, and Tom Everett, "Introduction: Living Stereo," in *Living Stereo. Histories and Cultures of Multichannel Sound*, ed. by Paul Théberge et al. (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., 2015), p. 8, footnote 8.

<sup>69</sup> The company changed its name to "Mood" in 2012. See <http://us.moodmedia.com/> (accessed on August 10, 2015)

<sup>70</sup> Richard James Burgess, *The History of Music Production* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) p. 35.

available in 1906.<sup>71</sup> The crystals not only inaugurated a new territory of technological experimenting in the home, but, as Susan Douglas points out, they “contributed more than any other component to the democratization of wireless, the concomitant wireless boom, and the radio boom of the 1920s.”<sup>72</sup> Indeed, in just a few years after the crystal became accessible, the number of radio amateurs experimenting with wireless transmissions grew significantly, reaching several hundred thousand operators by 1912.<sup>73</sup>

Since the number of radio amateurs was that high, their activities soon started to be regulated by law. However, law did not stop the amateur radio experiments, and even though through the 1912 Radio Act radio amateurs were restricted to transmit only 200 meters or less, by 1916, as many as 10,279 amateurs had transmitting licenses. Their activities were highly visible within their communities; both through the presence of antennas everywhere,<sup>74</sup> but also through the existence of 122 wireless clubs, with many of them established by high schools around the country in order to promote radio transmission as a hobby.<sup>75</sup>

The activity of radio amateurs is highly relevant to the relationship between classical music and broadcasts, as the transmission of classical music constituted the preferred content and one of the main goals of the first amateur broadcasters. Reginald Fessenden, a Canadian inventor, did the first ever radio broadcast on Christmas Eve 1906, from Brant Rock, Massachusetts. The transmission included a short solo violin concert played by Fessenden himself, and a Handel phonograph recording. Lee de Forest

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<sup>71</sup> Susan Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899-1922* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 195.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>74</sup> Susan Douglas quotes *Electrical World* (1911): “One can scarcely go through a village without seeing evidence of this kind of activity, and around any of our large cities meddlesome antennae can be counted by the score.” *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

is another name associated with the first classical music broadcasts. He started experimenting with radio broadcasts in 1907. One of his main goals was to bring music, especially opera, into the home, which he accomplished in a series of experiments. One of the most well-known of de Forest's broadcasts is a transmission from the Metropolitan Opera in New York that took place in January 1910, which was heard in New York, but also at sea.<sup>76</sup> While the Metropolitan Opera decided to finally engage in regular broadcasts only 20 years later, de Forest's transmission marks the beginning of the relationship between the Met and radio. In January 1932, after several successful transmissions, the *New York Times* published a map of the US stations involved in opera broadcasting from the Met, tracing its origins to the first transmission by de Forest:

Wednesday marks the twenty-second anniversary of the first broadcast from the Metropolitan Opera House. On Jan. 13, 1910, Dr. Lee de Forest broadcast songs by Enrico Caruso and Emmy Destinn by means of apparatus installed back and above the stage. Experimenters in Bridgeport, Conn., reported reception and so did the operator of the Steamer Avon at sea. This map shows how the Metropolitan Opera is now spread across the continent by a network of stations, while short waves project it to Europe.<sup>77</sup>

Even though thousands of amateurs had been assembling and experimenting with radios for almost a decade, it was only in 1920 that the first public radio transmissions took place. Montreal and Pittsburgh, which both claimed to be the first broadcasters in the world, were shortly followed by stations in Britain and Germany by the end of the year. Since many opera arias and other classical pieces were made popular by

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<sup>76</sup> Eric Barnouw, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States*, Vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 27.

<sup>77</sup> *New York Times*, "Captured for the Multitudes," January 10, 1932, p. 27.

phonograph records, classical music naturally became part of most of these early transmissions. Frank Conrad was one of the first to broadcast live performances every Saturday on 8XK, and then every weeknight. His broadcasts took into consideration requests from listeners. By May 1920, reviews of his broadcasts could be read in the *Pittsburgh Sun*. The first entertainment program broadcast from KDKA Pittsburgh in 1920. The first local advertisement reads “Concerts picked up by radio here.”<sup>78</sup> Pittsburgh’s *Sun* writes about the famous first transmission in May: “Two orchestra numbers, a soprano solo – which rang particularly high and clear through the air – [...] constituted the program.”<sup>79</sup> Classical music was also the genre of choice for the first international broadcasts. For the first broadcast in Britain, which took place in June, *Daily Mail* hired Australian operatic soprano Dame Nellie Melba to perform.<sup>80</sup>

By 1921 the number of licensed stations in US increased with 28 more new stations. By 1922, 550 new stations were licensed to go on air.<sup>81</sup> Music was the staple of early broadcasting and constituted the core of the programming, not only because it was the program of choice for many radio stations, but also because it was a reliable content filler. Moreover, the taste of the public was already shaped for decades by classical music and opera recordings, most notably those of Enrico Caruso, whose recorded performances were advertized to be “just as truly as if [they] were listening to him in

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<sup>78</sup> James Wood, *History of International Broadcasting* (London: P. Peregrinus Ltd. in association with the Science Museum, 1992), p. 13.

<sup>79</sup> Eric Barnouw, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States*, Vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 68.

<sup>80</sup> James Wood, *History of International Broadcasting* (London: P. Peregrinus Ltd. in association with the Science Museum, 1992), p. 15.

<sup>81</sup> Susan Douglas, *Listening in: Radio and the American Imagination* (New York: Times Books, 1999), p. 64.

Metropolitan Opera House.”<sup>82</sup> Classical music was thus already a primary and an integral part of the relationship of the audience with earlier sound technology.

Radio continued this trend successfully and, according to David Goodman, it seems that “the generation of Americans that grew up with radio in the 1930s and 1940s developed and retained a love of classical music unmatched by those that followed them.”<sup>83</sup> In this context, the presence of music on the air was not surprising and in fact, as George Douglas mentions, “early announcers were expected to break into a song if a speaker or lecturer didn’t show up.”<sup>84</sup> That music was a necessity for any radio stations was quickly acknowledged by radio stations managers of the era. For example, the interest of NBC in classical music was based on the assumption that music is a perfect match for radio and it is uplifting for the family life and musical culture, and that this ideal can be pursued while also selling air time commercially.<sup>85</sup> In his 1925 article, W. A. Fisher also points out that: “The radio cannot survive without music. The program manager of one of the most important stations in America wrote me a few weeks ago: Music is the foundation on which broadcasting rests. We would close our station today if we had no music, and so would anybody else who runs a station.”<sup>86</sup>

According to Susan Douglas, the most popular performers were female sopranos. They usually sang opera arias or light classical music that was usually used in public

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<sup>82</sup> David J. Steffen, *From Edison to Marconi. The First Thirty Years of Recorded Music* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005), p. 40.

<sup>83</sup> David Goodman, *Radio's Civic Ambition: American Broadcasting and Democracy in the 1930s* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 118.

<sup>84</sup> George H. Douglas, *The Early Days of Radio Broadcasting* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1987), p. 153.

<sup>85</sup> Louis E. Carlat, *Sound Values: Radio Broadcasts of Symphonic Music and American Culture, 1922-1939* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), cf. p. ii and pp. 133-134.

<sup>86</sup> W. A. Fisher, “The Radio and Music,” in *Music Supervisors' Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (February, 1926), p. 14.

settings such as hotel lounges.<sup>87</sup> “Salon” music was preferred “to ensure that the medium was respectable, and reinforced the cultural values of an educated bourgeoisie.”<sup>88</sup> That classical music was a good business card for radio is also reflected in RCA’s “Radio enters the home,” published in 1922, where radio broadcasts were referred to as “concerts,” in order to sound more appealing (more high culture).<sup>89</sup> In this context, by the end of the 1920s, transmissions from the Boston Symphony, New York Philharmonic, and opera houses in San Francisco, Chicago, and soon after also from New York, began to be broadcast through networks that not only covered the US, but also Canada, and could be received in Europe as well. Not only opera houses, but also the media recognised the value of live broadcasts, as reflected in this *New York Times* article from 1921:

No longer, now, will grand opera consist of phonographic selections to the music lovers in towns of 500 or 1000 miles from Chicago. All that is necessary is to acquire a wireless outfit, tune it up to the required wave length and grand opera can be enjoyed just as it is sung and the moment it is sung, at home.<sup>90</sup>

Very soon after the radio phenomenon took off, recordings started to gain territory on the air. In 1922, the Commerce Department prohibited commercial stations to broadcast recorded music, and recommended the use of local talent and educational material.<sup>91</sup> As a result, the first decade of radio was marked by rapid development of studios able to accommodate live broadcasts of in-house performances, accompanied by

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<sup>87</sup> Susan Douglas, *Listening in: Radio and the American Imagination* (New York: Times Books, 1999), p. 87.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Steve J. Wurtzler, *Electric Sounds. Technological Change and the Rise of Corporate Mass Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 146.

<sup>90</sup> *New York Times*, “Chicago Grand Opera Heard ‘By Wireless’,” November 21, 1921, p. 21.

<sup>91</sup> James P. Kraft, *Stage to Studio: Musicians and the Sound Revolution, 1890-1950* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 63.

an increasing demand for musicians. However, while the activity of local musicians was required on air, at first there was still no remuneration for it, because publicity was considered an appropriate compensation.<sup>92</sup> Starting with 1924, musicians' unions began demanding specific wages (ex: Chicago, \$8/3 hours), and also to hire orchestras according to station wattage.<sup>93</sup>

In addition to the live music requirement, another factor that contributed to a greater demand of musicians was the gradually dropping price of radios. By 1928, the price of radios dropped dramatically, and the audience grew together with a number of radio stations, which in turn generated more jobs for musicians.<sup>94</sup> Consequently, the radio studio became an important daily component of a musician's activity. Musicians had to change their performing routines by adapting schedules and repertoire to the radio stations' demands. Moreover, they had to adapt their performance techniques to the conditions offered by the studios. For example, since opera singers at the time were used to performing on the stage, they "often blew the tubes on radio transmitters when they used the same vocal force in front of a microphone."<sup>95</sup> Vaughn de Leath, also known as "the first Lady of Radio" was the first one to develop the crooning technique.<sup>96</sup>

It is within this context that classical music also redefines its relationship with the audience, becoming more accessible than ever for a considerably larger audience. George H. Douglas identifies a big change in the level of popularity of classical music, by pointing out the major differences between how classical music was consumed before

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>95</sup> Susan Douglas, *Listening in: Radio and the American Imagination* (New York: Times Books, 1999), p. 87.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

and after the radio development. He acknowledges that while in 1920 “the great majority of Americans had never attended an opera or enjoyed a performance by a symphonic orchestra,”<sup>97</sup> by the end of the decade, “a cultural miracle occurred: classical music which had never played a significant role in American life, became a widespread form of entertainment.”<sup>98</sup>

The changed status of classical music in the 1930s is well reflected in the formation of the NBC orchestra especially for conductor Arturo Toscanini. In 1937, Toscanini was already retired, after a successful career that included many live radio broadcasts with the New York Philharmonic. Regardless, NBC brought him back and created a new orchestra especially for him. The event was widely publicised by NBC and it was praised by members of the audience, who reportedly felt validated in their skills of classical music appreciation.<sup>99</sup> The change in the relationship between classical music and its audience is not only reflected in the considerably larger numbers of listeners and classical music broadcasts, but also in the growing number of professional orchestras, and school orchestras. While at the end of 1920s, there were only 60 professional orchestras, by the end of the 1930s, there were 268.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, while before radio there were no school orchestras and school bands, by the end of the 1930s there were 30,000 school orchestras and 20,000 school bands.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> George H. Douglas, *The Early Days of Radio Broadcasting* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1987), p. 153.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> David Sarnoff, the RCA president who initiated the NBC orchestra, received an award from the National Federation of Press Women for his decision to bring back Toscanini and for “disregarding the popular fallacy that radio listeners have the average mentality of children.” See the NBC Press release quoted in David Goodman, *Radio’s Civic Ambition: American Broadcasting and Democracy in the 1930s* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p 149.

<sup>100</sup> George H. Douglas, *The Early Days of Radio Broadcasting* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1987), p. 153.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

Live broadcast emerged as a valuable opportunity for classical music to change its relationship with the wider public and to become part of daily cultural practice. Eric Barnouw notes that music was “no longer confined within the four walls of concert halls and opera houses. Radio-telephony has freed the captive bird from its prison, and it is now at liberty to soar.”<sup>102</sup> Radio clearly generated various live broadcast practices that dramatically changed the activity and the mobility of musicians. Susan Douglas also acknowledges that radio brought a change of status in the role of music, by transforming it into “one of the most significant, meaningful, sought after, defining elements of day-to-day life, of generational identity, and of personal and public memory.”<sup>103</sup> It is not only that music became accessible almost every hour of every day, but it became “a more integral, structuring part of everyday life and individual identity.”<sup>104</sup> This change is reflected in the newspaper reportage of the time: the *New York Times* writes that radio completes the work started by the phonograph and the sound films in making music accessible worldwide: “The reason is the radio. Supplementary reasons are the phonograph and the sound films. With the aid of these, music has literally taken the world in its grasp in the past few years.”<sup>105</sup>

## 2. Reception of Classical Music Live Broadcasts

It is within the context described above that music critics continued to question various aspects of the relationship between classical music and its audience, the impact of

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<sup>102</sup> Eric Barnouw, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States*, Vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 104.

<sup>103</sup> Susan Douglas, *Listening in: Radio and the American Imagination* (New York: Times Books, 1999), p. 83.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>105</sup> *New York Times*, “Art, Radio and Big Business,” March 15, 1931, p. 118.

radio on that relationship in particular and on classical music in general. The main debates were focused around how music was received by the public. Efforts were made to understand and envisage the effects of live broadcast on how music was delivered to and appreciated by listeners. The result of these debates made for an ambivalent reception of the significant changes brought by radio. This next section will reflect the reception of radio within the classical music discourse by focusing on two of the most important aspects that challenged the status of classical music at the time: the democratization of classical music and changes in listening practice of classical music.<sup>106</sup> It is obvious that the phonograph was the first medium to open the discussion about the democratization of classical music and changes in listening practices. However, since radio was the first medium to popularize live broadcast, and to do so on a much wider scale, a close look at how these issues were received is highly relevant for the understanding of the role of liveness in the development of the relationship between classical music and radio.

**a. Radio challenges the status of classical music: the democratization of classical music**

The popularization of classical music was one of the main goals of radio stations, since it served as the perfect reason for further expansion and thus increased profit. But their motivation was also rooted in the idealization of the role of radio: disseminating culture to the masses. In his 1957 article about music and class structure, Charles Seeger discusses how “from a narrow commercial opportunism, the sell-America-music business

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<sup>106</sup> In a similar way, democratization of opera and changes in opera attending practices will constitute the core of my analysis of the opera in HD phenomenon (see chapter III).

men acquired a surprising amount of idealism, with many partially sincere slogans of social service, and with a degree of group consciousness.”<sup>107</sup> This might have been the drive behind the attitude of classical music live broadcast enthusiasts, such as K.A. Wright, director of music programmes at BBC, who made use of Victorian values to promote live broadcast of studio performance:

a broadcast performance for the home is [...] one wishes to hear in a drawing room or by the fireside. I think one can create, reproduce, or recall beauty much more in that way than in the cold-blooded concert hall, and although it is naturally a good thing to relay concerts from time to time from outside halls, [...] the real singing to you, and to me, and to the homely person, is the singing in the home. The primary effect may be to discourage people from singing themselves, but this is only a phase, and afterwards the effect will be the reverse.<sup>108</sup>

The transition from the Victorian approach to music – “a means of discipline, of health, and of intellectual and moral advancement”<sup>109</sup> – to the democratization of classical music has been initiated by player pianos<sup>110</sup> and continued by the radio. Roell points out that the big change in American musical culture at the beginning of the twentieth century was influenced, in fact, by four factors: the popularization of ragtime music, the invention of the player piano, the phonograph, and the motion picture. Of the four, he sees the piano player as the most influential, given that the classic piano had such

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<sup>107</sup> Charles Seeger, “Music and Class Structure in the United States,” in *American Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Autumn 1957), p. 288.

<sup>108</sup> In Percy A. Scholes, “Broadcasting and the Future of Music,” in *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 53rd Sess. (1926-1927), p. 27.

<sup>109</sup> Craig H. Roell, *The Piano in America 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 18.

<sup>110</sup> I discussed the popularity of the piano players in my first chapter.

a privileged place in Victorian homes.<sup>111</sup> The piano player democratized the piano for the masses and therefore changed the status of classical music in America. Radio was easily able to build on that trend. As Seeger concludes, by engaging in the democratization of music, radio and contemporary sound media helped shape a new class structure, based on American values (vs. old European ones). Moreover, they also contributed to changes in classical music listening practice:

the United States is beginning [...] to come of age musically [...] by swinging more than a little way from the imminent congelation of a neo-European social-economic music class structure and turning again toward the equalitarian mass use of what may be the embryo of a single integrated variety of music-usage based upon nation-wide intake of mass communications.<sup>112</sup>

As the audience grew and diversified overnight, the effect of radio on classical music culture soon became a pressing topic of discussion for many musicians, music critics, and musicologists. On the one hand, theorists who continued to promote Victorian values argued against the democratization of classical music focusing more on the incompatibility between classical music and technology and its impact on listeners (a conflict that was not new, as it was already inaugurated by recordings decades before). On the other hand, theorists who welcomed the democratization of classical music focused more on the elements that were new and specific to radio, such as liveness and access to continuous and lengthier musical excerpts for distant listeners, but also on radio as a means towards the goal of rescuing or maintaining the status of music as a noble art.

The musicological discourse of the twentieth century changed, accommodating

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<sup>111</sup> Craig H. Roell, *The Piano in America 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 32.

<sup>112</sup> Charles Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," in *American Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Autumn 1957), p. 291.

the various media interacting with classical music. At the same time, as reflected in contemporary musicological discourse, it still strives to protect the status of classical music, by valuing live performance and directly connecting an authentic musical experience with musical education and the exposure to music as produced in the concert hall. While analysing the arguments used in response to the democratization of classical music in the 1920s, I will briefly discuss some of the widespread contemporary attitudes towards it, to show both the similarity of arguments, but also to show how debates about the status of classical music still tend to focus around the same issues, regardless of the cultural and technological changes in the last century. In his 2001 book, *New Essays in Musical Understanding*, Peter Kivy writes:

I think the glories of classical music should be open to all, in the political sense. All should have access to the means by which the glories of classical music can be made available to them. But that does not mean telling them the big lie that all they need to do is listen, over and over again, and that musical training is a kind of conspiracy, a ‘racket’ to deprive them of their birthright. They should be told the awful truth that classical music is difficult to penetrate; that work is required; that it will open up its glories to those who are willing to do the *real* work.<sup>113</sup>

Kivy is not against democratization, but sees it necessary to point out not only that music education cannot be done solely through music listening, but that only through thorough music education can one access “the glories of classical music.” That there is an incompatibility between the complexity of classical music structure and casual listening is also reflected in Julian Johnson’s discussion of classical music within contemporary entertainment culture:

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<sup>113</sup> Peter Kivy, *New Essays in Musical Understanding* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 214.

Dominant culture now is defined by mainstream, homogenized popular culture that nobody identifies with but virtually everybody participates in. Music plays a central role in this entertainment culture, and for many people that includes classical music. But to function as art, classical music requires a different set of conditions. It requires a contemplative attitude that the distraction culture explicitly forbids.<sup>114</sup>

Johnson sees a direct correspondence between the complexity of classical music and a certain state of mind of its listeners, and thus rejects the idea of classical music as casual entertainment:

Art is an irritant; its silent insistence on something other challenges our passive acquiescence to a life of filling the vacant spaces left to us between work hours. [...] Art encodes something of the vastness of the human mind and spirit, a vastness that mirrors that of the external world, of the night sky or the depths of the oceans. We can choose to engage with it, to allow our minds and spirits to resonate through it, or we can choose to fill the empty spaces of our lives with game shows and TV shopping channels.<sup>115</sup>

The seeds of this protective approach have been definitely planted once radio started to make classical music accessible for all. A rather radical argument is used by J. Swinburne in the 1926 *Proceedings of the Musical Association* to reject the democratization of classical music. Swinburne defends the music *connoisseur*, saying that “machine-pianos, graphophones and broadcasting do not create musicians,”<sup>116</sup> and thus “uneducated people” have no chance of appreciating music, regardless of how much

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<sup>114</sup> Julian Johnson, *Who Needs Classical Music: Cultural Choice and Musical Value* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 122-123.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> J. Swinburne speech in Percy A. Scholes, “Broadcasting and the Future of Music,” in *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 53rd Sess. (1926-1927), p. 26.

classical music they are exposed to. Musical education is the result of intense effort and listening to radio broadcasts cannot stand as a substitute for it. Whether one is involved with composing, performing or listening, it is necessary “to make the music part of yourself.” Music is not just sound, but it also involves emotions, and “is in some obscure way mixed up with religious and sex instincts, and especially with personality and vanity.”<sup>117</sup> Consequently, to like music “to excess” means to have “high and rare quality which raises a man above his fellows.”<sup>118</sup> Swinburne’s attitude reveals an affinity with a wider social concern regarding the evolution of the masses in the economical context created by the continuous development of technology.

At about the same time, José Ortega y Gasset writes about the uprising of the contemporary masses in similar terms. He considers that “the direction of society has been taken over by a type of man oblivious to the principles of civilisation.”<sup>119</sup> Ortega y Gasset points out that the mass-men are not able to appreciate the values created by his predecessors and his “especially qualified” fellows: “They do not see, behind the benefits of civilisation, the marvels of invention and construction which made it possible and which can only be maintained by great effort and foresight.”<sup>120</sup>

In a similar way, composer Percy Rideout rejects the democratization of classical music in his 1930 article “The influence of broadcast music.” Rideout considers that broadcasting has a negative effect on music and that it is impossible to have an authentic musical experience, if mediated. Broadcast music can be enjoyed if the listener is already familiarized with it, because it will revive “emotional effects experienced previously at

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), p. 69.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

hearings under normal conditions.”<sup>121</sup> If the piece is unfamiliar, it remains abstract, and one cannot associate appropriate emotions with it: “Music that is fresh to the listener remains bereft of the peculiar emotional stimulus which decides whether it is actually liked or not.”<sup>122</sup> Moreover, Rideout considers that the widespread presence of radio is actually destroying traditional ways of musical education: “Now that the hen has sat on the eggs for the hatching period, it is seen that, so far as public awakening goes, many eggs are addled, and from the rest have proceeded a brood of troubles that are eating away the foundations of musical culture, through the extinction of the private student.”<sup>123</sup> In a last attempt to argue against democratization, Rideout tries to make a prediction of how music practice will evolve in the future:

the fund of talent from which the greatest artists are recruited will gradually grow smaller, until broad-casting will ultimately be reduced to gramophone records of those who existed when devotion to music was a living influence in the world. But perhaps by that time all interest in music will have evaporated, and some other way of filling the ears of listeners will have been discovered.<sup>124</sup>

On the one hand, the strong attitude against democratization made cultural historians and theorists ignore how music professionals have benefited from the presence of radio in the 1920s, through the emergence of laws favouring local and live music transmissions and the involvement of unions. On the other hand, because of the perceived threat of democratization, theorists fail to acknowledge the effect of the development of networks on musicians in the 1930s and thus to understand the connection between the

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<sup>121</sup> Percy Rideout, “The Influence of Broadcast Music,” in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 71, No. 1046 (April 1, 1930), p. 350.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

music job market and recent national live transmissions. As a consequence, years later, the conviction that radio impacts traditional musical culture was still strong, as W. R.

Anderson points out in a 1936 article:

It was strange to find the radio critic of one of the London evening papers discovering that several choral societies are facing extinction owing to the effect of broadcasting.... It is true that broadcasting has caused and is still causing great distress among professional musicians.<sup>125</sup>

Another interesting and highly influential theory on the effects of democratization of classical music is that developed by Theodor Adorno. His real concern with the democratization of music is that radio threatens to transform classical music into an ordinary commodity. He sees radio music as primarily linked to entertainment. Consequently, the association of classical music with radio is not desirable, as it influences the way music is listened to: “The thesis that music by radio is no longer quite ‘serious’ implies that radio music already prejudices the capacity to listen in a spontaneous and conscious way.”<sup>126</sup> Moreover, the fragmented way in which classical music is presented on the radio seduces the audience into approach it like it would popular music: “The differences in the reception of official ‘classical’ music and light music no longer have any real significance.”<sup>127</sup>

Adorno elaborately argues how the musical work of art is changed by reproduction. Radio destroys both form and structure of the musical piece, making it impossible for the listener to understand the work of art as a whole reflected in its

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<sup>125</sup> W.R. Anderson, “Wireless Notes,” in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 77, No. 1125 (November, 1936), p. 994.

<sup>126</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, “The Radio Symphony,” in Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, ed. by Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 266.

<sup>127</sup> Theodor Adorno, “On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening,” in Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, ed. by Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 293.

constitutive elements. Indeed, it is what Max Paddison labels as Adorno's obsession with 'unity through multiplicity'<sup>128</sup> that is the most affected by radio transmission. For example, when talking about how Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* is used in radio musical programs, Adorno considers that "the less articulate symphony becomes, the more does it lose its character of unity and deteriorate into a conventional and simultaneously slack sequence, consisting of the recurrence of neat tunes whose interrelation is of no import whatever."<sup>129</sup> He points out that what one could take from the transmission of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, is "merely musical information from and about [it]."<sup>130</sup> That is not real music, but more "an image of music than music itself."<sup>131</sup>

Like Benjamin, whose theory of the aura was discussed earlier, Adorno sees the public as already alienated by technology. He considers that "people have learned to deny their attention to what they are hearing even while listening to it."<sup>132</sup> What Benjamin identifies as a state of distraction becomes "regressive listening" for Adorno. Regressive listening is generated by deconcentration, which is the perfect tool of mass manipulation "for reasons of marketability." Radio seems to be the perfect medium for distracted listening of classical music: "serious music as communicated over the ether may indeed offer optimum conditions for retrogressive tendencies in listening."<sup>133</sup> Classical music should not be part of "the avalanche of fetishism which is overtaking music and burying

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<sup>128</sup> Max Paddison, *Adorno, Modernism and Mass Culture: Essays on Critical Theory and Music* (London: Kahn & Averill, 2004), p. 111.

<sup>129</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "The Radio Symphony," in Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, ed. by Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 261.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.

<sup>131</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "The Radio Voice," in *Current of Music*, ed. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2009), p. 350.

<sup>132</sup> Theodor Adorno, "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening," in Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, ed. by Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 289.

<sup>133</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "The Radio Symphony," in Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, ed. by Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 252.

it under the moraine of entertainment.”<sup>134</sup> As opposed to classical music connoisseurs, listeners who are not familiar with classical music are exposed to misinterpretations of what they hear on the radio: “The less the listeners know the works in their original form, the more is their total impression necessarily erroneously based on the specific radio phenomena delivered to them.”<sup>135</sup> In their desire for entertainment, common listeners are looking for “color and stimulating sounds” that cannot be provided by classical music, which is “composed in structural rather than coloristic terms [and] does not satisfy these mechanized needs.”<sup>136</sup>

Such attitudes towards the radio greatly influenced the interaction between musical institutions and radio stations in the 1920s. In fact, one of the musical institutions that tried to resist early radio efforts to democratize classical music is the Metropolitan Opera from New York. Unlike other opera halls, in the 1920s, the Metropolitan Opera was not interested in broadcasting its productions. Even though radio companies such as RCA and Westinghouse were eager to broadcast from the Met, directors rejected all proposals due to supposed lack of interest from the radio audience. The reason invoked was that “the directors and officials of the company have not yet been persuaded that there is a genuine popular demand for radio opera or that the reaction would be favourable to performances within the opera house.”<sup>137</sup>

But behind that, there was actually a strong attitude against the democratization of music: Giulio Gatti-Casazza, general manager of the Met and previously director of the La Scala Theatre in Milan, was opposed to radio broadcasting of classical music, which

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>137</sup> *New York Times*, “No Opera by Radio This Season,” November 7, 1922, p. 35.

in his view could contribute to the further destabilizing of the status of opera. He actually considered that the most important factor in the crisis encountered by opera is technology: “The age of mechanization in which we are living is not favourable to any form of art, including that of opera.”<sup>138</sup> Gatti-Casazza was not interested in the difference between recordings and live radio broadcasts, but he saw radio as just another medium that disseminated opera outside the opera hall. Because radio increased the general knowledge about music among the listeners, he believed, listeners had no reasons to look for musical information and education in the actual concert hall anymore: “the radio brings to many homes the voices of operatic singers and the music of operatic composers, so an increasing number of people, becoming familiar in this way with grand opera, stay away from the theatre.”<sup>139</sup> It was not until 1931 that the Met decided to first broadcast. By that time, the audience in both North America and Europe already had access for almost a decade to live transmissions from various musical venues in the big cities.

In order to reject live broadcasts and the consequential democratization of music, theorists employed arguments related to old conflicts, such as that between classical music and technology, or that between classical music and popular culture. However, critics who were receptive towards the novel traits of live broadcasts such as liveness and continuity used these new features to make a case for the imminent democratization of classical music. Even Theodor Adorno, in trying to understand Benjamin’s aura in relation to radio broadcasting, praises the aura of live performance: “this aura leads people to be eager to attend a live performance even if they cannot follow the music as

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<sup>138</sup> *New York Times*, “The Twilight of the Opera Gods,” February 16, 1930, p. 82.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

well from their cheap seat as they could have followed it in front of their radio set.”<sup>140</sup>

Adorno was impressed by the possibility of temporal simultaneity offered by radio and acknowledges that “the basic characteristic of the relation between radio and time is the simultaneity of the phenomenon listened to and the broadcast performance,”<sup>141</sup> and that “in its relation to time, radio seems to have much of the same structure as live music.”<sup>142</sup>

Adorno is not the only one to negotiate radio and democratization of classical music through his aesthetic views. While Adorno identified liveness and continuity as two characteristics of radio that softened the impact of the democratization of classical music on the wide audience, some other musicians and music critics find in radio and its traits the answer to the most ardent problems that classical music encounters, a means towards the goal of maintaining, prolonging or enriching the status of classical music as a noble art. For example, Merlin H. Aylesworth, president of NBC, considered radio to be the ultimate solution for the opera crisis: “Music was definitely going to the dogs of late. It came to radio to be saved.”<sup>143</sup> Among the voices that continuously praised the benefits of the democratization of classical music, Thomas Archer, music critic at *The Gazette* in Montreal, and Leopold Stokowski, well-known conductor, both saw radio as easily and naturally becoming a constitutive element of classical music culture.

Thomas Archer’s perspective on radio broadcasting was filtered through his concern with classical music, which he perceived it to be in a major crisis. He saw present times as “the sterile days of Schoenberg and others” and considered that the fruitful times of classical music were behind us:

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<sup>140</sup> David Jenemann, *Adorno in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 69.

<sup>141</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, “The Radio Voice,” in *Current of Music*, ed. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2009), p. 377.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 380.

<sup>143</sup> *New York Times*, “Art, Radio and Big Business,” March 15, 1931, p. 118.

the art as it was known up till the end of the last century is now a closed book. A new volume of history must be written from 1900. So far the volume has only the doings of pygmies to record, expert musicians perhaps, but pygmies in utterance compared with the giants of the past.<sup>144</sup>

Since the moment of great works in classical music has passed, the best option available is to reproduce and disseminate what the “musical geniuses” of the past left for us to enjoy in these unfruitful times. In this context, by making available great opera for listeners anywhere, broadcasting technology becomes the only means for classical music to play its cultural role. For Archer, radio is a useful medium especially because it is able to propagate the good values of the past, and thus he welcomes radio musical programmes in general and opera live broadcasts in particular. When trying to evaluate the present condition of classical music, Archer points out that technology in general and radio in particular contributed a great deal to the survival of opera, by making music accessible for greater audiences: “misconceptions arise largely because opera has been offered as an exotic instead of as an artistic staple like the concert and the recital. Radio may yet save a great art from practical extinction.”<sup>145</sup> He considers that broadcasting offers a good opportunity for discussing the status of opera, and that it could help to finally find answers to important questions: “Is opera music or is it drama? Does it belong to musicians or does it belong to the theatrical producers?”<sup>146</sup> Indeed, Archer is one of the few to acknowledge that the role of opera house managers might become more important in the way opera reaches its audience: “Is a Stanislavsky or a Toscanini to have the last word in the production of an opera? These are important questions that may be

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<sup>144</sup> Thomas Archer, “Past and Present,” in *The Gazette*, February 18, 1933, p. 10.

<sup>145</sup> Thomas Archer, “Opera in English,” in *The Gazette*, April 4, 1932, p. 10

<sup>146</sup> Thomas Archer, “Broadcasting Opera,” in *The Gazette*, January 1, 1932, p. 8.

partially answered by the new experiment.”<sup>147</sup>

While Archer has a pessimistic attitude towards the future of classical music, his enthusiasm about radio prevents him from blaming technology for the mishaps of classical music in recent times. He states that technology is useful for democratizing music, but it does not stimulate composers to come up with valuable works: “Music has gained many more converts than she ever did before: but she has lost proportionately in what writers of the nineteenth century would have called her resources of inspiration. She knows more but invents less.”<sup>148</sup> However, even though Archer discusses the impact of reproduction technology on listeners, unlike Gatti-Casazza, Adorno and others, he does not blame technology as the cause of the crisis in classical music. Archer points out that “the tools of art remain the same throughout the centuries,”<sup>149</sup> and thus technology cannot have any effect on composing.

Leopold Stokowski was among those who embraced democratization of classical music and sound technology without reservations and was actively involved in radio broadcasts and recordings of classical music. William A. Smith points out that, along his career, Stokowski engaged on a series of firsts: he agreed on his first recording in 1917; he was the first to record a full symphony in 1925, the first to introduce 33 1/3 RPM long-play records and 35 MM multi-channel tape recording to symphonic music in the 1930s.<sup>150</sup> Stokowski kept alive his enthusiasm towards sound technology and thus he was the first to make a stereo recording of symphonic music excerpts in the 1950s and the

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Thomas Archer, “Past and Present,” in *The Gazette*, February 18, 1933, p. 10.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> William A. Smith, “Leopold Stokowski: A Re-Evaluation,” in *American Music*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Fall 1983), p. 34.

first to record the new multichannel stereo process in the 1960s.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, he was one of the few conductors of the time to be involved in Hollywood movies. One of his most notable contributions is conducting the score for *Fantasia*, a 1940 movie that featured well-known classical music pieces set on Walt Disney animation. For this project, Stokowski actually chose the music and conducted the Philadelphia Orchestra to record most of the soundtrack.<sup>152</sup>

Unlike some previously discussed authors, Stokowski does not consider attending a live performance and musical education to be necessary for an authentic musical experience. Mass dissemination is also not an impediment for Stokowski. On the contrary, he declares that “when we are broadcasting from a studio, it is strange how intensely we can feel the distant presence of the enormous radio public.”<sup>153</sup> He starts his 1943 book, suggestively entitled *Music for All of Us*, with the following statement:

Music is a universal language – it speaks to everyone – is the birthright of all of us. Formerly music was chiefly confined to privileged classes in cultural centers, but today, through radio and records, music has come directly into our homes no matter how far we may live from cultural centers. This is as it should be, because music speaks to every man, woman, and child – high or low, rich or poor, happy or despairing – who is sensitive to its deep and powerful message.<sup>154</sup>

Furthermore, the several chapters dedicated to discussing sound technology in his book reflect Stokowski’s intention to familiarize the readers with the technology

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> He used studio musician for only one scene in the movie. Kenneth Marcus, *Musical Metropolis: Los Angeles and the Creation of a Music Culture, 1880-1940* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 183.

<sup>153</sup> Leopold Stokowski, *Music for All of Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1943), p. 234.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

available and how it interacts with classical music.<sup>155</sup> His very detailed explanations are not intended for the music expert or for the sound engineer, but for the music lover in the living room:

When we listen to an orchestra at a concert, one important factor is the size and shape of the air volume enclosed within the hall. [...] a decibel is a measurement of loudness [...] we have made experiments so as to find the maximum dynamic range possible for records in the average-size living room.<sup>156</sup>

Stokowski's technological and musical ideals were not directed only towards music and the democratization of it. He definitely saw live radio broadcasts as a means to a higher end: "It is a miracle that, thanks to radio, we can hear music at such immense distances. One of the most ideal ways of listening to broadcast music is to drive to a remote lake or high up in the mountains and there hear music broadcast from a distant cultural center."<sup>157</sup> In Stokowski's view, radio is "one of the greatest mechanical means toward evolution of Mind and Spirit,"<sup>158</sup> and also the first medium to offer us the possibility of "combining the highest in Art with the most beautiful in Nature."<sup>159</sup>

Stokowski was known for his original style of performing old and new classical music works. Asked about the effect of his original interpretation recordings on the audience, Stokowski declares that his intention is not to familiarize the public with the score, but to offer a unique musical experience for everybody, anywhere the radio could reach: "When I play music, I am thinking of the spirit of the composer, [...] I want to

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<sup>155</sup> William A. Smith, "Leopold Stokowski: A Re-Evaluation," in *American Music*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Fall 1983), p. 28.

<sup>156</sup> Leopold Stokowski, *Music for All of Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1943), pp. 222-223.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

reach out with my records to the lonely sheep rancher in Nevada or the farmer in Kansas and bring him a glimpse of the ideal world of beauty and inspiration.”<sup>160</sup>

Within the classical music discourse, attitude towards radio and the democratization of classical music was frequently mediated by aesthetic views regarding the status of classical music and its future, but also the conflictual relationship of classical music with technology. However, it is worth noting that the classical music discourse at the time also included voices that welcomed democratization as a desired phenomenon. Conductor Walter Damrosch, who left the New York Philharmonic in 1926 to join NBC, was enthusiastic about disseminating music to the masses and especially to children: “The real democratizing of music has come to us quite recently through what seems to me the greatest invention of modern times – the radio.”<sup>161</sup> His educational show “Music Appreciation Hour” was on the air for 14 years, from 1928 to 1942. Interestingly enough, while being captivated by the new possibilities of the radio, Damrosch was also interested in promoting old musical values. Louis E. Carlat points out that Darmrosch “brought to NBC a quintessential nineteenth century understanding of culture as the accretion of universally-recognized masterworks.”<sup>162</sup>

On a similar tone, in the 1926 *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, Percy A. Scholes indicates that the main advantage of the radio is the democratization of music. In his view, everybody everywhere can now have access to a type of music that used to be consumed by only a few: “There is music for everybody. Locality is no barrier. Even a moderate degree of poverty is no barrier. Blind people hear music which they could not

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<sup>160</sup> Irving Kolodin, *The Musical Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1958), p. 207.

<sup>161</sup> Sondra Wieland Howe, “The NBC Music Appreciation Hour: Radio Broadcasts of Walter Damrosch, 1928-1942,” in *Journal of Research in Music Education*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Spring 2003), p. 73.

<sup>162</sup> Louis E. Carlat, *Sound Values: Radio Broadcasts of Symphonic Music and American Culture, 1922-1939* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 136.

otherwise attain to.”<sup>163</sup> He sees the introduction of broadcasting as “the natural and logical culmination of a chain of activities which have led to the greater and greater democratization of music.”<sup>164</sup> For Scholes, the gramophone was the first step in making classical music more popular among the masses, but is only with radio broadcasting that “the complete democratization of music has begun.”<sup>165</sup>

**b. Radio challenges classical music listening practice: live classical music in the home**

In addition to the changes in popularity and accessibility of classical music, and working conditions for musicians, the classical music world was also intrigued by the technical qualities of radio as a medium and its actual characteristics as a home apparatus. As I already showed, the debut of the radio apparatus in the domestic space was marked by radio amateurs’ tinkering and experimenting with the new technology. For more than two decades, any radio amateur had to put together the radio apparatus in order to be able to use it for listening or transmission purposes. Susan Douglas points out that well into the 1920s, it was still not possible to buy a radio, and just plug it in and listen: “everyday people had to assemble the device (which included stringing up an antenna), had to learn how to listen, how they wanted to listen, and what they wanted to listen to at the same time that stations, and then networks, were deciding what was best to

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<sup>163</sup> Percy A. Scholes, “Broadcasting and the Future of Music,” in *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 53rd Sess. (1926-1927), p. 15.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

broadcast.”<sup>166</sup> Because the radio apparatus was a hands-on experience, experimenting with it, trying to listen to as many and as far away radio stations was the activity that actually preceded music listening.<sup>167</sup> In this context, the presence of radio programming was dependent on the skills of the radio owner, and thus was not always predictable for all listeners.

Classical music on the radio was not only part of various intended tuning-ins, but also of accidental ones. In 1922, the *New York Times* writes about an 18 year old radio amateur who could hear Chicago Grand Opera while experimenting with his receiving apparatus one evening and how the very loud and unexpected music was not appreciated by his neighbours.<sup>168</sup> But generally, the public appreciated classical music broadcasts in their homes because it offered the possibility to choose the location and the listening conditions. The public also felt empowered by the sense of control over cultural content, and the possibility of accessing important cultural events. It seemed that radio was able to erase any differences of social and financial status. All listeners had access to “the best seat in the auditorium,” while not being bothered by all nuisances specific to any concert hall experience: “The good wife and I sat there quietly and comfortably alone in the little back room of our own home that Sunday night and drank in the harmony coming three hundred miles to us through air.”<sup>169</sup> Soon enough, radio broadcasts of classical music

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<sup>166</sup> Susan Douglas, *Listening in: Radio and the American Imagination* (New York: Times Books, 1999), p. 57.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>168</sup> “Last Tuesday evening [...] Scout Albert Bombe, 18 years old, [...], while experimenting with his receiving apparatus, dropped 25 feet of wire out of the window to use as an antenna without insulation. Within a fraction of a second a burst of music filled his house as the Chicago grand Opera poured its melodies across the continent. [...] Unfortunately, the neighbours next door to Albert were trying to put the children to sleep, so the Chicago Grand Opera was not as much appreciated as it should have been.” *New York Times*, “Boy Scouts,” January 1, 1922, p. 74.

<sup>169</sup> Susan Douglas, *Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899-1922* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 308.

became part of the weekly routine of the listeners, who looked forward to their musical experience as they would do with any live performance in the concert hall:

When at last there seemed to be nothing remaining but the Fugue we lit our pipes and settled down. Whereupon there came the avuncular voice from the Studio: ‘A telephone message has been received from Kneller Hall saying that owing to the length of the programme the Bach Fugue will be omitted.’ I mention this in order that the B.B.C. may realise (as it no doubt does) that even a slight alteration in the order of a programme is a nuisance to a host of listeners.<sup>170</sup>

The first characteristics of liveness practice started to take shape: liveness was to be enjoyed in the comfort of the home, allowing for a personalized experience. However, for musicians and music critics, the value of music in the home was debatable. Percy Rideout identifies three main reasons that could explain why a broadcast musical experience cannot be an authentic one: it takes place in a different place than the live experience, it involves different stimuli, and it does not have the same sound quality as a live concert.<sup>171</sup> Indeed, these are the most frequently debated elements in relation to the experience of classical music in the home. Interestingly, while some authors see these elements as impediments for an authentic experience, others see them as enhancing the musical experience.

Radio is not the first medium to bring classical music in the domestic space. Actually, well before the phonograph, it was the piano that offered the possibility of diverse live performances of classical music in the home, but also the enjoyment of other popular tunes. According to Jody Berland, the piano actually “established the home as a

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<sup>170</sup> Caliban, “Wireless Notes,” in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 65, No. 979 (September 1, 1924), p. 829.

<sup>171</sup> Percy Rideout, “The Influence of Broadcast Music,” in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 71, No. 1046 (April 1, 1930), p. 350.

site of cultural practice and musicking as something that occurred in this private sphere.”<sup>172</sup> In fact, the piano was still very popular by the time radio started to become a common presence in the home.

While the piano offered the experience of live music in the domestic space, the phonograph excelled in offering recorded arias from popular operas and excerpts of other classical music forms. What was new in radio transmissions and intrigued the radio critics more than the phonograph was actually that the transmission was live and continuous, and thus closer to a musical experience in the concert hall. However, the comparison between a concert hall experience and a radio broadcast experience trapped many critics into misjudging the radio experience from the perspective of a concert hall experience, despite the fact that media and the audience seemed to grasp and actually enjoy the obvious differences between the two. For example, Rideout considers that the musical experience offered by radio is not able to overcome the big difference between the atmosphere in the concert hall and that of the familiar space in the home. He sees the domestic space as inappropriate for a concert experience, as it is “permeated with an atmosphere of its own which cannot be obliterated at a given moment.”<sup>173</sup> Adorno goes even further and blames the living-room for the lack of “symphonic space,” which would enable the listener to “enter” a symphony. Since dynamics play such an important part in the realization of the symphonic form, classical music needs sound that is “larger” than the individual. In the common home, “that magnitude of sound causes disproportions which the listener mutes down,” and thus the “surrounding” function of music

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<sup>172</sup> Jody Berland, “The Musicking Machine” in *Residual Media*, ed. by Charles R. Acland (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p.308.

<sup>173</sup> Percy Rideout, “The Influence of Broadcast Music,” in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 71, No. 1046 (April 1, 1930), p. 350.

disappears.<sup>174</sup>

On the other hand, K.A. Wright considers that access to live music in the domestic space is actually one of the main advantages of the radio. From his perspective, the musical experience becomes an intimate one, without all the unpleasant aspects offered by “the cold blooded concert hall.” Nevertheless, Wright points out that radio broadcast gives to the listener only “a very fair idea” of the music and thus there is no danger that the listeners will not still be interested in attending the live performance in the concert hall.<sup>175</sup> Percy A. Scholes also points out that broadcasting “brings back the young people to their homes.” Indeed, while cinema encouraged people to look for entertainment outside of the domestic space, radio gave them the possibility to be entertained at home.<sup>176</sup>

Because the radio broadcast was live, not being able to see the event was perceived as an important limit of the concert experience mediated by radio. As Adorno points out, simultaneity happens in time, but not in space: “Although the ubiquity of radio tends to preserve the Now, it is definitely hostile to the Here.”<sup>177</sup> Indeed, the possibility of experiencing a technologically mediated concert at the exact same time with the actual performance raised the expectation of the listeners with regard to their musical experience. Moreover, not being “there” had an impact on the studio performers as well. Some performers actually enjoyed not being exposed to a live audience. When she first experienced broadcasting, Dame Clara Butt reported that she was even more enthusiastic

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<sup>174</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, “The Radio Symphony,” in Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, ed. by Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 257.

<sup>175</sup> Percy A. Scholes, “Broadcasting and the Future of Music,” in *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 53rd Sess. (1926-1927), p. 28.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>177</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, “The Radio Voice,” in *Current of Music*, ed. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2009), p. 385.

to perform for a distant audience: “I visualized my audience though I did not see it. There was no talking, no fidgeting, no coming in late, no going out early. It was a most perfect audience, the best-mannered audience I have ever sung to!”<sup>178</sup>

As J. D. Peters points out, radio producers made efforts to make up for the “lost presence,” felt by both the speaker/performer and the audience. The result consisted in new discursive strategies, a chatty tone, and a live studio audience.<sup>179</sup> An interesting example is that offered by the opera broadcasts, where the lack of access to the visual aspect determined radio producers to hire a commentator to actually talk about what happened on the stage.<sup>180</sup> For the first broadcast of a full opera from the Metropolitan Opera in December 1931, Deems Taylor was the one who “described the action of the production to the radio audience.”<sup>181</sup> During the transmission, “Mr. Taylor’s narration, considered by several persons as one of the most difficult elements in broadcasting the opera, was begun a few minutes before the curtain rose with a brief outline of the life of the composer. [...] He translated some of his descriptions into German, French and Italian for the benefit of foreign listeners and attempted always to insert his remarks at points in the production where they would least interfere with the music.”<sup>182</sup>

Depending on the speaker’s take on classical music listening, the presence of the commentary on the radio was considered either useful or inappropriate for the classical music listener. Percy Rideout considers that any musical experience should provide the listener with access to the visual aspect of the performance. In the case of radio

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<sup>178</sup> Caliban, “Wireless Notes,” in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 65, No. 979 (September 1, 1924), p. 828.

<sup>179</sup> John Durham Peters, *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 214.

<sup>180</sup> *New York Times*, “Metropolitan Broadcasts First Full Opera,” December 26, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

broadcasts, the personality of the performer is absent and thus musical sounds become an abstraction. The listeners are forced on using their imagination to compensate for the visual spectacle that would contribute to the emotional experience of the live performance. This is rather a difficult task for the common listener, as only “a mentality of exceptional qualifications” would be able to disregard “the drawbacks of mechanical origin in the case of unfamiliar music,”<sup>183</sup> and to experience something close to what musical listening should be.

By contrast, Percy Scholes sees the visual aspect of the concert as an impediment in enjoying the sound. The performer’s movement while playing can distract the listener from focusing on the actual music. He points out that the impossibility of seeing the performer offers the occasion “to listen to music as music and not as some-thing which is coming to them from a celebrity whom they are pleased to pay five shillings to see.”<sup>184</sup> Personality worship, “silly applause,” and encores are thus out of the question, which Scholes sees as a positive aspect for music appreciation. In a similar way, Caliban sees live broadcast as an opportunity to come closer to the actual work of art: “In last month’s notes I expressed the view that wireless music had an advantage over that heard direct at the concert-hall in that the listener was free from distraction and in more intimate contact with the work itself. [...] Curiously, I found the Rachmaninov Concerto more enjoyable than at Queen’s Hall. I have never before heard so much of the detail in the pianoforte part of a concerto.”<sup>185</sup>

Archer goes even further and considers that the lack of visual stimulus is the most

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<sup>183</sup> Percy Rideout, “The Influence of Broadcast Music,” in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 71, No. 1046 (April 1, 1930), p. 350.

<sup>184</sup> Percy A. Scholes, “Broadcasting and the Future of Music,” in *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 53rd Sess. (1926-1927), p. 17.

<sup>185</sup> Caliban, “Wireless Notes’ in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 65, No. 979 (September 1, 1924), p. 828.

important advantage of live opera broadcasts, because it offers the possibility of listening the opera using a score. In this way, “the most disillusioning aspects of opera” – the visual aspects – are eliminated: “The radio listener holds the key to the visual sides of opera in his hands and in his imagination.”<sup>186</sup> This possibility is especially valuable for operas such as “La Bohème,” where “The auditor must have the score in front of him or he must have seen the opera often enough to be familiar with the action.”<sup>187</sup> When attending a live performance, the visual aspects of the opera distract the spectator from certain imperfections of the performance. When listening broadcast music, the listener is able to focus only on the auditive aspect of the performance and thus notice every error: “There is nothing that shows up the faults of opera singers so mercilessly as the radio.”<sup>188</sup> Consequently, in the case of a radio broadcast, the performer has to deliver a flawless performance: “the singer has to create the illusion and even when the listener uses a score, the action will not become real to him unless the singer carries it in his voice.”<sup>189</sup>

While the lack of visual stimuli in live transmission had its advantages in the opinion of some critics, the poor sound quality was mostly seen as an aspect of radio transmissions that needed much improvement. Even though sound technology at the time evolved rapidly enough to improve the quality of sound in a matter of years, when it came to classical music, the quality of the transmission was not yet satisfactory. Critics consider that the sound quality affects how the listener experiences music, and see it as a danger for classical music as art and practice. Moreover they consider that low quality sound is an alternative that might change our perception of natural, unmediated sound.

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<sup>186</sup> Thomas Archer, “Broadcasting Opera,” in *The Gazette*, January 1, 1932, p. 8.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> Thomas Archer, “Tribute to a Tenor,” in *The Gazette*, February 25, 1933, p. 10.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

Scholes complains about the bad sound of loud speakers at the time: “That human beings should be able to tolerate tone like that is astonishing, but they do, and the same sort of tone is coming from cheap loud speakers all over the country.”<sup>190</sup> Rideout sees the quality of transmission as a real impediment for an authentic music experience through radio. He considers that available technology is not good enough to replicate the exact sounds produced by the performer. In this context, it is impossible for people to become acquainted with “higher classes of musical composition.” In his view, those who hope to do that by means of the radio have “confused musical sounds with musical art.”<sup>191</sup> The standards of performance are lessened because of the accessibility of music through radio and the poor quality of the sound. Radio thus has an indirect negative impact on music professionals, who will be replaced “by an arm-chair army of listeners who will gradually become disenchanted.”<sup>192</sup>

In 1930, Stokowski welcomed Bell’s experiments and opened the possibility of recording during rehearsals. According to Robert E. McGinn, the intense collaboration between Stokowski and the Bell laboratories is actually an expression of Stokowski’s “dissatisfaction with the sonic quality of existing radio broadcasting.”<sup>193</sup> The quality of the tone needed improvement in particular: “our tone leaves much to be desired in the direction of warmth and roundness and depth and soft but firm beauty.”<sup>194</sup> The sound already available was not appropriate for complex symphonic pieces, as it was too “thin and metallic and pointed.” Transmission quality was important for Stokowski, because he

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<sup>190</sup> Percy A. Scholes, “Broadcasting and the Future of Music,” in *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 53rd Sess. (1926-1927), p. 21.

<sup>191</sup> Percy Rideout, “The Influence of Broadcast Music,” in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 71, No. 1046 (April 1, 1930), p. 350.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 351.

<sup>193</sup> Robert E. McGinn, “Stokowski and the Bell Telephone Laboratories: Collaboration in the Development of High-Fidelity Sound Reproduction,” in *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (January, 1983), p. 47.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46.

considered that sound technology and radio in particular change our understanding of sound:

Through constant experience of listening by radio, and laboratory experimentation [...], our horizons have become so vastly extended that formerly accepted standards and definitions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ and ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’ tone have become less dogmatic and fluid.<sup>195</sup>

Moreover, technology contributed to the final form of the work, as delivered to the audience:

the total intellectual-emotional-spiritual impact of music depends not only on the composition, performers, and conductor, and on acoustic properties of the performance and the audition environment, but also on the technologies with which the music is performed, recorded, transmitted, and reproduced.<sup>196</sup>

Indeed, in broadcasting classical music, technology became one of the constitutive elements of the performance, as it contributed to the construction of artificial sound as a valid alternative to live musical sound. Like Scholes and Stokowski, Adorno was also intrigued by the quality offered by sound technology, especially as he considered that it should not challenge our definition of natural sound. He considered that the desired standard for the quality of radio transmission should not be influenced by current possibilities of technology, but by live performance: “there is no criterion for the ‘natural’ sound of mechanically reproduced music but the faithfulness to the live sound.”<sup>197</sup> In fact, it was only by the end of the decade that sound technology improved enough so that

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<sup>195</sup> Quoted by Theodor W. Adorno, “The Radio Voice,” in *Current of Music*, ed. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2009), p. 346.

<sup>196</sup> Robert E. McGinn, “Stokowski and the Bell Telephone Laboratories: Collaboration in the Development of High-Fidelity Sound Reproduction,” in *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (January, 1983), p. 53.

<sup>197</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, “The Radio Voice,” in *Current of Music*, ed. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2009), p. 346.

it would satisfy standards of sound fidelity for classical music. Archer remarks that while at the beginning “radio was generally looked down upon by people who took their music seriously,” the quality of the recent broadcasts would satisfy any musician, even when it comes to Wagnerian operas.<sup>198</sup>

While radio was well received by the public and in the print media of the 1920s, music critics and theorists had a rather ambivalent reaction toward the effects that radio might have on classical music, an attitude that reflects both their aesthetic standards, but also their unenthusiastic views on the visibly unfolding democratization of classical music. On the one hand, radio was seen as a great opportunity for classical music to gain audience and further develop. On the other hand, radio was considered to have a negative impact on the composers, the performers, the listeners, and to be detrimental to the social and cultural role of music itself. The democratization of music and listening to classical music within the domestic space constituted the core of the debates about whether radio was good or bad for classical music.

Due to the complexity of factors that influenced the aesthetic approach of classical music at the time, the attitude toward these aspects varies widely. Interestingly enough, most debates were not even directly discussing the medium at hand, but, rather, they reflected the ambiguity of the aesthetic ideas embraced by critics. Judging by the actual content of the debates, one may argue that the clash between radio and classical music happened rather on an aesthetic level. Radio, with its live and continuous transmissions, intensified the dilemma opened by the previous development of sound recordings/phonograph, and offered yet another occasion to debate about whether the presence of technology in listening practice is appropriate for classical music.

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<sup>198</sup> Thomas Archer, “Radio and Wagner,” in *The Gazette*, April 3, 1933, p. 10.

However, most critics were actually interested to make sure that both the past and the future of classical music as an art will benefit from the way in which new technology is managed. By debating aesthetic issues, they also managed to emphasize that the status of classical music was about to be dramatically changed by live broadcasts. Through their liveness, live broadcasts offered a viable alternative to in-venue events, which was easily accessible to the masses – no technology managed to displace live performance to such an extent before. Consequently, the ongoing discussion about the radio played an important role in the reassessment of the status of classical music in a society where live broadcasts of classical music and wide access to liveness (vs. limited access to live) became inevitable. My analysis of the HD medium in the following chapters will show that some of the aesthetic issues present in the debates about radio and the sceptical attitudes toward them remained the same. However, the social aspect of HD broadcasts – the further democratization of opera – will become their main purpose, widely praised and accepted by both audiences and critics.

### Chapter III: HD Opera as a New Medium

In 2016, the Met will celebrate a decade of successful HD broadcasts. The Met in HD series has an established audience by now and it is an acknowledged presence in the world of classical music events. Together with its European counterparts that emerged soon after the first season of “Met in HD,” the series offers a unique operatic experience: spectators around the world have live access to opera productions from famous opera houses with famous opera singers in the public space of the movie theatre. This reality reflects two very important changes brought by the HD series in the way opera is experienced outside the opera hall: mediated opera is now just one movie ticket away for distant spectators around the world,<sup>199</sup> and it happens in a venue that largely resembles an opera house setting.

While HD opera offers a new form of mediated event, the medium itself uses a combination of elements already existent in popular media forms, such as television and cinema. Because HD is a new form of cultural event, we need new theoretical tools to approach it. But considering its constitutive elements, it is impossible to discuss it without looking at other visual media. The motivation behind the theorization of a new medium does not consist only in the desire to understand the medium, its impact and how to interact with it, but also in the need to engage and expand the image we have about technology and media in general. This is even more important when it comes to classical music and opera culture, where, even after more than a century of recordings and broadcasts, a need for negotiating the impact of mediation on the value of live

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<sup>199</sup> To watch a broadcast in the movie theater on a Saturday, one does not need any supporting technology, nor to commit to a channel subscription, as it happens with live television broadcasts.

performance persists and resists even the highest quality sound and image technology. From this perspective, theoretical discussions of new media not only attempt to reveal practical cultural or social changes, but tend to identify fundamental theoretical challenges and changes, if any. This is where a close look at the way opera in general and HD opera in particular interacts with old media becomes useful. Unlike other new media (i.e., digital media), the emergence, development, and impact of HD opera is profoundly dependent on an operatic cultural practice constructed with and around old visual media, such as cinema and television.

### **1. Opera and Visual Media**

The movie theatre live broadcast phenomenon emerged as a novelty in opera culture,<sup>200</sup> but it actually continued a century-old tradition of reaching out to a wider audience with every new visual medium available. Not only has opera been on television screens since the beginning of television, but it played an important role in the construction of cinematic culture in the first decades of the twentieth century as well. Opera has a rich relationship with both the small and the big screen, which provides the familiar cultural and visual context within which the HD series was proposed and promoted in the last decade. This relationship informs the analysis of the HD series a great deal, and it also helps to better contextualize the cultural milieu within which live radio broadcasts of opera – discussed above – were and still are enjoyed by listeners for more than a century now. Furthermore, it helps to show that liveness practice as we know

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<sup>200</sup> However, HD transmissions emerged as a novelty in pop music first. Met states on its website that “the initial inspiration was a global theatrical event featuring the rock musician David Bowie, who launched his 2003 album “Reality” with a live performance transmitted to movie theatres via satellite.” Cineplex, at <http://www.cineplex.com/Events/MetOpera/FAQ> (accessed on April 16, 2015).

it today, i.e., incorporating public space in the experience of liveness, has a precursor in early cinema.

It is rather hard to discuss the history of the early cinema without taking opera into consideration. As Jeremy Tambling points out, from its early years, cinema tried to capitalize on the auratic qualities of the opera house.<sup>201</sup> In fact, opera houses served as venues for movies before movie houses were built, thus rendering the opera stage into an intermedial space. The lack of physical locations available for movies created from the beginning an opportunity for the already established opera culture and the emergent cinema culture to associate. Of course, opera halls were not the only venues where movies were shown – carnival tents or store fronts offered considerably lower prices for the same shows –,<sup>202</sup> but opera offered a model as a venue, and as a successful art that engages the audience through its story telling.

Indeed, the relationship between cinema and opera was founded not on sharing venues, but sharing content. Opera was actually present on the big screen since the beginning of cinema and it provided an example of combining image with music. One of the very first productions that featured an operatic subject was Edwin Porter's *Parsifal*, which was shown in 1904, using the voices of live actors and an arrangement of the original score.<sup>203</sup> Three years later, in 1907, the first complete opera was filmed – Charles Gounod's *Faust*, filmed by Arthur Gilbert. The film included music and it was 66 minutes long.<sup>204</sup> Starting in 1911, visual recordings of opera from stage performances were often

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<sup>201</sup> Jeremy Tambling, *Opera, Ideology and Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 17.

<sup>202</sup> David Schroeder, *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure. The Operatic Impulse in Film* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2002), p. 14.

<sup>203</sup> Paul Fryer, *The Opera Singer and the Silent Film* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005), p. 55.

<sup>204</sup> David Schroeder, *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure. The Operatic Impulse in Film* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2002), p. 17.

played in movie theatres in US and Europe. The scores, provided by the film produces, were performed either by local orchestras, pianists, or even live singers performing next to or behind the screen.<sup>205</sup>

The celebrity of the opera stars already established through other media, particularly recordings, was definitely a contributing factor in the collaboration between opera and cinema. Paul Fryer sees the famous singers as an essential part of the development and popularity of cinema: “their widely recognized talents as performers also guaranteed them a place in the development of the twentieth century’s newest medium, the moving pictures.”<sup>206</sup> The recognized success of a well-known singer (Geraldine Farrar in *Carmen*, for example) had a high likelihood of being replicated on the screen. And indeed, in 1915, a few years after Farrar’s debut at the Metropolitan Opera with *Carmen*, she was cast in the silent movie with the same title.

Even after sound was introduced in cinema, opera continued to be a frequent feature in movie theatres, as an effective way to promote the new medium.<sup>207</sup> *The Jazz Singer*, released in October 1927 by Vitaphone is considered the first movie with synchronized sound, including dialogue. But *Don Juan*, the very first film with synchronised sound released by Vitaphone, was actually a musical. Moreover, as Fryer points out, a very important achievement of Vitaphone is the series of short sound films known as *Vitaphone Presentations*, which consisted in recordings of classical and

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<sup>205</sup> Richard Abel (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 489.

<sup>206</sup> Paul Fryer, *The Opera Singer and the Silent Film* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005), p. 17.

<sup>207</sup> Marcia J. Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 31.

operatic performers. The series, later renamed as *Vitaphone Varieties*, was produced from 1926 until 1932.<sup>208</sup>

The collaboration between cinema and opera was not only a matter of popularising the new medium or the genre to a wider audience, but it was also used as an indirect way of imposing certain moral standards on the newly born cinema audience. Soon after, thousands of cinema houses with orchestra pits were built, various attempts were made to fight the competition with nickelodeons, and to bring the audience into the movie theatres. Among the measures taken, the access was limited on Sundays, and movies were sorted – only “morally edifying films” were accepted.<sup>209</sup> As Fryer notes, by including opera so soon on its screens, “early cinema was attempting to prove that it was capable of presenting some aspects of serious performance as effectively as it did light entertainment.”<sup>210</sup>

At the same time that telephone broadcast services were providing news and music, and the radio was developing by using classical music as one of its most prevalent on-air programs, cinema as a medium exposed wider audiences to different social values and art standards. David Schroeder notes that while opera was becoming democratized, the so-called mass audience had no choice but to acknowledge and absorb the values of higher social classes: “opera was the reserve of the ruling element of society who forced their morals on everyone else as operatic subjects, operatic grandeur, and opera stars

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<sup>208</sup> Paul Fryer, *The Opera Singer and the Silent Film* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005), p. 61.

<sup>209</sup> David Schroeder, *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure. The Operatic Impulse in Film* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2002), p. 14.

<sup>210</sup> Paul Fryer, *The Opera Singer and the Silent Film* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005), p. 44.

were made acceptable for the general public.”<sup>211</sup> Marcia J. Citron also sees the fruitful relationship between opera and screen as an attempt to “instil the European affinity for opera in an America in search for its own operatic expression.”<sup>212</sup> Interestingly, even though opera could provide a different set of social values through its productions, at the same time it also needed to adjust its content to make it appropriate for wide distribution. A good example in that direction is offered by the same *Carmen* production, featuring Geraldine Farrar. Schroeder points out that the unexpected behaviour of the character on stage “could be confined to the opera house and the damage could be contained since an opera audience would know what to make of it; when put into a film, which millions of people from all social strata could see, her actions could be perceived as decidedly dangerous.”<sup>213</sup> Opera needed to create a new standard of performance that would be suitable for a wider audience.

Frequently, discussions of the relationship between early cinema and opera see early cinema as taking advantage of the century-long tradition and cultural practice offered by opera. But early cinema was not alone in benefitting from collaboration with opera. As with radio, and other previous media, the exchange was mutual. From a visual standpoint, early cinema was the first medium to offer the opportunity to opera as a genre to expand its audience. Opera recordings (especially arias) had been widely popular, and some radio transmissions had already taken place, but it was through cinema, with all its constitutive aspects, that opera could actually be accessed by a large audience. Fryer emphasises that more than moving out of the opera house, opera could also expand

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<sup>211</sup> David Schroeder, *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure. The Operatic Impulse in Film* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2002), p. 15.

<sup>212</sup> Marcia J. Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 20.

<sup>213</sup> David Schroeder, *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure. The Operatic Impulse in Film* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2002), p. 19.

internationally: “The movies enabled opera to move out of the restrictive confines of the opera house and to be experienced by a worldwide audience, regardless of language difference or the difficulties of geographic location.”<sup>214</sup> Opera was challenged by the possibility of such a wide exposure of its singers on the movie screen. On the one hand, opera had to acknowledge that being involved in the new medium opened the possibility to reach even the most distant social classes: Schroeder emphasizes that “people who could not afford the five dollar admission fee to the opera had a way to see and hear their favorite singers for a mere twenty five cents.”<sup>215</sup> On the other hand, opera was somewhat pressured to participate in the new medium, since more and more singers were already involved with it.

While critics needed time to accept the idea of opera on screen, singers were open to it: “singers [...], who consider recording sacrilegious, have proved rare in the extreme.”<sup>216</sup> In fact, opera singers were already media stars at the time. Fryer comments that “they achieved as much as any other kind of performer in the attempt to bridge the gap between high art and popular culture.”<sup>217</sup> Some opera singers, such as Lily Pons, the most loved and prolific soprano at the Met starting with the 1930s, or Beniamino Gigli, also called “Caruso Secondo,” took advantage of the openness of cinema to opera and built fully-fledged cinematic careers. In her analysis of the big screen, *Cinematic Uses of*

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<sup>214</sup> Paul Fryer, *The Opera Singer and the Silent Film* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005), p. 44.

<sup>215</sup> David Schroeder, *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure. The Operatic Impulse in Film* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2002), p. 49.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., p. 321. Indeed, opera singers have easily embraced new technology during the early radio years and continued to do so with every new medium. But the value of unmediated voice singing persists in opera, as I show in my thesis. Films such as *Diva* (1981, directed by Jean-Jacques Beineix), where soprano Cynthia refuses to make any recordings of her voice, challenge the idea that voice reproduction is desirable by default and thus easily embedded in any operatic singing career.

<sup>217</sup> Paul Fryer, *The Opera Singer and the Silent Film* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005), p. 16.

*the Past*, Marcia Landy points out how many very popular films featuring singers such as Jeannette Macdonald, Nelson Eddy or Mario Lanza included opera arias or were completely based on operettas, trend that continued well into the 1950s and beyond.<sup>218</sup>

In this context, some of the attempts made by opera to keep pace with technology at the time were a consequence of cinema expansion and the above described involvement with opera singers. In May 1916, *Vanity Fair* writes:

at last the Metropolitan Opera has gone into the movies. Cavalieri will be the first great feminine star, and Scotti will play opposite her in the earliest of the Metropolitan's films, i.e., the opera of *Tosca*. The opera company was driven into forming its own film concern because so many of its stars were going into the movies on their own account.<sup>219</sup>

While this project was never completed, it shows that to a certain extent the screen was perceived as a threat and a challenge for the opera institutions at the time, and thus the most sensible approach was to incorporate it somehow within the operatic culture.

Another challenge encountered by opera in its contact with cinema was of an aesthetic nature. Similar to the technological challenges of radio, cinema had its own shortcomings. Thus, the first contact between the newly created audience and opera on the large screen has been shaped by the existing technology. As Fryer points out, "Film did not simply document and record what had already been produced; it also served as a means of production and dissemination of new performance aesthetic."<sup>220</sup> Indeed, by combining film and opera, a new performance standard emerged, which included elements from both a regular opera hall performance, but also from film.

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<sup>218</sup> Marcia Landy, *Cinematic Uses of the Past* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p 107.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

As in the case of the radio, where the singers had to adapt to the presence of the microphone, with film, singers needed to accommodate the camera. For the same 1915 production of *Carmen*, the director Cecil B. DeMille suggested that Farrar film a different score first, in order to learn to diminish her gestures, which on stage were meant to be seen by all the spectators in the opera hall:

There is still no better preparation for acting in films than a sound and thorough training on the stage, but the best stage actor still has things to learn and unlearn when he comes before a camera; and that, I felt, was particularly true of one coming from grand opera, where the tradition is to over-act. [...] to be effective his projection must reach and grip the people sitting in the last row of the top gallery. They must be moved by voice and gesture. They cannot see the actor's eye. But the camera can, ruthlessly, infallibly. [...] until an actor learns to use his eyes and the slightest flickering change of facial expression to project what is in the mind of the character playing, the motion picture audience will not believe him.<sup>221</sup>

Visible difficulties in the representation of opera on the screen sparked the interest of some theorists, who tried to theorise the phenomenon and identify its main challenges. They understood that the medium at hand was an intermedial one (even though it was not named as such at the time), and tried to identify the main differences between opera and film in order to theorize opera on screen and find solution for the effective production of it. Among them, film critic Béla Balázs has an interesting take on opera, which is informed by his own interest in the genre, as the librettist of Béla Bartók's expressionistic 1911 opera *Bluebeard's Castle*. Balázs is preoccupied with the impact of cinematic technology on opera and with how opera can accommodate the camera and the big screen. According to Nicholas Vázsony, a reading of the *Bluebeard's Castle* libretto

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<sup>221</sup> David Schroeder, *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure. The Operatic Impulse in Film* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2002), p. 21.

through the lenses of Balázs' view brings to light a clear depiction of "opera's displacement as the only genre in which the textual-literary, sonic-musical, and visual-artistic media are combined,"<sup>222</sup> suggesting a mutual advantageous collaboration between opera and cinema. In this context, it is not surprising that Balázs focuses his analysis on the characteristics of an operatic performance that are essential for the spectator in the movie theatre to keep in contact with the live performance represented on the screen, and not mistake it for a common cinematic experience.

In his suggestions regarding how opera should be filmed, Balázs makes two important distinctions between opera and film. The first one indicates opera performance as a somewhat rigid cinematic material. He points out the difference between theatre plays or novels and opera, by emphasizing that opera cannot be treated as a raw material for film. Music, he says, cannot be changed and "ties the adaptor to existing order of scenes and acts."<sup>223</sup> Moreover, he suggests that, for best results, opera should be filmed as it is, without trying to modify any of its stage characteristics:

When filming a classical opera, it is mostly advisable to present it as a reproduction of an ordinary operatic performance. In this case the most operatically stylized performance will still give a realistic picture, because it will be the faithful reproduction of a familiar reality, and gestures and deportment which would strike us as ridiculous if seen in a real street, do not appear ridiculous, and are perfectly acceptable, if we see the stage on which they happen.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Nicholas Vázsony, "Bluebeard's Castle: Staging the Screen – Screening the Stage," in *Arcadia*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (2001), p. 345.

<sup>223</sup> Béla Balázs, *Theory of the Film (Character and Growth of a New Art)*, transl. by Edith Bone (London: Dobson Ltd., 1952), p. 275.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

This is where Balázs reveals a second important aspect of opera performance: the lack of realism. In his view, opera does not try to create realistic scenes, visually, emotionally, socially or politically, but rather to suggest them. Most often, part of the operatic experience is a clearly unrealistic setting, created by stage settings that move in and out our view, revealing the participating technology in the process. Technology and its manipulation on stage are two elements that accompany the operatic experience and constitute a staple of its production. There is always a degree of artificiality in what's happening on the stage, or, as Citron calls it, "a world of pretense that is framed by the proscenium arch and articulated by an unnatural means of communication."<sup>225</sup> Paradoxically, making sure that the lack of realism is visible on the screen can contribute to a more realistic mediated operatic experience for the spectator. Vázsony points out that liveness "is retained in opera by the 'liveliness' of interpretation combined with the 'liveness' of performance."<sup>226</sup> Stage settings and their manipulation are part of the liveness of performance; they constitute an important aspect of live opera. Their presence on screen helps mediate the operatic experience for the spectator in the movie theatre. This might be one of the reasons why many visual representations of opera that followed early cinema, including HD opera, keep the stage as a central part of the performance.

The history of the relationship between opera and early cinema shows that the beginning of the twentieth century meant more than just live radio broadcast transmissions for opera. Opera was faced with the opportunity and the challenge to embrace multiple new media at the same time. In fact, the first opera on film (Gilbert's *Faust*, 1907) was produced before the first live broadcast from the Metropolitan Opera

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<sup>225</sup> Marcia J. Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 8.

<sup>226</sup> Nicholas Vázsony, "Bluebeard's Castle: The Birth of Cinema from the Spirit of Opera," in *Hungarian Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 178 (Summer 2005), p. 144.

(Lee de Forest, 1910). A few decades later, while movie theatres started to show complete musical events with synchronised sound, the first experimentation with television also started to emerge. Experiments in televising opera started as early as 1936, but it was only after the war that broadcasts of opera became part of the BBC and ABC programming.

A notable event was the November 1948 transmission of *Othello* from the Metropolitan Opera. While the technology involved and the transmission technique created several problems,<sup>227</sup> half a million homes tuned in to watch the broadcast. However, the transmissions continued for only a couple of years. Technical problems constituted an important impediment in these first transmissions, with unclear images due to dimmed light in the opera hall, and the small size of the performers on television screens, due to long shots. It was only a few decades later that live transmissions came back on television, through the “Live from Lincoln Center” series, which started in 1976, followed by and the “Live from the Met” series in 1977, the Metropolitan Opera started to broadcast live again.

Schroeder notes that televised opera was born “from the assumption that audiences really want to be at the opera house, but for various reasons they cannot, and the television broadcast becomes a surrogate for the live performance.”<sup>228</sup> However, shortly after, producers decided that taped delayed relays were more convenient, and thus this was the practice for the next two decades.<sup>229</sup> The common practice for the taped performance was to be “corrected” where necessary with bits from the camera rehearsal.

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<sup>227</sup> Among others: dim lighting, too many long shots, lack of synchronization between image and sound. Marcia J. Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 43.

<sup>228</sup> David Schroeder, *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure. The Operatic Impulse in Film* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2002), p. 321.

<sup>229</sup> Marcia J. Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 48.

As a result, not only was the spectator denied access to simultaneous transmission, but he or she enjoyed a slightly modified version of the performance.

While live opera on television had an intermittent history, live broadcasts of classical music were present and popular. Together with the NBC orchestra, Arturo Toscanini hosted the first series of live classical music telecasts starting in 1948.<sup>230</sup> Another notable example of live classical music broadcasts is that offered by the *Young People's Concerts*, a series hosted by the New York Philharmonic conductor Leonard Bernstein on CBS between 1958 and 1972. His concerts were designed as music lessons and catered to a young audience. Bernstein wrote the scripts himself and, by using the New York Philharmonic orchestra, initiated his audience in the history of classical music and in music theory.<sup>231</sup> By bringing live lessons of classical music on the screens weekly, Bernstein's concerts managed to expand and inform the audience. Alicia Kopfstein-Penk notes that "Bernstein's love of things from all taste cultures helped him shape programs that made middlebrows and lowbrows feel both challenged and warmly welcomed, while providing highbrows with fresh and interesting presentations."<sup>232</sup>

The gap in live broadcasts of full opera productions on television was also somewhat compensated for by the presence of opera singers in live television variety shows, such as *The Ed Sullivan Show*. For many years, opera singers found an effective way to reach their audience through very short segments in the show. For example,

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<sup>230</sup> The series continued until 1954, broadcasting a total of ten performances. Tim Page, "Toscanini on TV: Maestro to the Masses," in *The Washington Post*, March 12, 2006, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/10/AR2006031000406.html> (accessed on January 19, 2016).

<sup>231</sup> Leonard Bernstein, "Young People's Concerts," at <http://www.leonardbernstein.com/ypc.htm> (accessed on January 19, 2016).

<sup>232</sup> Alicia Kopfstein-Penk, *Leonard Bernstein and His Young People's Concerts* (Lanham; Boulder; New York; London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), p. 49.

soprano Roberta Peters performed over forty times on the show.<sup>233</sup> Having classical music performers on the show was a fruitful exchange: the singers gained exposure to the audience, and the show gained variety and a certain status for the program.<sup>234</sup> These short segments of live opera on television constituted a very accessible bridge between opera and an audience more diverse than the Saturday opera live broadcast's radio audience. While they continued to reinforce the mediated connection between the wide audience and opera singers, they could not offer an opportunity for opera to further explore liveness in its relationship with television as a medium, at least not in full, complex productions.

In addition to not being frequently available, or not as common as live radio broadcasts of opera, television broadcasts of full opera productions were limited in their expression and impact of liveness by the very fact that they shared the same characteristics with radio broadcasts. As I will show in my next chapter, the visual aspect present in television broadcasts played an important and undeniable role in enhancing liveness, but it did not dramatically change the experience as a whole for the viewer, who continued to enjoy opera broadcasts from the comfort of the home and away from other members of the audience. Nonetheless, for many decades, television was (and still is) the most important medium committed to live broadcasts, and thus the medium that greatly shaped reception and perception of mediated opera productions. As I will show later, the relationship of HD opera with the big screen is also marked by some of the same challenges that were first encountered by opera in its collaboration with early cinema.

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<sup>233</sup> Bernie Ilson, *Sundays with Sullivan: How The Ed Sullivan Show Brought Elvis, Beatles and Culture to America* (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2009), p. 90.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

In more recent decades, opera reinforced its relationship with the big screen through film operas, such as Joseph Losey's *Don Giovanni* or Ingmar Bergman's 1974 production of *The Magic Flute*. While being valuable additions to the visual culture of opera, the cinematic style (*Don Giovanni*) and the camera work (*The Magic Flute*) provide an entirely different experience than that of attending a live performance, even when the audience is included in the movie, as in *The Magic Flute*. Citron also emphasises that film operas could never function as live broadcasts, because in their attempt to comply with "cinema's demands for realistic movement and consistent sound quality"<sup>235</sup> they use pre-recorded music. Not only are film operas not live transmissions, but the sound accompanying the images is not actually a part of the original live performance.

## 2. The Nature of HD Opera

The latest form of live opera broadcast – HD opera – is not a completely new medium, as it makes use of new technology by building on old media and opera performance practice. Even though it sits at the intersection between live television broadcast and cinema, HD opera is both a technologically improved combination of pre-existent elements, and a new form of cultural event. Consequently, it already started to attract scholarly attention and a series of descriptions and definitions. Martin Barker describes HD opera as "a *new kind of cultural occasion*, neither 'live' nor 'mediated'."<sup>236</sup> Kay Armatage sees it as a transitional cultural object, "a regime of intermedial musical

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>236</sup> Martin Barker, "Audience Responses to the Streaming of Live Performances," Report to Picturehouse Cinemas, unpublished report (March, 2010), p. 4. Italics in original.

and theatrical performance, costume and setting, progressive narrative, and cinematic rendering.”<sup>237</sup> Paul Heyer sees HD opera as a new medium, DBC – “digital broadcast cinema” – that tries “to close the gap between what constitutes a performing art and a recording art.”<sup>238</sup> Such diverse approaches reinforce the idea that HD opera is not a straightforward new medium: it challenges theorists to see it either as a combination of old and new media, or as a mediator between various media. It seems that HD opera offers a cultural space where television melds with cinema, live coexists with recorded, and the movie theatre functions as an opera hall.

**a. Emergence, goal, and technology**

In a 2006 interview, the year when the HD series started, Peter Gelb, general manager of the Metropolitan Opera declares: “Even though I’ve been associated with the Met for years, I was somewhat taken aback when I tuned in, after I was appointed to this position in fall 2004. I was quite surprised at how dated the broadcasts sounded.”<sup>239</sup> Gelb was determined to find new ways of improving live broadcasts from the Met, but also “to find the vehicles to breathe dynamic new life into the aging art form of opera and to see if it’s possible to broaden the audience and make it younger at the same time.”<sup>240</sup> This is how the HD series was born. The declared goal of the Met was “to reach new audiences through new technology.”<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Kay Armatage, “Cinematic Operatics: Barbara Willis Sweete Directs Metropolitan Opera HD Transmissions,” in *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (Fall 2012), p. 916.

<sup>238</sup> Paul Heyer, “Virtually Live: Digital Broadcast Cinema and the Performing Arts,” in *Visual Communication and Culture: Images in Action*, ed. by Jonathan Finn (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 394.

<sup>239</sup> Peter Gelb, “Interview: Media Veteran Brings Wary Revolution to a Fortress of Tradition.” *Curent.org*, at <http://current.org/files/archive-site/music/music0619metopera.shtml> (accessed on April 23, 2015).

<sup>240</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>241</sup> Cineplex, at <http://www.cineplex.com/Events/MetOpera/FAQ> (accessed on April 16, 2015).

HD opera started with a 90 minute transmission abridged version of the *Magic Flute* on December 30, 2006. From the beginning, the program was not meant only for opera fans, but it was “designed for everyone.”<sup>242</sup> The HD repertoire that followed was constructed every season to reflect this goal:

Various factors play a part in choosing the repertoire for Live in HD. These include the music, the composers, the performers, whether an opera is presented in a new production or is considered a Met favorite, etc. In general, opera, when it’s presented at the highest level both musically and theatrically, appeals to a very broad audience.<sup>243</sup>

Even though The Met targets a wide audience, it still has a commitment towards creating a complete image of opera through its broadcast productions: “The productions are chosen to represent a variety of styles and the full range of the Met repertoire. They all feature great storytelling, great singing, and extraordinary production values.”<sup>244</sup>

The inspiration for the program was the live broadcast concert of David Bowie in 2003. It is interesting to note how elements of the structure and technology of the very first HD concert transmission in movie theatres are reflected in HD opera to this day.

Here is the announcement of the event on Bowie’s webpage:

8 august 2003

David Bowie Brings His “reality” To Cinemas Worldwide

THE WORLD’S FIRST LIVE AND INTERACTIVE MUSIC EVENT TO  
CINEMAS ON 8TH SEPTEMBER 2003

On September 8th 2003 in London, David Bowie will make technological history and bring his new album “Reality” to cinemas all around the world.

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<sup>242</sup> Idem.

<sup>243</sup> Idem.

<sup>244</sup> Idem.

In a specially produced performance, Bowie's live show is to be beamed via satellite to cinemas globally, culminating in a real time, interactive Q&A between Bowie and cinema audiences whom will also be able to make requests for Bowie classics.

The 90-minute programme will be simultaneously transmitted via satellite to cinemas and theatres across Europe and due to time delay the following day across Asia, Japan and Australia. North America, Canada and South America will be able to catch the show on 15th September, making this a truly worldwide event. [...]

The show will be shot in digital widescreen and recorded in DTS digital 5.1 Surround sound for total digital delivery to cinemas – not a film reel in sight – representing the most innovative and wide reaching use of digital technology in cinemas to date.<sup>245</sup>

The new technology involved in Bowie's concert broadcast and its innovative usage are presented as attractive as the event itself. To emphasize even more the importance of the technology and of Bowie's pioneering project, his relationship with previous media is mentioned:

This is the latest in a long line of groundbreaking technological advances for Bowie, Bowienet, his exclusive online community was the first to offer ISP capabilities to its subscribers, he was an early exponent of e-mail using the then brand new form to communicate with the media during the legendary "Serious Moonlight" tour in the 80's. In addition Bowie was at the cutting edge of digital technology by offering the first widespread online download of the track "Telling Lies" in the mid 90's.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> <http://www.davidbowie.com/news/david-bowie-brings-his-reality-cinemas-worldwide-28996> (accessed on April 18, 2015).

<sup>246</sup> Idem.

Not only that HD opera uses the same technology, but it also incorporates its novelty in the image of the HD as a new and valuable medium: “Our broadcasts are engineered and delivered to movie theatres in Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound to accommodate most movie theatre systems. It is the next best audio experience to being in the opera house itself.”<sup>247</sup>

Several fixed and mobile cameras, as well as a robotic camera are present inside the opera hall. Armatage, who witnessed a live transmission from both the opera hall and from inside the video truck gives a detailed account of the technology involved in HD broadcasts:

There are (usually) ten HD cameras in locations throughout the opera house. Some are fixed, such as the full-proscenium wide shot from the rear of the house; others are handheld (for the backstage documentaries and between-acts interviews); there is a robotic camera that can track, pan, and zoom from the floor level at the front of the stage, and two – from side tiers – operated from long jib-arms that function effectively as cranes. The ten cameras feed to monitors in a truck outside Lincoln Center, where the director and editor work from multiple screens simultaneously.<sup>248</sup>

While the spectator can see specific technical aspects of the opera staging, in the opera hall, the Met is trying to keep the broadcasting technology as discrete as possible. But the audience can still see the cameras around the stage and in the back, as well as “a robotic camera that sweeps left and right across the stage” and “two more robotic cameras at the right and the left, which rose and descended on enormous telescopic

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<sup>247</sup> Cineplex, at <http://www.cineplex.com/Events/MetOpera/FAQ> (accessed on April 16, 2015).

<sup>248</sup> Kay Armatage, “Cinematic Operatics: Barbara Willis Sweete Directs Metropolitan Opera HD Transmissions,” in *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (Fall 2012), pp. 911-912.

supports.”<sup>249</sup> According to Auslander, using multiple cameras actually helps recreating the perceptual continuity of the stage, and, by alternating the images from one camera to the other, the image tries to mimic the spectator’s wandering eye.<sup>250</sup> Director Anthony Minghela points out that while “in film you choreograph the eye with the camera,” on stage “it’s done with stillness and movement,” and also that “light serves as theatre’s camera,”<sup>251</sup> guiding the eye of the spectator in the desired direction. But unlike the possibilities of the camera in film, where the angle choice is unlimited, in opera broadcasting the camera angle is restricted by the set. As a result, filmed performances retain the stagey characteristic, as Tambling pointed out.<sup>252</sup> However, this might be a desirable side effect, since the Met’s goal is to provide for the spectator in the movie theatre an experience as similar as possible to that in the opera hall.

Regardless of the technology used, the ultimate purpose of any medium, old or new, is to persuade the user that the mediated experience offers an authentic connection to the real event, which is not hindered by the technology involved. Bolter and Grusin show that the history of representation has always oscillated between *immediacy* and *hypermediacy*. In other words, while all media attempt to make a transparent presentation of the real, they are also striving to maintain their opacity. On the one hand, through immediacy, media promotes “the notion that a medium could erase itself and leave the viewer in the presence of the objects represented, so that he could know the objects

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<sup>249</sup> Michael Miller, “Music. Benjamin Britten, Peter Grimes,” in *The Berkshire Review for the Arts*, April 2, 2008, at <http://berkshirereview.net/music/grimesmet.html> (accessed on April 26, 2010).

<sup>250</sup> Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 19.

<sup>251</sup> W. Anthony Sheppard, “Giacomo Puccini: Madama Butterfly,” in *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol. 24, Nos. 1-2, p. 142.

<sup>252</sup> Jeremy Tambling, *Opera, Ideology and Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 14.

directly.”<sup>253</sup> On the other hand, through the nature of hypermediacy – where multiple media are explicitly visible in representation, such as internet content – the viewer is aware that the access to the event is actually mediated by the medium. And still, argue Bolter and Grusin, hypermediacy is at the same time defined by its “insistence that the experience of the medium is itself an experience of the real.”<sup>254</sup> By heavily employing both immediacy and hypermediacy, new media engage in a complex remediation, where old and new media are mixed together, as they are “commenting on, reproducing, and replacing each other.”<sup>255</sup>

Bolter and Grusin’s theoretical tools position HD opera in a revelatory perspective. HD opera remediates live television broadcasts and uses its techniques, striving to create the illusion of immediacy with live performance for the spectator in the movie theatre. Considering the array of factors involved in the conception and construction of any opera hall, with the intention of creating the best acoustics,<sup>256</sup> the opera hall is a medium in itself, which mediates listening and the experience of live performance in a very specific way. In this context any live broadcast of opera, regardless of the medium, is not only a mediation of the event, but in fact a remediation. In this context, HD opera is engaging in an even more complex type of remediation. Moreover, by continuously trying to remind the spectator during the broadcast about the opera hall and how it is experienced by the live audience, HD events also engage in hypermediacy.

In his work about the concert hall as a medium of musical culture, Darryl Mark Cressman discusses the role of the venue in the experience of the live audience. His

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<sup>253</sup> Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), p. 70.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>256</sup> I already discussed this aspect in my first chapter.

argument leads us toward understanding why mediating the venue is so important for HD events. He goes into detail about the conceptual construction of listening as being associated rather with technology, even if technical mediation (such as the concert hall) has actually a similar impact on the performance as any other media. He suggests that technology mediates the performance, but also the listening.<sup>257</sup> Cressman argues that even though opera culture is not created by the medium (in his discussion, the venue), it is definitely associated with it. From this perspective, I see the mediation of the venue as necessary for HD events – the distant spectator cannot participate in opera culture if the opera hall is not part of the experience.<sup>258</sup> The experience of attending live opera involves the opera hall as a medium. By using movie theatres, HD events attempt to recreate the opera environment, to give back to the audience the embedded medium of the opera – the venue –, an element that was missing in a traditional live broadcast setting, as provided by radio and television. In order to reinforce the importance of the opera hall in any live opera experience and thus in opera culture, and also the value of the movie theatre environment, HD events need to strongly represent the opera hall in their transmissions.

By mediating the venue, HD opera is trying to establish itself as an authentic experience of live performance, one which closely mirrors the experience of the audience in the opera hall. This effort is very well reflected in the sound technology that they use. Jay David Saks, the sound designer for the Met's broadcasts states that the Met has been always using reverb in their transmissions, and that various technologies are employed in the attempt to create the illusion of being in the opera hall for the distant spectator: "I try

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<sup>257</sup> Darryl Mark Cressman, *The Concert Hall as a Medium of Musical Culture: The Technical Mediation of Listening in the 19th Century* (PhD Diss., Simon Fraser University, 2012), p. 25.

<sup>258</sup> It is true that venue mediation is usually present in concert and opera live television transmissions. However, this strategy takes a different meaning in the case of HD opera, since the distant spectator is situated in a venue similar (in theory) with the opera hall.

to make reverb sound like it isn't artificial. I also use compression, filtering and EQ – anything to re-create in someone's mind the sense that they're experiencing an excellent live performance. The irony is, to do that I have to use these processing tools!"<sup>259</sup>

The Met is proud of its venue – Gelb confirms that this is an opera hall that doesn't need any technological improvement to help its singers to perform their best: "The natural acoustics in that opera house are a miracle. You can hear glorious voices without amplification. There's a lot to be done in expanding the creative horizons of legitimate opera performances without having to resort to inartistic marketing gimmicks."<sup>260</sup> Regardless, some have criticised the Met for amplifying the voices of some singers. In his review of *Siegfried* from April 2009, critic Martin Bernheimer writes: "Tomlinson boomed potently via microphone as Fafner, and Lisette Oropesa, also amplified, chirped sweetly as the Woodbird."<sup>261</sup> While the Met denies that they would amplify the singer's voices, they make public the fact that they use acoustic enhancement to deal with offstage voices and noises.<sup>262</sup>

The discussion about the lack of vocal amplification at the Met is primarily meant to retain the status of opera as a performative art that is defined by live performance. But, at the same time, it is also a means to state that the intention of HD opera is to mediate both the voices of the singers and also the sound of the hall for distant spectators in the movie theatre. For the same reason, the light in the opera house is not enhanced for the

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<sup>259</sup> Gary Eskow, "New York's Met in HD. Opera Hits a High Note with High-Tech Broadcasts," in *Mix*, April 1, 2008, at [http://mixonline.com/post/features/audio\\_new\\_yorks\\_met/](http://mixonline.com/post/features/audio_new_yorks_met/) (accessed on April 26, 2010).

<sup>260</sup> Peter Gelb, "Interview: Media Veteran Brings Wary Revolution to a Fortress of Tradition." *Curent.org*, at <http://current.org/files/archive-site/music/music0619metopera.shtml> (accessed on April 23, 2015).

<sup>261</sup> Martin Bernheimer, "Siegfried, Metropolitan Opera, New York," in *Financial Times*, April 20, 2009, at <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/a8afd4a2-2dbe-11de-9eba-00144feabdc0.htm> (accessed on April 26, 2010).

<sup>262</sup> Kai Harada, "Opera's Dirty Little Secret," in *Live Design*, March 1, 2001, at [http://livedesignonline.com/mag/show\\_business\\_operas\\_dirty\\_little/index.html](http://livedesignonline.com/mag/show_business_operas_dirty_little/index.html) (accessed on April 26, 2010).

HD transmission, even if sometimes that can become an inconvenience, such as in the broadcast of *Aida* (2009-2010 season), for example. Some fine tuning is possible as a collaborative process between the stage lighting artists and the HD video controllers, but The Met states that they “never added any lighting instruments for television or HD.”<sup>263</sup>

That the Met is supporting the attachment of the spectator to the opera hall as a medium and that it tries to mediate the venue in its transmissions is also reflected by the structure of the intermission. The intermission is a very important part of the program when attending live opera, since the audience has a chance to somewhat interact with the opera hall by walking around, enjoying the displays on the hallway, etc. That experience of the opera hall is revived in the mind of the spectator in the movie by showing details of how the settings are prepared and mounted on the stage during the intermission. The distant spectator might not be able to roam the Met’s actual hallways, but he is able to observe in real time how settings are moved and replaced, and perhaps let himself persuaded that even though he is in the movie theatre, what he is experiencing is live opera and not a cinematic production. The physical presence of the stage and its props, as well as the interior of the opera hall, with the typical intermission tuning and audience noises contribute to a successful mediation of the venue as a medium in itself. It is within this context that HD opera constructs itself as a complex remedial medium.

#### **b. HD opera and other visual media**

While Peter Gelb was inspired to create the HD series by the first popular music transmission in movie theatres, his intention was to design and promote the series on the

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<sup>263</sup> Cineplex, at <http://www.cineplex.com/Events/MetOpera/FAQ> (accessed on April 16, 2015).

model offered by sporting events: “our approach for the broadcasts is to treat them as live spectacles. We will imbue the broadcasts with the on-the-scene perspective you get with sporting events. We’re not creating movies here. We’re creating a portal to live musical theater.”<sup>264</sup> He declares that “We want to make the Met as available electronically to its followers as the Yankees are to theirs.”<sup>265</sup> Indeed, as I will show in the following chapter, the strategy used by the Met to reach its goal is to emphasize the immediacy of HD opera by using artifices that are similar to sport broadcasts. The HD transmissions attempt to follow the dynamics of sport events by using presenters before the show and during the intermission and by debating the difficult moments of the performance during the interviews with the singers. However, the technology and, even more important, the directors involved with HD opera also impact the final outcome, which sparks numerous discussions about the televisual and/or cinematic nature of HD opera.

One of the most important factors that impact the experience of opera and liveness in HD events is their intermediality. Kay Armatage describes with accuracy both the complexity of the medium, as well as the first impact that HD opera can have on an audience member interested in how visual content is shaped by the interaction between contemporary media:

The transmissions combined my enduring beats – cinema, intermediality, industry, institution – with my new interest, opera. This contemporary hybrid of cinema and opera was unlike the filmed operas that have appeared throughout film history, of which there are many examples – astonishingly, even in the silent period of cinema. Instead, the Met transmissions combined live musical

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<sup>264</sup> Peter Gelb, “Interview: Media Veteran Brings Wary Revolution to a Fortress of Tradition.” Curent.org, at <http://current.org/files/archive-site/music/music0619metopera.shtml> (accessed on April 23, 2015).

<sup>265</sup> Idem.

performance, narrative scenarios, and something approximating documentary performance visuals.<sup>266</sup>

The venue, the size of the screen, the directing, the close-ups, the interviews are all aspects that contribute to the complex hybridization offered by HD opera as a medium. Marcia J. Citron's approach of the relationship between opera and film brings a new perspective on the blurry distinction between the intertwined old media present in HD opera. She uses Werner Wolf's theory of *intermediality* "to categorize the relative importance of media when they combine."<sup>267</sup> Wolf talks about overt intermediality when "both media are directly present with their typical or conventional signifiers and if consequently each medium remains distinct and is in principle 'quotable' separately," and about covert intermediality when "only one of the media appears directly with its typical or conventional signifiers and hence may be called the dominant medium, while another one (the non-dominant medium) is indirectly present 'within' the first medium."<sup>268</sup>

Citron's interest lies in how Wolf's theory helps to reveal the intensity of the intermedial relation between the two media, its fluctuation, and the consequent ambiguous situations that render one or both media more or less hybrid. She points out that televised opera, for example, "interacts with film, a situation that shows how a hybrid medium, in this case opera, can become even more hybrid, as it were, in certain circumstances."<sup>269</sup> For Citron, any mediated opera is a hybrid.<sup>270</sup> HD opera is thus a

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<sup>266</sup> Kay Armatage, "Cinematic Operatics: Barbara Willis Sweete Directs Metropolitan Opera HD Transmissions," in *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (Fall 2012), p. 910.

<sup>267</sup> Marcia J. Citron, *When Opera Meets Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 7.

<sup>268</sup> Werner Wolf, *The Musicalization of Fiction: A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 40-41; quoted by Marcia J. Citron, *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

covert intermedial production, where opera is further hybridized in its function as the dominant medium.

For Paul Heyer HD opera is a new medium; he calls it “digital broadcast cinema.” In his view, HD opera is attempting “to close the gap between what constitutes a performing art and a recording art.”<sup>271</sup> In this context, he describes it as “the sum of all previous media used by the Met and the addition of a new one, cinema,”<sup>272</sup> emphasizing the important roles that cinematic and televisual editing play in the production of HD opera. Following Heyer’s argument, where HD opera is “a well-edited concert film,”<sup>273</sup> cinema and television are integral to the production, but they can only function as hybrid media present within the dominant medium – opera. Indeed, for the visual aspect of the HD transmission, the Met makes use of complex video technology,<sup>274</sup> and the visuals do carry the print of the screen director. Most broadcasts are directed by Gary Halvorson, who has extensive television experience, thus making the HD opera montage more televisual in nature. Some of the broadcasts are more cinematic. Armatage points out that another director of the Met in HD series, Barbara Willis Sweete, has an extensive cinematic experience, which clearly impacts the opera broadcasts.<sup>275</sup> More recently, another prestigious television director, Matthew Diamond, who worked on some of the Met productions, is also the target of mixed reviews. This shows that the visual style of the HD broadcasts is still a work in progress even after a decade of transmissions.

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<sup>271</sup> Paul Heyer, “Virtually Live: Digital Broadcast Cinema and the Performing Arts,” in *Visual Communication and Culture: Images in Action*, ed. by Jonathan Finn (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 394.

<sup>272</sup> Paul Heyer, “Live from the Met: Digital Broadcast Cinema, Medium Theory, and Opera for the Masses,” in *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 33 (2008), p. 593.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 598.

<sup>274</sup> Both Paul Heyer and Kay Armatage offer detailed description of the video technology involved in the: multiple cameras, multiple editing platforms (in camera, console), etc.

<sup>275</sup> Kay Armatage, “Cinematic Operatics: Barbara Willis Sweete Directs Metropolitan Opera HD Transmissions,” in *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (Fall 2012), p. 910.

My previous discussion of the relationship between opera and early cinema showed that visually mediated opera carried the imprint of the available technology and montage standards from its beginnings. Later on, whenever opera was on screen, the montage was either adapted to fit the small screen (live broadcasts and recordings) or the big screen (film operas). Thus, the televisual character or the cinematic one is not a new addition to the HD opera broadcast, but a constitutive part of the event. This is exactly why Citron qualifies any mediated opera as a hybrid. When talking about the impact of technology on theatre, Jensen rightly points out that whenever assessing a mediated performance, it is easy to overlook the embedded mediatic character of the event, because of an oscillation between the “nostalgia for a pure theatre, which embraces its own medium-specific qualities, and the reality that theatre has always communicated within the language and culture of the culture that produces it.”<sup>276</sup> Mediated opera has always been a product of the visual culture that produced it. So soon in its development, it is not possible for HD opera to transcend the visual marks specific to the visual media in use today. As Armatage points out, HD broadcasts are just starting to develop new visual strategies:

And so we see in the HD broadcasts the emergence of new forms, as the limitations of camera placement are exacting their own reworkings of film grammar and technological evocations of affect and sensation. It is for these reasons that I would suggest that we are presently in the ‘transitional’ period of HD broadcasts of theatrical and musical events.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Amy Peterson Jensen, *Theatre in a Media Culture. Production, Performance and Perception Since 1970* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007), p. 3.

<sup>277</sup> Kay Armatage, “Cinematic Operatics: Barbara Willis Sweete Directs Metropolitan Opera HD Transmissions,” in *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (Fall 2012), p. 918.

While the development of HD visual practices is an ongoing process, the usage and content of the HD medium have been established from the first transmission. The HD medium was constructed to recreate the experience of the opera as close as possible within the conditions offered by the existing venues of the movie theatres. As I already pointed out and will continue to discuss in subsequent chapters, HD events offer an environment where the audience is able to interact, behave, and share the experience of the opera in a similar fashion with what happens in the actual opera hall. This aspect constitutes, in fact, the core of the change in liveness practice as initiated by the HD medium. Lisa Gitelman's work on the usage of media helps situate the HD medium in the context of other visual media and their development from the perspective of how they are used. She defines media as "socially realized structures of communication," thus including both technological forms as well as their "associated protocols," i.e., aspects of media usage practice.<sup>278</sup> Gitelman's main concern is to reevaluate and clarify the relationship between media and their users. More specifically, she focuses on understanding "the ways that people experience meaning, how they perceive the world and communicate with each other, and how to distinguish the past and identify culture."<sup>279</sup> Indeed, if we look at the literature on new media, an investigation of the technology involved together with its usage practice is always a priority, as it reveals how the new medium is perceived as different than other previous media.

Not all new media have a defined usage purpose at the time of their emergence. Many important media, such as radio, television, and even internet found a clear path of usage after years of experimenting. This is not the case with HD opera, which, as Peter

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<sup>278</sup> Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), p. 7.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Gelb declares, was created with a specific usage purpose from the first transmission. By using the movie theatre as its venue, HD opera indirectly invites its audience to experience a different but familiar set of what Gitelman calls “associated protocols” – the movie theatre decorum and behaviours. On its FAQ online page, the Met answers the question “What should I wear?” with “You should wear whatever you would normally wear to go to a movie theatre.”<sup>280</sup> And to the question: “I don’t like it when it’s noisy. Will people be able to buy popcorn?” the Met answers: “Popcorn and other snacks and drinks will be sold as part of the movie-going experience.”<sup>281</sup> However, dressing up, as well as applauding, are frequently present inside the movie theatre. The occurrence of an intermission also gives to the audience the opportunity to socialize and sometimes to enjoy the refreshments exclusively offered for the rooms where opera is screened. This indicates that some of the opera hall protocols make their way inside the movie theatre, thus negotiating the space for the opera and making the experience even more similar to that in the opera hall.

Gitelman’s work on new media offers further relevant tools for the analysis of HD opera: she is interested in the “materiality” of new technology, because “it makes no sense to think about ‘content’ without attending to the medium that both communicates that content and represents or helps set the limits of what that content can consist of.”<sup>282</sup> She acknowledges that material properties of media are important in “determining some

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<sup>280</sup> Cineplex, at <http://www.cineplex.com/Events/MetOpera/FAQ> (accessed on April 16, 2015). It is worth mentioning that a few years back, the answer to these questions used to be “Feel free to wear whatever you would normally wear to go to a movie theatre, although some patrons have told us they enjoy dressing up for the operas.” The Metropolitan Opera, “FAQs. Live in HD.” The Metropolitan Opera, at <http://www.metoperafamily.org/metopera/broadcast/template.aspx?id=4668#ontheday> (accessed on April 26, 2010).

<sup>281</sup> Cineplex, at <http://www.cineplex.com/Events/MetOpera/FAQ> (accessed on April 16, 2015).

<sup>282</sup> Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), p. 7.

of the local conditions of communication amid the broader circulations that at once express and constitute social relations.”<sup>283</sup> It is obvious that the content of HD opera is not different from previous live transmissions. In fact, the content of HD opera does not enter into discussions about HD opera, scholarly or otherwise. To a certain extent, in terms of content, the transition from live television to HD opera is similar to that from tape to CD. The sound quality, the volume of information that it could hold, the durability, and the practicality of the new medium as an object might have raised interest when introducing the CD as a replacement of the tape, but the actual content was irrelevant. In a similar way, when introducing HD opera, the Met did not draw attention to the content, but rather the access to it, the experience of it in a different setting.

Gitelman argues that any so-called new technology is actually preceded by various early similar technological forms that not only expose the public to new technological concepts, but they help in the construction of future meaning and determined usage of the new medium: “new media are less points of epistemic rupture than they are socially embedded sites for the ongoing negotiation of meaning as such.”<sup>284</sup> She points out that “the whole social context within which production and consumption get defined – and defined as distinct” should stay at the core of any investigation about new media.<sup>285</sup> There is no doubt that HD opera builds upon old media and upon an already established culture of opera production and consumption that actually revolves around various sound and visual media. In fact, by the time HD opera was launched, like

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>284</sup> Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), p. 6.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

many other musical genres, recordings and live broadcast had become as an integral part of contemporary opera culture and opera experience.

Dependence on previous visual media is by far the main difference between previous live broadcasting media and HD opera broadcasts. The radio introduced the concept of live broadcast of continuous sound and thus created a new type of experience. In a similar way, television introduced the concept of live broadcast of complete productions, which gave the distant opera listener a more complex experience than that offered by the radio or by the early cinema. The success and the popularity of live opera image and sound have been built over the decades by radio and television transmissions. The techniques used by old media feed perfectly into the opera broadcasts in movie theatres. The spectator needs to make no effort to adjust to the spectacle: the cinematic space is familiar, the camera work on the screen is familiar, the live broadcast is also familiar. It is just the combination of the three that is new. By using this mix of old media elements, the new medium is not only familiar *a priori*, but it also gains further legitimacy in the eyes of the spectators. Through live broadcast, HD opera continues and reinforces what has become a constitutive part of the opera culture.

An interesting aspect of HD opera is that while it is promoted as an event designed for the movie theatre, the transmissions and the recordings are also disseminated through other media. Here is a short description of the Met in HD series, as presented on their website:

The *Live in HD* performances are later also shown on public television, and a number of them have been released on DVD. In partnership with the New York City Department of Education and the Metropolitan Opera Guild, the Met has

developed a nationwide program for students to attend *Live in HD* transmissions for free in their schools.<sup>286</sup>

Also, most of the HD broadcasts are simulcast on radio and are also available online on “Met Opera on Demand,” where an impressive number of performances are available:

If you're one of the millions of opera lovers who have enjoyed the thrilling experience of this grand spectacle at your local cinema, we'd like to invite you to try Met Opera on Demand. The Met's online streaming service offers instant access to more than 80 past Live in HD presentations, streamed to your computer or iPad (with the free Met Opera on Demand iPad app) anytime, anywhere in the world.<sup>287</sup>

Furthermore, states Heyer, “starting with the April 5, 2008, broadcast of Puccini's *La Bohème*, the live transmissions began to include cruise ships at sea. The 2008-2009 Gala, broadcast on Monday night September 22, was also beamed to multiple screens in New York's Times Square, making it the biggest event held there apart from New Year's Eve festivities.”<sup>288</sup> The idea of having the content of HD opera migrate on other platforms appeared early in the design of the HD series. Peter Gelb mentions that the project was born in his discussions with the president of PBS, Paula Kerger:

She saw this as a way PBS could embrace opera broadcasts once again. She immediately suggested cross-promotional possibilities between the theater exhibitions and the public television pledge drives. The publicity and excitement generated by the live showings in theaters – one live showing and a repeat for

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<sup>286</sup> <http://www.metopera.org/About/The-Met/> (accessed on August 15, 2015).

<sup>287</sup> “Enjoy Past ‘Live in HD’ Performances Online, Anytime,” Metropolitan Opera email (received on April 25, 2015).

<sup>288</sup> Paul Heyer, “Live from the Met: Digital Broadcast Cinema, Medium Theory, and Opera for the Masses,” in *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 33 (2008), p. 593.

limited audiences – is only going to serve as a promotional tool for the broadcast that comes afterward.<sup>289</sup>

By making its content available on multiple media and platforms, HD opera participates in what Henry Jenkins identifies as *convergence culture*. Like Gitelman, Jenkins explores the confluence between old and new media by taking into consideration users and their impact on how new media are used. Moreover, he looks at how users think about content and how they gather information about what interests them by using multiple media. Jenkins defines convergence culture as the point “where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways.”<sup>290</sup> While this statement sums up his position on how media technology appears, evolves and impacts culture and society, it is important to note that convergence “occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interaction with others.”<sup>291</sup> For Jenkins, therefore, convergence culture is not just an interaction between old and new media or the migration of content from one platform to another. Convergence culture marks a paradigm shift in terms of how we think about media, their content, and how we interact with them: “convergence thinking is reshaping American popular culture and [...] is impacting the relationship between media audiences, producers, and content.”<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Peter Gelb, “Interview: Media Veteran Brings Wary Revolution to a Fortress of Tradition.” Curent.org, at <http://current.org/files/archive-site/music/music0619metopera.shtml> (accessed on April 23, 2015).

<sup>290</sup> Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York: New York University Press, 2006, p. 2.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12. Now, a decade after Jenkin’s book was published, online social media can be set up to offer the same content at the same time on multiple platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) by default. Various platforms (as various media) are now easily able to function as different points of access towards the same information.

HD opera is present on all available contemporary media, offering to the spectator the opportunity to access its content virtually anytime (and not only as a live transmission): live broadcasts are still available on radio and some can be watched on television; Met opera is available On Demand and on DVDs, and numerous excerpts are available on YouTube. Convergence consists in “the flow of content across multiple media platforms,”<sup>293</sup> which is exactly what the Met offers. Moreover, convergence involves how the audience is thinking about HD opera: the accessibility of HD opera on multiple platforms, together with the engagement of HD opera personalities with social media, have changed how the audience perceives the Met as a provider of cultural events. For many, the Metropolitan Opera in New York ceased to be a distant opera company: it is now just a click away, and so are many of its most famous singers. HD opera is therefore a medium that it is strongly engaged in today’s cultural practices of content access.

### **c. HD opera and social media**

In his book, *The Opera Singer and Silent Film*, published in 2005, right before the emergence of the Met in HD series in 2006, Fryer points out that the beginning of the 2000s was a time when “the variety and accessibility of twenty first century media has made it easier than ever before for an artist to traverse the widely perceived barrier between the historical stereotype of ‘high art’ forms and ‘popular culture.’<sup>294</sup> Indeed, while the first half of the twentieth century had seen a slow and somewhat predictable

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>294</sup> Paul Fryer, *The Opera Singer and the Silent Film* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005), p. 16.

development of new forms of mediated communication,<sup>295</sup> in the last few decades of the twentieth century there has been an explosion of new communication technology based on digital media. Carolyn A. Lin points out that while in the 1980s most Americans were served by the AT&T telephone monopoly, three broadcast television networks and a local newspaper, today most have internet access, multichannel television service and cellular phones.<sup>296</sup> However, the relationship between opera singers and the big screen had not been improved by the explosion of technology:

in the first decade of the twenty first century, then, the opera singer continues to be highly marketable in most sections of the media. Yet in cinema, where the star quality of the operatic performer once made such a significant contribution, the currency of the opera star has declined dramatically.<sup>297</sup>

The presence of the internet alone has had a spectacular impact on how music is produced, promoted and consumed. In a 2005 article, written right before the emergence of HD opera and social media, Paul Théberge shows how online activity of music fans leads to close daily communication between artists and their fans. Interestingly, Théberge points out that “the support of concert touring itself has been identified as the prime motivator behind the recent rise of Internet fan-club sites.”<sup>298</sup> This reflects the importance

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<sup>295</sup> While radio technology was available and used by amateurs soon after 1910, it became widespread and popular only after 1920 and peaked around 1930s. Similarly, when television was finally implemented on a large scale in late 1940s, the idea was not new, partly because the cinema has been present for several decades already, but also because sporadic broadcasts had been taken place already starting with early 1930s.

<sup>296</sup> Carolyn A. Lin, “Communication Technology and Social Change,” in *Communication Technology and Social Change: Theory and Implications*, ed. by Carolyn A. Lin and David J. Atkin (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007), p. 4.

<sup>297</sup> Paul Fryer, *The Opera Singer and the Silent Film* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005), p. 16.

<sup>298</sup> Paul Théberge, “Everyday Fandom: Fan Clubs, Blogging, and the Quotidian Rhythms of the Internet,” in *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (2005), p. 494.

of touring in popular music, and how the internet offers the perfect medium to further promote it.

Théberge's view can be easily transferred to the current relationship between opera and social media. There are numerous touring artists in the opera industry, but considering the complexity of operatic production, they are only able to engage in different productions of the same opera, other operas, and in recitals featuring various arias. The HD medium is actually the first occurrence in the history of opera that resembles somewhat the touring practice that is so central to popular music promotion. Fryer points out that "the coming of recording and moving pictures revolutionized the audience's access to recognizable theatrical, operatic and musical star figures, removing them from their usual environments, often out of the reach of the ordinary man in the street and displaying them on an altogether more democratic stage."<sup>299</sup> Indeed, by being accessible in the local movie theatre, HD opera revived the status of operatic stars in the same manner that early cinema enriched and expanded the images of the opera stars of the time.

From this perspective, HD opera can be seen as an opera democratization tool, indeed, but also as a promotional one that mimics the touring practice in popular music.<sup>300</sup> In this context, the online activity of opera fans, especially on social media, can be seen as the "cross-media interaction" mentioned by Théberge, this time between internet and the HD events, as mobile, widely accessible opera productions. It is only with HD opera that the operatic world takes full advantage of the contemporary impact of

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<sup>299</sup> Paul Fryer, *The Opera Singer and the Silent Film* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005), p. 131.

<sup>300</sup> HD broadcasts mimic touring practice by making the event accessible in multiple locations and by how they use online media.

digital technology and social media on everyday life. Since the internet and social websites offer a continuous connection between the opera and its wide audience, the HD opera constructs and maintains the accessible image of opera as a genre by promoting a certain type of repertoire and singers that regularly engage with social media.

Although the marketing of the Met in HD series emphasises that the main efforts are directed towards production and maintaining a great cast for the audience of the cinema broadcasts, the Met in HD series is actually an ongoing project that not only benefits from internet and social media, but a project that targets the wide audience of these media. The audience is encouraged to enjoy the live broadcast events in the movie theatres a few times each season, but at the same time it is invited to keep in touch with the opera world at all times by engaging in social media. Most popular singers have Facebook accounts, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube channels. For example, soprano Anna Netrebko, who has been on many promotional posters of the Met in HD series, has active accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube. This might seem irrelevant at a first glance, considering that social media have become the norm for artists in the last decade. But seeing an international opera singer answering lifestyle questions from fans (YouTube) or expressing political views (Twitter) is rather important, especially when they have the power to influence the image of the Met around the globe.

HD opera was an unexpected medium that revived the relationship between opera and its audience with its accessibility. In fact, HD opera arrived at the opportune moment, right before major social websites emerged. In 2006, when the HD series began, even YouTube was in its infancy. This is a very important detail, as one cannot claim that the operatic world was actually pressured by the evolution of social media to open access to a

larger audience, nor that social media facilitated its popularity when it launched. If anything, the Met as an institution concurred with other attempts to capture the interest of the worldwide audience that has been rapidly becoming engorged with everyday internet use. As I will show in subsequent chapters, the involvement of HD opera with social media becomes an important part of liveness practice today, as it allows listeners to be continuously connected to other members of the audience, and it enables them to access liveness-related content and information anytime and anywhere. Liveness ceases to be an isolated cultural experience; it is now anticipated, discussed, and shared online with the community every day.

### **3. Novelty and Innovation in HD Opera**

While HD opera is a medium that mostly thrives on cultural and technological practices established and extensively used by older visual media, it is still perceived as a new phenomenon, and with good reason. Besides identifying what the new medium shares with its oldest counterparts, understanding what is new and innovative in HD opera helps place this medium in the context of contemporary operatic culture and also evaluate its impact on how live broadcast opera is experienced today. In fact, identifying the new characteristics of a medium and their impact on users is a common strategy employed by theorists when trying to understand the nature of the medium.

Recent theories of digital media offer a good example in that direction. Lev Manovich, who is interested in defining digital technology and assessing the impact of the new medium on our culture, focuses on the core differences between old media and

new media.<sup>301</sup> The theoretical tendency to isolate new media characteristics in an attempt to clearly delimitate it from old media is also reflected in Des Freedman's investigation of digital media.<sup>302</sup> In the case of HD opera the inventory is considerably shorter. I have shown above that HD opera uses an improved version of the technology used in live television broadcasts, the content is similar to previous broadcasts, the montage is televisual or cinematic in nature as always, and it targets a similar interaction with the audience as live opera and other live broadcasts. The few new characteristics of HD opera – public space, scale of the performance – reinstate to a certain extent characteristics of live opera, which are well-known and not actually new. Moreover, the new characteristics of HD opera seem to be related exclusively to one element: the venue. But the venue – the movie theatre – is also not new. Identifying the innovative elements of the HD medium is a step forward towards understanding how it functions, and also a way of recognizing its contribution to the history of live broadcast.

Since its beginnings in the seventeenth century, opera has been a collective experience, involving a quasi-ritualistic relationship with the space in which the opera is performed. While the actual decorum and the socially acceptable behaviour in the opera hall changed over centuries, the fact that any epoch had its own social customs specific to the opera house never changed. The social aspect of attending an opera performance had value and meaning for both performers and their audience.

Before HD opera, televised broadcasts constituted the most complex type of mediated opera available. Obviously, one of the main differences between television

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<sup>301</sup> They are: numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability, and transcoding.

<sup>302</sup> They are: virtuality, extraterritoriality, acceleration of time and space compression, demassification, asynchronicity. Des Freedman, "Internet Transformations. 'Old' Media Resilience in the 'New Media' Revolution," in *Media and Cultural Theory*, ed. by James Curran and David Morley (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 277.

broadcasts and the live opera experience was that the collective character of the attendance was compromised. The issue of a collective experience within a public space is addressed simply by HD opera by placing the broadcast in the movie theatre. Attending opera in a movie theatre involves publicly performed collective rituals that not only are similar (in quality, though perhaps not in glamour) to those involved in attending the performance in the opera house, but are radically different from any other form of consuming an operatic performance in the domestic space. The opera hall is not only a space that offers appropriate conditions for enjoying the live performance, but is also a place where the operatic community is able to come together. This is confirmed by members of the audience: “It lacks the sensation of being part of the audience at the live performance but we enjoy the greater experience of being part of the audience in our home town,”<sup>303</sup> and is also confirmed by some critics. In his review of the first HD broadcast, W. Anthony Sheppard reports that he wore a suit and that he felt like “participating in a ritualistic and historic occasion.” He also describes the experience of the cinematic space:

As I entered the hallway to the darkened theater, sound transformed my surroundings and made me feel as though I was entering the opera house itself. Hearing the orchestra warming up and the hum of the Met audience, it sounded like “being there,” only a good bit louder.<sup>304</sup>

When talking about public space, Mirjam Struppek, organizer of the *Urban Screens 2005* conference on discovering the potential of outdoor screens for urban society (thus before

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<sup>303</sup> Martin Barker, “Audience Responses to the Streaming of Live Performances,” Report to Picturehouse Cinemas, unpublished report (March, 2010), p. 21.

<sup>304</sup> W. Anthony Sheppard, “Review of the Metropolitan Opera’s New HD Movie Theater Broadcasts,” in *American Music*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Fall 2007), p. 384.

the HD series emerged), emphasises the fact that the public space is a storytelling medium that provides a stage for interaction: “public space has always been a place for human interaction, a unique arena for exchange of rituals and communication in a constant process of renewal, challenging the development of society.”<sup>305</sup> By using movie theatres around the world, HD opera extends its own public space, thus inviting a wide audience to participate in the operatic event. The actual number of audience members that witness the live event at the same time through HD opera was a source of pride, but also a legitimization of the new medium from the beginning of the series:

From its inaugural season, the series enjoyed critical acclaim and global box office success, attracting an audience of more than 325,000 attendees across six live and six encore events in seven countries. In the second season, the number of performances increased to eight live and eight encore events, seen in 17 countries, with audience numbers nearly tripling to more than 925,000.<sup>306</sup>

As discussed in one of my previous chapters, Benjamin argues that our perception was irreversibly changed by recording and reproduction technology. In our appreciation of the arts, technology mediates our perception from the realms of aural and visual, while also greatly influencing our conceptual tools in approaching the work of art. In our contact with opera, for example, apart from live performances, which themselves may involve sound-enhancing technology, opera productions can be experienced in various mediated ways, from live or relay broadcasts on radio, television, movie theatre, or internet, to audio and video recordings. Chances are that most contemporary opera lovers have primarily connected to the operatic performance through technological mediation,

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<sup>305</sup> Quoted by Amy Peterson Jensen, *Theatre in a Media Culture. Production, Performance and Perception Since 1970* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007), p. 67.

<sup>306</sup> Cineplex, at <http://www.cineplex.com/Events/MetOpera/FAQ> (accessed on April 16, 2015).

only to discover later the live operatic experience, if ever.<sup>307</sup> In this context, it becomes impossible to observe opera as an art form without our technologically generated aural and visual filter.

Live performance is a unique experience that music lovers of all genres appreciate greatly. Sometimes financial factors might keep spectators away from the concert halls, but free live performances seem to have great success everywhere, from the North American mall setting to the European square. My analysis of the HD opera medium shows that its design, technology, directing, and interaction with other media are all employed to reinforce the idea that the HD experience is a close representation of live performance. The HD medium succeeds somewhat in offering to the spectator in the movie theatre a glimpse of the aura of live performance. It is not my claim that the HD series succeeds in mediating the aura, nor that it would actually be possible to do so. But within the realm of the inevitable technologically mediated contact with the operatic work of art, live broadcasting in movie theatres is the closest we are now to a *simulated* operatic aura.

A live television broadcast shares with the actual live event the visuals and the sound, both mediated, and the timing. All other characteristics of the experience are different (venue, company, behaviour). By situating the broadcast in the movie theatre, HD opera addresses all missing elements from a television broadcast: it offers a public space similar to the opera hall, it brings the community together to form a live audience, and provides a social model of behaviour – “being at the movies” – that occasionally is

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<sup>307</sup> Indeed, as Opera America reports, five percent of Met’s HD audience have never been in an opera hall. See “The Metropolitan Opera: Live in HD Research Project. An Important Highlight of Program Survey Shows HD Attendance Increases Interest in Live Opera Performances,” in Opera America Press Release, at <http://www.operaamerica.org/content/about/pressroom/2008/692008.aspx> (accessed on January 25, 2013).

completed with opera hall decorum elements, such as applauding or having a polite conversation about the performance during the intermission. In so doing, it brings the experience much closer to that in the opera hall.<sup>308</sup>

Besides helping to build the impression of attending a live event, there is another element brought by mediating technology that contributes to the establishment of a perceived aura for both performers on the stage and spectators in the movie theatre: the possibility of communication between performers and the HD spectators. Benjamin favours live theatrical performance because aura can be perceived by the public only when in direct contact with the performance; it is tied to the actor's presence. He quotes Pirandello in order to reflect how the movie actor loses his aura due to the technological means used during the shooting: "his body loses its corporeality, it evaporates, it is deprived of reality, life voice, and the noises caused by his moving about, in order to be changed into a mute image, flickering an instant on the screen, then vanishing into silence."<sup>309</sup> However, in the case of HD opera, the camera that substitutes for the gaze of the spectators in the movie theatres, works only as a spatial mediator, not also as a temporal one, like in film. The image becomes "separable" and "transportable"<sup>310</sup> only in space, but not in time.

In this case, the actor does not deal with an alienating technology, which puts in danger his auratic presence while performing, but with a technological extension of his auratic performance. Also, during the intermission, singers get the chance to address a

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<sup>308</sup> The closest technologically possible today live broadcast setting would probably involve live broadcast holograms of the singers on the stage of a real opera house (different that the one where the live performance takes place).

<sup>309</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), in *Illumination*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, transl. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 231.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*

few words to the audience in the movie theatres, this being actually the only instance when performers get the chance to represent themselves. During a live performance, Met singers are able to identify themselves with the character they are playing, unlike the film actor, who very often is denied this opportunity, considering the fragmented nature of any film production. From Benjamin's discussion of "the aura of an appearance," it follows that the awareness of an auratic interlocutor might actually be enough for the presence of the actor to become auratic in front of the camera. Since HD broadcasts happen live, the singer on the stage knows that he has an auratic interlocutor behind the camera eye, and that the interlocutor is trying to perceive the aura at the same time the performance takes place.

While the singers from the Met appear on the screen in the movie theatre during the HD transmission, their experience on the stage is no doubt a live one. They are performing for a live audience situated in the opera hall, exercising the aura through the connection between them and the present audience. Live broadcasts try to bring the spectator closer, by showing the opera house, the audience, the orchestra with the intention to "pull us inward, not outward, as they urge us to identify with the audience and its participation in the event."<sup>311</sup> In this context, the audience in the opera hall serves as a mediator between performers and HD spectators; both performers and HD spectators use the audience in the opera hall to project their reactions towards one another.

Even though the live audience mediates somewhat between performers and HD spectators, the effects of mediation create a different experience. The size of the screen and the camera work during transmission, most notably close-ups, contribute to a larger scale of the spectacle than that possible in the domestic space. The close-up not only

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<sup>311</sup> Marcia J. Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 13.

enhances the experience of the audience, but it is actually expected. Some “prefer the visual quality of the screen performance (compared with a view from a much greater distance),” and find the transmission to be better “because you get close-up shots of the singers and orchestra leader.”<sup>312</sup> But many find the close-up an inconvenience. Armatage talks about spectators complaining that they are not being able to enjoy the performance because “the direction of Met’s HD broadcasts is much more intimate, with almost claustrophobic obsession with close-ups of the principals.”<sup>313</sup> Moreover, spectators are able to notice that “singers tend to sweat, and a giant screen filled with a close-up of their face is not always a pleasant image. There is also much too much camera movement, zooming in, panning, pulling back, changing cameras. It is all very distracting.”<sup>314</sup> While this might seem like a trivial detail, it is important enough to be addressed in the FAQ page of the Cineplex website:

Q. Can we get more long or wide camera shots, not so many close-ups?

A. The way a transmission is presented visually is the director’s choice. It varies by performance. We continually provide feedback to the program directors, so please let us know your thoughts.<sup>315</sup>

That close-ups are the subject of so many discussions and critiques shows that the use of the camera in HD events makes the spectacle to be perceived as a distant, mediated experience. Close-ups are not possible when attending a live performance in the opera hall. Similarly, the spectator in the movie theatre does not feel the need to be so close to

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<sup>312</sup> Martin Barker, “Audience Responses to the Streaming of Live Performances,” Report to Picturehouse Cinemas, unpublished report (March, 2010), p. 21.

<sup>313</sup> Kay Armatage, “Cinematic Operatics: Barbara Willis Sweete Directs Metropolitan Opera HD Transmissions,” in *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (Fall 2012), p. 915.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>315</sup> Cineplex, at <http://www.cineplex.com/Events/MetOpera/FAQ> (accessed on April 16, 2015).

the stage or the singers, considering the scale of the venue and of the screen. To a certain degree, the public space of the movie theatre transforms the spectators of the mediated event into an operatic audience enjoying a spectacle similar in scale with the original event. The movie theatre with its big screen is a comfortable enough venue for the audience to enjoy the HD transmission as a staged event in itself; however, sometimes the close-up technique may undermine this experience.

Jeremy Tambling claims that filmed performances of the opera are meant to return the aura to the operatic performance and within the opera house.<sup>316</sup> He sees the movement of the camera focusing in and out on various players of the orchestra or singers as an attempt to recover the aura, by separating the audience from what happens on the stage, and thus creating the needed distance.<sup>317</sup> In his view, the role of filmed opera performances is to keep intact the ritualistic and traditional aspects of the work of art as described by Benjamin, thus actually constituting an impediment in the democratization of the opera: “opera filmed in the theatre is unlikely to offer a radical experience, one that can be used by its audiences in a way that frees them from tradition and ritual.”<sup>318</sup> The HD broadcast setting – the public space of the movie theatre – seems to fit this description even better. Attending the HD performance reminds the spectator about the public space of the opera hall, where performers and spectators participate together in the creation of the operatic aura.

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<sup>316</sup> Jeremy Tambling, *Opera, Ideology and Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 16.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter IV: Liveness in HD Opera**

The nature of the live spectacle offered in the collective space of the movie theatre has an important role in how liveness is received by the audience. Sound and image technology, as well as other media have an undeniable impact on how HD opera is constructed and on the way opera translates to the big screen. HD opera sound strives to seem unmediated. Production details are further changed to accommodate the presence of live cameras. At the same time, the audience in the movie theatre comes to the HD event with a set of expectations that are shaped by both their aesthetic approach to opera, and by their interaction with other media. In this context, the reception of liveness in HD opera is the complex result of the efforts made by the producers in combination with the aesthetic expectations and perception of the audience. The fact that liveness in HD opera is reached through some behind-the-scene artifice does not diminish its role in how HD opera as a medium is received by spectators.

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the role of liveness in HD opera through the lens of its production and reception. Furthermore, I will highlight the importance of liveness, as promoted by HD opera, in the current reshaping of classical music culture and practice. My contention is that the recent flourishing of live online broadcasts benefits from the impact of HD opera on classical music audience. HD opera also has an impact on how this audience is engaging with online media with the purpose to access classical music streaming and related information. With the Met in HD series, opera entered a new chapter in its interaction with mainstream technology (such as social media) and its audience. Ultimately, I will show how HD opera contributed to a complete

democratization of opera (in theory), thus challenging its residual status as a high culture art.

### 1. Construction of Liveness

In a recent article discussing the usage of the word *liveness* in the promotion of HD screenings, Bernadette Cochrane and Frances Bonner take a strong position: they argue that “specific adaptation practices are applied to render it possible for a compliant cinema audience member to imagine their encounter with the text as if they were in the theatre or opera house.”<sup>319</sup> They identify and examine several strategies used by the HD producers to convince the audience of the uniqueness of the event, trying to see whether “the assertions of liveness, of the sameness of the experience, and the difference from filmed or televised productions are sustainable for a range of performance types viewed close to the source of the event and remote from it.”<sup>320</sup> In their analysis they talk about the fact that among all HD producers, the Met “maintains temporality and the live illusion as much as possible, limiting though not completely excluding, pre-recorded material.”<sup>321</sup> While theatre transmissions or opera transmissions from other companies include recorded materials (such as masterclass clips), the Met strives to have as much as possible live content. Indeed, the very few moments when the spectator in the movie theatre is disconnected from the live transmission is when the Met screens the promotional material for the current or upcoming season (and I will discuss later the impact of that on liveness perception by the audience). However, liveness in HD opera is

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<sup>319</sup> Bernadette Cochrane and Frances Bonner, “Screening from the Met, the NT or the House: What Changes With the Live Relay,” in *Adaptation*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2014), p. 3.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

not constructed only through promotion and by offering content that is almost continuously live. The HD opera production involves numerous artifices meant to persuade the spectator – or maintain their belief – that the show is live.

From the beginning of the HD opera project, Peter Gelb planned to include live interviews and backstage access in order to offer to the distant audience a feeling of immediacy: “My main objective is to make the broadcasts feel more immediate and live. That will be accomplished by having more live reports, live interviews.”<sup>322</sup> Since the movie theatre is a space traditionally dedicated to recorded content such as movies, the HD opera producers strive to assure that the spectator does not misread the live broadcast experience as a cinematic one. Moreover, simply knowing from promotional materials and trusting the broadcast provider that the event is transmitted without major delays and unmodified is not enough for the spectator. In fact, all live broadcasts use artifices in live transmission meant to persuade the viewer even more that the event is happening right there, right now, and HD opera does not hesitate to use them.

Unsurprisingly, the camera and how it is used in transmission constitutes the core in the construction of liveness. Unlike a popular music concert, where audio elements that directly address the audience can be easily inserted during the performance (“Good evening, Ottawa!”), opera and classical music performances in general do not offer this possibility. Thus, during the actual performance, it is impossible to use sound in order to captivate the attention of the distant spectator and assure him that he is witnessing a live transmission. In this context, during the performance, the visual becomes the most important means of expressing liveness in a live opera broadcast. This is exactly why the

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<sup>322</sup> Peter Gelb, “Interview: Media Veteran Brings Wary Revolution to a Fortress of Tradition.” Curent.org, at <http://current.org/files/archive-site/music/music0619metopera.shtml> (accessed on April 23, 2015).

camera work is so crucial in HD opera, and it also successfully explains why the visuals are such an important and often mentioned and reviewed aspect of the HD experience.

After attending both live Met performances and the HD transmissions of the same productions, Zachary Woolfe from the *New York Times* concludes that the HD transmissions offer an enhanced visual experience to the spectator: “Even as the vocal performances are homogenized, the visuals are often thrown into higher relief. In getting so close to the performers the broadcasts can create remarkably strong moments.”<sup>323</sup> He notes that specific scenes were received differently by the live audience as compared by the distant audience: “The woman sitting next to me in Las Vegas delivered an unprintable exclamation during the broadcast of *La Traviata* when Germont (Dmitri Hvorostovsky) slapped his son, Alfredo (Matthew Polenzani). The slap had sent a low murmur through the Met when I saw it live, but it was harrowing in high definition.”<sup>324</sup> Furthermore, the impact of the singers’ expressions, due to close-ups, created a different experience when the production was seen in HD:

That exaggeration of detail is where the subtle shift in the opera experience happens. I watched the first broadcast of the season, Donizetti’s “Anna Bolena,” at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, surrounded by Russian fans of the opera’s star, Anna Netrebko. When Ms. Netrebko, as Boleyn, was listening to Percy’s recollections of their love, her emotions registered in facial details that had been invisible when I saw the opera in the house. In Boleyn’s scene with Jane Seymour, Ms. Netrebko stared at Ekaterina Gubanova, her eyes glistening with a potent mixture of hatred and pity. Her performance, strong in the house, was powerful in a different way on screen. Live opera acting depends more on posture

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<sup>323</sup>Zachary Woolfe, “I’m Ready for My Close-Up, Mr. Puccini,” in *New York Times*, April 27, 2012, at [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/29/arts/music/the-mets-hd-broadcasts-are-changing-opera.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/29/arts/music/the-mets-hd-broadcasts-are-changing-opera.html?_r=0) (accessed on May 4, 2012)

<sup>324</sup> Idem.

and physical fearlessness than on the kinds of details – a quiver of the mouth, a quick turn of the eyes – that convey emotion in cinematic close-up.<sup>325</sup>

Indeed, the close-up is one of the most important elements that transform the operatic show from a primarily aural medium to a visual one. I completely agree; in my experience, from a visual standpoint, the HD access to some performances (most notably in Angela Gheorghiu's rendering of Magda in Puccini's *La Rondine*, 2009, and Anna Netrebko's *Tatiana* in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, 2010), made for some operatic experiences comparable only to small-scale recitals, where one can actually see and closely read the singer's expression. I second Michel Beaulac, artistic director of the Opéra de Montréal, in confirming that the auditive element – the vibration of the voice – is missing; however, the strong visual impact compensates the cold mediation somewhat. For an assiduous HD spectator, the visuals become part of the experience and of the expectations: the HD transmission would seem less live without this strong visual element.

That HD broadcasts transform opera productions into strong visual art shows was also acknowledged by both producers and critics early in the process. Here is what Larry Weinstein, partner in Toronto-based Rhombus Media, the independent producer of television programs on the performing arts, has to say about that:

One reason this big projection of opera works is because you see a lot. [...] I mean, it's very large, it's high definition. If you have excellent actors on stage, you can see their faces in close-up, which is something you can't do in the opera

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<sup>325</sup> Idem.

hall. I'm a filmmaker. I mean, for me, nothing is more frustrating than sitting and watching a five-hour Wagner opera in the same shot.<sup>326</sup>

Similarly, Derrick de Kerckhove, author of *The Skin of Culture: Investigating the New Electronic Reality* and director of the McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto until 2008, discussed this change soon after the series began.

Christopher Hoile gives an account of de Kerckhove's view:

Both opera and film, he says, deal with "the specularization of life," but broadcasting an opera to a cinema is "changing a primarily aural medium with a strong visual component into a primarily visual medium with a strong aural component." It's no surprise the Met's simulcasts should be popular because "we live in a visual age."<sup>327</sup>

While during the actual performance the camera has the role of conveying liveness, HD productions use the introductory section of the program to connect the distant spectators with the event, and the intermission to give the impression of communication between performers and spectators. From the first minutes, the HD transmission is trying to bring the spectator closer, by showing the opera house, the audience, the orchestra with the intention to "pull us inward, not outward, as they urge us to identify with the audience and its participation in the event,"<sup>328</sup> as Marcia J. Citron points out. Moreover, before the performance starts, an announcer, usually a well-known singer, is present backstage or on the stage, talking about the production soon to be broadcast, or future broadcasts.

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<sup>326</sup> L. H. Tiffany Hsieh, "For Two Movie-makers, the Met's Success Is No Surprise," in *Opera Canada*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Summer 2007), p. 26.

<sup>327</sup> Christopher Hoile, "Opera at the Movies: The Met's Success Raises Some Interesting Questions About What Happens to Opera in the Movie Theatre," in *Opera Canada*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Summer 2007), p. 23.

<sup>328</sup> Marcia J. Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 13.

When talking about live television, Jérôme Bourdon identifies this strategy as a “sequence-guarantor of live continuity.” He defines the “direct address” as “the sequence where a person looks straight at the camera (as if at the viewers) and addresses the viewers, using the appropriate deixis,” which includes ‘I’ (the host), ‘you’ (the viewers), and most-likely the word ‘live’.<sup>329</sup> This is common practice in live television broadcasts of sporting events, where the announcers address the audience before the game starts. Steve Wurtzler interprets the direct address as another chance for the audience to see that the announcer occupies the same space as the event. The announcer’s presence on screen and his discourse are meant to “position the spectator-auditor in a relationship of temporal simultaneity and spatial contiguity with the representational posited event.”<sup>330</sup>

Similarly, the introductory address plays a very important role in establishing a relationship between the opera hall and the spectators in the movie theatre. By addressing it, the remote audience is invited and welcomed to join the event. From this point on, the distant audience is not only watching what happens in the opera hall, but is also *participating* in the event – its participation is validated through being acknowledged. When the announcer sits in the audience while making the introductory remarks, part of the audience in the opera hall is able to see the announcer talking to the camera, which is definitely visible on the screen; through this simple exchange, the audience in the movie theatre is reassured of their established importance in the event. My last chapter will discuss in detail why the acknowledgement of the audience as a part of the event becomes a pivotal element in liveness practice as initiated by HD events.

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<sup>329</sup> Jérôme Bourdon, “Live Television Is Still Alive: On Television as an Unfulfilled Promise,” in *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 22 (2000), p. 540.

<sup>330</sup> Steve Wurtzler, “She Sang Live, but the Microphone was Turned Off: The Live, the Recorded, and the Subject of Representation,” in *Sound Theory/Sound Practice*, ed. by Rick Altman (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 91.

As I mentioned before, short clips presenting future productions are also featured during this time. These are recorded materials, but because they are presented during the introductory remarks (and not as the pre-show of any movie), they actually contribute to liveness. By offering the promise of unique and distinct future liveness experiences in the same setting (the clips feature the exact dates of transmission), these recorded materials emphasise the uniqueness of the HD events. Also, they acknowledge the audience in the movie theatre as a close-knit community that attends these events together, at the same date and time, because they are live. In this way, the recorded clips are not disruptive within the discourse of liveness, but maintain the continuity of liveness that the Met attempts to maintain during the entire duration of the HD experience.

During the intermission, besides the long shots from the hall accompanied by the familiar noise at the opera hall during the break, the host takes the spectators behind the curtain and interviews the protagonists on the spot. The live interviews help reinforce the certitude of attending a live event, and add to the simulated aura, thus enriching the experience of liveness. The interviews offer the possibility of perceived communication between performers and the HD spectators, an element that is in fact reserved for live broadcasts, since singers do not address directly the audience in the opera hall. After witnessing HD opera behind the scenes, James Steichen confirms that all these details are taken care of with the intention of creating a dynamic and lively intermission:

The Creative Content team had sent Renée [Fleming] her remarks in advance, but all of the rehearsal took place that morning. Even with such limited preparation time, the script remained fluid, with Renée requesting small edits to make her remarks and questions flow more naturally. To ensure proper pronunciation, certain words were written out phonetically (for instance, “Newbauer” in lieu of “Neubauer,” one of the broadcast sponsors). For the previous broadcast (of

Rosenkavalier) host Plácido Domingo had requested that the “dot” in a website address be written out; Renée asked for it to be changed back to a period. Thanks to state-of-the-art digital teleprompters, such last-minute changes were easily made on the spot, the age of cue cards having long passed.<sup>331</sup>

This account of how the intermission is constructed offers insight into the pressure exerted on the producers to maintain the intermission material flowing, and thus to ensure that the feeling of liveness for the spectator in the movie theatre is continuous throughout the entire HD experience. But whether communication between performance and audience is viable during the intermission is a matter of debate. Beaulac considers that communication between performers and spectators is nonexistent during an HD live broadcast: “Theatre is a communication experience, it has to do with sharing. Be it at home or in a movie theatre, the audience has no access to the performers, no matter how hard they applaud or how they react. The sound, no matter how thrilling it may be through amplification, remains ‘artificial’ and does not compare with experiencing the live vibrations of the human voice, the sound of the orchestra or the amplitude and articulation of the staging.”<sup>332</sup> Cochrane and Bonner see the interviews as tools for giving the appearance of spontaneity and presenting opera as a democratized genre:

The Met may script and rehearse Renée Fleming or Deborah Voigt’s interviews with cast members (Steichen; Heyer), but it wants the cinema audience to know that they occur during actual intervals, so the camera follows the singers threading their way to the designated site backstage, still sometimes catching their breath before they answer questions about their role. It is quite common for singers to

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<sup>331</sup> James Steichen, “HD opera: A Love/Hate Story,” in *Opera Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Fall 2011), pp. 447-448.

<sup>332</sup> Michel Beaulac, quoted by Christopher Hoile, “Opera at the Movies: The Met’s Success Raises Some Interesting Questions About What Happens to Opera in the Movie Theatre,” in *Opera Canada*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Summer 2007), p. 23.

overtly signal the global reach of the relays by breaking into their native tongue and waving through the camera to the folks at home. The practice, normally engaged in by the unsophisticated person-in-the-street, is here used both to create an illusion of inclusiveness, [...] and to show the ordinariness of the performers. This plays to the rationale of the relays to extend the audience by reducing the apparent exclusiveness of high cultural performance.<sup>333</sup>

Indeed, the casual tone and the fact that the interviews are available exclusively for HD spectators do contribute to the general feeling that opera is further democratized. But the interviews serve as opera democratization reminders for both singers and spectators. Moreover, the camera serves as a spatial mediator between singers and their distant audience. The singer knows that when he looks into the camera, there are thousands of spectators actually returning the gaze. The interviews not only work as reinforcers for the spectators, but also for the performers, who get an additional chance to represent themselves besides the final moments of the applause. Because they are live, the interviews are not pure spectacle, but mediated interaction. Even Walter Benjamin, advocate of the live aura, has a different take on the mediated aura when talking about a perceived receptor of the auratic image. He writes in *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire*:

What in the daguerreotypes must have been felt to be inhuman, even lethal, was (the prolonged, by the way) staring into the camera, since, after all, the camera takes a person's picture without returning his glance. The glance, however, expects inherently to find a response wherever it gives itself. Wherever this expectation finds such response, [...] it experiences aura to the fullest. [...] The experience of aura thus rests upon the transfer of a form of reaction that is current in human society to the relation human beings have with the inanimate or with

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<sup>333</sup> Bernadette Cochrane and Frances Bonner, "Screening from the Met, the NT or the House: What Changes With the Live Relay," in *Adaptation*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2014), p. 9.

nature. The person who is looked at or who believes himself to be looked at looks up. To experience the aura of an appearance is to endow that appearance with the ability to look up.<sup>334</sup>

From Benjamin's discussion of "the aura of an appearance" it follows that the awareness of an auratic interlocutor might actually be enough for the presence of the actor to become auratic in front of the camera, and thus providing a space for communication to be possible, even if it is rather perceived. Since HD broadcasts happen live, the singer on the stage knows that he has an interlocutor behind the camera eye, and that the interlocutor perceives this exchange as direct communication.

During the intermission, the perceived interaction between singers and spectators is reinforced by how the camera is used. The mobility of the camera and its dynamics meant to mimic the excitement and the fervour backstage help create a sense of immediacy for the spectators, which in turn sustains the feeling of liveness throughout the intermission. The spontaneity and realism of the interviews that begin right after the first half of the production are successful in keeping many spectators inside the movie theatre. By getting out of the movie theatre during that time, the spectator makes a conscious decision to miss a part of the live show. This is where the venue of HD opera plays its role in liveness, not only during the intermission, but for the entire duration of the transmission.

HD opera (and other HD productions as well) is one of the few live broadcast events today where the viewer cannot interact with the medium and, consequently, has to

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<sup>334</sup> Quoted by Samuel Weber, "The 1992 Mari Kutna Lecture on Film: Mass Mediauras, or: Art, Aura and Media in the Work of Walter Benjamin," in *Mass Mediauras. Form, Technics, Media, Media*, ed. by Alan Cholodenko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 99.

stay there and watch the transmission in real time. By now, with most other live transmission – television, online streaming – the viewer has the technological possibility of pausing the transmission and taking a break from it without actually missing anything. It is true, by taking a break, the viewer gives up liveness, but it is possible to quickly recover that during a commercial break. The point here is that the viewer has some control over the content; he can take a break, not miss anything and still be engaged in the liveness of the event. In the movie theatre, especially in a sold out location, getting out during the transmission is not only a sometimes difficult thing to do, but it guarantees that the spectator is missing part of the performance. The spectator has no control over the event, which adds to the reinforcement of liveness as well.

The above discussion reveals that maintaining the liveness of HD opera takes a lot of planning and spontaneous decision making. But it is true that attention to every little detail and its impact on the audience is not necessarily specific to the production of HD events. Many live events, as well as mediatized ones, rely on a detailed script and other artifices to ensure a smooth and successful performance. Moreover, HD broadcasts resemble other opera live television broadcasts, an aspect that was always understood by HD producers. From the beginning, Peter Gelb was aware that HD opera will resemble live televised broadcasts and that it will be limited by the very fact that the core of the HD event was the actual live performance with an audience in the opera hall: “There will always be certain limitations in reproducing live events on television. Operas are meant to be viewed from the audience in the theater. They’re not staged for television. Camera positions are limited because we don’t want to disturb the audience in the theater with

cameras moving on dollies or cranes.”<sup>335</sup> This reinforces the idea that HD opera was not constructed as a new medium, nor claimed that it uses a completely new set of approaches to live broadcast. The production and promotion of HD events rely on television culture, and they need televisual (and not cinematic) methods in order to ensure a visual appeal that conveys liveness to the spectators. Regardless, HD events manage to create a different liveness experience and to open a new realm in the relationship between opera and its audiences, by using old broadcast techniques – television-like – in the reconquered public space of the movie theatre. By being transmitted on the big screen in front of an audience, HD opera creates a different type of mediated operatic event, defined by its liveness and its visuals.

## **2. The Role of Liveness in the Reception of HD Opera**

HD transmissions constitute an intermedial medium that emerged and became accessible in a time when mediated communication and information exchange are at their highest in history. In this context, the reception of the medium is impacted by numerous aspects that intervene between the opera spectator and the HD event. As I will show, surveys and studies have a tendency to focus on the comparison between the original operatic event and the HD event, with the purpose of outlining the impact of the HD medium on opera in general, and also on the relationship between audiences and their local performative arts companies. I consider that the perspective of the audience on liveness as conveyed through the HD medium plays a significant role in the reception of

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<sup>335</sup> Peter Gelb, “Interview: Media Veteran Brings Wary Revolution to a Fortress of Tradition.” *Curent.org*, at <http://current.org/files/archive-site/music/music0619metopera.shtml> (accessed on April 23, 2015).

the HD medium, and it has a direct influence on the relationship between audiences and their local companies.

Before having a look at the reception of HD opera by its audience, it is necessary to understand the complex and multifaceted perspective that the audience has on opera today. Since Benjamin's discussion of perception in the 1930s, which I briefly discussed earlier in this thesis, a great deal of debate has focused on discussing the viewer's perspective on works of art, most notably on the original work of art, such as a live musical performance or an original painting. But technology impacts more than our perception of artistic products; it transforms the way we interact with each other and even our view of reality. This is confirmed by Amy Peterson Jensen, who notes that because "the contemporary concept of reality increasingly centers on the use and understanding of technology,"<sup>336</sup> our concept of live interaction is also changed:

Film, television, and other electronic technologies have shaped the mental and physical identities of individuals. [...] people do not need to be in corresponding time, locations, or settings to communicate directly. Encounters with media technology have also transformed communities through the manipulation of time and space.<sup>337</sup>

In this context, not only reception, but also production of performative events is influenced by our continuously changing perception. For example, when talking about how theatre is now produced on stage, Jensen notes that our perception of reality impacts theatre irreversibly: "reality therefore has been altered for us by technology [...], reality (in its complete sense, and cultural reality in particular) must be achieved on the stage

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<sup>336</sup> Amy Peterson Jensen, *Theatre in a Media Culture. Production, Performance and Perception Since 1970* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007), p. 23.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

today through associations, rather than through imitation as it has been in the past.”<sup>338</sup>

Like theatre, which in Jensen’s view “responded to the sense of immediacy created by the technological and mechanical features of film, leading first to naturalism and realism in the theatre and then to assimilation of media’s forms and content,”<sup>339</sup> opera today is also an art that reflects a long coexistence with movies in the visual world, as previously discussed.

Not only opera itself, but also the intermediality involved in HD opera has an impact on how the spectator receives the performance. According to Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink and Sigrid Merx, intermediality “calls for an active attitude on the part of the spectator.”<sup>340</sup> The spectator might need to balance between the various perceptual elements brought on by all the present media relationships. In this context, as Nibbelink and Merx point out, intermediality influences the experience of liveness: “Not only does the intermedial experience entail a perceptual awareness of the simultaneous presence of multiple sensual and cognitive impressions, it also makes the spectator aware of the experience of simultaneity itself.”<sup>341</sup>

Intermediality prevents the spectator from having a clear image of the media at play – which in the case of HD opera are television and cinema. Nibbelink and Merx specify in their analysis of intermediality that “a performance might qualify for example as televisual, cinematographic or digital without actually staging the respective technologies in the performance,”<sup>342</sup> because many productions “deconstruct established

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<sup>338</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink and Sigrid Merx, “Presence and Perception: Analysing Intermediality in Performance,” in *Mapping Intermediality in Performance*, ed. by Sarah Bay-Cheng et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), p. 220.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., p. 221.

cultural connotations normally assigned to either live or mediatized performances.”<sup>343</sup>

This is precisely the case of HD opera, where the media encrypted in the performance are not actually present on the screen. Cinematic and televisual elements are identifiable (camera use, length of shots, etc.) depending on the cinematic director, but since we are dealing with a live transmission in a movie theatre, the end result is definitely distinct from both television and cinema.

Indeed, the experience of the spectator does not resemble that of television, nor cinema. The HD experience starts once the spectator enters the venue. Sheppard describes in detail what happens before the actual opera starts. In order to bring the opera hall atmosphere to the audience in the movie theatres, from the beginning, images from inside the opera hall are projected on the screen. While the specific lighting and sounds remind the distant spectator that a live event is about to start, at the same time, as Sheppard points out, the show in the movie theatre has already started: “In Albany we sat enjoying the slow and elegant zoom-outs from the curtain images, the orchestra, and other details of the opera house and we watched the Met audience mingling and finding their seats. [...] The camera work suggested we were spying on an event, watching in real time but at a definite remove. For us the show had already begun.”<sup>344</sup> For the regular movie-goer, participation to the event starts when entering the actual movie theatre, and the show starts when the lights go down and the spectator is urged to follow the images on the screen. This part of the experience is the same when attending an HD opera event. But, by broadcasting the opera hall, an HD event manages to break the usual movie

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<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> W. Anthony Sheppard, “Review of the Metropolitan Opera’s New HD Movie Theater Broadcasts,” in *American Music*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Fall 2007), p. 384.

routine and to invite the spectator to become aware that he is connected to another venue where a live event is about to take place.

But there is more to the pre-show HD opera experience. Promotional recorded material, the list of sponsors and/or live reports that are not actually part of the experience of the live audience intervene between the waiting time and the start of the opera. I have already showed how I see the role of the pre-show in the construction of liveness. I also pointed out how pre-recorded material contributes to the perception of liveness before the opera starts. However, the HD opera pre-show can constitute a surprise and a challenge for the first-time spectator who just starts to enjoy having visual and audio access to the opera hall. Here is how W. Anthony Sheppard describes this experience:

And then, five minutes before the opera was to start, we were cut off from the live event, perhaps allowing for a brief time lag during the “live” relay. During this period, still close-up images from the opera changed with each minute of the countdown. Our experience moved closer to the cinematic with a main title sequence consisting of shots from the staged opera and from rehearsals. A prerecorded welcome by the Chinese movie star Zhang Ziyi filmed on the grand staircase at the Met followed by an immediate and perfectly timed cut to Tan Dun in the pit separated us further from the live performance event. Any illusion that we were present at the staged performance was undercut as several minor details throughout reminded us of our vicarious position. The clear audibility of the prompter, and Mr. Domingo’s evident reliance on her, suggested that we were positioned unnaturally close to the performance. A brief appearance on the screen of text concerning camera settings reinforced our distance and elicited laughter by drawing attention to the technology. The most shocking moment came at the end

of Act I when we cut immediately to backstage and witnessed the performers exiting, waving to us and congratulating each other.<sup>345</sup>

Sheppard makes an obvious point: access to additional information and images position the HD audience in a different rapport with the spectacle. HD opera maintains the privileged place of the HD audience throughout the entire production, by making the live audience almost absent from the screen during the actual performance. While sporadic images of the audience in the opera hall contribute to liveness in a production such as *Barber of Seville* (2007), in many others the audience is “felt” only when laughing, applauding or coughing.

During the performance, the sound of the venue has the role to remind the HD spectators that they are witnessing a live performance in the presence of a live audience. It is worth noting that as compared to a classical music concert, an opera audience is traditionally more expressive in appreciation. Obviously, the narrative content of the opera also invites the audience to react, as theatre does. This aspect works in the favour of HD opera, as it helps create through sound only a continuous, subtle awareness for the HD audience that the live audience is actually present in the opera hall. By not actually seeing the live audience, the HD audience becomes a legitimate audience in itself, it becomes “the” audience. In this context, the HD spectators become an essential part of the operatic experience. Sheppard accurately describes how the spectator becomes part of the live audience:

By the opera’s end I realized that our position as an audience had changed considerably. At the moment the curtain fell, the relay cut to a backstage camera

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<sup>345</sup> W. Anthony Sheppard, “Review of the Metropolitan Opera’s New HD Movie Theater Broadcasts,” in *American Music*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Fall 2007), p. 384.

revealing the performers lining up for their curtain call. We did not begin our applause, however, until the curtain rose and the opera-house audience responded. As we continued to applaud, we remained in our seats throughout the curtain calls (I repeatedly glanced over my shoulder), while we watched the Met audience in the Orchestra section of the house pack up and abruptly depart, as is their wont. Had we become the true or better audience? The experience had made us part of a communal performance, and yet it was distinctly our event – we did not merge with the Met audience and in fact had been accorded a privileged spectator position. At the start we may well have felt “presence envy” as we watched the Met audience arrive in the house. However, by the end we appeared satisfied with the uniqueness of our own performance event.<sup>346</sup>

There are numerous such accounts of what happens in the movie theatre during an HD screening, but I chose to present Sheppard’s account in detail because it reflects the findings of numerous studies and surveys done on HD audiences in Europe and North America. According to these studies, audiences around the globe recognize the importance of liveness in the HD experience, acknowledging that they are being a constitutive part of a new form of cultural event.

In 2010, Martin Barker evaluated the response of the audience to HD transmissions in a research project that gathered and interpreted the data from 644 responses to a questionnaire available online in late 2009. The goal of this project, made in collaboration with Picturehouse Cinemas, the company involved with HD transmissions in UK, was meant to also monitor the involvement of the audience with HD events. While the report identifies numerous categories of attendees (first-time, second time, regular, immersive, experts, etc.), the general sense is that HD transmissions

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<sup>346</sup> W. Anthony Sheppard, “Review of the Metropolitan Opera’s New HD Movie Theater Broadcasts,” in *American Music*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Fall 2007), p. 385.

are well received and appreciated by the audience. Multiple responses reveal the HD experience to be a comfortable one that makes spectators feel welcomed and “belonging socially,” as in the following example:

Nothing could improve the experience in a good quality cinema like the Picturehouse at all. All the better points were that the Picturehouse is comfortable (luxurious seating), clean and the staff are welcoming; there isn't the snobbery that there is at the Opera House and you can still feel part of the production by dressing up just as you would at the Theatre.<sup>347</sup>

Barker notes that numerous responses indicate that the HD transmissions bring “a mix of pleasures,” suggesting that the venue and the social environment offered in movie theatres improve the operatic experience for many spectators. Moreover, the operatic event is perceived as a more casual event, which in turn makes for a more open reception of the content streamed on the screen, as this response indicates: “Although I did not think the production was by any means the best I have seen, I rate the overall experience as excellent because the quality of both sound and vision was excellent, and it's a great pleasure to be able to sit back to an opera with a glass of wine in hand!”<sup>348</sup> It is within this relaxed alternative environment that liveness is experienced by the audience.

Barker dedicates a good section of his report to liveness. Even though liveness “is less likely to be of direct relevance to Picturehouse,”<sup>349</sup> Barker considers that understanding the meaning of liveness for the audience might reveal important aspects of the HD experience. Barker's interest in the response of the audience to liveness is not new; it actually precedes HD events. He debates how liveness is perceived in the movie

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<sup>347</sup> Martin Barker, “Audience Responses to the Streaming of Live Performances,” Report to Picturehouse Cinemas, unpublished report (March, 2010), p. 11.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

theatre in his 2003 article about the movie *Crash*.<sup>350</sup> His evaluation of the importance of liveness in the HD reception is thus thoroughly informed by his previous research and revealed in the pertinent questions he mentions in his 2010 report:

1. How far do different audiences identify the presence or absence of ‘liveness’ in streamed performances? What does this mean to them, and how does it matter to them?
2. What role in their experience of these performances is granted to the selective choices and framings of the transmission to cinema (camerawork, sound qualities)? In what ways are these transmission ‘languages’ seen as enabling, disabling or altering their ability to participate?
3. How far are they aware of the issue of ‘liveness’ as a debated issue, and where is this sense of the issues derived from? How does it impinge on their responses, and their reporting of these?<sup>351</sup>

It is from this perspective that Barker has chosen to include the question “The Meanings of ‘liveness’ to you?” as one of the four open questions present in the questionnaire of the 2010 study.<sup>352</sup> Incidentally, this question received the most lengthy responses of all open questions, which shows that the respondents took an interest in the issue of liveness. In his analysis of the available responses, Barker identifies five dimensions of liveness: immediacy, intimacy, buzz (enjoying the event with others), learning, and being the audience.<sup>353</sup> Barker indicates a difference of attitude between the *immersives* and the *experts*; however, all five aspects are mentioned in responses from

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<sup>350</sup> Martin Barker, “Crash, Theatre Audiences, and the Idea of ‘Liveness’,” in *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (2003), pp. 21-39.

<sup>351</sup> Martin Barker, “Audience Responses to the Streaming of Live Performances,” Report to Picturehouse Cinemas, unpublished report (March, 2010), p. 20.

<sup>352</sup> The other three questions are rather general (Why have you given this rating?; Why did you go?; What disappointments if any? – p. 20), thus making the liveness question the only more specific one, which again reflects the emphasis that Barker puts on liveness in his research.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

both categories. I find it highly relevant that the dimensions identified by Barker are easily transferable to experiencing any other live event. It seems that the way liveness is conveyed in HD transmissions offers the audience the opportunity to focus on the production as if it were in the opera house. This is definitely reflected in Barker's conclusion with regard to the reception of liveness in HD events:

'Liveness' is an acknowledged difference, for most, but it is one which matters most to people within the 'Expert' orientation. Even for many of these, the facts of access of convenience make streaming a welcome second-best. Only for 'hard-line Experts' is physical presence the single measure. And only for the same group is cameras' intervening work an interruption of the way they wish to attend to the performances. For many others, providing the camerawork and soundwork remain relatively unobtrusive and avoid flashiness, they are welcomed as part of the guiding of appropriate attention (which is also facilitated by notes, interviews and back-stage tours).<sup>354</sup>

Barker's findings in UK are confirmed by Benjamin Speed's findings in Maine, USA. In his impressive research of the reception of HD events at The Grand Theater in Ellsworth, Maine,<sup>355</sup> *Opera Enormous: Arias in Cinema*, Speed makes an extensive analysis of how the audience responds to HD events, and of the newly created performance ritual around these events. His methodology encompasses a variety of approaches, from interviews, personal observation and field notes, to analytical, historical, and phenomenological contextualization of the HD event as a new form of cultural event. In his analysis of the audience reception, Speed identifies several aspects that play a role in the popularity of the HD events, even though they are not live – as

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<sup>354</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>355</sup> The research is based on field notes from 40 simulcast, 40 encores (in the presence of a cumulative total of about 15,000 ticket holders), and also some thorough interviews with 12 members of the audience.

some other events offered by that venue. Speed shows that coming to the Grand to watch an opera is as much about the show as about the community:

While there is much lost in transmission, there is also much gained such as democratizing opera to this small art house in Ellsworth, Maine. However, it all comes back to the quality content and the communal experience of that content that ties it all together. [...] They walk out feeling like they have learned something about themselves and the humanity of the world. And they do this while in the company of their neighbors [with] whom they share a communal ritual of digital opera going in the 21st century.<sup>356</sup>

Speed points out that the liveness of the event plays an important role not only in the decision of the spectators to arrive at the theatre, but also in their behaviour during the show, in the perception of the social aspect of the event, and in the much needed reshaping of the operatic community in Ellsworth. That liveness is an important factor when spectators choose what to attend is reflected in the difference between the live broadcasts and the encores:

The fact that the event is live is important to audience members. Even if it is not live, the perception of liveness is key. The encores bring much less audience members in. Instead of a half-full or full house, the best audience for an encore has been an eighth of the house, which feels empty in the Grand. The music and performance still bring pleasure at encore simulcasts, but there is not the excitement of the event being live.<sup>357</sup>

Like in many movie theatres around the world, the audience in Ellsworth is clapping during the HD events. Interestingly, applauding challenges the spectators to

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<sup>356</sup> Benjamin Speed, *Opera Enormous: Arias in the Cinema* (MA Thesis, The University of Maine, 2012), Abstract, p. iii.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

reevaluate the meaning of liveness for the audience in the theatre and the connection between the spectators and the singers on the screen. While one respondent declares that he sometimes feels silly to applaud because, “it’s *not* live from the Met. It’s *live* from the Met, but it’s not *live* from the Met,”<sup>358</sup> another one resolves to understand clapping as a gesture of communication with the present audience: “I’m just taken aback by, I was just totally surprised, I mean, who do you clap for [...], you clap for the actors, but you don’t just clap for the actors, you clap for the audience.”<sup>359</sup>

Another survey, “Value Propositions of Opera and Theatre Live in Cinema,” which covered audiences in both Europe and North-America, including Canada, confirms the role of the convivial atmosphere in the movie theatre. In 2010, Florin Vladica and Charles H. Davis used Q methodology – a methodology that asks subjects to rank-order various statements to best represent their views on the topic in discussion.<sup>360</sup> In their study, participants to nine HD broadcasts evaluated and sorted forty statements regarding the HD performance they attended, their reasons for doing that, and their reception of the event.<sup>361</sup> The analysis of the data indicates that, while respondents had various viewpoints on the event,<sup>362</sup> they generally had a positive experience. Not only had the respondents rejected the idea that the HD event was a “cold experience,” but the *classical* audience

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<sup>358</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>360</sup> Florin Vladica and Charles H. Davis, “Value Propositions of Opera and Theatre Live in Cinema,” at <http://www.ryerson.ca/~c5davis/research.html>, pp. 8-9 (accessed on July 19, 2015).

<sup>361</sup> The elaboration and selection of the statements was made by interviewing people from Rotterdam, Barcelona, Las Vegas, Innsbruck, and New York who recently attended a live cultural event, people from New York who just attended and HD event, and from various opera related websites. The Q sample – the chosen statements – was distributed to HD audiences in Innsbruck, Toronto, and Bucharest. Ibid.

<sup>362</sup> Vladica and Davis identify four viewpoints that best fit the HD event audience: avant garde, worthwhile, grateful consumer, and classical. Ibid., p. 10, at <http://www.ryerson.ca/~c5davis/research.html> (accessed on July 19, 2015).

members considered the experience of liveness to be a vivid one, which justified applauding:

[...] for *classical* audience members (Viewpoint D), a live opera performance on a big cinema screen provided an immersive experience that was moving enough, and lifelike enough, to induce behaviour that would have been appropriate in a live theatre.<sup>363</sup>

The social aspect of the HD experience contributes to the perception of the HD events as complete cultural events, distinct from the live performance in the opera hall. By agreeing with the statement that “I witnessed an excellent performance that defined opera/theatre broadcast in cinema as an art form in its own right,” *avant garde* and *worthwhile* audience members considered that the HD events constitute a legitimate form of art. Vladica and Davis conclude that “digital cinema technologies open the door to development of new audiences for live performances, and also open the door to development of new value propositions to attract audiences.”<sup>364</sup> At the same time, their results suggest that most audience members “are either loyal admirers of the artists, or devoted attendees of opera and theatre, and were recruited to the art form before the inception of live cinema broadcasts.”<sup>365</sup>

The results of all these studies and surveys converge towards the same conclusion: a now global audience of the Metropolitan Opera in New York validates the liveness of the HD events, and the essential role of liveness in the quality of the HD experience. Moreover, because they convey liveness to an audience that can share the experience in the movie theatre, HD events are acknowledged and accepted as a new type

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<sup>363</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

of cultural event. As I will show, this new legitimization of liveness brings in a new era of representation in classical music culture, while also providing a new environment for liveness practice.

### **3. Liveness and HD Opera Criticism**

Like any other new medium that has impacted the world of classical music, HD transmissions have encountered criticism, ranging from aesthetic concerns to the medium itself, and also directly related to its liveness. While its critics raise interesting and relevant points, as I will show, their approach serves as a great venue for understanding how crucial the role of liveness has been in shaping the HD medium in a unique provider of cultural events.

As with the reception of live radio broadcasts of opera in the 1920s, HD opera has generated some concerns with regard to the status of opera and how it might be affected by the HD transmissions. Interestingly, when it comes to evaluating the aesthetic value of HD opera, its liveness status becomes a point of conflict. It is exactly the fact that HD opera is live and that it tries to mediate the performance as an event that prompts its audience and critics to look at it more closely from an aesthetic standpoint. Because it is live, HD opera qualifies for a type of evaluation unprecedented by any other mediated representation of opera: it raises the question whether the HD experience can be compared with the experience in the opera hall. One might argue that the venue – the movie theatre – also plays a role in the emergence of this dilemma. However, if HD opera had been a series of recordings screened in movie theatres, it would have been evaluated as reproduction only. Whenever live opera and HD opera are compared, the general

consensus seems to be that they should be treated as different types of events. But that does not necessarily mean that HD opera is recognized as equally valid as live opera, and James Steichen successfully articulates this attitude. He does not see live opera and HD opera as event-types that should exclude each other. In his view, live opera remains the original and valuable event, and HD opera is a contemporary operatic representation that might or might not be as long-lasting as the genre it represents:

And if the Met were ever to collapse, or merely decide at some point that HD broadcasts are no longer viable, where would that leave us? So, by all means, go see an HD broadcast, but make sure that there's something else to fall back on when and if they're no longer around. Myself, I'll keep splitting my operagoing between the stadium seating of the AMC in Hamilton, New Jersey, and whatever tickets I can rustle up at Lincoln Center. I can't seem to give up on either.<sup>366</sup>

Steichen is attached to opera as a live performative event and sees the HD transmission as a surrogate event that can replace neither the authentic experience of being in the opera house, nor the status of such a cultural activity:

I tell myself yes, this is not the way opera is supposed to be, but it's all right, because I still go to see live opera. I'd never become one of those people who only went to the movies for their Verdi. And more opera is more opera, even if it's in a movie theater, right? After all, this admittedly mass-produced version of opera is still profoundly countercultural, and most of the audience is there for the "right" reason, that is, because what we really love is the real thing. [...] But then again, how will it feel to tell my grandchildren that I saw my first Don Carlo at the Regal Cinema in South.<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> James Steichen, "HD opera: A Love/Hate Story," in *Opera Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Fall 2011), p. 457.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 453.

While I agree that live opera and HD opera should be seen as two different types of events and not be compared to each other, I also think that HD opera is not just another type of live transmission. Regardless of the quality or the longevity of HD opera as a cultural event, its presence and popularity make it now an integral part of opera culture. Steichen points out that HD opera is “an inevitable fulfillment of Philip Auslander’s claims about the increasing indivisibility of live and mediatized forms of performance.”<sup>368</sup> Indeed, HD opera contributes to what I will define in my next chapter as *liveness practice* by legitimating mediated live transmission as a valid way of accessing live performance, one that is not only recognized by classical music discourse, but is in fact promoted by it. From this perspective, unlike radio or television opera broadcasts that rather belong to their respective medium, I see HD opera as irreversibly belonging to and reshaping opera culture.

Because a thorough access to live mediated opera is now hard to imagine without HD opera, it is only natural that the actual existence and longevity of the medium is questioned. In her article dealing with digital decay, Charlotte Crofts also raises the issue of the fate of the HD transmissions. Her starting point is Godfrey Cheshire’s reaction to HD transmissions: “the ‘moviegoing’ experience will be completely reshaped by – and in the image of – television.”<sup>369</sup> Cheshire expresses concerns that the mobile theatre will become a space for interactivity and that “the decay has progressed since then [and] this technological change that we’re facing with the conversion of movie theatres to these new kinds of facilities will rapidly hasten that decay.”<sup>370</sup> Crofts’ investigation confirms Cheshire’s fear that HD transmissions will “turn the cinema into a glorified television

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid., p. 450.

<sup>369</sup> Charlotte Crofts, “Digital Decay,” in *The Moving Image*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Fall 2008), pp. 18-19.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

set,” and most importantly, that it will change how spectators get engaged with the movie theatre. Crofts points out that digital technology has been very easily embraced by the film industry but also by media and academia. She identifies the presence of an “almost religious fervor” present in digital media discourse: “This ‘faith’ in digital media, with its language of the ‘cutting-edge’, the ‘revolutionary’, ‘unique’, and ‘advanced’ is so ubiquitous that it has become almost axiomatic.”<sup>371</sup>

Starting with this observation, Crofts attempts to make an analysis of the impact of digital technology on future film preservation. Part of her investigation was an interview with Clive Ogden at Kodak. She points out that Ogden identifies High Definition as another link in the long chain of media, which like many others before might put archiving and preservation at risk: “Based on history HD is just another format that will be superseded by something better in years to come, or so they say, and therefore anything that is acquired now could potentially not be able to be viewed in fifteen or twenty years.”<sup>372</sup> From this perspective, Crofts concludes that, due to rapid technological change, a medium and our expertise of it might be in danger of becoming out of date even before it is fully mastered.<sup>373</sup>

Crofts’ analysis brings us to an important issue related to HD opera and its liveness: HD opera is not only a live transmission, but also the documentation of it. Claire Read defines documentation as the evidential proof of a performance’s prior existence.<sup>374</sup> But, more than that, she argues that documentation does not reflect only the need for preserving a performance, but is also a new way of presenting the performance,

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> Claire Read, “Live or Almost Live...: The Politics of Performance and Documentation,” in *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2014), p. 67.

and thus “the resultant cyclical relationship between performance and documentation alters the causal relationship assumed between the two states.”<sup>375</sup> From this perspective, an HD event is a new performance in itself, which is not a simple broadcast of the live performance, but a separate production of the same event. Furthermore, Read argues that not only is the documentation a new performance, but documentation helps in a way prolong the existence of live performance:

[...] documentation exceeds the life of performances, becoming itself a referent to performance anew, which in turn is documented and so forth. Due to this cyclical rather than linear relationship, which assumed a perishable performance and a resultant document, I propose that live performance does not end with the documents or archives of live performance, but that these documents are themselves performances anew.<sup>376</sup>

This is where the role of liveness in HD opera appears in a new light. The function of liveness is not only to sustain the live broadcast, but also the live performance, its representation and its preservation. Considering the array of possibilities offered by digital technology today when it comes to editing recorded materials (such as the various opera productions DVDs that the Met puts on the market), having an untouched version of a live broadcast as documentation becomes invaluable. Martin Lefebvre and Marc Furstenuau emphasize that the documentary value of any recorded material resides in its “direct connection to the physical world.”<sup>377</sup> In their discussion about the fate of cinema today, they point out that the possibilities offered by digital editing are actually generating an anxious discourse with regard to the connection between cinema and

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<sup>375</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

<sup>377</sup> Martin Lefebvre and Marc Furstenuau, “Digital Editing and Montage: The Vanishing Celluloid and Beyond,” in *Cinemas: Journal of Film Studies*, Vol. 13, Nos. 1-2 (2002), p. 90.

reality.<sup>378</sup> With digital technology, editors are able to generating multiple versions of the same event:

[Digital editing] allows changing the order of shots in a given sequence without any consequence for the rest of the edited footage. It also gives the editor the ability to produce – quickly and at little cost – multiple versions of any given sequence (or section) of a film, and provides several on-screen (analog) display possibilities for the digitized data, including simultaneous visual display of unedited and edited material (showing up either as still or motion images in the source and record monitors), and corresponding timeline.<sup>379</sup>

One could easily argue that the editing technique described above would be hard to apply to the editing of HD transmissions, since they represent continuous, coherent stories and music scores. That is true, a live broadcast does not offer as much material as the production of a movie. However, the Met acknowledges that rehearsal material is used to edit live broadcast material for DVD production. One might argue that while HD opera documents the live performance in the opera hall, it fails to document the HD transmissions as a movie theatre mediated performance, since images of the distant audience are not included at all in the transmissions. In fact, that practice makes for an easier editing when working on the final DVD version. Excluding the audience from the movie theatre not only prepares the material for the DVD version, but, as Auslander argues, the presence of the audience does not determine the authenticity of the documentation:

The purpose of most performance art documentation is to make the artist's work available to a larger audience, not to capture the performance as an “interactional

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<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

accomplishment” to which a specific audience and a specific set of performers coming together in specific circumstances make equally significant contributions. For the most part, scholars and critics use eyewitness accounts to ascertain the characteristics of the performance, not the audience’s contribution to the event, and discussions of how a particular audience perceived a particular performance at a particular time and place and what that performance meant to that audience are rare.<sup>380</sup>

He acknowledges that while the audience is important for the performers, it is only incidental to the documentation. What really counts is framing the event as performance through the performative act of documenting it as such.<sup>381</sup> From this angle, the HD transmissions are documentation of both the live performance and the HD performance.

But I would argue that including the movie theatre audience in the HD opera as a performance anew – in Crofts’ terms – would render a more true and useful representation of HD opera, historically speaking. The fact that the distant audience is missing from the HD transmissions cannot be overseen and regarded in similar terms to radio or television audience (which are also missing from most live broadcasts). As I have previously argued, HD opera has made its way into opera culture as a constitutive component; because of that we need to preserve all aspects of the phenomena, including the receiving audience. Moreover, including the audience and actually interacting with it during the intermission would transform the encores and their impact on the audience: seeing an encore would be the equivalent of watching HD opera as a complete event and would make the participation of the encores to liveness practice more convincing for the

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<sup>380</sup> Philip Auslander, “The Performativity of Performance Documentation,” in *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (*PAJ* 84, September, 2006), p. 6.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

audience.<sup>382</sup> It is an aspect easy to integrate through social media, and I assume that sooner or later it will happen. But for the time being, unlike other live broadcasts,<sup>383</sup> HD opera presents itself as a pure medium that does not include the audience and phones or social media. However, receiving a tweet from a singer during the interview directly on one's phone, for instance, could constitute the ultimate proof of liveness and acknowledgement for the spectator in the movie theatre.

There might be a reason why interactivity between the opera hall and movie theatres is kept at a minimum. Interestingly and paradoxically, one of the concerns that arrived with HD opera is the degree of interactivity between the event and the distant audience. While the interactivity during the actual performance is merely a perceived one, since the audience does not get a chance to express and to react when the presenters and the singers address them, the degree of interaction is perceived as higher. Traditionally, when attending an opera performance in the opera hall, the spectator does not expect any interaction or very specific address from the stage. What happens on stage is a spectacle that the spectator will enjoy and appreciate, but it is not a spectacle that will address the spectator directly like a popular music concert does. The few occasions when there will be an address before the performance is usually bad news; for example, it might inform the audience that one of the singers is not able to perform. Otherwise, it might be an announcement connected with the sponsors or the donors involved in the

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<sup>382</sup> My point can be easily illustrated with documentations of events where the audience plays a constitutive role, such as popular music concerts. Watching a documentation of a live concert without being able to see the audience, would be like watching half of the event.

<sup>383</sup> An example of a live broadcast that included their distant audience in the show is the 2014 Academy Awards, where the host, Ellen DeGeneres tweeted a selfie that generated millions of retweets before the live broadcast ended. CBS News, "Ellen DeGeneres' Oscars Selfie Goes Viral, Crashes Twitter," CBS News, March 3, 2014, at <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/oscars-2014-ellen-degeneres-oscars-selfie-goes-viral-crashes-twitter/> (accessed on August 20, 2015). That was a testament of the watching audience that went beyond the direct address present in the actual live broadcast.

production, information that again does not solicit the spectator in his capacity of participant in a live event.

In this context, it is understandable why HD opera events are seen as more interactive. Christopher Hoile confirms this concern: “opera companies may have to worry when someone develops a virtual-reality opera, where viewers can interact with the piece more fully than they can as audience members at a live performance.”<sup>384</sup> Furthermore, Hoile points out that Peter Gelb declared in an interview that the success of the Met in HD series shows that “opera belongs on the big screen,”<sup>385</sup> a statement that has been challenged many times by artistic directors of opera companies. These concerns are doubled by the fact that the HD opera is an actual event (as compared to a television live transmission), where the audience gets to engage in an activity similar to going to the opera. Michel Beaulac remarks that seeing opera in a movie theatre versus on a DVD at home has the advantage of associating “opera appreciation with ‘going out’, which is a good thing in this era of cocooning. From the movie theatre to the opera house is then an easy step.”<sup>386</sup>

Concerns about the impact of HD opera on local companies have been voiced early on, with Paul Heyer being one of the first to raise the issue in scholarly writing. Heyer went beyond an analysis of the medium – DBC (“digital broadcast cinema”) – and raised an important question: “The question is still open as to whether smaller local arts production companies will benefit from the increased appreciation and larger audiences created by DBC, or whether A-list broadcasts will trump B-list live theatrical

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<sup>384</sup> Christopher Hoile, “Opera at the Movies: The Met’s Success Raises Some Interesting Questions About What Happens to Opera in the Movie Theatre,” in *Opera Canada*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Summer 2007), p. 23.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*

productions.”<sup>387</sup> The impact on local companies is directly connected to how audiences respond to HD events and how that response influences their decision to attend or not local productions. In her review of the research done on digital performances, Hannah Rudman concludes that there are few publications that focus specifically on the audience development potential, and on the impact of digital performance on the audience.<sup>388</sup> She also points out that “There is now evidence that digital participation in the arts complements rather than threatens ‘off-line’ or ‘real’ participation, [and] potentially offers a means to increase digital, social and cultural participation.”<sup>389</sup> For example, the study “Beyond Live. Digital Innovation in the Performing Arts” reveals that research “confirms the centrality of ‘live’ for the audience experience – both in the theatre and in cinemas.” More surprisingly, the study concludes that “Cinema audiences report even higher levels of emotional engagement with the production than audiences at the theatre,” but also that members of the audience claim that they intend to visit the theatre more often in the future.<sup>390</sup>

Even though the movie theatre as a venue is well received by the audience, the relationship between opera and the big screen attracts criticism, since it is a relationship that is obviously reinvented by HD opera. Long before the emergence of HD opera, critics have been questioning the relationship between opera and film. Philip Kennicott,

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<sup>387</sup> Paul Heyer, “Live from the Met: Digital Broadcast Cinema, Medium Theory, and Opera for the Masses,” in *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 33 (2008), p. 602.

<sup>388</sup> Hannah Rudman, “Review of Available Research on Digital Developments in the Arts, and Their Impacts on and Benefits to Audiences for Federation of Scottish Theatre,” Federation of Scottish Theatre (March, 2012), p. 1, at <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/ambition-downloads/89959629-Research-on-Digital-Performance-Content.pdf> (accessed on July 27, 2015).

<sup>389</sup> Ibid.

<sup>390</sup> Hasan Bakhshi, Juan Mateos-Garcia, and David Throsby. “Beyond Live: Digital Innovation in the Performing Arts,” NESTA, London, Research briefing (February 2010), p. 2 and p. 5, at [https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/beyond\\_live.pdf](https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/beyond_live.pdf) (accessed on August 4, 2015).

art critic at *The Washington Post*, is well-known for his concerns regarding the future of opera. In one of his articles he discusses the relationship between opera and film:

Where are the great films of opera? Yet to be made. The form has never conquered what might be called the tongue-and-teeth problem. While it makes perfect sense within the opera house that everything is sung, when transferred onto film, the opera illusion often breaks down. [...] Rather than assist in the creation of theatrical intimacy, the camera usually punctures the basic illusion essential to opera.<sup>391</sup>

However, while he saw that relationship as being unsuccessful at the time, he could also see its potential:

The camera can also (potentially) “solve” some of the basic problems of opera, making its gestures more intimate, its theater more detailed and lively, and its narrative adventures more believable. An ideal experience of Wagner’s “Ring” cycle, for instance, demands that the listener see the smallest nuance of facial expression, as well as experience epic floods and fires and rapid changes of place and scene. From no single seat in any opera house are those two extremes possible.<sup>392</sup>

Kennicott is obviously referring to Richard Wagner’s view of *Gesamtkunstwerk* – the total work of art – a complex, intermedial form of art that would comprise music, drama, and state-of-the-art visual effects:

Not one rich faculty of the separate arts will remain unused in the United Artwork of the Future; in *it* will each attain its first complete appraisalment. [...] Tone [will] unfold [its] utmost wealth within this Artwork [and] will incite the mimetic

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<sup>391</sup> Philip Kennicott, “Opera and Film: Can This Union Be Saved?,” in *The Washington Post*, January 9, 2005, p. N01, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A56556-2005Jan7.html> (accessed on July 17, 2015).

<sup>392</sup> Idem.

art of Dance [and] swell the breath of Poetry to unimagined fill. For Music [...] is capable of the highest reaches of expression [...], introduced into Drama by the orchestra, marks an entirely fresh departure for the dramatic artwork. [...] Architecture and [...] scenic Landscape-painting have power to set the executant dramatic Artist in the surroundings of physical Nature, and to dower him from the exhaustless stores of natural phenomena with an ample and significant background.<sup>393</sup>

Production of opera on film benefits from the visual technology used in cinema, coming closer to what Wagner imagined before the cinema medium was developed. But as Kennicott notes in a later review of a *Ring* production directed by Francesca Zambello, the key to Wagner's total artwork is primarily in the complex fusion of music and drama, as created by Wagner: "Zambello [...] proved the old master of Bayreuth [Wagner] was right about his art: It works only as a complete fusion of musical and dramatic gestures."<sup>394</sup>

The impediment in the relationship between opera and visual reproduction is constituted by the clash between the realism easily achieved by cinema and the suggestive nature of opera. This conflict was confirmed recently, after the Met in HD series started, by Meline Esse: "Common to these complaints is the notion that opera and technologies of visual reproduction and dissemination are simply incompatible – opera is an inherently fantastical medium, where disbelief must be radically suspended, while contemporary film and television more often convey a realist (even hyperrealist)

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<sup>393</sup> Richard Wagner, "The Art-work of the Future," in Richard Wagner, *Prose Works* (vol. I: "The Art-work of the Future etc.," 2nd ed.), transl. by William Ashton Ellis, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, Ltd., 1895, p. 190.

<sup>394</sup> Philip Kennicott, "San Francisco Opera's 'Ring' Cycle is Ambitious, Brilliant," in *The Washington Post*, June 20, 2011, at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/san-francisco-operas-ring-cycle-is-ambitious-brilliant/2011/06/20/AGsxXNdH\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/san-francisco-operas-ring-cycle-is-ambitious-brilliant/2011/06/20/AGsxXNdH_story.html) (accessed on January 23, 2016).

aesthetic.”<sup>395</sup> Melina Esse also shows that the relationship between opera and the big screen has been developing over time through various means of mixing the representation on stage with available media:

Whether through actual film footage projected on the backdrop, the presence of video screens, turntables, or radios on stage, or more subtle techniques such as rotating stages to imitate tracking shots, opera has been taking account of – even bringing about – its own mediatization for years. Simulcasts of opera in movie theaters and the recent operas filmed in European capitals with a steadicam and broadcast in real time are perhaps the most current manifestations.<sup>396</sup>

Indeed, in its recent history opera made use of various media on stage, thus enhancing the visual aspect of the performance. Esse makes an interesting analysis of how a television set is used on stage in one production of Gluck’s *Orfeo*.<sup>397</sup> The television set is not just another prop on the stage, but, by becoming a mediator between characters and also a representation of others, it becomes part of the live performance. Recent integration of mediating technology on stage as a part of live performance shows the interest of opera producers in enhancing the visual aspect of live opera. By using media on stage and delivering an intermedial performance, producers engage the experience of the audience with other media in the perception of the opera production.

A similar phenomenon is present when attending a live broadcast of opera that is projected on the big screen. The visual aspect of HD events defines the experience of the spectator, as I showed earlier. By witnessing an intermedial event that involves the big screen – the avatar of cinema –, the spectator experiences a type of event that does not

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<sup>395</sup> Melina Esse, “Don’t Look Now: Opera, Liveness, and the Televisual,” *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Winter 2010), p. 82.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

resemble an opera production, even though it is a close representation of it. This aspect solely makes for a very different experience from attending a live performance, which contributes to what João Pedro Cachopo identifies as a tension between remaining loyal to live opera and fully enjoying the movie theatre version of it. This dichotomy in itself indicates that HD opera, through its scale if nothing else, is paralleled to the actual event. Cachopo considers that the HD medium, by using cinema as a component, brings opera closer to its audience:

Lastly – to draw attention to films attracted to opera rather than reproducing it – all these developments have found an echo in the paradox of technological mediation appearing in cinema as a device that enhances rather than precludes the feeling of distanced wonder associated with listening to operatic music.<sup>398</sup>

But here as well, liveness plays a key role: it gives HD opera a new and distinctive identity. It is only liveness in HD opera that challenges the status of the movie theatre by using it for alternative content. What is new in the movie theatre is not necessary opera on the screen (since film operas and movies containing opera scenes have a history in movie theatres), but the simple fact that HD events consist in live content. That is why, from the perspective of using movie theatres as a venue, HD transmissions are seen both as dangerous and enriching events. Unlike movie critic Godfrey Cheshire (mentioned earlier), Heyer sees the HD medium not only as a promoter of performing arts, but also as an opportunity for revamping movie theatres: “At a time when movie attendance is facing competition from technological innovations, such as the new generation of high-

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<sup>398</sup> João Pedro Cachopo, “Opera’s Screen Metamorphosis: The Survival of a Genre or a Matter of translation?,” in *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Fall 2014), p. 323.

definition DVDs and the latest handheld screen options, DBC [digital broadcast cinema] represents an intriguing counter-current.”<sup>399</sup>

#### **4. The impact of HD Liveness on Classical Music Culture**

While the Met in HD series has not been the very first live event present in cinemas,<sup>400</sup> it was definitely a pioneer of digitally repurposed content in the classical music world. Recent studies show that repurposed content, described by John Caldwell as “a means to counteract a limited first-run shelf life and to exploit legacy archival holdings in the postnetwork era,”<sup>401</sup> is in fact a natural development and interaction between the realm of performative arts and digital media. Since live events carry with them the limitations of space and time, the best way to engage with digital technology is via live transmission. Liveness therefore holds a key role in enriching and maintaining the status and accessibility of performative arts in an epoch where technological mediation is already perceived as integral to daily life.

The starting point for a 2010 study of the performing arts and digital technology was the idea that (unlike film, recorded music and publishing businesses) performing arts organisations produce ‘experiential goods’ whose features are difficult to translate digitally. Consequently, there is a general perception that ‘one has to be there’ in order to

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<sup>399</sup> Paul Heyer, “Live from the Met: Digital Broadcast Cinema, Medium Theory, and Opera for the Masses,” in *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 33 (2008), p. 602.

<sup>400</sup> As I indicated in my third chapter, David Bowie’s concert was.

<sup>401</sup> John Caldwell, “Convergence Television: Aggregating Form and Repurposing Content in the Culture of Conglomeration,” in *Television After TV*, ed. by Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 65.

fully enjoy a live performance.<sup>402</sup> But because events can be transmitted live, states the study, “the internet and digital cinema break down the barriers to access arising from physical location.”<sup>403</sup> The authors of the study see two main advantages in this evolution: HD events offer an opportunity for the audience to engage with the live event from the location that is most convenient, and at the same time, they reinvent the production for distant audiences:

In principle, they [technologies like the Internet and digital cinema] may create new audiences for live art at the site of production too, for example if they enable audiences to ‘sample’ cultural experiences in contexts where they are more comfortable – as when someone decides to attend the performance of a play at the theatre after trying out a digital broadcast in their local cinema. [...] The adaption of cultural goods to digital platforms may even push the artform itself, creating altogether new forms of artistic experience for audiences.<sup>404</sup>

Acknowledging that digitally mediated events such as the HD events constitute “new forms of artistic experience” suggests an expansion in the realm of performative arts. As I will show, this expansion is well reflected in the activity of many opera companies around the world. From this perspective, repurposing content could be seen as a creative opportunity that has a positive impact on live performance. By keeping liveness at the core of this new form of events, what seemed to be the most fragile aspect of live performances (the here and now) became the strength of a new type of cultural event.

This study was supported by NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) in collaboration with David Throsby, author of *Economics and*

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<sup>402</sup> Hasan Bakhshi, Juan Mateos-Garcia, and David Throsby. “Beyond Live: Digital Innovation in the Performing Arts,” NESTA, London, Research briefing (February 2010), p. 3, at [https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/beyond\\_live.pdf](https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/beyond_live.pdf) (accessed on August 4, 2015).

<sup>403</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

*Culture* and expert on the relationship between arts and economy. In order to understand the impact of HD events on performative arts and their audience, the authors of this study worked with The National Theatre in London and 35 digital cinemas. Given the promotional intent behind the study, it is not surprising that the authors focused on investigating the benefits of the involvement of art companies with digital media for producers and spectators.<sup>405</sup> But for my purposes here, the most important aspect revealed by the study is that live and liveness still constitute a priority for the spectator:

[The research] suggests an appetite for cultural experiences that are live, going against the prevailing logic of ‘consumption on demand’, where individuals are free to choose the place and time where they access content, but do so detached from the unique circumstances where it was produced in the first place.<sup>406</sup>

Even though we live in an era where information is readily available for the consumer, thus creating an expectation of perpetual spontaneity and mobility, the popularity of live events (mediated or not) is indeed undeniable. That the audience is still attached to live events, mediated or not, indicates that having liveness as a constitutive element of HD events was not only a great idea, but a necessary step in constructing the type of event that will cater to a need strongly present in the relationship between arts, cultural events

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<sup>405</sup> Martin Barker discusses the wider context within which NESTA started the study and the underlying promotional motivation behind it. NESTA “was keen to build a business model for livecasts, to measure that potential.” See Martin Barker, *Live To Your Local Cinema: The Remarkable Rise of Livecasting* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 25. NESTA openly confirms that: “The support of NESTA and Arts Council England in jumpstarting the research and development of this project [National Theatre Live] was critical.” See NESTA, “Digital Broadcast of Theatre: Learning from the Pilot Season NT Live,” NESTA, at [https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/nt\\_live.pdf](https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/nt_live.pdf) (accessed on January 19, 2016), p. 9. Barker points out that the study is part of a UK trend that tries to expand the audience of the HD events: “For in the UK at least there is a clear tendency for research on and promotion of livecasts to be presented as part of a tendency to wish to spread high (good) culture to the less fortunate.” See Martin Barker, *Live To Your Local Cinema: The Remarkable Rise of Livecasting* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 76.

<sup>406</sup> Hasan Bakhshi, Juan Mateos-Garcia, and David Throsby. “Beyond Live: Digital Innovation in the Performing Arts,” NESTA, London, Research briefing (February 2010), p. 2, at [https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/beyond\\_live.pdf](https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/beyond_live.pdf) (accessed on August 4, 2015).

and their audience. More than that, it also shows that while live performance at the location where it is produced might be preferable, live broadcast is perceived as an equally important means of accessing the event.

The research briefing of the “Beyond Live. Digital Innovation in the Performing Arts” survey notes that liveness, the visuals, and a sense of collective experience play the most important role in the experience, and also in choosing the time of the event. The results show that the most important elements used in the production of liveness – conveying the spontaneity in time through interview, the visual aspect augmented by close-ups – have a great impact on how HD transmissions are received. Moreover, they show that the reception of the HD events is similar to that of a live event:

**The live and collective aspects of the theatrical experience remain essential for audiences**

The survey findings show clearly that the experiential aspects of attending the performance were valued by theatre and cinema audiences alike. In both cases the chance to see the actors ‘up close’, as well as the ambiance and comfort of the venue were reported as important factors when deciding whether or not to attend [...].

Both groups also anticipated enjoying the ‘buzz’ of a live experience, an expectation that was clearly more than validated. So, for example, [...] 84.3 per cent of cinema audiences felt real excitement because they knew that the performance they were watching was taking place ‘live’ at the National Theatre.<sup>407</sup>

The survey concludes that “there are limits to the ‘anywhere, anytime’ attitude towards the consumption of content. It would seem that there does exist a ‘right time’ (live, as it happens) and a ‘right place’ (a cultural venue, whether a theatre or a cinema) to enjoy

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<sup>407</sup> Ibid., p. 6. Bold letters in original.

some cultural experiences.”<sup>408</sup> Again, the movie theatre is seen as a viable venue (as compared to the living room), a venue that is not only comparable to the original venue of the event (the theatre), but an acceptable venue that satisfactorily serves the purpose of the transmissions – witnessing a live event.

Another study regarding the arts and digital media was done in Canada. “Beyond the Curtain. How Digital Media Is Reshaping Theatre” did not focus on the audience, but rather on “leading theatre professionals including performers, directors, unions, playwrights, technicians, designers, musicians, producers, arts administrators, technology innovators and screen-based content creators.”<sup>409</sup> Even though it used a very different methodology and demographic, the study reveals similar findings – live performance as a phenomenon has expanded through digital media: “No longer is the live experience only a shared collective memory for the audience in attendance. Performing arts content is now being repurposed for cinemas, television, mobile devices, streaming and downloads, preserving great performances and giving them a new life on other platforms.”<sup>410</sup>

The study points out that the only events with a similar format that featured Canadian content at the time of the study were the *The Tempest* and *Caesar and Cleopatra* presented by the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, and *The Nutcracker* presented by the National Ballet of Canada. The main reason indicated by the study as being the cause of such scarce Canadian presence in cinema presentations is funding, which “is not available for even the most successful companies to follow these examples on a regular

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<sup>408</sup> Ibid.

<sup>409</sup> Thompson, Craig et al. “Beyond the Curtain. How Digital Media is Reshaping Theatre,” Avonova (2011), p. 4, at [http://www.avonova.ca/assets/uploads/pages/image/files/Beyond\\_The\\_Curtain.pdf](http://www.avonova.ca/assets/uploads/pages/image/files/Beyond_The_Curtain.pdf) (accessed on July 17, 2015).

<sup>410</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

basis.”<sup>411</sup> Regardless, interest for repurposing local content was found to be very strong. Pery Rosemond, television writer and producer, sees digital distribution of live theatre as a desirable and also inevitable process in the future: “We must understand that Broadway will see the benefit of somebody in Omaha, Nebraska seeing an opening night of a Broadway production. This is what’s going to happen.”<sup>412</sup> Ideally, local companies and their audiences would benefit from this trend as well: “Isn’t there something magical about opening night? What if opening night went out live across the country at the same time it was playing live at Stratford. Now there’s something exciting.”<sup>413</sup> Indeed, the interest in having access to live broadcast of local events is confirmed by one of the responders involved in the study:

I see a very high value in making performances available where they would not otherwise be available. I do not highly support the current practise of regularly providing the Metropolitan Opera to Vancouver audiences which negatively impacts Vancouver Opera, a local opera company. But providing Vancouver Opera performances to the rest of BC outside Metro Vancouver makes total sense to me.<sup>414</sup>

Here I want to point out the fact that this study (like so many scholarly and critical accounts) does not look to modify the HD medium as created by the Met series in 2006. The HD medium is embraced as is, with its liveness, its movie theatres, its technology; even the pre-show and intermission format are employed in a variety of HD events. What interests us here, the liveness in HD events, is definitely not a matter of debate: HD events have become, by definition, *live* broadcasts. This is not because technology does

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<sup>411</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

not permit simple screenings in movie theatres of recorded material (the HD encores are doing exactly that), but because all involved in producing, reviewing, enjoying HD events see liveness as the reason to engage with such an event. That is why debates on the relationship between arts and the HD medium do not revolve around how to change the medium, but around how to change the content and mainly how to use the medium for locally produced content.

Indeed, some recent experiments show that liveness is the defining trait of the relationship between arts and digital media, so much that producers and artists are willing to modify live performance in order to adapt to digital media, while keeping liveness intact. Such an experiment is referenced by the above study and consists in the Twitter performance of *Romeo and Juliet – Such Tweet Sorrow*, produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2010. The performance took five weeks in total. During that time, six actors tweeted in accord to their respective “character’s backgrounds and their motivations – what they are feeling, who they are with, who they want to talk to,”<sup>415</sup> thus giving complete freedom to the actors to shape the discourse of their characters. *Such Tweet Sorrow* is not the only experiment of its kind. The five minute theatre,<sup>416</sup> and also some operatic experiments build upon live and liveness in order to connect with their audience.

Experiments vary from less sophisticated events, such as the screening of an opera production on the stage of an opera hall, with the main singer in attendance collecting

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<sup>415</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>416</sup> National Theatre of Scotland. “The Great Yes, No, Don’t Know, Five Minute Theatre Show,” Five Minute Theatre, at <http://fiveminutetheatre.com> (accessed on July 25, 2015).

applause at the end,<sup>417</sup> to complex holographic productions, such as the *Telesio* opera production at the Rendano Theatre in Cosenza Italy (2011),<sup>418</sup> or the *Sunken Garden* holographic 3D production at the English National Opera in London, UK (2013).<sup>419</sup> Back in the spring of 2010, I wrote the following about the Met in HD series:

Quite recently, the Metropolitan Opera from New York celebrated a century of so-called live broadcasting. Decade after decade the public was able to access live performances from the Met through radio and television broadcasting. Needless to say, the experience of the technologically mediated performance was radically different from its live counterpart. If one could imagine the best technological illusion of an opera possible today, it would probably involve a real opera house and live broadcast holograms of the singers on the stage. Obviously, not only has this never happened yet, but effort and costs make it unlikely to happen anytime soon. In the meantime, the most advertized and technologized form of mediated opera available is constituted by *The Met: Live in HD* series from the Metropolitan Opera in New York.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> Angela Gheorghiu attended a screening of Puccini's *Tosca* at the National Opera in Bucharest, Romania, November 28, 2011. See <http://www.flickr.com/photos/more2screen/6520521279/in/photostream/> and <http://www.flickr.com/photos/more2screen/6520078345/in/photostream/> (accessed on January 25, 2013).

<sup>418</sup> See "Christie Projectors Make the First Holographic Opera a Reality," Christie, Telesio Holographic Opera, at <http://www.christiedigital.co.uk/emea/business/visual-solutions-case-studies/visual-solutions-application-stories/Pages/telesio-holographic-opera.aspx> (accessed on January 25, 2013).

<sup>419</sup> Andrew Preston, "Hologram Singers, Avatar-style 3D Effects and Techno Music: How English National Opera Took a Bold Step into the Future," in *Mail Online*, April 6, 2013, at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/moslive/article-2302840/English-National-Opera-Hologram-singers-Avatar-style-3D-effects-techno-music.html> (accessed on August 20, 2015).

<sup>420</sup> ICSLAC course CLMD 6101: Perspectives on Interdisciplinarity in Cultural Theory. My experience with holograms at the time was limited (and still is) to seeing a holographic promotion of a mobile telephony company in Frankfurt, Germany, in July 2009. The promotion consisted in a live performance of the artist Jan Delay, unfamiliar to me at the time, with one of his hit songs (*Oh Jonny*). It just happens that the location where I saw the promotion was the local train station, a context where a live performance didn't seem out of the ordinary. The liveness of that experience was so powerful that it took a while (more precisely until the song started again from the beginning) to catch my attention and to realize that it was actually a mediated performance. Besides reinforcing my interest in mediated live performance, that experience informed my understanding and prediction related to mediated opera.

Little did I know that in the following years, holograms would indeed become the new frontier of opera productions. This shows that as with any established technology, opera is still one of the first genres to embrace new technology and experiment with it.<sup>421</sup>

An interesting enterprise that explores the use of liveness in live events is constituted by the events hosted by The New World Center in Florida. Their new concert hall is able to use live transmissions to produce live performances, thus integrating liveness in a live event. The concert hall “has embedded 360-degree video projection technology that ensures world-class classical music performances can happen live with an orchestra, conductors, and soloists from anywhere else in the world.”<sup>422</sup> The events are also projected outside the concert hall, in a Wallcast, and streamed online. The Wallcast transmission is free for the public and projected on a very large surface:

New World Symphony WALLCAST™ concerts allow you to experience select events throughout the season at Miami Beach SoundScape through a striking use of visual and audio technology on a soaring, 7,000-square-foot projection wall. Bring a blanket, share a picnic dinner and enjoy the sights and sounds of the New World Symphony with friends and family!<sup>423</sup>

The New World Center thus offers live broadcasts of events that include elements of other live broadcasts – liveness within liveness. Past this point, classical music practice is

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<sup>421</sup> Experiments with holographic concerts started in Korea as early as 1998, but it is only recently that they build a dedicated hologram performance hall – K-live, where they offer regular K-pop concerts (see <http://www.klive.co.kr/renewal/Eng/main.php#/introduction> ). In the Western world, some popular music events also started to include holograms on stage (Tupac Shakur in 2012 at the Coachella Festival, Michael Jackson in 2014, at the Billboard Music Awards). Furthermore the upcoming National Comedy Center, to be inaugurated in 2017, plans to feature holograms of comedians by using the latest technology available (see <http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/theater-arts/national-comedy-center-break-ground-weekend-article-1.2309696> ). This, obviously, might be a part of the future of opera. (All online sources mentioned were accessed on August 20, 2015).

<sup>422</sup> Hannah Rudman, “Learning Journeys: Simulcasting, Webcasting, and Live Streaming,” AmbITION, at <http://www.getambition.com/learning-journey/simulcasting-livestreaming/> (accessed on July 25, 2015).

<sup>423</sup> New World Symphony, Wallcast Concerts, New World Center, at <http://www.nws.edu/events-tickets/wallcast-concerts-and-park-events/> (accessed on July 25, 2015).

irreversibly changed. Liveness is currently able to become a part of the here and now of any live performance. All of the above shows that live performance is continuously evolving to include more and more digital technology that makes use of liveness and thus integrates liveness within the performance, continuously reshaping the audience expectations and reception of live mediated content. But the main technological platform that hosts liveness in recent years, strongly contributing to this trend, is the internet. In an interesting article reviewing the online activity of various classical music companies around the world, Melissa Lesnie remarks:

You no longer have to be an international jetsetter in order to enjoy what's on at the most prestigious concert halls across Europe. Armed with the latest technological innovations, orchestras and opera companies around the world have joined the crusade to diversify and broaden classical music audiences, offering live and on-demand access to their concerts through online video streaming.<sup>424</sup>

This is precisely how things present themselves today. One decade after the HD medium was created, companies around the world ride the wave created by the promotion of live mediated content by HD events. Through HD events, opera companies are able to reconstruct the image of their productions and their interaction with audiences around the world. As I showed in my previous chapter, live broadcast of classical music has been present on small screens for decades now, so it is not a surprise that the online media would become the new host of these broadcasts. What is new is the popularity of live broadcast through alternative media, other than radio and television.<sup>425</sup> The HD events

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<sup>424</sup> Melissa Lesnie, "Limelight's Guide to the Virtual Concert Hall," in *Limelight* (May 17, 2011), at <http://www.limelightmagazine.com.au/Article/257694%2Climelight-s-guide-to-the-virtual-concert-hall.aspx> (accessed on July 25, 2015).

<sup>425</sup> In fact, the popularity of live broadcast was revamped by the impact of the HD events even for traditional media. For example, in recent years, NBC started to join the liveness trend initiated by the HD

and their subsequent streaming online attracted the audience of classical music outside of the traditional ways of accessing live broadcasts. I see the role of HD events, the Met in HD series especially, as instrumental to the migration of the classical music regular audience towards online media, and also for drawing the attention of online users towards classical music and opera and creating a new layer of audience. I am not arguing that the regular audience of opera and classical music was not using online media before the Met in HD series, but that the Met in HD series legitimated alternative ways of accessing live broadcasts. It is within this context that various companies around the world developed an impressive presence online only in recent years, even though the technology they use is not new.

As Lesnie shows, the list of companies engaging in live streaming is substantial, and includes the Metropolitan Opera and several Australian companies. The Berlin Philharmonic is another one of them. In 2009 they inaugurated “The Digital Concert Hall,”<sup>426</sup> which “streams classical music concerts to your tablet, smartphone, smart TV or PC. The sound quality is similar to that of a CD and the picture quality similar to HD television.”<sup>427</sup> The transmissions use “excellent audio technology [and] ensure that the experience is as authentic as it is thrilling.”<sup>428</sup> On this platform they offer an impressive number of 40 live-streams per year, along with historic concerts, hundreds of recorded concerts, interviews, and documentaries. What is interesting is that while the platform is built around live broadcasts, it offers access to the Berlin Philharmonic as an institution,

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events by broadcasting once a year, in December, what they promote as “a live television event for one night only.” In 2013 audiences saw “The Sound of Music Live!,” and in 2014 “Peter Pan Live!.” The production for 2015 is “The Wiz Live!.” NBC, at <http://www.nbc.com/the-wiz-live> (accessed on November 29, 2015).

<sup>426</sup> Berlin Philharmonic. Digital Concert Hall, at <https://www.digitalconcerthall.com> (accessed on July 25, 2015).

<sup>427</sup> <https://www.digitalconcerthall.com/en/info> (accessed on July 25, 2015).

<sup>428</sup> Idem.

as represented by all its documented activity. While it is obvious that none of this would be possible without online media, liveness does function as the bridge between the company and its audience; liveness is what brings people over.

To return to our investigation of opera, its presence online goes far beyond the Met's streaming of its productions. In May 2015, "The Opera Platform" was inaugurated:

The Opera Platform is the online destination for the promotion and enjoyment of opera. It is designed to appeal equally to those who already love opera and to those who may be tempted to try it for the first time. [...] The Opera Platform is a partnership between Opera Europa, representing 155 opera companies and festivals; the cultural broadcasting channel ARTE; and 15 carefully selected theatres from across Europe.<sup>429</sup>

The Opera Platform offers an all-encompassing experience for free, with the purpose to keep its audience up to date, to be in constant contact with it, and also "to play a part in the technological development of opera for the future."<sup>430</sup> In this context, it is no coincidence that the platform was launched during the annual European Opera Days,<sup>431</sup> whose theme in 2015 was "Opera alive and online." The relationship between opera and digital media is thus at the core of debates about opera today. Here is an excerpt from the European Opera Days Manifesto:

**Opera today is alive and kicking.** It explores unconventional spaces and forms, uses state-of-the-art technology and draws inspiration from the world in which we live today. It plays a major role in contemporary artistic and cultural life and contributes to the development of a **creative society**.

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<sup>429</sup> Opera Europa. The Opera Platform, at <http://www.opera-europa.org/en/the-opera-platform> (accessed on July 25, 2015).

<sup>430</sup> The Opera Platform, at <http://www.theoperaplatform.eu/en/collection/opera-contemporain> (accessed on July 25, 2015).

<sup>431</sup> European Opera Days is an annual event that takes place each May and consists in numerous opera houses in Europe hosting an open doors day.

**Opera reaches out to everyone.** Europe needs a creative society in order to develop – just as opera needs the involvement of its audiences if it is itself to develop and remain an innovative art form, central to our lives. Access to opera should therefore be promoted for all European citizens.<sup>432</sup>

This manifesto not only states that opera is successfully thriving today, but it is also a public declaration of the democratization of opera. It can easily be argued that the work started with the first opera radio broadcasts – that of bringing opera to the wider public – has reached ultimate success. While the contribution of many factors involved in this evolution in the last decades is undeniable (but not the central focus of my investigation), it can be safely argued that HD opera played a very important role.

Needless to say, the launching has been a success and a testament that opera has changed forever indeed:

Last week-end, Opera was alive and online throughout Europe, and beyond! The now traditional European Opera Days took place between 8 and 10 May with 101 opera companies in 23 countries celebrating opera in all its diversity. This year's theme – opera alive and online – translated into the most creative events alongside the well-loved guided tours and open houses. The launch of The Opera Platform ([www.theoperaplatform.eu](http://www.theoperaplatform.eu)), offering free access to full opera performances, extracts and glimpses behind the scenes, reinforced the message, and it is a pleasure to say that opera was very present and easily accessible for all.<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>432</sup> European Opera Days, at <http://www.operadays.eu/en/eod> (accessed on July 25, 2015). Bold letters in original.

<sup>433</sup> Opera Europa, at <http://www.opera-europa.org/en/european-opera-days2> (accessed on July 25, 2015).

## Chapter V: Liveness Practice Today

If there is one aspect of HD opera that any spectator in the movie theatre expects and counts on, that is the liveness of the HD event. Liveness has become the essential trait of the HD events, and therefore a good grasp of it as a concept is mandatory when talking about the impact of HD events. As I already discussed in the introductory section of my thesis, and also showed in my analysis of radio and HD broadcasts in the previous chapters, the concept of liveness and its usage constitute a complex topic for analysis.

The most notable accounts of liveness try to approach liveness from a theoretical perspective which is thoroughly informed by how media are used, live broadcast practices, and specifically for music, listening practices. But according to Paul Sanden, the author of one of the most recent accounts of liveness, even though mediating sound technology changed greatly in the last century or so, the understanding of liveness has remained the same. He argues that “much of the ideology implicated in the concept of liveness has remained constant,” and that regardless of the medium involved “the term *live* still carries with it a defining connection to unmediated musical performance along with the aesthetic and ideological values associated with that performance.”<sup>434</sup>

Since my investigation offered me the opportunity to observe how liveness was constructed, validated and consumed over the span of more than a century, I realized that liveness could be indeed better understood if we were to look at it through the lenses of its characteristics that have lasted over time, rather than the ones that changed with every new medium engaging in live broadcast. In this chapter I argue that our notion of liveness

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<sup>434</sup> Paul Sanden, *Liveness in Modern Music. Musicians, Technology, and the Perception of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 4. My italics.

has been always shaped by what I call *liveness practice*, a set of expectations and practices related to liveness that remained largely unchanged until the advent of HD events. While bringing back the now widely accepted blurry distinction between live and recorded in liveness, I will show that HD opera manages to expand liveness practice and to offer a space for the relationship between classical music and its audience to be irreversibly transformed. Liveness practice has been established by the radio, within the limits imposed by the characteristics of radio as a medium. Television continued the tradition initiated by the radio, where live broadcasts kept the audience at home. The spectator at home did not have the possibility to participate at the event in the presence of a wider audience, with the community that shared the same interest. It is only with HD events that liveness practice evolves to encompass the possibility of enjoying a live event in a public venue, similar to what an opera hall offers to its audience. Consequently, HD events invite the audience to change its attitude towards liveness and to see it as a phenomenon that engages more and more with a mix of live and recorded materials, as I will further show.

### **1. In Between Live and Recorded: Liveness Practice**

In 2015, the Metropolitan Opera inaugurated the tenth season of the series *The Met: Live in HD*. The series is presented on its website as “a series of performance transmissions shown live in high definition in movie theaters around the world.”<sup>435</sup> The main page of the series features a list of ten live performances, together with an HD

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<sup>435</sup> The Metropolitan Opera, at <http://www.metopera.org/About/The-Met/> (accessed on August 8, 2015).

holiday encore (Mozart's *The Magic Flute*).<sup>436</sup> On the upper right corner, among a couple of other links, a "view encore screenings schedule" link is provided, where a similar list (except *The Magic Flute*) is available with their respective date and time. The movie theatres participating in this series will screen each performance twice: a live broadcast version and an encore version, thus offering a total of twenty shows (plus the holiday encore). This means that only half of the screenings available in movie theatres are actually live transmissions.

Moreover, a random search online of the Met in HD series schedule in theatres around the world located in very different time zones shows that all HD opera productions screened there are actually recorded.<sup>437</sup> It is true, in parts of the world such as Australia, the Met in HD series is retitled "The Met: Captured Live in HD,"<sup>438</sup> so one cannot argue that the audience is not informed or that The Metropolitan Opera as an institution is trying to mislead its audience. But the title certainly draws attention towards the role and the importance of liveness in how the series is promoted and, subsequently, received by the audience. Whether the role of liveness in a live captured performance equals or resembles that present in a live transmission, thus making HD opera a coherent phenomenon throughout, is the question that I will try to answer next.

Most live broadcasts strive to meet the expectations of the audience with regard to the simultaneity in time of the live broadcast with the event. However, live broadcasts can also include or consist in delayed content, captured live content, or instant replays

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<sup>436</sup> <https://www.metopera.org/Season/In-Cinemas/> (accessed on August 8, 2015).

<sup>437</sup> For example, The Avoca Beach Picture Theatre in Australia screens *Il Trovatore* on October 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> at the reasonable local time 11:30 am. The actual live transmission is available live in North-American movie theaters on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, and as an encore on October 7<sup>th</sup>. See <https://www.metopera.org/Season/In-Cinemas/> and <http://www.avocabeachpicturetheatre.com.au/il-trovatore.html> (accessed on August 8, 2015).

<sup>438</sup> Sharmill Films, Met Opera, at [http://www.sharmillfilms.com.au/?page\\_id=2195](http://www.sharmillfilms.com.au/?page_id=2195) (accessed on August 8, 2015).

(such as in sport broadcasts).<sup>439</sup> All these types of content involve the original live performance of the event. Broadcast delays consist in live content transmitted a few seconds or minutes later than the actual event: the delay is usually a measure meant to give time to the producers to adjust technical details, and to remove unexpected or inappropriate content.<sup>440</sup> For example, according to the Met’s television engineer Mark Schubin, when the opening night production is transmitted in Times Square, in New York City, some screens have to be delayed in order to offer simultaneous images that match the sound.<sup>441</sup> Broadcast delays can also occur to accommodate various time-zones: this is common in television, where an originally live programme can be scheduled in the same slot for viewers in another time-zone. Similarly, captured live HD opera transmissions, such as those mentioned above, are broadcast delays that are transmitted later for time-zone convenience; these transmissions provide unmodified content. HD opera events are also transmitted unmodified when they run again, weeks later, as recorded transmissions, titled as “encores.”

Paul Heyer’s 2008 article, “Live from the Met: Digital Broadcast Cinema, Medium Theory, and Opera for the Masses,” was one of the first scholarly accounts of the Met in HD phenomenon. In his discussion of HD opera, Heyer decides upon a title for the newly created medium: DBC – digital broadcast cinema. While this is one of the best

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<sup>439</sup> Some broadcasts, such as news broadcasts, can also include recorded or archival materials that are relevant to the topic, but not an actual part of the live transmission.

<sup>440</sup> Wolfgang Broll and Jan Herling discuss in detail realtime video manipulation, which is currently used mainly in sports broadcasts. They show how original content can be removed, and also how virtual content such as digital product placement and digital advertising can be added in live broadcasts. “*Live Will Never be the Same! How Broadcasting Might Influence the Acceptance and Widespread Usage of Augmented Reality,*” in *Virtual Realities. International Dagstuhl Seminar, Dagstuhl Castle, Germany, June 9-14, 2013, Revised Selected Papers*, LNCS, Vol. 8844, ed. by Guido Brunnett et al. (Cham; Heidelberg; New York; Dordrecht; London: Springer International Publishing, 2015), pp. 5-7.

<sup>441</sup> Mark Schubin, “Late—and See?,” Schubin Café blog, posted on November 30, 2012, available at <http://www.schubincafe.com/tag/fritz-reiner/> (accessed on January 23, 2016).

descriptions to date of HD opera for the reader unfamiliar with the phenomenon, what really gives value to Heyer's approach is his definition of DBC:

Although the term eludes precise definition, DBC as it is elaborated here can be said to *include the broadcast into movie theatres, either live or recorded* (some Met broadcasts are repeated as encores), *of various arts and entertainment productions that, like cinema, have a narrative format*. Besides opera, this would include ballet, musicals, and theatrical productions; it would exclude sports, concerts, and newsworthy public events.<sup>442</sup>

Choosing to define the new medium as "either live or recorded" shows that Heyer saw past the title of the series (*Met: Live in HD*) and identified it for what it was: a body of content consisting in both live and recorded material. Heyer's definition also detaches the medium from the operatic content, acknowledging that other various events in narrative format can function as content for DBC. While this holds true for most HD events even today, a few years after Heyer's DBC definition was published, the evolution of the HD medium showed that even events that are not narrative in nature, such as art exhibitions made their way into movie theatres. The case of art exhibitions in movie theatres threw a new light on the HD medium and brought to the forefront the delicate issue of the coexistence of live and recorded, first noted by Heyer, which is hosted under the umbrella of the word *live* to this day. Here is the promo presentation of the first live exhibition in movie theatres, *Leonardo Live*:

Beginning February 16, 2012, art lovers around the world will be able to experience LEONARDO LIVE, an HD presentation of the once-in-a-lifetime

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<sup>442</sup> Paul Heyer, "Live from the Met: Digital Broadcast Cinema, Medium Theory, and Opera for the Masses," in *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 33 (2008), p. 593.

exhibition “Leonardo da Vinci: Painter at the Court of Milan,” captured at the U.K. National Gallery.

LEONARDO LIVE offers an unprecedented opportunity for audiences worldwide to experience these da Vinci works. The historic exhibition is sold out in London and, due to the fragility of the paintings, the exhibition cannot tour.

Captured live on the eve of the exhibition opening in London this fall, LEONARDO LIVE will provide a high-definition walk-through of the landmark exhibition, in-depth commentary about featured pieces in the exhibit and extra content.<sup>443</sup>

From the description, it follows that *Leonardo Live* is recorded material which was transmitted in theatres a few months after the event took place. Regardless, the word *live* is employed in the title and in the presentation – “captured live,” as to make the recording participate in the HD phenomenon, which by definition is “live.” Interestingly, the uniqueness of the exhibition framed as an event and thus the need to attend the specific transmission offered in movie theatres is amplified by the fact that “The historic exhibition is sold out in London and, due to the fragility of the paintings, the exhibition cannot tour.”

The example of the *Leonardo Live* promotion shows that in order to be perceived as worth watching at a specific date and time, an HD event has to be presented as being live. For this very reason, most HD series include the word *live* in their generic title: *The Met: Live in HD*, *Leonardo Live*, *NT Live* (National Theatre Live), *Times Talks Live*,<sup>444</sup> *Live Cinema Season* (Royal Opera House).<sup>445</sup> While liveness is obviously essential in the promotion and as part of the original HD events, recorded material is also very much a

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<sup>443</sup> BY Experience, at [http://www.byexperience.net/event\\_leonardoHD.html](http://www.byexperience.net/event_leonardoHD.html) (accessed on August 8, 2015).

<sup>444</sup> BY Experience, at <http://www.byexperience.net/events.html> (accessed on August 8, 2015).

<sup>445</sup> Royal Opera House, at <http://www.roh.org.uk/cinemas> (accessed on August 8, 2015).

part of the experience of HD liveness for some audiences around the globe. This shows that from the point of view of the producers, recorded (but unmodified) content can be associated with liveness, to a certain degree. It also shows that audiences accept recorded content as conveying liveness.

The idea that liveness now resides at the blurry intersection between live and recorded has been rightfully advanced and argued by Auslander. In his 2008 book, he found it necessary to challenge our traditional understanding of liveness, which saw live content as opposed to mediated content, by showing how contemporary technology and musical trends not only permit, but actually encourage the blurry distinction between live and mediated. He argued his case by focusing on sound technology used in popular music: studio work, and so-called live and unplugged musical events. In his analysis of the concept of liveness, Auslander identifies six types of liveness: “*classic*” liveness, *live broadcast*, *live recording*, *internet liveness*, *social liveness*, and *website liveness*,<sup>446</sup> thus clearly showing the flexibility of the concept of liveness, and also the multiple mediated events that feature liveness as a constitutive element.<sup>447</sup>

His influential findings apply somewhat to opera and classical music practice today, but do not render the blurry distinction between live and recorded as acceptable in classical music discourse. But as we have seen, with HD events there seems to be a more relaxed attitude towards labeling recorded events as live. This is a change that cannot be explained by analysing liveness as constructed by HD events, but rather by looking at how liveness reaches the audience during HD events. This is where the concept of

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<sup>446</sup> See Table 1 in Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 61.

<sup>447</sup> For a comparison between the types of liveness identified by Auslander and those proposed by other authors discussed here, see my Table 2 at the end of this section.

liveness practice becomes a useful theoretical tool: it places liveness in a wider context, away from the broadcasting medium, and closer to where it is actually experienced, in the audience.

As mentioned before, as a concept, liveness practice can be defined as a set of expectations and practices that are common to all mediated events, and acknowledged by consumers as such. I see liveness practice as encompassing all mediated events that are shared by a community of people at the same time. While this seems like a rather vague definition that would allow too many mediated instances and events to qualify as liveness practice, I think that it gives sufficient criteria to identify the technologically mediated situations where liveness can be recognized as such by the participants. Moreover, as I will show, liveness practice has just been reshaped by HD events and online media. To tie liveness practice exclusively to live mediated events would mean to disregard one of its most important and striking new assets: a certain flexibility with regard to what used to be the mandatory and perfect simultaneity in time with the live event.

After investigating the relationship between radio and liveness, and the one between the HD medium and liveness, I now see the audience and its experience to be much more central to the discussion of liveness than live broadcast media or practices. While liveness does not exist outside technology, obviously, it does not reside within the mediated event either, not even when the mediated event abides by the traditional definition of liveness, that of being a conveyor of a purely live performance. It seems to me that our concept of liveness is not connected so closely to its source, the broadcasting medium, but rather to how its audience, as a community that participates in the same event, experiences liveness and validates it.

Martin Barker's revelatory analysis of how liveness is approached in different disciplines<sup>448</sup> shows that the audience and its experience with liveness do not inform the subject of theoretical debates as they should. Barker finds that liveness is important for all the investigated disciplines, but that most ideas about the meaning of liveness are "purely theoretical, neither based upon nor tested by empirical investigations," and that the claims about the role of liveness "are actually assertions of what critics either want or don't want to happen."<sup>449</sup> What is most striking in Barker's analysis is that theoretical accounts of liveness are "almost all written entirely from the points of view of producers and distributors, with a real absence of attention to the ways audiences might *experience* liveness."<sup>450</sup> In this context, my investigation of liveness from the perspective of the audience shapes itself as an alternative approach, addressing a newly revealed theoretical gap.

Regardless of how it is constructed, liveness needs an audience to become apparent and depends on the appraisal of the participants to the respective event. That is why, since its emergence together with the radio, liveness practice encompassed two main criteria: the event had to be happening right at the moment of the broadcast, and it also had to have an audience able to acknowledge that the broadcast was indeed live. Even if scholarly accounts of liveness do not focus on the audience, these two elements are acknowledged, as reflected in the list of the debated characteristics of liveness identified by Barker (see Table 1, my italics). The role of simultaneity in time and of the

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<sup>448</sup> Barker looks at how liveness is discussed in music and opera studies, film studies, television studies, theatre and performance studies, comedy studies, virtual performance studies, and sport studies.

<sup>449</sup> Martin Barker, *Live To Your Local Cinema: The Remarkable Rise of Livecasting* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 57.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

presence of a savvy audience able to acknowledge liveness are also confirmed by the results of Barker’s livecasts survey, discussed earlier.

	<b>Characteristics of liveness:</b> (as reflected in scholarly accounts)	<b>Dimensions of liveness:</b> (as reflected in livecast audience surveys)
Martin Barker (2013)	<i>simultaneity</i> bodily co-presence eventness experienced risk <i>immediacy</i> a sense of place and locality <i>a ready and prepared audience</i>	<i>immediacy</i> intimacy <i>buzz</i> (awareness of the other members of the audience and their engagement with the event) learning <i>being the audience</i>

**Table 1.** Martin Barker’s findings on liveness.

The presence of simultaneity in time in liveness practice does not need explanation – that has been explored extensively by authors such as Steven Wurtzler, Andrew Crisell and others. Moreover, most academic works discussing recordings and mobile technology have emphasised that mobility in space and time belongs to recordings, which in turn allows for simultaneity in time to be the embedded trait of liveness. Liveness simply cannot be fastforwarded; its continuous flow in real time cannot be influenced or changed, not even when the transmission of the captured event is delayed.

With regard to the importance of the audience in acknowledging liveness, my viewpoint joins and expands on a discussion that has been already opened by other theorists. In fact, in a more recent article on the topic of liveness, Auslander himself

challenges his own idea of liveness expressed briefly as “not an ontologically defined condition but a historically variable effect of mediatization.”<sup>451</sup> Upon further consideration, Auslander sees our experience of digital technologies as live as determined by their ability to respond to us in real time.<sup>452</sup> Auslander points out that the usage of the word ‘live’ suggests that what we accept as being live has modified over time: “The phrases *live broadcast* and *live recording* suggest that the definition of what counts as live has expanded well beyond its initial scope, as the concept of liveness has been articulated to emergent technologies.”<sup>453</sup> To show that this process is continuously in progress Auslander uses as example Nick Couldry’s categories of liveness: online liveness and group liveness.<sup>454</sup> While Auslander describes these categories as “decentered experiences of liveness” he acknowledges that they “posit liveness as a technologically mediated relationship among human beings.”<sup>455</sup> In this context, Auslander redefines liveness as belonging in between medium and users. Today, notes Auslander, it is easy to use the word ‘live’ to describe connections and interactions between human and non-human agents.<sup>456</sup> Here is how Auslander describes the relationship that generates liveness:

To summarize my argument: some technological artifact – a computer, Website, network, or virtual entity – makes a claim on us, its audience, to be considered as live, a claim that is concretized as a demand in some aspect of the way it presents itself to us (by providing real-time response and interaction or an ongoing connection to others, for example). In order for liveness to occur, we, the

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<sup>451</sup> Philip Auslander, “Digital Liveness: A Historico-Philosophical Perspective,” in *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (*PAJ* 102, September, 2012), p. 3.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., pp. p 5-6.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid.

audience, must accept the claim as binding upon us, take it seriously, and hold onto the object in our consciousness of it in such a way that it becomes live for us. In this analysis, liveness is neither a characteristic of the object nor an effect caused by some aspect of the object such as its medium, ability to respond in real time, or anthropomorphism. Rather, liveness is an interaction produced through our engagement with the object and our willingness to accept its claim.<sup>457</sup>

Auslander resituates liveness in the interaction between media and its users, more specifically in the belief that the medium is rendering liveness and our engagement with it. By placing liveness in the belief of the user as sustained by the interaction with the medium, Auslander focuses somewhat on the individual response to liveness. He redefines digital liveness as a very direct relationship: “digital liveness emerges as a specific *relation* between self and other, a particular way of ‘being involved with something’.” The experience of liveness results from our conscious act of grasping virtual entities as live in response to the claims they make on us.”<sup>458</sup> While avoiding technological determinism as well as a constructivist argument,<sup>459</sup> Auslander expands the realm of liveness past media. However, not acknowledging the shared aspect of liveness as an essential component isolates and devalidates the experience of liveness.

But liveness is a social, publicly shared phenomenon. As I showed in my second chapter, liveness emerged with the radio, when it became necessary to distinguish

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<sup>457</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>459</sup> Auslander specifically discusses the relationship between technological determinism and liveness, as well as the incomplete approach that would place liveness exclusively in the perception of the audience: “an account of digital liveness that rejects technological determinism in favor of a constructivist argument that technological entities are live only inasmuch as we see them that way would miss the mark because it would simply shift the balance of power from the technology to the spectator (from technological determinism to spectatorial determinism, so to speak). The benefit of a phenomenological perspective is that it enables us to understand that digital liveness is neither caused by intrinsic properties of virtual entities nor simply constructed by their audiences.” Ibid.

between having on air a recording, a studio live performance, or a live broadcast. Radio shaped liveness practice as limited by its characteristics as a medium: for the common listener the experience of liveness involved in any live broadcast was a personal experience, it happened in the home, knowing that other listeners were tuning in simultaneously from their own homes. Each experience was unique and shaped by the coordinates of one's home and lifestyle. But acknowledging that the live broadcast was shared by multiple listeners and that it was indeed a public event embedded in our concept of liveness a social component: liveness is public.

That is why the concept of liveness has never been used in relation to basic mediated communication (between two people), such as the telephone, which emerged decades before the radio. Generally, a broadcast event that involves only a transmitter and a receptor is not correlated to liveness, but it is merely viewed as technologically mediated communication, even if it involves an artistic manifestation. An easy way to illustrate the above is the difference between regular online email exchange and social media. On the one hand, an email exchange can be "live," meaning that the sender and the receiver are using their digital devices at the same time, but their liveness is not a specific characteristic. On the other hand, the acknowledged liveness of social media (such as Facebook, Instagram, etc.) is sustained by the constitutive public aspect of these platforms and by the presence of multiple communities online, who share the content simultaneously.

One of the main reasons why personal communication does not raise the issue of liveness is the fact that liveness always carries with it a degree of uncertainty. The uncertainty is not given (in this case) by the indeterminacy of any live event, but by the

lack of control that users have on liveness. In personal communication, most often (or at least ideally), the identities and truthfulness of the sender and the receiver are not questioned by the parts involved. That is exactly why the word ‘live’ started to be used in order to influence the listeners in their appraisal of the content – to enable them to believe that what they were listening was indeed an event that took place at that respective time.

Theorists have always connected liveness to belief and emphasized the role of belief in liveness. For example, in his article discussing live television, Jérôme Bourdon discusses the concept of “belief in liveness,” which in his view is continuously reinforced by the information that the spectator gathers from sources outside the televised event itself: “We know that a programme is live from television itself, from newspapers, the radio, programme magazines. The spectator, then, ‘reads’ television in a context more or less favourable to the belief in liveness.”<sup>460</sup> John Durham Peters also notes that “media events studies seek the conditions in which the willing suspension of disbelief is justified. In media events, the borrowed eyes and ears of the media become, however tentatively or dangerously, one’s own. Death, distance and distrust are all suspended, for good and evil.”<sup>461</sup> I agree, liveness cannot take place outside a prior understanding of the nature of the mediated event (no direct access and no control on the part of the spectator) and of the accompanying belief in the technology involved, its providers, and the producers of the event or information mediated. Liveness-wise, attending or watching a live broadcast would not be successful from the perspective of the spectator without the presence of belief in liveness.

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<sup>460</sup> Jérôme Bourdon, “Live Television Is Still Alive: On Television as an Unfulfilled Promise,” in *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 22 (2000), p. 535.

<sup>461</sup> John Durham Peters, “Witnessing,” in *Media Culture Society*, Vol. 23 (2001), p. 717.

A notorious example that illustrates the importance of belief involved in the reception of liveness early in its history is the 1938 *War of the Worlds* broadcast. During this radio event, parts of the drama picturing a Martian invasion were presented as actual radio news. While the sensationalism of his account has been questioned by some recent critics, Hadley Cantril's 1940 study on the reception of the event notes that "at least a million Americans became frightened and thousands were panic-stricken."<sup>462</sup> Indeed, it seems that some of the listeners were persuaded that Martians were actually on their way to destroy the Earth. This event would not have been possible without the existence of several layers of beliefs in the relationship between radio as a medium and its audience. In his 2005 book, Paul Heyer notes that the panic was partially the result of "a belief that any kind of live on-the-spot newcast, especially one faked so convincingly, must be true, and in part from an invasion fear."<sup>463</sup> That is not surprising, since liveness practice in radio news at the time (as today) involved the transmission of news in real time about real events. The audience already had an extensive experience with radio news and thus

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<sup>462</sup> Hadley Cantril, "Preface (1966)," in Hadley Cantril, *The Invasion from Mars. A Study in the Psychology of Panic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. vi. Various scholarly accounts of the broadcast were published since then, culminating with a revival of the interest in 2013, which marked the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event. Among the new wave of writings, some question the value of Cantril's 1940 findings. See Jefferson Pooley and Michael J. Socolow, "The Myth of the *War of the Worlds* Panic," in *Slate*, October 28, 2013, at [http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/history/2013/10/orson\\_welles\\_war\\_of\\_the\\_worlds\\_panic\\_myth\\_the\\_infamous\\_radio\\_broadcast\\_did.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/history/2013/10/orson_welles_war_of_the_worlds_panic_myth_the_infamous_radio_broadcast_did.html) (accessed on January 19, 2016). It is worth mentioning that, as A. Brad Schwartz points out, "media coverage of the broadcast's seventy fifth anniversary put the growing gap between the conventional wisdom and the more skeptical view on full display, with little hope of a consensus." A. Brad Schwartz, *Broadcast Hysteria: Orson Welles's War of the Worlds and the Art of Fake News* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015), p. 8. In this context, we are currently dealing with many layers of scholarly and media representation of the event, making it difficult to accurately evaluate the real response to the *War of the Worlds* broadcast. However, for my purpose here, it suffices to say that the very fact that such a strong reaction was thought plausible until recent doubts shows that the existence of a belief in liveness was not a matter of debate. Moreover, while the 135 people from New Jersey interviewed by Cantril might not be indicative of the scale of the reaction, they do offer evidence that the reaction was indeed possible.

<sup>463</sup> Another important factor was "an invasion fear." Paul Heyer, *The Medium and the Magician: Orson Welles, the Radio Years, 1934-1952* (Lanham; Boulder; New York; Toronto; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), p. 76.

trusted radio as a medium and believed that the events described were real. As Heyer points out,<sup>464</sup> Welles picked up on that and, by creating the illusion of real news, managed to displace the listeners' beliefs associated with live news and to transfer them to the radio drama. Interestingly, people interpreted reality according to their belief in the so-called news: too many cars outside meant that everybody was leaving; empty streets meant that everybody had already left.<sup>465</sup>

By being public, liveness has a social component that is sustained through belief, and by sharing content among the members of a community. An isolated user of immediate online content hardly participates in liveness practice. While the user is engaging in the belief that he is watching a live captured event, for example, the interaction between him and the medium does not generate liveness, but just immediacy. In fact, Couldry's liveness categories that constitute the starting point of Auslander's reevaluation of liveness both involve groups of people, thus making the social aspect of liveness a defining trait. Couldry makes an interesting point: the connection to real events embedded in the experience of liveness is an indirect one, and it is related to the outside source of the event:

Live transmission (of anything, whether real or fictional) guarantees that someone in the transmitting media institution *could* interrupt it at any time and make an immediate connection to real events. What is special, then, about live transmission is the *potential* connection it guarantees with real events. Or at least

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<sup>464</sup> "These news bulletins were common fodder on the radio and Welles picked up on that. [...] Welles set people up for this by the pacing. And people suspended their disbelief. The Svengali effect Welles had of hypnotizing millions of people over the airwaves made things appear as if they were taking place in real time." Paul Heyer, Interview Transcript: "The War of the Worlds," at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/transcript/worlds-transcript/> (accessed on December 10, 2013).

<sup>465</sup> See Susan Douglas, Interview Transcript: "The War of the Worlds," at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/transcript/worlds-transcript/> (accessed on December 10, 2013).

this is how liveness is now generally constructed. [...] Liveness – or live transmission – guarantees a potential connection to shared social realities as they are happening.<sup>466</sup>

Couldry situates liveness in the realm of possible interaction between the event and the spectator, and also acknowledges that the event represents a “shared social reality.” He goes even further and defines liveness as “a category whose use naturalizes the general idea that, through the media, we achieve a shared attention to the ‘realities’ that matter for us as a society.”<sup>467</sup> In this context, liveness gains significance when it rests on the following ideas:

1. that we gain access through liveness to something of broader, “central,” significance, which is worth accessing now, not later;
2. that the “we” who gain live access is not random, but a representative social group;
3. that the media (not some other social mechanism) is the privileged means for obtaining that access.<sup>468</sup>

Couldry’s remark can be applied successfully not only to HD opera transmissions, but in most events that I would qualify as liveness practice. The importance of a “representative social group” that participates in a mediated event “now, not later” is undeniable in liveness practice. I consider that the social aspect of liveness reinforces the belief necessary for liveness to be validated. I consider that, by moving live broadcasts from the domestic space to the public space of the movie theatre, HD events create an environment where the belief in liveness is sustained by the possibility of the audience to

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<sup>466</sup> Nick Couldry, “Liveness, ‘Reality’, and the Mediated Habitus from Television to the Mobile Phone,” in *The Communication Review*, Vol. 7 (2004), p. 355.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 356.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*

participate to the event together, to acknowledge liveness together. By reshaping liveness practice to comprise a shared public space where the community is able to validate the liveness of the events happening on the screen, HD events encourage their audiences to have a more relaxed attitude towards captured live events, promoted under the umbrella of liveness.

When talking about television, Jérôme Bourdon points out that live broadcasting was always a public phenomenon: “other people are viewing this live event at the same time as I do.”<sup>469</sup> Within this context, Bourdon questions whether television is really about live broadcasting or simply about shared viewing. Indeed, being shared, the very important element of liveness practice as outlined above, constitutes one of the most compelling aspects of liveness. Crisell also argues that not only are we interested in witnessing the performers in the act, but that “our love of liveness is essentially a desire for the company of other humans which is separate from and antecedent to, anything they might have to say to us or we to them.”<sup>470</sup> His approach to liveness is understood more loosely, coming close to what I defined above as liveness practice. In his view, liveness is valued not only for “the instantaneous nature of its messages, but for the sense it gives us of being part of a larger community.”<sup>471</sup> This is what makes the HD encores participate successfully in liveness practice – they enable an additional manifestation of the operative community. Crisell extends his perspective on co-presence to encompass even daily newspapers, which again show the value of sharing information and events with one’s contemporaries:

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<sup>469</sup> Jérôme Bourdon, “Live Television Is Still Alive: On Television as an Unfulfilled Promise,” in *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 22 (2000), p. 534.

<sup>470</sup> Andrew Crisell, *Liveness and Recording in the Media*, (London; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 16.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid.

In other words, whether the primary medium is live (theatre, television, radio) or recorded (cinema and even the daily newspaper), a kind of live secondary communication – perhaps communion or companionship would be a better word – is established between the individual members of its audience, who are either co-present in time and space (theatre and cinema) or merely in time (television, radio, the daily newspaper): that is to say in different places but all conscious of doing the same thing that instant.<sup>472</sup>

As discussed in my third chapter, HD events are heavily promoted through social media activity of singers and spectators. A Canadian study on the relationship between theatre and digital media notes that an entire set of new expectations emerged together with HD events. They mention that “this new, more connected, theatre-goer” expects:

More exciting use of visual effects and technology on stage. Interacting with performers via social networking. Glimpsing ‘behind the curtain’ to see the backstage magic of the creative process. Commenting on what they see via personalized reviews. Consuming additional background information and content on a play. Owning a copy of the performance they’ve just seen for future viewing.<sup>473</sup>

All the above mentioned elements that become part of the HD spectator’s expectations are in fact new elements of liveness practice today. Jérôme Bourdon mentions that the most direct way for a distant spectator to be connected with the event is when the event takes place in his area and physical signs of it are present: traffic, closed streets etc. In a similar way, I see access to social media, online pre-show announcements and post-show reviews, background and repurposed content as being a part of a similar,

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<sup>472</sup> Ibid.

<sup>473</sup> Thompson, Craig et al. “Beyond the Curtain. How Digital Media is Reshaping Theatre,” Avonova (2011), p. 8, at [http://www.avonova.ca/assets/uploads/pages/image/files/Beyond\\_The\\_Curtain.pdf](http://www.avonova.ca/assets/uploads/pages/image/files/Beyond_The_Curtain.pdf) (accessed on July 17, 2015).

but virtual, phenomenon. Liveness practice in its new form actually needs these elements in order to persuade the viewer of its authenticity. Without the outside informational fervour, there would be few elements to differentiate between a live transmission and an encore, and spectators would have to use their judgment in the appraisal of liveness.

In this context, it seems natural to move the analysis of the concept of liveness and how it is used from the established blurry live/recorded dichotomy towards that body of information that really provides the participants with the acknowledgment that they participate in a live mediated event. This is not to say that splitting liveness in categories or identifying the myriad of events where liveness is perceived as being a constitutive element is not useful. They definitely inform and outline the complexity of the concept at hand (as reflected in Table 2). But for the purpose of understanding how liveness functions in our minds today and thus in HD opera, this simplified approach, based on temporal simultaneity and co-participation at the event seems to be rather revelatory. This is not the place to explore all the instances where liveness practice is involved, but it suffices to mention that any broadcasting technology that provides content simultaneously to a community (radio, television, but not services such as Netflix), any online service that offers public immediacy (social media, online gaming), as well as all existent HD events live or captured live (opera, theatre, ballet, sport and pop music events, etc.) qualify. I am not arguing that the experience of liveness is comparable between these events, but that they convey liveness and that their participants are all experiencing it.

	<b>Liveness is:</b>	<b>Types of liveness:</b>
Philip Auslander (2008, 2012)	“an interaction produced through our engagement with the object [could be the medium] and our willingness to accept its claim” (2012, p. 9)	“classic” liveness live broadcast live recording internet liveness social liveness website liveness
Paul Sanden (2013)	“a rather fluid concept, contingent upon historical context, cultural tradition, implicated technologies, and various other factors for its exact articulation” (p. 3)	temporal liveness spatial liveness liveness of fidelity liveness of spontaneity corporeal liveness interactive liveness virtual liveness
Nick Couldry (2004)	“a category whose use naturalizes the general idea that, through the media, we achieve a shared attention to the ‘realities’ that matter for us as a society” (p. 356)	online liveness group liveness

**Table 2.** Several theoretical approaches to liveness showing the complexity of the concept.

## **2. The Power of Liveness**

A discussion of liveness practice as framed by HD events today would not be complete without a short analysis of the impact of liveness itself on the audiences. There are two justifications for this analysis. Firstly, the reception of HD events depends a great deal on how impactful liveness is during the HD experience. Secondly, some of the elements that contribute to the efficacy of liveness in HD events (or any live broadcasts, in fact) constitute, coincidentally, the very elements that are actually untouched by the change in liveness practice discussed above. Consequently, I consider that it is very important to acknowledge these elements and to understand them as constituting the

aspect of liveness practice that is determined by liveness itself as a phenomenon, and not by cultural or technological contexts that can evolve and change.

At a first glance, the impact of liveness on its audience seems to reside in the power of liveness to convey some of the most compelling aspects of live performance, such as uniqueness and unpredictability. In my third chapter I discussed extensively how HD events attempt to mediate the environment of the live performance – the venue – in order to emphasize the uniqueness of the experience and to render a simulated aura to the public. Furthermore, the unpredictability of the event is protected by the continuous live transmission and by the promise that even encores are uncut and unmodified. This shows that there is a certain value attached to these elements, a value that precedes the HD medium and that, in fact, always existed in liveness practice. Such elements reflect the nature of liveness and they have never been impacted by the location of the live broadcast or by the size of the audience. A live radio broadcast in the 1920s and an HD broadcast today share these elements and also the expectations that arise from their association with liveness. In other words, our understanding of liveness practice has changed and become more flexible in the last decade or so, but that does not apply to our expectations associated with liveness itself as a phenomenon that connects us with a live, unpredictable event. In my appreciation of liveness as a phenomenon, I share Sanden's view that in essence the concept of liveness is unchanged.<sup>474</sup> But again, as in my analysis of liveness practice above, I choose to focus on liveness from the perspective of the audience and its expectations with regard to liveness.

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<sup>474</sup> Paul Sanden, *Liveness in Modern Music. Musicians, Technology, and the Perception of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 4.

As shown in my previous chapters, live broadcasts strive to convey the aura of the performance and thus keep the audience engaged as it would be if it were present in the actual venue. This is understandable, since in the vast realm of events that participate in liveness practice today, the events that are live broadcasts in the traditional sense, i.e., live transmissions of a live event, still gather the most enthusiastic response from audiences. The impact of a live event on its audience is therefore still the best starting point for a more in-depth analysis of the value and power of liveness, especially when discussing classical music or opera broadcast. Here is how John Durham Peters justifies the popularity of the live concert:

Why will people pay high prices for music performed in concert whose quality and polish is often better on the CD-player at home? Obviously extra-musical values shape concert-going: party, spectacle, noise, dance. Even so, live music is different. A concert is an event, not a record. [...] Touch and eye-contact with the artist are possible. So is imperfection: in the concert one may hear strains edited out in the studio, and witness the labor of the performing body.<sup>475</sup>

Coincidentally, in his description, Peters touches on the aspects of a live musical performance that are the most easily transferable through HD broadcasts. A concert is indeed an event. But a live broadcast in a movie theatre is also an event; it is constructed as an event and it offers to the spectator the opportunity to witness music in the making, where the risk of unpredictable moments is real. With a few additional notes from the producers of the Met in HD series that would frame the (otherwise perceived) communication between the performer and the spectator through the camera as a valid type of communication, this description could easily fit an HD event.

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<sup>475</sup> John Durham Peters, "Witnessing," in *Media Culture Society*, Vol. 23 (2001), p. 718.

The audience in the movie theatre is able to hear unedited sound, to witness the performing body in much greater detail than the audience in the opera hall, it benefits from spectacle and noise, and even from one-sided interaction with the performers (they usually address the audience in the movie theatres in the intermission interviews). To continue to use Peters' description of live performance, he also notes that a live performance takes place in time. "In a concert, one's mortal time-line on earth is spent. [...] The body, however, lives only in real time. Singing, dancing and live performance all engage time's passage."<sup>476</sup> We can also easily argue that attending an HD event, unlike other traditional live broadcasts, takes time from both the performers and the singers; this is not a secondary activity such as listening to a recording or to the radio while engaging in something else around the house or during commute.

In my fourth chapter I argued that HD events are among the few live broadcasts available today where the audience has no control over the transmission. This makes the temporal aspect of HD live broadcasts even more valuable and offers the perfect environment for unpredictability to play its role in liveness. While unpredictability in classical music does not match that of popular music and is far from sport events, a certain degree of indeterminacy exists and every passionate and knowledgeable music listener attending a live performance is familiar with it and actually experiences the performance through its lenses.<sup>477</sup> Because of that, unpredictability was always

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<sup>476</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>477</sup> There is a notable difference between the popular music listener and the classical music listener that needs to be addressed here. A passionate popular music listener attending a live concert tends to focus on the co-presence with the stars in the same space and experiencing the music in the presence of the performers and other fans. While classical music listeners value greatly the presence of famous performers on stage and sharing that with the other listeners, there is also a great deal of importance that is put on how the performance is carried through. A knowledgeable classical music listener is more often than not familiar not only with the music itself (as is the popular music listener), but also with its degree of difficulty, especially in key sections of the work. This is where indeterminacy comes into place and makes

emphasised in the promotion of live classical music broadcasts, and still is today. This would not be possible, obviously, without the possibility of live broadcast to carry unpredictability successfully for distant audiences, but at the same time, it also shows that unpredictability in liveness is a valued given for the audiences.

Old musical reviews of live television opera broadcasts boast of this aspect: “The broadcasts are events, in which the excitement of live theatrical performance is conveyed even through occasionally bleary images: members of the audience clear their throats, the feather patter of ballet slippers intrude on the music; and above all, the potential for error is constant.”<sup>478</sup> Years later, John Goberman, the producer of “Live from Lincoln Center” talks about it again: “When an opera star hits a difficult note, the thrill is that you are watching him accomplish it. If he misses, of course that’s terrible – and exciting. But once it’s recorded on tape or film, chances are it’ll be fixed, edited out, and that terribly important element of immediacy is missing.”<sup>479</sup> Of course, as Goberman implies, the audience is perfectly aware of what happens to a performance once it is recorded; “fixing” the performance is the standard practice. Any recorded live event becomes a reproduction, and thus it becomes predictable; the audience knows that it is just a matter of fast-forwarding the recording and all the specificities of the performance can be revealed in their now unchangeable condition.

Because unpredictability is a characteristic of live performance that transfers easily in broadcast, unplanned and accidental details serve as key elements in the

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for a very different listening experience, which also impacts the reaction of the audience, which takes into consideration the dexterity of the performer, as well as the difficulty of the piece. This is not to say that the popular music listener is not interested in the quality of the performance; he is, but the experience is perceived profusely as a complex shared labour between the performers working hard on stage and the audience, which brings some flexibility with regards to the actual accuracy of the interpretation.

<sup>478</sup> Henry Weil, “Media: Live from Lincoln Center,” in *Change*, Vol. 9, No. 11 (November, 1977), p. 52.

<sup>479</sup> Quoted by Jennifer Barnes, “Television Opera: A Non History,” in *A Night in at the Opera. Media Representations of Opera*, ed. by Jeremy Tambling (London: J. Libbey, 1994), p. 47.

unmediated relationship between the live event and its audience. Imperfection, mishaps, gaffes or off-script happenings are all possible in live performance, and thus unpredictability is associated with the idea of risk. Christopher Hoile notes that Derrick de Kerckhove emphasises the role of risk when talking about the value of live performance. This is what differentiates between a live performance and montage (as in film), which “is not about risk, but control.”<sup>480</sup>

When talking about live broadcasts of opera in movie theatres, de Kerckhove argues that risk is not present in a simulcast, since the director and the sound engineer intervene between the live performers and the spectators, thus reducing the immediacy that would provide a sense of risk.<sup>481</sup> But Barbara Willis, one of the founding partners of Rhombus, the company that contributes to the HD series, remarks: “The live thing is very exciting when you get that kind of virtuosity and you are there with them. You feel the danger, you feel the risk – it’s the danger, the risk, that is very exciting.”<sup>482</sup> She considers that the live broadcast can be even more exciting than the live performance, since spectators in the movie theatre get access back stage, where they can see the performers, the presenters getting ready for the stage and for the camera.<sup>483</sup>

It is undeniable that unpredictable events are possible in HD broadcasts, and that they can be generated by the very nature of the medium involved. A relevant example in this sense is that reported by Armatage. She points out that the camera movements, shot

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<sup>480</sup> Christopher Hoile, “Opera at the Movies: The Met’s Success Raises Some Interesting Questions About What Happens to Opera in the Movie Theatre,” in *Opera Canada*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Summer 2007), p. 23.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> L. H. Tiffany Hsieh, “For Two Movie-makers, the Met’s Success Is No Surprise,” in *Opera Canada*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Summer 2007), p. 26.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid.

types, and cues for the HD transmission are planned in advance.<sup>484</sup> However, given the complexity of the singer's activity on stage, working with live opera is still a challenge. Justin Davidson witnessed Gary Halvorson's team dealing with a challenging moment during the live transmission of *Romeo and Juliet* in 2007:

[...] Gary Halvorson was furiously calling shots. On a wall in front of him was a grid of screens, showing three angles on [Roberto] Alagna and several more on [Anna] Netrebko, plus a handful of shots that took them both in. Halvorson issued a steady stream of orders to the button-pusher on his right, cuing each cut with a peremptory finger-snap. 'Three! Five! [Snap.] Three. Ready, Six ... ready, Six, but hold it. Holditholditholdit – and Six! Back to Three! I said Three, goddamn it! Forget it. Now Five! [Snap!]' Then, an aside: 'They're doing it totally differently than they did in rehearsal – Roberto's all over the place.' In theory, Halvorson, the camera operators, and a couple of assistant directors all follow the same script, but Alagna's vagaries had triggered a few minutes of frantic group improv. 'That was fun,' Halvorson remarked afterward. 'Don't try that at home.'<sup>485</sup>

While the audience did not have access to how this situation was handled, such an instance could have made for a very puzzling few minutes for the audience in the movie theatre if the problem was not solved in a timely manner.

The chance of witnessing an unplanned moment is an exciting aspect of the experience for the audience, and it is connected directly to the desire of the audience to participate to the uniqueness of the event.<sup>486</sup> The results of a study done with lovers of

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<sup>484</sup> Kay Armatage, "Cinematic Operatics: Barbara Willis Sweete Directs Metropolitan Opera HD Transmissions," in *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. 81, Number 4 (Fall 2012), p. 913.

<sup>485</sup> Justin Davidson, quoted by Kay Armatage, "Cinematic Operatics: Barbara Willis Sweete Directs Metropolitan Opera HD Transmissions," in *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. 81, Number 4 (Fall 2012), p. 915.

<sup>486</sup> I remember attending a live performance of *Carmen* by Bizet one time, where the lead singer noisily lost one of her earrings at the end of the production, got distracted by that, and... forgot to die. What was extraordinary about it was not just that I witnessed live a small incident that generated a change in the

live mediated events by Joachim Vosgerau shows that perceived indeterminacy is the strongest factor in the excitement associated with witnessing the performance. Vosgerau considers that an experience can be indeterminate “if and only if both the underlying event and the manner in which it is experienced are indeterminate.”<sup>487</sup> Thus, perceived indeterminacy means both that the spectator does not know details about how the event will unfold (just like in sports, for example, the score of a soccer game), and that he knows that the outcome of the event is not already known or decided. The Met is not only transmitting live performances, but also recording them, as well as the respective dress-rehearsals in order to use them for later television replay or DVD releases, which are always modified.<sup>488</sup> In this context, the distant opera spectator has but one chance to see the real version of the performance and that is during the HD live transmission. J. D. Saks describes the process: “The original HD shows themselves are live. Whatever happens – missed notes, mix or video mistakes, warts and all – that’s how it goes out. When we’re working in post, though, we have options. If the soprano missed a high C but nailed it in rehearsal, we’ll insert the good take to fix the spot.”<sup>489</sup>

The importance of unpredictability in liveness is very well reflected in live transmission of sports. Peters describes the dramatic difference between real time and replay when it comes to sport events: “sports fans [...] must be there *as it happens*. [...] the few seconds between occurrence and replay open up a metaphysical gulf in the

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(visual) plot of the opera, but merely that I was there and enjoyed that unique, otherwise very good, representation of *Carmen*, where the audience visibly waited for the well-known ending of the opera, which never happened.

<sup>487</sup> Joachim Vosgerau, Klaus Wertenbroch and Ziv Carmon. “Indeterminacy and Live Television,” in *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 32 (March, 2006), p. 488.

<sup>488</sup> Gary Eskow, “New York’s Met in HD. Opera Hits a High Note with High-Tech Broadcasts,” in *Mix*, April 1, 2008, at [http://mixonline.com/post/features/audio\\_new\\_yorks\\_met/](http://mixonline.com/post/features/audio_new_yorks_met/) (accessed on January 25, 2013).

<sup>489</sup> Ibid.

meaning and quality of what is seen.”<sup>490</sup> Even though there is no visual difference between what happens on the television screen during the live event and the instant-replay “in the psychology of the fan, one is history, the other is television; one is window to the event, the other is representation.”<sup>491</sup>

Being connected to the live event is equivalent to having access to its real, unmodified and non-manipulated form, it is “an assurance of access to truth and authenticity” and “it avoids the ontological depreciation of being a copy.”<sup>492</sup> Presence-at-a-distance (Peters’ term) is what broadcasting events claim to offer, by creating for the audience the opportunity to witness the event: “the communication situation of broadcasting is analogous to that of witnessing: experiences are mediated to an audience which has no first-hand acquaintance with them.”<sup>493</sup> Indeed, the recording lacks the *hic et nunc* of the event. Further, but by being a copy, it opens the possibility of repeatability. Any event, even a recurring one, is singular in its specificity. A “copy” of an event is a reiteration of something that by definition is impossible to be reiterated in its original condition. Because of that, the relationship between the singular event and its “forever irreplaceable” witnesses is a privileged one.

As I discussed above, re-transmissions of the original material are available in movie theatres for most of the HD productions. In its FAQ webpage, the Met makes sure that the public is aware that: “the encore presentations feature a direct recording of the live event transmission;” and again: “the encores feature the exact same content as the

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<sup>490</sup> John Durham Peters, “Witnessing,” in *Media Culture Society*, Vol. 23 (2001), p. 719.

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>492</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 718.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 717.

live presentations.”<sup>494</sup> In this way, the Met reassures the spectators that it is a delayed but untouched representation. In other words, the spectators are offered the opportunity to understand that the encore event participates in liveness practice by not altering the content that was captured live. Consequently, they have access to a delayed unpredictability, in the exact form that was presented in the original transmission.<sup>495</sup>

To conclude, I want to emphasize that the cultural value of the above discussed elements – uniqueness and unpredictability – is sustained by the social aspect of liveness. Witnessing a unique event – live or broadcast – is enjoyable as an experience, but it is also important because its value is acknowledged by the other members of the community. This brings us back to the most important aspect of liveness practice: liveness has always been a shared, public phenomenon. I agree with Crisell when stating that what we really look for in a live broadcast is “essentially the co-presence of other humans.”<sup>496</sup> That is why I see liveness practice to encompass any content that is enjoyed simultaneously by multiple members of an audience. Whether we are talking about telepresence or about what Russell Fewster defines as virtual presence – a social exchange that takes place in a simulated environment –,<sup>497</sup> the co-presence of others is the ultimate reinforcer of liveness.

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<sup>494</sup> See <http://www.metoperafamily.org/metopera/liveinhd/faqs.aspx> (accessed on January 25, 2013). FAQ section has been updated since 2013. Here is the current explanation of the encore event, hosted under “Other opportunities to see the broadcasts.” “Q. What does “encore broadcast” mean? Where will these broadcasts play? A. An encore performance is a re-exhibition of the live event.” See <https://www.metopera.org/About/FAQ/FAQs/Live-in-HD-FAQ/#otheropp> (accessed on August 10, 2015).

<sup>495</sup> Obviously, an incident like the Carmen one I witnessed would already made its way in media by the time the encore is screened.

<sup>496</sup> Andrew Crisell, *Liveness and Recording in the Media* (London; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 15.

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

## Conclusion

My goal in this thesis was to have an in-depth look at HD opera events, with the purpose of revealing how these events reshape our understanding and usage of the concept of liveness. Moreover, I was interested to investigate whether the HD events have an impact on the long-debated relationship between classical music and technology in general, and also to see how new media are integrated and received in classical music culture today. My strategy was multifaceted: I chose to look at the relationship between classical music and live broadcast through the lens of the production and reception of live broadcast events, starting with early radio in the 1920s, and focusing on HD opera as a new medium. At the same time, my intention was to identify trends in how liveness is constructed, evaluated and perceived, taking into account the fact that over the decades, the understanding of liveness evolved with media usage, and also with the cultural and social context within which live broadcasts flourished.

My investigation revealed that liveness as a concept does not stand and evolve only in relationship with the production and reception of live broadcast events, and as constructed by broadcasting media, but that it is rather continuously shaped and redefined by its rapport with what I call *liveness practice*. It is our concept of liveness practice that shapes both how we understand and use liveness as a term. Moreover, liveness practice negotiates how media are continuously accommodated and integrated in classical music culture and discourse. In this last section of my work, I will emphasize several important characteristics of liveness practice that could be explored in future research, while showing the relevance of my investigation in relation to this newly unveiled concept.

During my research on liveness in relation to HD events, I felt somewhat constrained by the available theoretical approaches of liveness, as they were looking at liveness *too closely*. Accounts otherwise very enriching investigate liveness from the perspective of the relation to the broadcasting media. Consequently, they approach liveness as a phenomenon continuously shaped by the ever-changing technology in interaction with the culturally and economically determined production and consumption of live broadcast. While I acknowledged that the construction of liveness evolved with every new medium and our response to it, in my view there was something about liveness as a concept that outlived any technological improvements and musical genres in one hundred years of live broadcasts, and which seemed to be more than the necessary (but now debatable) simultaneity in time with the event indicated by Paul Sanden,<sup>498</sup> or the valuable co-presence of other humans indicated by Andrew Crisell.<sup>499</sup>

The categories of liveness identified by Auslander – *classic liveness, live broadcast, live recording, internet liveness, social liveness, and website liveness*,<sup>500</sup> and by Sanden – *temporal liveness, spatial liveness, liveness of fidelity, liveness of spontaneity, corporeal liveness, interactive liveness, and virtual liveness*,<sup>501</sup> show not only the complexity of the concept of liveness today, but also our need to look at liveness through the lens of media. Seeing my own temptation to tie liveness closely to HD opera as a medium, I decided to try to look at it from afar and to understand its presence and

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<sup>498</sup> Paul Sanden, *Liveness in Modern Music. Musicians, Technology, and the Perception of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 4.

<sup>499</sup> Andrew Crisell, *Liveness and Recording in the Media* (London; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 15.

<sup>500</sup> See Table 1 in Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 61.

<sup>501</sup> Paul Sanden, *Liveness in Modern Music. Musicians, Technology, and the Perception of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 11.

development in cultural practice from a wider angle. This is how the need arose for a new concept that would allow me to look at liveness more loosely.

One of the most striking and interesting aspects of HD events is that, by using movie theatres, live broadcasts expanded to encompass cinematic territory. What is intriguing is not only that HD events use venues exclusively dedicated to the cinema until now, but also that they challenge (theoretically) cinema practice. While this is not the place to expand on what cinema practice involves, it suffices to say that part of it is to deliver a fairly predictable type of content on the big screen, especially when talking about duration and dynamic of the consecrated – under two hours – cinematic form known as film.<sup>502</sup> The impressive continuity of film as an established cinematic form was what sparked my idea of liveness practice: in fact, in a similar way, we have been familiar for a century with a very specific type of live broadcast event. I could clearly see now how our concept of liveness practice developed quietly along with our exposure to live broadcasts and to what they all had in common regardless of the medium or the content involved.<sup>503</sup> Liveness practice encompasses more than liveness itself, but, at core, it is less complex than all that is involved in the production and media usage in live broadcast, and consequently in the construction of liveness today. Liveness practice involves a series of expectations, socially and culturally validated, combined with a few

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<sup>502</sup> Under two hours is the standard length in Western cinematography. Other schools of cinema, such as the Indian one, engage in productions that usually exceed two hours. *Lagaan. Once Upon a Time in India*, a movie that was nominated for the Oscar for the best foreign language film in 2002 has 224 minutes. I will take this opportunity to point out that many movie theatres around the world host Indian productions (mostly Bollywood). Consequently, the prolonged duration of HD broadcasts which impacts somewhat the use of the movie theatre is not really a novelty.

<sup>503</sup> Radio and television were the main media used in live broadcasting before HD events and online streaming. Live broadcast content consisted (and it still does) in a varied type of events, from art performance to sports, television and radio shows, to news.

essential elements, such as a liveness-savvy audience that shares in the mediated event simultaneously.

The structure of my thesis allowed me to focus on liveness from different angles, which in turn revealed a fresh perspective on liveness practice. In my first chapter – “Music and Technology: The Value of Live Performance” – I took a close look at the status of live performance in classical music. Live performance and its constitutive elements sit at the core of liveness practice, as it represents the unaltered source of the mediated event. The investigation of the value of live performance in classical music informed both the analysis of liveness practice, and that of the relationship between classical music and any mediating technology. Furthermore, the analysis of live performance put in perspective the efforts made by producers of live broadcasts to convey liveness by using various artifices, cues that help the audience recognize the liveness of the event. Even if the recent development of liveness practice negotiates live, captured live, and even recorded material, our attachment to live performance seems unchanged.

Liveness is a phenomenon that now spans a century of mediated live events. All media that contributed significantly to how the concept of liveness was constructed and evolved over decades (radio, television, and now HD events and the internet) are still broadcasting today. That we are still talking about liveness a century later after the first live broadcasts shows that the source event – the live performance – still retains its value. Moreover, its uniqueness is still enough reason to maintain on air and online a type of content – the live broadcast – that is almost the same as the first radio broadcasts ever. Indeed, while our technology is better, and ever-changing, offering sound and visuals that

are now highly accurate, the main content of most live broadcasts today is kept unaltered as in the first radio broadcasts. There is something about live performance that still obliges media and producers to keep the content mostly untouched during a live broadcast.<sup>504</sup> In order to better understand the unchanged value of live performance, I decided to have a close look at the status of live performance in classical music.

My investigation revealed that classical music discourse has always been intrigued (and still is, to some extent) by reproducibility, especially when talking about the authenticity of the technologically mediated musical experience. Any live performance is, by nature, already mediated.<sup>505</sup> However, due to its elusive and ephemeral nature, a live event continues to constitute a major cultural attraction for audiences. Even though in recent decades sound technology has been successful in offering very accurate recordings, in any genre of music, attending a live performance is still considered an experience that any music listener and connoisseur should strive to have. As Paul Théberge points out, “attending concerts remains, for most fans, as intense an expression of their relationship to stars as it was in the days of Jenny Lind.”<sup>506</sup> Indeed, the live concert experience is valued even when the performance involves major use of technology, such as in live popular music concerts. In some cases, the use of mediating technology, such as multiple big screens, make the performance even more highly appreciated.

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<sup>504</sup> I am not referring here to the transformative power of mediation, such as camera work, but at how producers usually try to keep the presence of the mediating medium at minimum. Even in sports, where commentary and relay excerpts during a live broadcast are the norm, there is not much innovation in how the live event is mediated. The purpose of the producers is to direct the attention of the listeners/viewers towards the live event at all times.

<sup>505</sup> By the venue, the acoustics, etc.

<sup>506</sup> Paul Théberge, “Everyday Fandom: Fan Clubs, Blogging, and the Quotidian Rhythms of the Internet,” in *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (2005), p. 494. Jenny Lind was a Swedish opera singer active in the nineteenth century.

The most striking and debated aspect of live performance is its uniqueness, given that such an event has a clearly defined and also limited place in time and space. There are also several essential elements that confer on a performative event the status of live performance: human presence on stage and in the audience, as well as some form of human performance, which can obviously involve musical instruments, but also complex technological tools (such as amplifiers, loop pedals, laptops, etc.). The presence of all these elements constitute what Walter Benjamin sees as the *aura* of the work of art, in this case the “here and now” of the event, with all its necessary constitutive elements.

In my analysis, I found that these essential elements of live performance always shaped liveness practice. Liveness practice does not reflect the actual attempt to mediate the live events, which most often involves an artificial construction of liveness that compensates for the aspects of the live performance that can never reach a distant spectator, such as the venue or direct communication with the performers through applause. Liveness practice regards the live broadcast experience in itself, which involves the mediated event and a distant audience that is able to recognize the liveness of the event, and thus validate it. An event that does not participate in liveness practice by not allowing its audience to identify and recognize its liveness risks being perceived as a recording.<sup>507</sup>

Distinguishing between a live broadcast and a recording is essential to liveness practice. Even though technology today allows for a blurry distinction between live and recorded (see Auslander’s account on that) when it comes to liveness practice, the

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<sup>507</sup> Live news constitute a good example here: many news channels use recorded/archive material to illustrate live news, sometime making it very easy for the inattentive viewer to not be able to identify the short visual excerpt that is actually live. By not giving enough cues about the liveness of the images (and thus not constructing liveness clearly), such events do not ensure their participation in liveness practice and are thus sometime perceived as recordings/old material.

audience has to be able to confirm that the mediated event is transmitted in a timely fashion in order to validate its liveness.<sup>508</sup> One of the reasons why the audience needs to be able to distinguish between a live broadcast and a recording is the fact that a live broadcast, as mentioned before, conveys the live event mostly unaltered. And an unaltered live content is at the core of liveness practice. By keeping the content unaltered, the attachment of the audience to live performance is transferred to liveness.

In my first chapter I showed that, before sound technology emerged, attachment to music performance was natural, an obvious part of music culture. Sound reproduction offered an alternative to live events and with that, it generated an irreversible binary relationship between recordings and their originals. Suddenly, a regular music performance became a *live* performance. In theory, in the presence of technology any live musical event became a possible original for a recording. Once recordings pervaded musical culture, a musical work of art changed its status forever: what used to be a sole type of representation became the source of another representation – the recording. In this context, attachment to live performance was not only made visible by the emergence of recordings, but it became necessary, as it validated the binary relationship between recordings and their originals. This obvious fact – that we need to continue to value live performance in order to validate reproduction – is in fact the most impactful factor on the theoretical dichotomy between an original and its copy.

Within this context, live broadcast constituted the perfect mediated event to reinforce the value of live performance, and consequently of any subsequent recordings.

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<sup>508</sup> As I will later show, due to online media, liveness practice today allows for a more flexible timing, but there is still an unwritten convention among the members of the audience with regard to how long an event is considered still live, and when it becomes just a recording or a documentation of a live event.

As I showed in my second chapter, “Classical Music and Live Broadcasts in the 1920s,” from the earliest radio days, live broadcasts strived to encapsulate and convey the most impactful elements of live performance. Through this process, liveness was shaped not only as a trustful mediator between a live event and its distant audience, but also as a constant reminder and reinforcer of the codependent opposition between the original and its copy. Liveness was the most striking characteristic of radio, and thus the relationship between classical music and radio naturally shaped itself around liveness. Radio was the first medium to initiate the construction of liveness in relation to classical music, and thus it was the first medium around which liveness practice developed. Underneath the desire to mediate live performance and thus promote radio as a new medium at the time, radio shaped the concept of liveness and constructed liveness as a phenomenon adjacent to radio.

The nature of the radio as a medium created the necessity to clearly distinguish between recordings and live broadcasts. Auslander points out that the word “live” was not used in relation to performance until 1934. I agree with Auslander’s interpretation that radio challenged the complementary relationship between live and recorded, as established by the recording technology. Indeed, even today, listeners are not able to identify liveness on the radio just by listening to the music. There are other elements informing the listener that what they hear is a recording or a live broadcast. Since radio is not visual, from the beginning it needed to construct the experience of liveness in such a way that the audience would be able to identify it. A Saturday opera live broadcast was thus not just another radio transmission that happened to be live; it was a mediated musical event that had an informed, somewhat tech-savvy audience – most listeners

would know that they were listening to a live broadcast from cues that had no connection to the music itself, such as the introductory address.

What strikes us now is the realization that, at the same time, liveness practice started to take shape in a form that remained largely unchanged until challenged by HD events and online media. Liveness practice as initiated and popularised by the radio and then continued by television consisted in a live transmission addressed to the audience at home. From the perspective of liveness practice, enjoying the live transmission in one's own home transformed domestic space into the only available alternative to attending a live performance. In this way, live broadcast was tied to and conceived to belong in the domestic space.

By placing live broadcast at home, radio listeners enjoyed the broadcast at the same time with other listeners and the live audience, but in the comfort and isolation of their home (as compared to the communal aspect of a regular live audience). Even when multiple listeners would share the same radio, and later television set,<sup>509</sup> they would know that they participate in a community of listeners or viewers that is scattered around the city or country. The connection between the members of the audience was not a direct one, but it was rather sustained by the live broadcast itself. Simultaneity in time with other listeners thus made up for the lack of a large audience attending the event. But at the same time, the isolation in one's own home created a very personal experience, encompassing multiple aspects (mostly pertaining to one's home, company and listening habits) that could not be shared with other members of the audience. Liveness practice thus encompassed the home as the sole venue, simultaneously sharing the broadcast with a scattered audience, and enjoying the broadcast as a personal experience. Liveness

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<sup>509</sup> This applies to sport events enjoyed by numerous viewers in sports bars.

practice did not include access to how other listeners or viewers experienced any particular live broadcast. These are not all the elements of liveness practice, but they suffice to show the basic model of experiencing liveness that constituted the standard for almost a hundred years, since the experience of live television broadcast also employed most of these elements.

Liveness practice evolved while coexisting with numerous live broadcast practices, which consist in the specific conditions of producing and delivering liveness, according to the medium used, the content of the broadcast, and many other social, cultural, and economical factors. During the first radio decades, along with liveness and liveness practice, various live broadcast practices started to develop. In this chapter, I discussed the contribution of the first efforts made by radio amateurs to the popularisation of radio. Some of them, Canadian Reginald Fessenden included, were also the first to tackle live broadcast details. But the development of the studios, which generated the flourishing of jobs for musicians, put its print on how live broadcast was produced during the first radio decades.

My research was not focused on live broadcast radio practices in general, but my close analysis of the construction of liveness in HD events in the second part of my thesis, as well as my surveying of other types of live broadcasts (old cinema broadcasts, television broadcasts, and recent classical music broadcasts) show how diverse live broadcast practices can be. At the same time, my discussion of these examples shows how various media can borrow or share practices. One relevant example is how HD events borrow from sport and television live broadcast practices (the “direct address”). There are also common elements between television broadcasts of performative art

events and various HD events (intermission content for opera and theatre). My third chapter, “HD Opera as a New Medium,” reveals these strong connections between HD opera and previous broadcasting media (radio, television), as well as its engagement with new media (online and social media). It is within this context that HD opera cannot be regarded as a completely new medium, as it makes use of new technology by building on old media live broadcast practices.

HD opera sits at the intersection between live television broadcast and cinema. In my analysis, I show that HD events do not constitute only a technologically improved combination of pre-existent elements, but they represent a new form of cultural event, which innovates not only live broadcasts, but also liveness practice. Because of that, HD opera has already attracted a series of descriptions and definitions. Paul Heyer sees it as a new medium, DBC – “digital broadcast cinema” –, one that tries “to close the gap between what constitutes a performing art and a recording art.”<sup>510</sup> While Martin Barker describes HD opera as “a *new kind of cultural occasion*, neither ‘live’ nor ‘mediated’,”<sup>511</sup> Kay Armatage sees it as a transitional cultural object, “a regime of intermedial musical and theatrical performance, costume and setting, progressive narrative, and cinematic rendering.”<sup>512</sup> Furthermore, to qualify HD opera through the lens of Marcia J. Citron’s intermediality, HD opera is a covert intermedial production, where opera is further hybridized in its function as the dominant medium. Citron indicates that any mediated

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<sup>510</sup> Paul Heyer, “Virtually Live: Digital Broadcast Cinema and the Performing Arts,” in *Visual Communication and Culture: Images in Action*, ed. by Jonathan Finn (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 394.

<sup>511</sup> Martin Barker, “Audience Responses to the Streaming of Live Performances,” Report to Picturehouse Cinemas, unpublished report (March, 2010), p. 4.

<sup>512</sup> Kay Armatage, “Cinematic Operatics: Barbara Willis Sweete Directs Metropolitan Opera HD Transmissions,” in *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (Fall 2012), p. 916.

opera is a hybrid;<sup>513</sup> in HD opera, the size of the screen, the venue, the way cameras are used during transmission, the interviews during the intermission are all aspects that contribute to an even more complex hybridization of opera.

Through its intermediality, HD opera engages in the remediation of live broadcast, by striving to give the impression of immediacy with live performance for the spectator in the movie theatre. HD opera is also participating in hypermediacy by continuously trying to remind the spectator during the broadcast about another represented medium, that of the opera hall. Considering the theoretical complexity of the HD medium as compared to previous broadcasting media it is not surprising that HD events managed to generate a shift in how live broadcast of opera is experienced today. Constructing the HD event as intermedial created a completely new live broadcast practice, as direction and production need to accommodate the big screen.<sup>514</sup> But most importantly, by placing the event in a venue relatively unexplored by live broadcasts – the movie theatre,<sup>515</sup> HD events challenged liveness practice in an unexpected way.

While radio initiated liveness practice, television maintained it roughly within the same model. Adding the visuals changed the access and the connection with the live event, but it did not change the experience of live broadcast and liveness in relation to the other members of the audience. Some media developments, such as the portable radios and television sets or the headphones also somewhat challenged our liveness practice concept, since they allowed the experience to happen in any random place. The experience of each listener or viewer was changed and changeable, but, again, the

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<sup>513</sup> Marcia J. Citron, *When Opera Meets Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 165.

<sup>514</sup> As in live broadcasting practices discussed previously – the various manners of producing live broadcasts employed by various media and events.

<sup>515</sup> See my chapter three for previous experiments with live opera broadcast in cinema.

experience of live broadcast and liveness in relation to other members of the audience did not change. Given the partial control of the listener or viewer over the portable mediating technology and the fact that the experience became even more isolated and personal (and thus further away from a live performance experience), I consider that it is hard to argue that liveness practice changed dramatically with the above mentioned media.

One of the main reasons I consider liveness practice to have been largely unchanged before HD events is that opera has always been a collective experience, and radio and television could not compensate for this important aspect of the opera experience. Throughout its history, going to the opera involved an important relationship with the space in which the opera was performed, and thus opera house social customs were always a part of the operatic experience. Even if expectations of social behaviour during the performance changed over centuries, the social component of attending an opera performance always had an important value and meaning for performers and their audience.

What was missing in previous live broadcasts, the experience of the public venue, is now offered by HD events through the use of movie theatres as venues. In this way, HD events changed completely the experience of the audience, both regarding the location of the live broadcast, and also the connection with the community of listeners. Furthermore, the change shapes the experience of live broadcast into an event similar to the live event that makes the subject of the transmission. As stated earlier, the goal of liveness practice was always to replicate the live event; however, previous media did not offer the possibility to carry out all aspects involved in the experience of attending a live event. With HD events, it became possible to replicate the live experience more closely,

through the innovative elements of HD events that I have discussed extensively in my thesis. The audience shares a public space, enjoys a more closely simulated aura, and has a visual experience that mimics and even surpasses the scale of the original event.

When an audience attends a mediated event in a movie theatre, new collective rituals emerge. These publicly performed behaviours are fairly different from enjoying the live broadcast at home; moreover, they are very similar to what happens in the actual opera hall. In this way, for the first time, the audience is able to attend the live broadcast collectively, interact and share the experience as a social and public event. As I mentioned previously, liveness practice has been challenged before with regard to the location of the live broadcast by portable media. However, this is the first time when the previously scattered audience is able to come together and enjoy the live broadcast in a proper public setting. This is very important from the perspective of liveness practice, because it pushes us to give up the connection between live broadcast and a private, personal experience. Our concept of liveness practice is more flexible now when it comes to where and with whom we experience live broadcast: we know that we are still able to engage in liveness practice in its original form (strongly reinforced by wireless mobile devices), but we can also share the experience with an audience in a public venue.

But even if different types of live broadcast experiences are now possible, there is no doubt that the expectation of the public is for them to convey liveness. HD events are no exception; in fact, they are presented by the producers and accepted by the audiences as defined by liveness. In my fourth chapter, “Liveness in HD Opera,” I show that in addition to the strong promotion of the events as being live, there is a great deal of work

that is put into the construction of liveness with the help of various artifices. This is actually how HD events contribute to a completely new live broadcast practice.

In my earlier chapters I discussed how, in various stages of the development of sound technology, sound fidelity and the quality of technology constituted the main focus in the attempt to reproduce live performance. While recordings and radio had no choice but to centre their performativity around sound, with cinema and television, visuals joined the mediated experience. The presence of visuals in early cinema and television live broadcasts added a very important layer to liveness practice, relatively soon after live broadcast as mediated content was established by radio. With cinema and television, liveness practice expanded from a primarily audio type of event to an alternative that was constituted by both audio and visual elements. The quest for sound fidelity was joined by the attempt to use visual media as efficiently as possible to convey space and live experience as accurately as possible. Even though television is limited by the camera, the techniques that it developed over the decades are essential to how HD events are now constructed. HD events rely heavily on televisual methods to convey liveness to the spectators.

By placing the transmission in movie theatres, HD events promote the big screen and the efficient use of visuals as part of liveness practice. This is reflected very well in the examples of live concert broadcasts that I discuss in my last section of chapter four. Most classical music venues or institutions that experiment now with the promotion of liveness are engaging in placing the visuals at the centre of an experience that should primarily be aural. It is as if the value of liveness as the new “live” in classical music cannot be conveyed without the use of state of the art visual technology. As I was

mentioning in my analysis of the extensive use of visuals in HD opera, the reason for it is not only the fact that classical music and opera do not allow for much variation when it comes to the interaction between performers and audience during the actual performance. Visuals have become essential also because the quality of the sound, while necessary and important, does not make the focus of the HD experience. Given the fact that sound systems in movie theaters vary greatly, HD events do not expect their audience to engage with sound fidelity. But even when particular movie theatres fail to deliver accurate sound, liveness is not impaired by it, as the audience knows that the issue is contextual.

My analysis of the concept of liveness practice was centred on the idea of the audience as a community that is able to validate liveness in a mediated event. However, my investigation would not be complete without acknowledging the role of recent visual technology in how liveness practice developed in the last decade. HD events offered the opportunity to worldwide audiences to participate in live opera broadcast as reunited communities sharing the same interest and the same content in multiple venues around the world. The visual aspect of HD events has a determining role in how these communities function as essential elements of liveness practice today.

Sharing a live or mediated cultural event in the co-presence of multiple members of the audience has always been a significant visual experience, even when talking about music. It is difficult for a community to function as a live audience in the absence of visual information. This is easily illustrated by the spectacular visual efforts made in popular music live concerts. People come to hear the music and see the performers, but what really binds the community and transforms it into an audience is the act of visibly watching together what happens on the stage. As I previously mentioned, sound fidelity

is not an issue today, as sound technology is able to offer us accurate sound now. And still, this technological performance had no notable impact on liveness practice, as it was not able to bring the audience together in a public space and shake the most unnatural aspect of liveness practice as initiated by the radio. Sound fidelity is obviously necessary, but not sufficient for liveness practice to shift. The relationship between liveness practice and performative arts, independent from online media liveness and immediacy, was eventually able to change because of the availability of high quality visuals. This might sound like technological determinism, but it is far from it; I think that opera was ready for liveness practice to change as early as the first time it hit the big screen in 1904.<sup>516</sup> But it is only one hundred years later that technology provided the necessary tools for liveness practice to start the process of replicating the live event in the movie theatre.

In my analysis, liveness practice seems sometimes to be used as synonymous with live broadcast experience, which might raise questions regarding my choice of terminology in this paper. In my last chapter, dedicated to “Liveness Practice Today,” I detail how I see liveness today, as well as the role of liveness practice in the way we understand liveness. Regardless of the medium, content, venue, I consider liveness to be the core of live broadcast, not one of its many constitutive elements. It is not that we cannot talk about live broadcast practice (in addition to the above mentioned live broadcast practices), but live broadcast practice as a concept would move the accent away from our expectations surrounding liveness – which reflect our longing for live performance, our being under the spell of live performance.

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<sup>516</sup> I discussed the impressive presence of opera on screen at the beginning of the twentieth century in my third chapter.

To talk about live broadcast practice when trying to understand liveness would mean to place technology in the centre of the discussion, which I have been trying purposely to avoid in my attempt at identifying the long-lasting expectations that underlie our concept of liveness. Furthermore, after taking into consideration the blurry distinction between live and recorded, I concluded that, theoretically, liveness practice today extends to encompass many types of mediated events that are not necessarily live in the original sense. Some HD events are not live, but only captured live; online content that is perceived as being live can be prerecorded and often thoroughly edited.<sup>517</sup> This type of content does not participate in live broadcast practice, but it does participate in liveness practice. Even more important is the fact that liveness practice today includes without doubt our concept of immediacy and digital co-presence as shaped by online media, which could be overlooked in a discussion about live broadcast practice, but becomes easily apparent in my approach of liveness practice. In short, in order to be effective, the discussion about liveness today needs to include live broadcast practice, but also to look beyond it.

HD events participate fully in the current trend that associates recorded material with liveness. Paul Heyer was the first to point out the contrast between the title of the HD opera series (*Met: Live in HD*) and its body of content that actually consists in both live and recorded material. In my investigation of the HD content, I show that the recorded material – captured live and unaltered – not only constitutes the content of encore presentations, but in fact, depending on the location on the globe, it can be the actual HD event. But because liveness does not really reside in the mediated event, but it

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<sup>517</sup> YouTube as a platform hosts many channels that promote their content making use of the idea of liveness and our flexible understanding of immediacy. However most content available on YouTube is prerecorded, not broadcast live.

takes shape under the validation of a liveness-savvy audience, the recorded events participate successfully in liveness practice. This does not imply that the audience is not aware that the event is not actually live, but that they accept the delay as part of how HD events engage in this new form of liveness practice.

Short delays confer immediacy an unprecedented and paradoxical flexibility, which is actually very common in online media. Our concept and experience of liveness is obviously not related solely to performative arts. Our views and perception of cultural events changes in contact with multiple factors. As I showed in my section about HD opera and social media, HD events emerged at the same time with social media. They both put their print on liveness practice, but in very different ways.<sup>518</sup> Together, they reshaped our concept of liveness practice in less than a decade.

The shift in our concept of liveness practice would not have been possible without the contribution of social media, especially when we are talking about the digitally redefined immediacy, and also about how online media changed our concept and perception of community. Incidentally, immediacy and community constitute by far the most easily grasped characteristics of social media. Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube enable users to deliver information and content instantaneously to

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<sup>518</sup> An interesting liveness practice aspect revamped by internet and social media alone, and thus unrelated to HD events, is the regained democratization of liveness. Liveness as a phenomenon had its share of free public access, especially with the first radio experiments that I discussed thoroughly in my second chapter. At the time, for a short period, any radio user could engage in live broadcast. But very soon, with the regulation of the radio, liveness became the avatar of broadcasting media; the masses became receivers only. With social media, liveness is now back in the hands of the users. Platforms such as Livestream, Stageit, or Twitch offer the possibility of streaming live content generated by users. Even more interesting, in the newly created immediacy fervor of the internet in recent years, performers are also successful in broadcasting themselves live online, directly on their websites. Unlike before, now they do not depend on television or radio live broadcasts to reach their audiences. The content of such online live broadcasts varies from popular music concerts to sports transmission and live video gaming. See Cherie Hu, "The Modern Concert, Part 1: Live-Streaming As Microcosm," *Forbes*, November 27, 2015, at <http://www.forbes.com/sites/cheriehu/2015/11/27/the-modern-concert-pt-1-live-streaming-as-microcosm/> (accessed on November 29, 2015).

the other members of the community. By being public and mediated, social media host what I will conventionally call here “pseudo-live broadcasts” in the form of information, images, videos, etc. Most social media have exact time stamps attached to any posted content. While time stamps help boost the feeling of immediacy (“3 minutes ago”), at the same time they promote a more flexible attitude towards immediacy. Having the time stamp offers to the receiving members of the community the opportunity to evaluate how recently the content was posted. How “flexible” is immediacy is understood within each community depending on the content and its frequency. For example, a YouTube channel that posts daily videos will probably have a shorter timeframe within which viewers perceive the content as being “live now,” as compared to a channel that posts weekly. This is not to say that social media users do not appreciate immediacy in the original sense, but that they are used to participate in sharing “live” information that is not precisely live, but just very recent.

This immediacy gap becomes acceptable online because its lack of accuracy is compensated for by the perceived “live community” online. The perpetual presence of the community online makes irrelevant the fact that the information is live or it was posted minutes ago. Accessing shared content online is perceived as a communal activity, even though the members of the community are apart, perception that is reinforced by the opportunity to interact with other listeners/viewers during the event through comments. In this context, the immediacy of the information is revived with any live comment; on some platforms text or images are actually reposted by other members of the community.

Digital presence makes for strong communities online that are thoroughly familiar with the technology, the social platforms, the type of shared content, and which

consequently validate and define liveness with regard to their respective content of choice. In a similar manner, HD events that are “captured live” and are in fact recordings, have a savvy, reunited audience that is able to acknowledge liveness in the specific form “captured” by the respective HD events and thus to validate it, while also confirming the new form of liveness practice associated with opera. In the live broadcast experience inside the movie theatre, captured liveness becomes a new, different live performance. Liveness needs the validation of its audience and is determined by two criteria: the event is happening right then, and it is shared by a competent audience, a “representative social group,” as defined by Couldry.<sup>519</sup> Any HD event, whether live, captured, or encore benefits of all these necessary elements.

My thesis explored liveness through the lenses of a new intermedial medium, in a moment of dramatic shift in how we understand liveness practice. HD events opened a new chapter in how live broadcasts are experienced and, together with social media, expanded liveness practice territory to incorporate delayed broadcasts and reunited audiences in movie theatres. Only time will show if further developments of media will be able to generate other big changes in liveness practice in the near future. The door of flexibility and alternative location, content, and audience has already been opened; it is just the stage that awaits surprising transformations now.

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<sup>519</sup> Nick Couldry, “Liveness, ‘Reality’, and the Mediated Habitus from Television to the Mobile Phone,” in *The Communication Review*, Vol. 7 (2004), p. 356.

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