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The reflections of memory : an account of a cognitive approach to historically informed staging

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Introduction

« Aussi ne donnay-je icy mes opinions qu'à la mode de M. de Montagne,
non pour bonnes, mais pour miennes.
Je m'en suis bien trouvé jusqu'à present,
mais je ne tiens pas impossible qu'on reussisse encore mieux en suivant les contraires. »

Pierre Corneille. "Au Lecteur" of *Héraclius*, 1647[1].

Although originally conceived by the artists of the end of the Renaissance as an attempt to recreate an ancient form of expression, opera ultimately grew into the most innovative spectacle in Europe[2]. Offering a unique character of profane but sublime excellence it allowed the meeting of several artistic languages, such as poetry, music, theatre, architecture, dance, and painting, and seemed to thrive with the performing addition of the powers of expression. Reflecting the aspirations but also the social changes of different periods, opera sparked different approaches, both theoretical and material[3]. While opera, a staged drama telling a story in words and music, remains a deeply hybrid genre, it has seen its image radically changed over the course of history. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, a shift has gradually been made between the creation and interpretation of operas: the phenomenon that saw the decline in the number of new works was offset by the rediscovery of the repertoire of the past and its transfer to the stage. In this occurrence, of which the trend seems irreversible, baroque opera has been largely explored and offers to the modern audience the many resources of this vast repertoire[4]. Operas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have also benefited from the renewal of the relation to early music in general: many works were reviewed musically and returned to their original proportions by interpretations based on knowledge of the aesthetic criterions of the period in which the work was created[5]. This last movement is known

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[1] [Corneille, Pierre]. *Héraclius, empereur d'Orient: tragédie*. Paris: A. de Sommaville, 1647, np.

[2] For an overview of the development of opera in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see: Donington, Robert. *The Rise of Opera*. London & Boston: Faber and Faber, 1981. For Venice, see: Rosand, Ellen. *Opera in seventeenth-century Venice, the creation of a genre*. [Berkeley, CA]: University of California Press, 1991. For France, see: Barthélemy, Maurice. *Métamorphoses de l'opéra français au siècle des Lumières*. Arles: Actes Sud, 1990.

[3] For studies about the various forces which shape opera, see: Salazar, Philippe-Joseph. *Idéologies de l'opéra*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980. And see : Flaherty, Gloria. *Opera in the development of German Critical Thought*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978. See also: Glixon, Beth L. and Glixon, Jonathan E. *Inventing the Business of Opera, The Impresario and His World in Seventeenth-Century Venice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

[4] Handel is a good example as he can be considered as the first baroque composer to have some of his operas regularly staged since the mid-twentieth century. See: Wolff, Hellmuth Christian. *Die Händel-Oper auf der modernen Bühne, Ein Beitrag zu Geschichte und Praxis der Opern-Bearbeitung und -Inszenierung in der Zeit von 1920 bis 1956*. Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1957.

[5] Despite the few attempts in the early twentieth century to base interpretation with the period of origin of the piece, the work of the Schola Cantorum and Wanda Landowska in France, and Arnold Dolmetsch in England,

nowadays as the Historically Inspired or, more specifically, as the Historically Informed Performance movement (henceforward referred sometimes as HIP)[6]. Nobody can deny that this movement has been fostering opera as a musical corpus, but when it comes to stage productions it has not always succeeded in applying its own principles to opera as an art form.

Musicology, after taking the history of the opera genre to the speculative level, currently tends to assert its influence on musical practice. Critical editions of scores, treatises of musical practices, and history of instruments are among the many resources available to performers who wish to tie their musical interpretations closer to that of the opera in its original acoustic condition. Furthermore, early music education and specialized pedagogy have spread around the globe. Finally, musicology seems to have often substituted itself for philosophy, literature and the performing arts to lead a reflection on the aesthetics of opera[7]. The supremacy of music over the other components of opera has been asserted to such an extent that the text and the arts of the stage have been long neglected[8]. On the one hand research of quite some musicologists has the merit of trying to understand the lyric genre as a whole without excluding any of its components; on the other these approaches, because they are based on a musicological methodology, cannot help but establish a hierarchy in the constituent parts of the opera where music dominates the others. In addition, by the rhetorical setting of their formulation, and despite their intrinsic qualities, quite some musicological works are often forced to disconnect their considerations from the nature of opera as a live performance. Consequently, such musicological research is often discounted by the artists and craftsmen in charge of live productions. Here the Historically Informed Performance movement finds a limitation, more by the lack of opportunities to implement its principles than interest: interactions between historians and stage artists are not common.

Consequently, opera tends today to be in many instances only considered as a musical genre represented by one « object »: the score, the sole work of the « composer »[9]. The fruitful discussion on the hierarchy of parts that make up an opera, and which inspired its creation,

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it is around the early 1960s that the movement becomes noticeable in its effect on performance practice. See: Donington, Robert. *Interpretation of Early Music.* London: Faber and Faber, 1963. See also: Wilson, Nick. *The Art of Re-enchantment, Making Early Music in the Modern Age*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

[6] For some other milestones chronicled in the Historically Informed Performance movement literature, see: Koopman, Ton. *Barokmuziek: theorie en praktijk*. Utrecht: Bohn, Scheltema & Holkema, 1985. And see: Butt, John. *Playing with History, The Historical Approach to Musical Performance.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. See also: Haynes, Bruce. *The End of Early Music, A Period Performer's History of Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

[7] Taking into account the period spectacle in opera was the subject of my master's dissertation: Blin, Gilbert. "Les Opéras de Rameau, pour un Théâtre des Enchantements", (mémoire de Maîtrise soutenu à l'Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris III. Paris: Institut d'Études Théâtrales, 1986). For the distinction between literature and performance, see: Kowzan, Tadeusz. *Littérature et spectacle*. The Hague: Mouton & Co and Warszawa: PWN – Éditions scientifiques de Pologne, 1975. For a philosophical approach of French opera, see: Kintzler, Catherine. *Poétique de l'Opéra Français de Corneille à Rousseau*. Paris: Minerve, 1991.

[8] The disdain with which literature treated opera librettos has been ameliorated by the impact of the musicological approach. Librettos have ceased to suffer from the contempt of literature only recently. See: Girdlestone, Cuthbert. *La Tragédie en Musique (1673–1750) considérée comme genre littéraire.* Genève: Droz, 1972. See also: Smith, Patrick J. *La Decima musa, Storia del libretto d'opera*. Firenze: Sansoni Editore, 1981.

[9] This focus on the composer is the product of a school of thought which appeared before the French Revolution, established itself in the nineteenth century with the figure of the composer demiurge and was erected in model by the « progress » – made of social, technological and musicological developments – formulated in the twentieth-century.

has found a single, but sterile, answer: opera is often reduced to its musical form. Paradoxically, music has not always benefited from such an appropriation: finding itself isolated from the other arts that are needed for making an opera and losing its ability to organically communicate with the other components, music could have very nearly excluded itself from any possibility of operatic development. The problem frequently comes from the fact that today there is a dichotomy between the musical factor and the others in opera. In actuality, opera has no aesthetical or historical reason to be considered from a purely musical perspective – neither does it thrive under exclusively poetic, dramatic or visual approaches. And this combinative itinerary is particularly true regarding baroque opera.

Indeed, the arts and disciplines which contribute to the completion of an opera can be considered individually. Music but also poetry, architecture, the decorative arts and the art of the actor, singing or dancing, require such specializations – each have such an intrinsic complexity – that it is necessary to « work » with them separately, whether one wish to « analyze » or to « produce » an opera. But the difficulty is that none of these media are enough, by themselves, to « do » a historically informed opera production: the poetics of opera is primarily combinative and cannot be reduced to any of its parts. Different approaches which are all constitutive of the historically informed process, as usually understood, can be applied to all of these segments. These approaches are often based on a fidelity to the original material, and a way to interpret it, perform it, following the techniques, practices and tastes of the period. But this scope brings some legitimate questions for a stage production, and one may wonder « What are the criteria to qualify a stage production with the expression "historically informed"? » This expression has turned into a label and would suppose a standard of judgment or criticism and some rules or principles for evaluating a production.

Meanwhile, opera stage direction, since the mid-twentieth century, has become an expression that claims exclusivity and originality[10]. The development of the role of the stage director from the 1960s created the notion of *Regietheater*, or « theatre of the stage director »: it is not the composer or the librettist nor the conductor or the singer, it is the director who is often perceived as the key figure of an opera performance[11]. The result of this development has been nowadays dividing artists and audience alike: de facto, by ignoring the poetics in force at the time of the creation of the piece, this limited attitude assumed that it is only up to the artists in charge of the staged production – stage directors and stage designers – to establish a dynamic dialogue with today. The search for bringing the audience to new levels of perceptions and impressions which was one of the primary ambitions of the opera project around 1600 has been changing its nature. What is the « purpose » of opera? It is a large question but, in my opinion, the audience as a community, seems to be the destination of the work of the artists, as a collective. Separating the poetic and musical vectors from the stage vector and overlooking the audience factor leaves out this twice-collective nature of opera. An incomplete approach like this does not reflect the original integrity – the state of being complete – of the artistic

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[10] For a short history of the staging process of opera, see: Guccini, Gerardo. "Direzione scenica e regìa" in *Storia dell'opera italiana*, *volume 5: "La spettacolarita"*, edition by Lorenzo Biancon, and Giorgio Pestelli. Turin: EDT, 1988, p. 123; and: *Histoire des Spectacles*, Encyclopèdie de la Pléiade. Volume publié sous la direction de Guy Dumur. Paris: Gallimard, 1965. For the current situation, see: Deshoulières, Christophe. "La mise en scène contemporaine des opéras baroques, classiques et romantiques" in *Musiques. Une encyclopédie pour le XXI siècle*, Volume 2: « Les savoirs musicaux », edited by Jean-Jacques Nattiez. Arles: Actes Sud/Cité de la Musiques, 2004, pp. 1091–1127. See also : Baker, Evan. *From the score to the stage, An Illustrated History of Continental Opera Production and Staging*. Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 2013.

[11] Dahlhaus, Carl. "Regietheater" in *Musica*, No. 38, *Das Theater mit der Oper*. 1984, p. 227.

project called *opera*[12]. It leaves out the criteria of aesthetics necessary for a more unprejudiced perception of the piece and is at risk of reducing it to an incomplete re-presentation. Instead of negatively singling out the importance of the stage director in this translation process, it may seem logical to instead see his function as a key factor in creating a more profound historically informed stage practice. Aside from his ability to direct the stage and the authority (if not always the capacity) to give it its meaningful necessity, the stage director also has the obligation to work with all the competences of the opera personnel and with every component of the performance.

The currently held notion, by audience and the reviewers alike, that Historically Informed staging is made of shapes and forms, with a capacity of reproducing period original artifacts that signals an « authenticity » of style is misleading[13]. The word authenticity covers a wide category of notions, and many scholars have been questioning its relevance and its use when it comes to musical performance[14]. But for audience and reviewers alike the word authenticity is mostly used as « displaying visual or acoustic historical knowledge ». Peter Kivy (1934–2017), in his seminal approach on authenticity in musical performance (1995)[15], came to the conclusion that the notion should be expanded to authenticities of performance, including authenticities of intention, sound, practice, and the authenticity of personal interpretation in musical performance. The Kivy categories are self-explanatory[16], but when it comes to opera as a combinative art, another one must be added to integrate the concrete and visual elements of a performance to call it Historically Informed; one could call this category: authenticities of shapes.

These authenticities of shapes are, in more than a visual way, the emerging part of the iceberg and have been dominating and blurring the debate regarding the Historically Informed staging of opera. While I am the first to recognize that opera is a combinative art, which requires a well formulated visual language, I have frequently observed that while many staged productions that have been labelled HIP placed such an emphasis on visual details, they ignored the aesthetical categories and theory of arts of the period, what Kivy would have called the « authenticity of intention ». By doing this, these so-called HIP productions have disconnected the works so significantly from their orginal *raisons d'être*, that they tend to lose the sense of balance, a sense of the whole, a sense of proportions: the characteristic fundamentals of baroque opera, as expressed by many contemporary definitions of aesthetics

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[12] This trend has provoked polemical reactions. See: Dandrey, Patrick. "Vers une scénographie d' « authenticité » " in *Lettres Actuelles, N°1–2, Juin–Septembre 1993*. Mont de Marsan: Société de Presse, d'Édition et de Communication, 1993, pp. 10–13. And see: Beaussant, Philippe. *La Malscène*. Paris: Fayard, 2005. See also: Muller, Julie and Muller, Frans. "De nieuwe kleren van Monteverdi" in *Mens en melodie*. Jaargang 63 nummer 5. 2008, pp. 20–25.

[13] See: Fischer, Christine. "Baroque Opera, historical information, and business; or, how a Nerd became a Hipster" in Belina-Johnson, Anastasia and Scott, Derek B. *The Business of Opera*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2016, pp. 31–49.

[14] See : Wilson, Nick. *The Art of Re-enchantment, Making Early Music in the Modern Age*. New York : Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 37–53.

[15] Kivy, Peter. *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance*. Ithaca (CT): Cornell University Press, 1995.

[16] For a synthesis and critical approach of Kivy's *Reflections* see: Jackson, Roland. "Authenticity or Authenticities? -Performance Practice and the Mainstream" in *Performance Practice Review, Volume 10, Number 1 Spring, Article 2*. Claremont (CA): Scholarship Claremont, 1997, pp. 1–10.

of the period in question. By ignoring how the elements were designed to connect with each other, these productions alter the equilibrium between the different components of opera and give a somewhat incomplete expression of the pieces. In striking opposition, I have seen productions without the visual language of the period (for example without period costumes, candles and so-called baroque gestures) that were closer to the original intentions and artistic forms because they were able to articulate these connections within modern sets and costumes, a decorum much easier to imagine for the audience, than reconstructing the structure in which they combine. Given the HIP movement and its radical effects on music performance over the past half century it may seem that trying to follow the same principles while staging operas is an even more recent development. However, as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, efforts to convey authenticity to a staged performance of an early piece were at the center of the work of some of the most revolutionary stage directors and thinkers, whose influence cannot be attributed to of lack of creativity, or to theatrical conservatism. Three examples, going back a century, help to introduce my own approach on the importance of the connections between the various parts of operatic works.

French theater director André Antoine (1858–1943) was most importantly often associated with the Naturalism movement as he created the plays of Émile Zola (1840 – 1902), but he may also be one of the first director to extend his research of authenticities to the repertoire of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when he directed a series of French « classiques »[17]. First, with his production of *Le Cid* by Pierre Corneille in 1907 he chose not to represent medieval Spain, as it was then customary at the Comédie-Française but presented an evocation of the first performance at the Théâtre du Marais in 1636. In this production, presented at the Théâtre de l'Odéon, he used 624 wax candles to light a simple stage where actors in seventeenth century costumes took positions as an on-stage audience while between the acts a vocalist sang accompanied by a lute. Then, for his staging of Racine's tragedies, he reproduced the same setting of meta-theatre for an evocation of original staging of the Hôtel de Bourgogne for *Andromaque* (1909); for his production of *Esther* (1913), Antoine uses the same device and, in addition to restoring the musical « intermèdes » of Jean-Baptiste Moreau (1656–1733) for the first performance in Saint-Cyr, he directed his actors by asking them to integrate in their acting the gestures and attitudes found on the series of tapestries by Jean-François de Troy (1679–1752) and Antoine Coypel (1661–1722) depicting the biblical episode[18].

From these examples, I deduce that the productions of Antoine, while researching shapes and forms of the period (research was carried by Antoine, his designers and musical director in various libraries and museums), were in search of a contextualization of the performance. By means of staging a fake audience, the purpose was to establish the perception of the drama through the eyes of these characters and reestablish the authenticity of intention in the drama itself. The seventeenth century spectators that Antoine put on both sides of the stage acted as mediums: their reactions in front of the performance they attended informed the modern audience and added another layer to its modern perception. It seems to me that Antoine identified the two main elements that any HIP staging must work on: the visual parts

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[17] Chothia, Jean. *André Antoine.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 155–158.

[18] Works by Coypel and De Troy are still considered as unique sources of documentation for period French stage rhetoric. See: *Le théâtre des Passions (1697–1759), Cléopâtre, Médée, Iphigénie*. Lyon: Fage éditions and Nantes : Musée des Beaux-Arts, 2011, pp. 135–138. See also: Wentz, Jed. "The relationship between gesture, affect and rhythmic freedom in the performance of French tragic opera from Lully to Rameau". Doctoral thesis. Leiden University, 2010, pp. 148–150 & 175–179.

and the relation between them. By offering his own audience the opportunity to look through the eyes of a period audience, Antoine was providing a critical discourse on the play while performing it and was as such more creative than the productions that the Comédie-Française offered around 1910, which were based on circumvoluted reconstructions of Greek or Assyrian culture.

Another initiative around the same period completes the picture by addressing one of the fundamental aspects of any attempt to create Historically Informed spectacle: the need for specialized performers and their training. Debates regarding musical education have been spreading for centuries, but when it comes to the rediscovery of early repertoire, some artists realized that a language was needed for specific means of expression ; in a rare text published in 1906, eloquently titled *De l'opportunité de créer en France un Théâtre d'Application pour la Reconstitution des anciens Opéras français des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*[19], French composer Charles Bordes (1863–1909) pleaded for a special HIP practical education for opera singers. Bordes, one of the founders of the Schola Cantorum de Paris, in 1894, with Alexandre Guilmant (1837– 1911) and Vincent d'Indy (1851–1931), emphasized the need of trained performers to do justice on stage to the early repertoire of opera: « The study and the reconstruction, even at the concert, of all the monuments of the musical history and in particular the theatre made such progress and aroused the interest of so many people, that it seemed to me that gap was to be filled, that of the complete realization of many of these works in their milieu, i.e. in the theatre »[20] . Bordes reiterated that one of the initial goals of the Schola Cantorum was to « restore to honor all documents of music history and revive them in their milieu […] constituting for this very reason a kind of Musical Museum by the audition where one could easily realize the high artistic value of all these works, most of them forgotten, but, what is more important the life that they carried in them, which made them not only realizable in our time, but imposed them on our interest, so much do they still vibrate in unison with our feelings, since they are above all sincere and based on the true and universal expression».[21] Next to the Schola Cantorum, where musical education of the highest level was being dispensed, he wished to create « une école d'application théâtrale » (A school for theatre application) with the goal of « preparing young opera singers trained for free declamation of the masters of the basso continuo and of early French opera. »[22] These singers would work on the roles of a specific early piece under the direction of singing teachers, but Bordes

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[19] Bordes, Charles. *De l'opportunité de créer en France un Théâtre d'Application pour la Reconstitution des anciens Opéras français des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, *Article paru dans la* Tribune de Saint-Gervais*, n° de Février 1906*. Paris : Bureau d'édition de la « Schola », 1906.

[20] « L'étude et la reconstitution, même au concert, de tous les monuments de l'histoire musicale et en particulier du théâtre ont fait de tels progrès et suscité l'intérêt de tant de gens, qu'il m'a semblé qu'une lacune était à combler, celle de la réalisation complète de beaucoup de ces œuvres dans leur milieu, c'est à dire au théâtre. » in Bordes, Charles. *De l'opportunité*… Paris: Schola, 1906, p. 3.

[21] « remettre en honneur tous les documents de l'histoire musicale et les faire revivre dans leurs milieu; d'abord la musique religieuse à l'église, puis les œuvres de concert au concert, constituant par cela même une sorte de Musée musical par l'audition où l'on a pu aisément se rendre compte de la haute valeur artistique de toutes ces oeuvres, la plupart oubliées, mais, ce qui est plus important la vie qu'elles portaient en elles et qui les rendait non seulement réalisables à notre époque, mais les imposait à notre intérêt, tant elles vibrent encore à l'unisson de nos sentiments, puisqu'elles sont avant tout sincères et reposent sur l'expression vraie et universelle. » in Bordes, Charles. *De l'opportunité*… Paris : Schola, 1906, p. 3.

[22] « préparant de jeunes chanteurs lyriques entraînés à la libre déclamation des maîtres de la basse continue et de l'ancien opéra français. » in Bordes, Charles. *De l'opportunité*… Paris : Schola, 1906, p. 4.

emphasizes « the necessity to attach to the Foundation a permanent stage director, artist, and to be more respectful of older works than sometimes antiquated traditions and unnatural modern opera ».[23] The stage director would be the key factor of this new school, in opposition to the then-current ways of performing[24].

A third example will confirm the early comprehension of the importance of the critical approach of the stage director for the repertoire of the seventeenth century. The Russian stage director Vsévolod Meyerhold (1874–1940), known as a radical and political theatre pioneer, experimented in this direction when he staged *Dom Juan* of Molière for the Theatre Alexandrine in Saint Petersburg in 1910. Like in Antoine's productions in Paris, « Hundreds of wax candles in three chandeliers and two candelabra on the proscenium » were used as an essential part of the scenography: « The entire space seems to be designed to intensify the play of light the candles project on the stage and from the auditorium which stays lit during the performance»[25]. Meyerhold explained how his artistic choice came at first from the text at his disposal, and the search for what he identified as « the knowledge of the period » to be evoked in to the audience: « if Molière's *Dom Juan* is read without any knowledge of the period which shaped the genius of its author, what a dull play it seems! » Meyerhold is convinced that qualities of the play can only be revealed by the historical context when the play is staged: « If the spectator is not to get bored, too, if whole passages are not to strike him as simply obscure, it is essential somehow to remind him constantly of the thousands of Lyonnais weavers manufacturing silk for the monstrously teeming court of Louis XIV, to remind him of the Manufacture des Gobelins, the whole town of painters, sculptors, jewelers and carpenters under the supervision of the celebrated Le Brun, all the master craftsmen producing Venetian glass and lace, English hosiery, Dutch mercery, without forgetting the ones who worked tin and copper in the German fashion ». To stage this idea, Meyerhold integrated some stage servants, whose activities, inspired by the Kōken of Japanese Noh theater, made the physical link between audience and actors: small dark-skinned people[26] who interacted as ushers with the audience and as stage servants with the actors. He clarified the purpose stating that « all these are not merely tricks designed for the delectation of snobs but serve the central purpose of enveloping the action in a mist redolent of the perfumed, gilded monarchy of Versailles ». Like Antoine before him, the concern to integrate the period in the performance was done by Meyerhold with an addition of this mist: the first task of a director staging *Dom Juan*, is « to fill the stage and auditorium with such a compelling atmosphere that the audience is bound to view the

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[23] « la nécessité d'attacher à la fondation un metteur en scène permanent, artiste, et plus respectueux des œuvres anciennes que des traditions quelquefois surannées et antinaturelles du théâtre lyrique moderne. » in Bordes, Charles. *De l'opportunité…* Paris : Schola, 1906, p. 4. I made mine all principles of Bordes when I created the Young Artists Training Program in 2011 for the Boston Early Music Festival.

[24] Bordes' desire to create a school for theatre application did not come to fruition but various experiences where the Schola Cantorum's spirit and artists were involved, including a performance of Rameau's *Castor et Pollux* in Montpellier in 1908 (the first revival since 1754) prompted a new awareness that this type of opera could not be satisfactorily accommodated by using the ways operas were conceived and performed in this early twentieth century.

[25] All quotes from Meyerhold about his production of *Dom Juan* come from his article which first appears in the *Annuaires des Théâtre Impériaux* and then in his book *Du Théatre*. They can be found in an English translation in : Meyerhold, Vsévolod. *On Theatre, edited and translated by Edward Braun*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016. I based my own translation on the French edition, which gives some extra details: Meyerhold, Vsévolod. *Le théâtre théâtral, Traduction et présentation de Nina Gourfinkel*. Paris: Gallimard, 1963, pp. 81–88.

[26] The American translation used the word « blackamoors» and the French one « négrillons», both expressions not very culturally sensitive today, although more accurate in their referent.

action through the prism of that atmosphere ». The word « prism », even with the limitation of translation, establishes a sense of correspondence, based on the vocabulary of optical sciences, with my own research about *The Reflections of Memory*.

When I take the historical data relative to a specific opera in order to establish the foundation of the process of a historically informed staging for it, I am confronted by various elements of different nature: original librettos, scores, sets and costumes (as extant designs or material remains), and planned or built architectures. This varied evidence of past activity can be seen as archeological remains and I choose to call these tangible data the *Remaining parts*. But they constitute an incomplete although as accurate as possible picture of the piece, because, according to its own original poetics, opera requires the simultaneous participation of various media. Yet coexistence does not here mean accumulation but the addition of the relations that these remains have between them. It is consequently in this way that opera wholly formulates itself, through different codes interrelated with each other. These vectors of relations between music and text, audio and visual codes, static and motion forces, organic and still lives, to name a few, develop at different levels of perception. Such various configurations constitute together a structure of memory, as they deal with information encoding, storing and being retrieved. It is an almost endless world of interferences and influences which organizes itself through various mental ciphers, both conscious and unconscious. It is a structure of layers that one could also visualize as three-dimensional spider webs[27], with the threads as routes of interactions: opera's existence can only be developed and supplemented by their meeting.

Unfortunately, a flawless shape is very rare and the difficulty of obtaining a perfect form is due to the scarcity of the *Remaining parts*: the memory of opera, like all memories, is made of different levels of recollection. As much as we have of the remains of an opera, some short-term memories have disappeared: in most of the cases the information we possess does not give a much-defined picture of the opera. Therefore, after one has recognized the potential existence of these disappeared elements on the speculative level, a reconstruction of what is missing is necessary to make the surviving data more meaningful. How can I create these *Missing parts* ? One direction which presents itself is the use of the creative structures in place at the time the work was made. Insofar as these parts, remaining and missing, are representative of the theories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they belong to the Aristotelian system of Poetics largely applied to opera during the baroque era[28]. Consequently, to analyze these historical documents following the thinkers of the time is like deciphering a code with a key at hand. Theoretical treatises and recorded usages shed light on the creative systems that had the integrity of the operatic project in mind and help to enlarge the picture by proposing such structures. It establishes a first set of reflections between evidence and ambitions, because it locates the *Missing parts* next to the *Remaining parts* within the *Structural parts*.

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[27] This syncretic structure of layers can be associated to a rhizome, the philosophical concept developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972–1980) project. It is what Deleuze calls an « image of thought », based on the botanical rhizome, that apprehends multiplicities. A rhizome is characterized by « ceaselessly established connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles » in Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Transl. Brian Massumi. London and New York: Continuum, 2004. Vol. 2 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. 2 vols. 1972-1980, pp. 7–13.

[28] The Aristotelian dramatic system presented mostly in his *Poetics* has been translated, commented upon and developed extensively since the first Latin edition was published in Italy in 1498. See: Carter, Tim. *Music in Late Renaissance and Early Baroque Italy*, Newark (NJ): Amadeus Press, 1992.

The development of these remains and the formulation of new elements, to replace the missing ones, will also be clarified by a better understanding of their complementary relations at the moment of the original performance. The second domain of research to make the stage production of today more related to history is a cognitive study of all existing historical elements. Period treatises relative to performance practice offer another type of evidences for the performance. Here period theory offers one (or more) systems which structure theoretically all the « items » necessary for an opera. In this attempt, while most rhetoricians follow the example of Aristotle and his works, observers and other time witnesses offer some alternative approaches that are less connected to the text (as literature or musical composition) and more to the spectacle (as performance). The information related to the ephemeral nature of the period performance itself needs to be added to the *Structural parts*, and I name here this information, the *Performing parts*. There is, however, a difficulty to retrieve these *Performing Parts*: the historically informed movement applied to stage performances does not have the same ground to grow as the music movement or even the dance movement had. Although poetry, music, dance and scenography are all codes, their means to record by notations their activation–the performance–may vary and qualify their capacities for being interpreted and re-created.

The update by *Structural parts* established from historical data's comparisons with other primary and secondary sources, might allow the identification of the reference points of the aims of the piece. The use of the *Performing parts* permits the contextualization of the recorded facts that reflect the initial state of the performance: The *Missing parts* start then to emerge next to the *Remaining parts*. The opera starts now to appear to me in a more defined way: This total form is not exactly the original formulation as these *Performing parts* bear also witness to the ambition and of the reality of past artists, elements difficult to detect. It is from the relations between the *Structural parts* and the *Performing parts* that the vitality of the spectacle depended. It is therefore necessary, as a last step in the process, to make a transfer of the parts – remaining and missing – by a new step in the method that allows me to retain if not all, most of the creative mechanisms of the period and, from the elements that I discovered, to conceive of potential formal developments. The interest for such an attitude is based on the spatial/material nature of the live performance itself but includes the necessity for the auditory and visual elements to meet each other at a certain moment of time with some necessity.

Evidence from original performances comes in a variety of forms and needs a great deal of time and effort to be brought together. Nevertheless, the investigations to retrieve the *Performing parts* are guided by the same belief as the quest for the *Structural parts*: the combinative relations of the arts of the Baroque era do offer alternative structural solutions enfeoffed to current subjectivity to a lesser degree[29]. This second set of reflections offers the possibility of a less prejudiced interpretation and ultimately gives the audience a freedom to confront itself more directly with opera, as the neglect of these *Performing parts* is de facto impossible in the case of a performance: it is the very accuracy of the translation of the piece in a stage language echoing the time and place of its origin which makes it contemporary.

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[29] For an example of the work of the *Remaining* and *Missing parts*, see an account of my approach to the 1787 sets of *Don Giovanni*: Trotier, Rémy-Michel. "La restitution de scénographies à l'épreuve de l'expérience: un exemple des travaux de l'Académie Desprez" in *Restitution et création dans la remise en spectacle des œuvres des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, Actes du colloque international Versailles, 29 mai 2008, Nantes, 30-31 mai 2008*. Annales de l'Association pour un Centre de Recherche sur les Arts du Spectacle aux XVIIe et XVIIIe s. En partenariat avec Le Printemps des Arts & Centre de recherche du Château de Versailles, edited by Jean-Noël Laurenti. Villereau: ACRAS, June 2010, pp. 15–22.

Although requiring a separation of the aforementioned components in the production process, opera is only fully revealed to the spectator in the concrete form of the interpretation. Opera is indeed an art which is fulfilled exclusively in the moment of the performance by the simultaneous activation of all its components. The full existence of opera is circumscribed with the time of its development but also to the common space of its representation; what exists before the time of this « image » is not yet opera, what follows it is no longer opera. This principle accepted, it may thus be only useful to consider the opera of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the context of its time: as a living spectacle where all constitutive and interpretive elements interact with each other at a certain moment in time. Therefore, to the two first sets of reflections – based on the *Structural* and *Performing parts* – between the opera components, a third needs to be added: the interface which is the modern performance itself, in its duration and location, is a point of interconnection between the piece, as it was conceived « then », and the work, as it exists « now ». Maybe this truism brings in fact an intriguing analogy with the realm of physics and presents the performance as a boundary between different universes or two phases of a single universe. It is as much with the capacity of the performers as with the one of the audience that this interface may create various dynamic reflections which, because of their mirror-like connections and transfers between past and present time ideas, I identify as *The Reflections of Memory*.

Baroque operas are in continuous need of a renewal of their interpretations and if the Historically Informed Performance movement has been making a mark on the musical side, it is still pertinent to wonder whether or not this musical phenomenon is applicable to stage performance. If so, the stage director's role can be the vector of an alternative approach, by exploring the vestiges of the original stage productions while illuminated by the principles of the aesthetics of the period and what he knows of the stage practice of the period in question. These guidelines bring the approach to cognitive philology, because, in addition to the interest for the material evidence that remains, it focuses on the way the Baroque era was thinking when it aimed to elaborate opera as an artistic language[30]. It takes into consideration the structures of the symbolic that can be perceived in the Baroque material culture to produce all items and ideas necessary to stage a production today. But this approach is also cognitive by the way it acquires knowledge and understands historical facts through thought, experience, and the senses.

The articulation of the process is not new by itself and can be put in relation with pianist and researcher Paulo de Assis' acute remarks about artistic research: « The archeological moment relates to conventional scholarly research, including archival and sources studies; the genealogy calls for interpretation, semiotic and transtextuality; and the problematization happens by constructing new and experimental machinic assemblage ».[31] This dissertation is the fruit of my scholarly research and the experimentation around it: my staged productions are at the same time the product of the research and the problematization of it. Between

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[30] See: Noë, Alva. "Art and Entanglement in *Strange Tools*" in *Phenomenology and Mind, n.14 - 2018*, pp. 30-36. See also: Arteaga, Alex. "Embodied and Situated Aesthetics: An enactive approach to a cognitive notion of aesthetics" in *"Arts and Research" Artnodes. N°20,* pp. 20-27. https://artnodes.uoc.edu/articles/abstract/10.7238/a.v0i20.3155/ (accessed 18 June 2018).

[31] Appropriating Deleuze and Guattari's terminology on *strata*, Paulo de Assis gives another classification of existing *parts,* which mirrors my own defintions. See: Assis, Paulo de. "Towards aesthetic-epistemic assemblages" in *Assemblage Theory 3.0.* Book machine. 2014. https://issuu.com/me21collective/docs/booklet_2_-_book_machines (accessed 18 June 2018).

pastiche[32] and allusion[33], it may be accurate for some aspects of the experiments to speak of appropriation, as the process uses preexisting "audio" objects – music and text – or images with little or no transformation applied to them[34]. However, inherent in my own use of the term appropriation is the evidence that the modern performance recontextualizes de facto whatever it has been using to recreate the opera. My exploration aims to demonstrate how Historically Informed staging has the ability to nourish my own creative process. There is enough ground to demonstrate that if historically informed staging is still a form of interpretation in the making it may also be, when establishing itself through *The Reflections of Memory*, an expression rich of discoveries and possible creative evolutions for the musical theatre[35]. The following chapters will show how I apply this theorical process in the making of staged productions and to which results.

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[32] The word « pastiche » is a French cognate of the Italian noun « pasticcio », which derives from the post-classical Latin « pasticium »: a pie filled with a mixture of diverse ingredients. Metaphorically, « pastiche » describes a work which is composed by several authors or made from various preexisting pieces by a single author. The term « pasticcio » is first found in the sixteenth century referring both to a kind of pie and to a literary mixture, and for music, the earliest English attestation is 1742, and in Italian, 1795. The practice of opera pasticcio was common in Italy in the eighteenth century and Vivaldi's *Rosmira fedele* offers some typical and topical aspects. For a review of my approach to this pastiche, see: Delaméa, Frédéric. "Vivaldi in Scena: Thoughts on the Revival of Vivaldi's Operas" in *Vivaldi, « Motezuma » and the Opera Seria, Essays on a Newly Discovered Work and Its Background. Edited by Michael Talbot.* Turnhout: Brepols, 2008, pp. 169–185.

[33] « Allusion » may refer to another art work, but it does not replicate it and requires the audience to share in the author's cultural knowledge in order to fully appreciate it. These terms and concepts can be used as mechanisms of intertextuality. For a full exploration of the postmodern use of pastiche, although this book does not address the question of opera, see: Hoesterey, Ingebord. *Pastiche: Cultural Memory in Art, Film, Literature.* Bloomington (IN): Indiana University, 2001.

[34] See: Muller, Julie and Muller, Frans. "Completing the picture: the importance of reconstructing early opera, the case of the *Fairy Queen*" in *Early Music, Vol. XXXIII, N°4.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 667–681. See also : Banducci, Antonia. "Staging a tragédie en musique : a 1748 Promptbook of Campra's *Tancrède"* in *Early Music, Vol. XXI, N°2.* Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 180–190.

[35] Some of these views are summarized in an article written following a lecture given at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in 2013, see: Blin, Gilbert. "The Reflections of Memory – A Proposition for a Cognitive Approach of Historically Informed Staging" in: *Historische Aufführungspraxis und Oper edited by Christine Fischer, (Zwischentöne 3).* Zürich: Chronos (in preparation).