The Digital Upgrade of Opera Theater:
Intermedial Dramaturgies and Technological Visualities in Fanny and Alexander's Spectacles

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The multiform galaxy of contemporary opera also includes authors originally unrelated to the musical theater. These artists belong to the so-called third avant-garde of the Italian scene, that is, to groups open to other forms of theatrical expression, which aimed at altering the medium of theater through the acquisition of other languages such as cinema, video, literature, and visual arts.

The academic debate about multimedia/intermedial performances has long since developed an important theoretical-methodological frame for analyzing the complexity of contemporary opera productions through the multiple lenses offered by different research fields.[1] My recent volume, published in the wake of these studies, is on the opera theater by Fanny & Alexander,[2] the company founded in 1992 in Ravenna by Luigi De Angelis and Chiara Lagani. The work of Fanny & Alexander is examined in greater depth in this article. It aims at looking more deeply into the question about the forms of representation and perception of opera performances hybridized with digital technologies.

Always committed to intermedial dramaturgy, Fanny & Alexander entered a new directorial path in 2015 in the field of opera. The visual and technological expressions of their productions are the result of a precise media configuration, corresponding to the category that the scholar Irina Rajewsky has called "media combination" (Rajewsky 2005, 52) and which concerns the coexistence and "fusion" of different media. Based on the interplay between performance dynamics and video projections, the combination of media in their spectacles upgrades opera theatre technologically, overcoming the deadlock of trite customs of opera staging and enticing the audience toward unpredictable trajectories.

A true turning point in Fanny & Alexander's creative journey, their

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[1] Cf. Levin 1994; Hutcheon 2006; Ridout 2012; Sheil and Vear 2012; Novak 2015; Sirmons 2020; Havelková 2021.
[2] Cf. Pernice 2022.

opera performances are based on precise expressive principles aimed at the "reactivation"[3] (Meldolesi and Molinari 2007) of the original dramaturgies. The first peculiarity of their works involves an ability to combine faithful and integral execution of the scores with a grafting of videographic codes. The technological amplification provided by the video screens produces videographic visions that, not serving only as a mere background or "decoration" of the operas, relaunch the composers' creativity into other fields of imagination. The aim of this intensified audiovisual aesthetics is to add a new semantic level, a sort of supra-layer to the dramatic-musical text, which updates the scenic and visual codes of the artistic event in relation to the historical changes in sensibility and theatrical conventions, as well as the spectators' expectations.

Another principle of the work of Fanny & Alexander concerns spectatorial reception, the act of watching by the audience, which has always been understood as "an act of responsibility, [as] active witnessing" (De Angelis 2015). From this fundamental role of the spectators stems the desire to involve them as active witnesses, to challenge them by going beyond traditional conventions and to stimulate them to ask themselves questions about the meanings of the operas relocated in the present time.

In the small but significant corpus of Fanny & Alexander's opera productions, four works stand out for the expressive principles just described: *Il flauto magico* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, staged in 2015 at the Teatro Comunale in Bologna; *Orfeo nel metrò*, a reinterpretation of Claudio Monteverdi's *Orfeo* performed in 2019 at the Teatro Ponchielli in Cremona; *L'isola disabitata* by Franz Joseph Haydn staged in 2021 at the Teatro Alighieri in Ravenna; and *Il ritorno di Ulisse in patria*, another Monteverdi opera staged in 2022, also at the Teatro Ponchielli.

A "writing of moving images" (Sacchettini 2020, 23) capable of altering theatre and video stylistically by activating intermediality, emerges with force in the scenic syntax of these productions, all of which rely on combinations of media, and presents fascinating variations on the group's eclectic "mundus immaginalis" (De Angelis and Lagani 2010, 8) rich in readings, visions, and ways of listening. Thanks to an effective mix of creative intelligence and targeted investments, De Angelis and Lagani have succeeded in renewing the practice of staging important titles of the operatic repertoire, gaining over time an acknowledged role in the new panorama of musical theater.

Indeed, their opera productions of the last ten years are generating a

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[3] All quotations from Italian texts have been translated by the author.

complex phenomenon, described by Giulia Carluccio and Stefania Rimini as the "regeneration of the operatic specific" (Carluccio and Rimini 2020, 14). According to the scholars,

> The growing emergence of opera direction as a qualifying creative element [...] has not only distinguished the reception practice of pure listening from that of spectatorial participation in the opera spectacle, but above all has motivated a re-signification of the theatrical experience of opera, both in the demand/offer of scenic and visual invention and solicitation, and in the research and experimentation of new nexus between the score and the performance, between listening and viewing. (Carluccio and Rimini 2020, 10-11.)

Following this analysis, it is easy to understand the success of those shows aimed at scenic and visual innovation created by international artists (such as La Fura dels Baus, Robert Lepage, and Christoph Marthaler) and Italian artists (such as Davide Livermore, Damiano Michieletto, and Mario Martone) that focus on hybridization of different codes, with a frequent use of video references and cinematographic frames that reveal the similarities between opera and film.

Fanny & Alexander, therefore, belongs to those "levels of opera directors in which it is not excessive to recognize a manifestation of the peculiarity of theatrical innovation, which has continuously cultivated among its developmental directives the relationships between music and the dynamics of performance" (Guccini 2010, 83). Endowed with theatrical wealth rich in experiences and resources, the group has opened up librettos and scores through a new expressive key, which engages digital technologies, themes as revised from contemporary perspectives, scenic dynamics reshaped by a decisive "performative turn," iconographic re-visioning of characters, and new ways of involving the audience. As we shall see, each of Fanny & Alexander's opera productions translates the semantic of the operatic text, or rather "the visual system presupposed by the text" (Zoppelli 2010, 99), in a way that is not descriptive but rather intermedial and symbolic, giving new visions and a greater breadth to contemporary musical theater.

1. Il Flauto Magico, *a Three-Dimensional Fairy Tale*

Fanny & Alexander's landing in the world of opera intertwines with Mozart's last masterpiece, *Die Zauberflöte,* composed in 1791 with a libretto by Emanuel Schikaneder. This production was executed by the orchestra of Teatro Comunale in Bologna directed by Michele Mariotti. In fact, Mozart's famous *Singspiel* is linked *ab origine* to the artistic history of De

Angelis and Lagani, because the director Ingmar Bergman, who made a cinematographic version of it in 1974, has always been their "tutelary deity," to the point that even the group's stage name is derived from the Swedish director's last film, *Fanny och Alexander* (1982).

Because the company's creative approach is based on the archetypes of childhood and play, both understood as an inclination toward fairy tales and ludic behaviour in contrast to adulthood, the imaginative and childlike dimension of Mozart's opera and Bergman's film resonate profoundly as theater, triggering a play of cinematographic grafts and scenic inventions.

Taking inspiration from Bergman's *Fanny och Alexander*, De Angelis and Lagani "graft" into the performance the two children protagonists of the film, who appear on a maxi-screen placed behind the singers and observe the scene and the audience. The overture opens with the projection of lush vegetation in which the two children appear next to a miniature of a baroque theater, on the pediment of which is inscribed "Ei blot til lyst" ("Not just for fun"). Seamlessly, a dragon-shaped puppet appears, which, framed in giant close-up, leans menacingly toward the singer who plays Prince Tamino, by comparison tiny and defenseless on the stage.

This clear disproportion in size is an effect of augmented reality and immersivity produced in three dimensions with the cinematic technique of the anaglyph, an effect that the audience perceives by wearing special glasses. From the overture onward, anaglyph video projections are incorporated into the staging of the opera, appearing at the most salient moments such as the arias of the protagonists (Tamino and Pamina, but also the birdman Papageno); the trial by fire with which the prince victoriously concludes his initiatory journey; and the scenes in which he plays the magic flute, enchanting the animals of the wood.

Far from being a mere visual diversion, the three-dimensional video projections by Zapruder filmmakersgroup and inserted dramaturgically by De Angelis and Lagani become the practice and metaphor of a crucial issue for the company, "the long-standing question of the witness audience" (Lagani 2015), of audience reception as a practice of active witnessing.

In particular, the visual dynamic of Fanny and Alexander's gazes turned toward the spectators' seats leads to a profound alteration of the canonical praxis of audience reception. Intentionally jutting out over the spectators and the scene, the eyes of the two characters trigger a *mise en abyme* of gazes, a kaleidoscopic overturning of the points of view, whereby "the axis of the theater stalls-scene" (Lehmann 2010, 6) is rendered vertiginous.

The vision of the video scene is also extended to the performative space, structured as a kind of photographic lens. Inspired by the suggestive diora-

mas and baroque machines of the Swedish theater of Drottningholm, which was the location chosen by Bergman for his adaptation of *Il flauto magico*, De Angelis articulates the scenography as a puzzle of moving panels, exactly forty colored aluminum panels covered with colored cloth of various shapes and sizes. The scenic dynamic consists in opening and closing the panels so that the sequences of the opera appear to be "focused" by a lens. The dilation and the narrowing of the visual field of the stage replicates the mechanism of a photographic shutter, or of the iris of an eye, thanks to which the scenes quickly change, recalling the artisanal special effects of eighteenth-century opera or the canted framing cuts of expressionist cinema.

In this way, space does not function as a mere mimesis of the environments of the story but serves to transfigure them into abstract images, into allegorical frameworks inspired by visual art, especially James Turrell and the artists of Color Field painting. Finally, the stylization of the scenography is matched by the imaginative and bulky costumes designed by Chiara Lagani, painted and decorated to convey "almost heraldic information about the characters they dress" (Lagani 2015).

In observing the many and diverse dramaturgical solutions of *Il flauto magico*, we see a clear desire to rset in motion once again the "carousel of phantasmagorias" of Mozart's fairy tale, using a rich apparatus of technologies, both digital and analogue. Thus, in line with studies of the relationship between theater and technologies, it seems convincing to apply to the video-design of this work Gabriella Giannachi's definition of hypersurface, which is "a site of exchange between inside and outside. […] When "performing" the hypersurface, the viewer always confronts materiality and representation, inside and outside, information and fiction, to find that they also are always part of both worlds" (Giannachi 2004, 103). The concept of hypersurface formulated by Giannachi allows us to "close the circle" of our analysis, highlighting the reciprocity and plurality of perspectives in Fanny & Alexander's spectacle. Their staging shifts Mozart's opera toward an intermedial "carousel of gazes," so that the audience's vision is not flattened by a mono-focal point of view but opens up to observation in perspective, at times disorienting and ambiguous but certainly unprecedented.

2. Orfeo nel Metrò, *the Symbolic Actualization of the Myth*

In 2019, Fanny & Alexander's operatic journey made an important step, the participation in the Monteverdi Festival in Cremona with the staging

of the composer's best-known masterpiece, the *Orfeo,* which he set to music in 1607 with a libretto by Alessandro Striggio.

Having renewed the performance of a pivotal eighteenth-century title, De Angelis and Lagani decided to take on an even more arduous challenge. They returned to the seventeenth-century origins of opera theater and one of its first and most important pioneers, the "divin" author of madrigals who combined recitative with polyphony, creating a musical form that in many aspects is unequalled.

The will to meet this challenge, again, stems from a desire to innovate. In this sense, the performance staged by De Angelis and Lagani and musically directed by Hernan Schvartzman corresponds to that genre of reinterpretations that moves between two poles: "the attempt at philological reconstruction of the classical representation, and the critical actualization of the model according to the historical, political, social, and cultural context of arrival" (Albanese 2020, 25).

If the philological reconstruction takes place on the side of music, through great attention to Monteverdi's score, the actualization unfolds on the stage, starting with the reinvention of the performative space. De Angelis transforms the stage of the Teatro Ponchielli into a contemporary subway car in which the spectator-passengers (120 to 150 at a time) sit next to singers and musicians to be led on the mythical singer's otherworldly journey.

At the root of the idea of the subway car is a close parallelism: The descent to the underworld of the poet Orpheus is symbolically transposed and translated into the descent into a contemporary subway, a realistic and recognizable context where the catabasis of the myth becomes the metaphor of a "journey into the depths of the psyche, into boundless love, into the possibility of inner metamorphosis, of healing from the toxicity of the wound and the symbiotic relationship [between Orpheus and Eurydice]" (De Angelis 2019). To stimulate identification between the modern audience and the archetypal story of Orpheus and Eurydice, the performance takes place in close contact with the spectators, who are also encouraged to interact with the characters of the opera, directly involving themselves in the various stages of the journey.

The first technique aimed at cultivating this involvement is the reinvention of the chorus of nymphs and shepherds as an ensemble of artists/street vendors, who combine singing to the audience with the sale of CDs, books, and leaflets. The act of singing in a meta-theatrical way and of handing spectator-passengers objects from everyday life, pushing them to act in the first person, corresponds to a performative aesthetics strictly hermeneutic.

As Erika Fischer-Lichte writes, "the spectator, the subject, can make the play the object of his experience and thus of his interpretation" (Fischer-Lichte 2014, 30).

The second technique, dramaturgically more complex, seeks a strong investment in the actualization, both in terms of forms and contents. Taking inspiration from the graphic novel *Poema a fumetti* (1969) by Dino Buzzati, who rewrote the mythical tale in a modern and urban key, De Angelis and Lagani transform their Orpheus into a gritty rock singer who plays the electric bass instead of the lyre. Both he and his beloved Eurydice, as well as the nymphs and shepherds of the chorus, and the allegorical figures of the libretto (Music and Hope), are presented as typical millennials constantly busy with their smartphones, which they use to immortalize themselves in a profusion of selfies and videos.

The act of shooting photos of oneself with smartphones and selfie-sticks explicitly evokes the exhibitionist practice of "broadcast yourself" typical of the social-network society.[4] However, De Angelis's direction is able to weigh the characters' self-exposures, avoiding an excess of "media-embodied presence." The self-videos projected on the displays of the subway cars serve above all to multiply and differentiate the spectators' points of view, to give them a *surplus* of vision, including special effects of zoom, slow motion, and fading. Not by chance, the announcement of Eurydice's death also receives a media treatment: The breaking news of her passing, broadcast by the TV channel Cremona1 bursts dramatically on the displays of the subway.

The reference to mass and social-media communication constitutes the most relevant dramaturgical key of the reinterpretation by Fanny & Alexander. The technique, then, transforms the characters of the Greek myth into "contemporary social-media heroes," whose fantastic journey corresponds to a daily journey on a subway, between joys and sorrows, and between happiness for love regained and the twinge of pain at its definitive loss.

On close look, this actualization gives to Monteverdi's opera a strong effect of reality, not diminishing the presentation of the characters and the story yet still capable of framing them within an "ostensive-presentational-performative framework" (De Marinis 2013, 48), that is, within a context of credibility and realism that impacts productively on the spectators' reception. In this regard, the reinvention of the theatrical space is

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[4] On this topic, see Boccia Artieri 2012.

decisive. Designed as a dynamic and enveloping environment, in which energy circulates, the scenic container of the subway car corresponds to an "expanded scenography" (Gough and Lotker 2013, 3). It is a concept used to indicate a new and malleable artistic field, whereby space can be considered as an aesthetic practice that, rather than marking limits, allows the audience to live an experience.

In reshaping the mythical material with settings and languages that belong to our present, Fanny & Alexander's *Orfeo nel metrò* updates the audience's reception, accentuating the spectators' experience on both an inner and physical level.

3. L'Isola Disabitata, *Visions of the Sense of Place*

The actualization principle of *Orfeo nel metrò* also characterizes the staging of Haydn's *L'isola disabitata*, with which De Angelis and Lagani opened the 2021-2022 season of Teatro Alighieri in Ravenna. The moment in which the spectacle was staged, the reopening of theaters just after the repeated lockdowns because of the pandemic, offered the company a significant opportunity for a directorial re-interpretation of the work set to music by Haydn in 1779 using Pietro Metastasio's previous libretto. A tight *fil rouge* links the original poetic and musical components of the opera to the topical issues adopted by the company as its interpretative filter.

In the bonus track *Dietro le quinte* shared on the online platform OperaStreaming, De Angelis underlines the thematic consonance between Haydn's work and our present, remembering that he was

> immediately struck by the many resonances this opera had with the moment it was proposed to me, which was the end of the first lockdown. We were all coming from a period of isolation, and the story of *L'isola disabitata*, of these two sisters who are locked up in a perimeter place, with very cramped confines, [...] struck me because, in some way, we all came from a confinement.[5] (De Angelis 2021b.)

The physical isolation protagonist sisters of the opera, abandoned for many years on a small deserted island, and the creative isolation of the composer Haydn, who wrote the score while living in a remote palace in the Hungarian countryside (the princely residence of the Esterházy where

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[5] Cf. De Angelis, Luigi. 2021. *L' isola disabitata, Behind the scenes*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vv-3L19kyHU&ab_channel=OperaStreaming.

he worked as a kapellmeister), are thus linked to the difficult domestic isolation we all faced during the pandemic crisis.

To express this metaphorical connection, De Angelis and Lagani insert their performance into an evocative meta-dramaturgical framework, consisting in a series of videos projected on a particular screen, a scrim placed behind the singers. The first level of videographic writing begins at the overture, during which the curtain does not remain closed as opera tradition would have it (so as not to distract from listening to the music) but opens wide on the "digital window" of video projections. Alternating static shots and dynamic subjective cameras, a video shows the entrance to the Teatro Alighieri of the young singers who play the protagonists Costanza and Silvia, followed at close range by the camera up to the private space of the dressing rooms. Here, the singer who interprets the role of Costanza drifts off to sleep leaning against the dressing table, her head reclined above the opera's libretto.

This "behind the scenes" sequence serves to evoke the dreamlike aspects of the story imagined by De Angelis and Lagani, immediately transporting the spectators inside the meta-dramaturgical framework of the show. The directorial idea is that the story of Haydn's opera is dreamt by the protagonist singer, Costanza, who projects her own artistic isolation as a result of her forced confinement, abandoned by her husband on the uncharted deserted island.

Starting with Costanza's awakening on the stage of Teatro Alighieri, the operatic plot begins, in which a new, important element is added to the videographic framework projected on the scrim the "imaginary background" (De Angelis 2021, 29) of the island of Marettimo.

With an aptitude for field research, De Angelis explored the wildest of the Aegadian Islands off the western tip of Sicily to shoot a series of panoramic videos with which, from the Ouverture onwards, the main moments of the opera are marked. Animated by a strong "geoscopic" tension (Giordano 2018), De Angelis's direction of the video alternates different shooting styles, seeking a landscape poetics of metamorphosis that, the artist explains, "is capable of projecting the inner images of Costanza's dream" (De Angelis 2021, 35). Thus, slowly tracking shots of the rocky coast of Marettimo are followed by wide high-angle shot of the vastness of the sea, and then by sequences showing the furious swell of the waves or evocative slow-motion sequences focused on the natural elements of the island (such as tree branches and pebbles on the beach).

The direction alternates moments during which it shows a blank screen and others in which the landscape of Marettimo saturates the theatrical

"visualscape," multiplying the audience's levels of view and projecting the opera's characters far beyond the material stage. While the stage set is minimal (only a sofa, an ottoman, and a stone on which Costanza engraves her thoughts), the digital scene is configured as a "metamorphic device" (De Angelis 2021, 35), which, by taking advantage of the mobility of the scrim, acquires the fascination of mutability, of the evolution of different décors.

Far from being didactic, the video-dramaturgy of Marettimo brings new meanings to the operatic plot, linked at the same time, charmed and scary, paradise and hell, a place of physical confinement but also of mental projection, of a reverie beyond the horizon of the sea.[6] The effect of the video projections is to transmit to the audience a powerful sense of place that highlights the oxymoronic dimensions of the island and its character as liminal space.

Therefore, if the deserted island described by Haydn and Metastasio can be a metaphor for the prison-house during the pandemic lockdown, it can also turn into its exact opposite, becoming an engine of abstraction and imagination, a *rivage du rêve* (Donadieu 2002) open on infinity.

It is exactly this gaze beyond the confines of the island/isolation that Fanny & Alexander's spectacle gradually unveils, exploiting the iridescent beauty of wild Marettimo to amplify the pathos of the opera's characters and the empathic involvement of a contemporary audience.

4. Il Ritorno di Ulisse in Patria*, the Interplay between Physical Actions and Digital Gazes*

In 2022, De Angelis and Lagani staged at the Monteverdi Festival *Il ritorno di Ulisse in patria*, the composer's most famous Venetian work, written in 1640 and based on a poem by Giacomo Badoaro.

The stage concept in this case rests on a dialectical interplay between material scene and digital scene, an interaction of different expressive codes that transforms the theatrical setting into a hypermedial space, capable of developing and radicalizing the naturally hybrid character of opera theater.[7]

The return of the Homeric hero to his homeland is linked to the return in Cremona of the opera that Monteverdi composed in Venice. Based on

[6] Cf. Previti 2010.

[7] For a framing of the hypermedial dimension of theatre see especially Chapple and Kettenbelt 2006, and Havelková 2021.

this parallelism, De Angelis transfers the story of the myth from Ithaca to the river Po, in an unspecified historical time.

In the notes accompanying the staging, it is the director himself who clarifies the formal and the thematic aspects of the *Ritorno*, perceiving in its intense dramatic-musical découpage the traits of forerunner of cinema:

> The score of this wonderful, experimental opera offers us multiple levels of interpretation and takes us on a real emotional journey, with an almost cinematographic progression, with sudden, tight scene and narrative changes, in which the music reflects the varied character of the many variations of the story, with pages that seem to have been written in the 20th century. (De Angelis 2022.)

The filmic metrics of Monteverdi's musical writing find an original re-elaboration in the dramaturgy of Fanny & Alexander's performance, in which the effect of reality – always an essential ingredient of their direction – is obtained by exploiting the architecture of Teatro Ponchielli.

The stage and the stalls are conceived as a modern representation of the palace of Penelope and Ulysses, in which the orchestra – directed by Ottavio Dantone – is no longer placed in the pit but «in evidence, on the same level as the stalls, as if it were the queen's baroque court orchestra" (De Angelis 2022). Audience involvement is also stimulated technologically, through a maxi-screen on which, during the prologue sung by Humana Fragilità, Ulysses' landing on home soil is projected.

The on-screen vision of a poignant video prologue opens inside the black box of the empty stage. It is where the castaway Ulysses appears, uncomfortably waking up on the banks of the river Po. The camera follows him as he treads unsteadily on the pebbles of the sandy shore, "gluing itself" to his mud-streaked back, stumbling along with him among stones and debris, assuming his own staggered and faltering gait.

Using an observational filming modality borrowed from documentary cinema, which seeks to "minimize authorial intervention in order to follow human actions," to carry out an "analysis of spaces and bodies in their indissoluble relationship" (Dottorini 2020, 92), the video representation of Ulysses' landing acquires a texture far from oleographic. Through a tight dialectic between camera movements and shooting planes, and use of the hand-held camera, the visual narration constructed by De Angelis aims to penetrate into the materiality of space, to "feel" the fragility of the body being followed at close range, to observe the reality represented with a gaze that is empathetic and direct.

De Angelis's video direction, however, is eclectic: For example, the divine characters (such as Minerva, Jupiter, and Neptune) are immersed in abstract and atmospheric video projections, characterized by suggestive graphic effects of splitting, fading, and color variations.

If the videographic representation of Olympus is fantastic and soft, the temperature of the performance changes radically during the central sequence of the opera plot: Ulysses' fierce hunt for the usurping Proci, the suitors of Penelope. Here, the scene splits in two, material and digital. While the character of Ulysses launches himself in pursuit of the Proci, running furiously inside orchestra seats of the theater at a very short distance from the audience, the infrared viewfinder of a shooter videogame appears on the maxi-screen, pointing a firearm while it moves into the corridors of Teatro Ponchielli.

With their gaze fixed on the palpitating gameplay on the screen, and their body materially reached by the ferocious violence of the character, the spectators are involved perceptually in an intermedial scenic dynamic with a strong sensory impact, which can be compared to the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Moreover, the intense interplay between the two scenes, between the performative action inside ground floor and the digital eye of "killer" Ulysses appearing on the screen, produces an effect of "augmented liveness" (Dixon 2007, 455), an increase in the "live sense" of the theatrical experience of opera.

The coexistence of the performative dimension and the videographic one allows Fanny & Alexander's spectacle to reactivate Monteverdi's work with results of rare participation, showing once again that the operatic heritage is not a dead and buried "museum" art form that has remained intact over time but a field of progressive intermedial experimentation. In this sense, De Angelis and Lagani's all-encompassing style of opera theater may be useful also to better understand the nature of a genre that nowadays is constantly changing and reinventing itself, challenging the digital media to reach its audience and produce meaning.

Their reinvention of the places and languages of the opera scene produces, as our analysis clearly demonstrates, a hybridization of the physical environment with the virtual one, a transformation of the theatrical place into a hypermedial place, and, inevitably, a renewed relationship with the audience. If the spectatorial posture traditionally linked to opera is always divided between "mimesis and abstraction" (Gallarati 2007), in the works of De Angelis and Lagani the continuous intersection and oscillation between the various reception levels involved (score, dramaturgy, theatrical staging,

and video-graphic creation) relaunches the dialectical essence of musical theater in the sign of an even stronger and more complex participatory grammar. Far from a purely affective-emotional engagement (Rössel 2011), the immersive and actualizing quality of Fanny & Alexander's operas requires another type of commitment from the audience: The ability to introject different texts and spaces, multiple media and technologies, according to the logics of contemporary spectatorship,[8] which tends to be more active, embedded, and cognitive.

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[8] Cf. O'Neil et al. 2014.

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