Contemporary opera as relevant and effective socio-political critique: two case studies

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Abstract

The validity of the traditional arts in contemporary society is often questioned by the wider public. This dissertation argues that one of the ways in which the arts attain value is through their function as political activism. In order to do so, it investigates the characteristics of resistance art. This is followed by a discussion of contemporary opera. While this genre is a minority interest when compared to popular music forms, it is, nevertheless, a form of resistance art that has the potential to fulfill a social and political function. The dissertation focuses on two case studies: John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1990) and Poul Ruders's *The Handmaid's Tale* (2000), and concludes that contemporary opera can be relevant and effective socio-political critique.

Titel Kontemporêre opera as relevante en effektiewe sosio-politieke kritiek: twee saakgevalle

Sleutelterme Politiek, Opera, Sosiale Impak, Poul Ruders, John Adams, Handmaid's Tale, Klinghoffer

Opsomming

Die geldigheid van die tradisionele kunste in die hedendaagse samelewing word gereeld deur die wyer publiek bevraagteken. In hierdie verhandeling word geargumenteer dat een van die maniere waarop die kunste waarde kan toevoeg, is deur te funksioneer as politiese aktivisme. Vir hierdie doel word die kenmerke van versetkuns ondersoek. Dit word gevolg deur 'n bespreking van kontemporêre opera. Alhoewel hierdie genre minderheidsbelang het wanneer dit vergelyk word met populêre musiekvorme, het dit as versetkuns steeds die potensiaal om 'n sosiale en politieke funksie te vervul. Die verhandeling fokus op twee saakgevalle: John Adams se *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1990) en Poul Ruders se *The Handmaid's Tale* (2000), en kom tot die gevolgtrekking that kontemporêre opera relevant en effektief kan wees as sosio-politieke kritiek.

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1 INTRODUCTION

"Both history and criticism have overlooked the one fact about the contemporary composer that is of any real importance to the understanding of modern [art] music: he is obsolete."

Henry Pleasants, *The Agony of Modern Music*, 1955 (quoted in Shapiro, 1978:71)

1.1 Problem statement

'Obsolete', 'out-dated' and 'irrelevant' are all words that have been used to describe art music and opera in contemporary society. *Opera in Crisis* (1989), Henry Pleasants' predominantly pessimistic book, describes the degeneration of opera in contemporary times. According to Avgikos (1995:86), the viability of art in society and its ability to fulfil new functions was in question at the time of the book's publication. Individual attitudes, as well as those taken by governments in recent times, seem to illustrate a lack of respect for the arts and a belief in its irrelevance.

Upon his acceptance of the First Aspen Award in 1964, operatic composer Benjamin Britten (1967:119) noted:

> Finding one's place in society as a composer is not a straightforward job. It is not helped by the attitude toward composers in some societies. My own, for instance, semi-socialist Britain, and conservative Britain before it, has for years treated the musician as a curiosity to be barely tolerated. At a tennis party in my youth I was asked what I was going to do when I grew up — what job was I aiming at. 'I am going to be a composer,' I said. 'Yes, but what else?' was the answer. The average Briton thought, and still thinks, of the arts as suspect and expensive luxuries. The Manchester councillor who boasted he had never been to a concert and didn't intend to go is no very rare bird in England. By Act of Parliament, each local authority in England is empowered to spend a *6d.* rate on the arts. In fact, it seems that few of them spend more than one twentieth of this — a sign of no very great enthusiasm!

Britten touches on a subject that indicates the support, or lack thereof, for the arts in the current Western capitalist climate — finance. In recent times the idea that the arts are unimportant is evidenced by withdrawal of governmental funding. In 2004, the Arts Council of England initiated budget cuts that total thirty million pounds sterling. By 2008 this will mean a total loss of funding for 121 organisations (Jones, 2005 & Anon, 2005a). In the wealthier USA, the arts have received increased funding between 1993 and 2001. Yet, between June 2002 and June

2003, the arts in all 52 states of the USA lost 13 percent of their funding and faced a further cut of one hundred million US dollars in government funding (Waters, 2003). Doug McLennan of artsjournal.com interprets these cuts as follows: "What the government is saying right now is that culture is not important for us to fund" (Waters, 2003). Samuel Lipman (1992:292-299) also refers to funding problems for opera and the arts in the USA, but this time with reference to opera's political dimension. He believes that opera should not challenge government (the very institution that provides support to the opera) and that contemporary opera should remain a-political to avert its own demise.

Contemporary opera, however, increasingly approaches the political, achieving both notoriety and success. In 1990, John Adams used the events surrounding the 1985 terrorist hijacking of an Italian cruise-ship, the Achille Lauro, and the execution of wheel-chair bound Leon Klinghoffer as the subject of an opera: *The Death of Klinghoffer*. Initial performances received widespread press-coverage, evoking outrage and the near cancellation of the Brussels premiere (lest it incite extreme violence) as well as pickets at the San Francisco premiere. These protests coincided with continuing aggression in the Gaza region, threats of world terror attacks, and the Gulf War (1990-1991). Furthermore, despite an attempt by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 2001, the work was not performed again in the USA after 1992. Despite the seeming inapproachability of the subject matter in the light of coalition forces' activities in Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon, the work received its British premiere in 2005. Once again there was a mixture of acclaim and controversy.

In contrast, Poul Ruders's *The Handmaid's Tale* (2000) is a frequently performed, socio-politically critical opera. The opera has caused controversy, yet, following its world premiere in Denmark (2000), it has simultaneously experienced success with consecutive premieres in London (2001), the USA (2003) and Canada (2004), and received two Grammy nominations in 2002. This success is rare in a profession where the financial potential of a work is of primary concern and operas from the Classical and Romantic eras are consequently those most frequently performed. Despite this success, the political climate in the USA created great difficulties for the American premiere: the Metropolitan and Santa Fe opera companies withdrew their bids. The Minnesota Opera Company won the rights to the premiere, but could not subsequently secure a corporate sponsor. Of this, Ruders stated: "It's not an opera that makes everybody happy … maybe it was just a backlash of the times, but make no mistake, we created something extremely

volatile and controversial" (Peiken, 2003). In contrast, the Canadian Opera Company staged a successful premiere which was praised for its political prescience.

If culture is not important, art is a suspect luxury, the contemporary composer is obsolete and opera should remain devoid of politics, how then can the effect of these socio-politically challenging operas be explained? This study therefore asks: Can contemporary opera be an effective and relevant form of socio-political critique?

1.2 Objectives

In order to address this problem, several objectives are identified. Firstly, the critical role of the arts is explored in order to determine how art can constitute socio-political critique. This discussion provides the conditions needed for art to function as relevant and effective socio-political critique. Secondly, these provisions are applied to opera, in order to clarify that contemporary opera can take on this function. This discussion begins with the consideration of opera's position in contemporary Western society and is followed by an analysis of socio-political opera in the twentieth century. These subjects are approached in order to demonstrate that opera can meet the additional conditions for art to function as socio-political critique and also provides a brief historical context for the analysis of the two case studies.

After exploration of these wider concepts, the focus narrows, concentrating on two specific operas, namely Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer* and Ruders's *The Handmaid's Tale*. The final objective is to investigate these two case studies as specific examples of socio-political critique by discovering the specific socio-political issues that they explore, discussing how they were received at their premieres and subsequent performances in light of the socio-political context in which they were performed and, finally, by establishing their relevance and effectiveness as socio-political critique.

1.3 Method of Investigation

First, an initial literature review was conducted. It was found that contemporary writing on opera (as an existing body of knowledge surrounding political opera) focuses largely on political interpretations of historical works such as Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Verdi's *Nabucco* within the context of their own time periods, while politics and contemporary opera have, until a

recent surge of interest, remained largely unexplored. Andrew Davidson, for example wrote an honours dissertation entitled "Dalcroze Eurhythmics and contemporary opera: Applications in the production of John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer*" for the University of New South Wales in 1995. Recent studies on *The Death of Klinghoffer* include Robert Fink's (2005:173-213) investigation of "the opera's negative reception in the larger context of the increasingly severe crises that beset American Jewish self-identity during the Reagan-Bush era", published in the *Cambridge Opera Journal*. Bianca Michaels (2002) has focused on the "intermedial connections between television and music theatre" as part of her exploration into "the relation between the historic events and their mediatisation". She asks if the creation of 'CNN operas', such as *The Death of Klinghoffer*, alters the audience's perception of recent history and how these operas reflect the way in which cultural memory is constructed in contemporary times. Michaels's paper formed part of the Fourteenth World Congress of the International Federation for Theatre Research, held in Amsterdam in 2002. Another paper, presented at the Forty-Ninth Annual Conference of the Society for Ethnomusicology in the USA in 2004, delves directly into the politics of *The Death of Klinghoffer*. Shanya Silverstein (2004:84) investigated the opera in order to determine how ideological meaning is expressed in music and determine how advocacy in music generates cultural meaning through the "universalisation of politically charged material".

Research on *The Handmaid's Tale* is still in its infancy. Although librettist Paul Bentley published his account of the opera's transformation from novel to opera,[1] most academic papers have begun to emerge only in 2006. Examples include two papers published in the *University of Toronto Quarterly:* Caryl Clark & Linda Hutcheon's (2006:815-820) "Adapting a Canonical Canadian Novel for the Operatic Stage: A Dystopia for Our Times" and Paul Kingston's (2006:833-834) "The joyless republic of Gilead: Reflections of a political scientist on the operatic production of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*." While such articles illustrate a rapidly developing interest in the political analysis of music, none of these articles place the work within the greater context of activist art or evaluate the relevance and effect of contemporary opera as a whole.

Books and journal articles written in the field of musicology, cultural studies, philosophy, drama and art were consulted and newspaper articles made available on several databases were

[1] See Bentley (2005).

invaluable sources. These were available in both printed and electronic form through the North–West University (Potchefstroom Campus) Music Library; the Johannesburg Music Library; the Cardiff City Central Library, Wales; and the Cardiff University Music, Social Sciences and Bute Libraries, Wales. Several online databases and academic search engines were also used, namely *Academic Search Premier* and *Newspaper Source* available through the *Ebsco* database, and *Infotrac*, made available through the Cardiff Central Library portal. The *New York Times Online* database was used on a personal subscription to access their 'Free' and 'Select' articles. Free online access was gained to several additional newspaper sources. Further electronic sources used include the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *Encyclopædia Britannica* and *The Oxford Reference Series*, made available through Cardiff Central Library. The internet was also indispensable in gaining access to audio archives of interviews with Adams and Ruders as well as obtaining the non-specialist reactions of audience members via web logs, forums and articles published for various websites. Audio material included the use of CD recordings (and associated libretti) of both *The Death of Klinghoffer* and *The Handmaid's Tale*.

2 ART AS SOCIO-POLITICAL CRITIQUE

This chapter begins by defining what is meant by socio-political critique, gives information on those aspects of communication that affect the evaluation of art which contains ideological statement, and then moves on to explore the facets of resistance art. This discussion shows how art can be an effective socio-political critique of society, and defines the characteristics of resistance art. These characteristics will be applied to socio-political opera in the next two chapters.

2.1 Definition and usage of the term 'socio-political'

According to the Oxford English Dictionary 'socio-' is used in combination with adjectives such as 'political' and adverbs such as 'politically' to mean social and political or socially and politically. It furthers defines 'social' as "living together in more or less organized communities; belonging to a community of this kind", "concerned with, interested in, the constitution of society and the problems presented by this" and "of activities, etc., carried out (esp. by government agencies) to improve the condition of society or for the benefit of society as a whole)". 'Political' is defined as "of, belonging to, or concerned with the form, organization, and administration of a state, and with the regulation of its relations with other states". (OED, 1989a; OED, 1989b; OED, 1989c.)

In the early decades of the twentieth century revolutionary currents pervaded Western Europe. Marxist ideas laid the foundations for debates about the role the arts might play in social change. Class-structure and the campaign for the political rights of women were early themes. They were followed by the international growth of fascism, the rise of state communism and the use of war-time propaganda amongst Western democracies. In the 1960s the Vietnam War and the American Civil Rights movements became central issues. In recent years the focus has shifted to the problem of silence and invisibility among the disenfranchised, the effect of the AIDS epidemic, and the broader implications of feminism. The conservatism of the Reagan-Bush administration, in particular, gave new focus and inspiration for activism among post-Vietnam generations. (Clark, 1997:15, 154-157.)

Although there is no shortage of topics on which to comment, Leftist concerns became fragmented as the Marxist concept of revolutionary art began to seem antiquated in the wake of

the collapse of failed communist states during the late 1980s. The West saw a great widening and diversification in approaches to political art: artists attempted to find alternative methods of protest in a world saturated with media messages. Themes such as multi-nationalism, capitalism, the dispersal of information via global information systems and the loss of the 'real' world to cyberspace fall increasingly under the arts activist's eye. (Clark, 1997:15, 154-157.)

As methods and topics for activism diversify, it has become harder to distinguish between those issues which are classed as political and those which are defined as social. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the term 'socio-political' includes all social and political areas of concern upon which an activist may choose to comment.

2.1.1 Definition: Socio-political critique

Critical assessment or socio-political critique offers insight into the shortcomings of social and political structures. Jansen & Steinberg (1991:70) maintain that critical appraisal of any specific phenomenon is inseparably bound with critical assessment of the kind of society in which that phenomenon takes place. A critical assessment of any socio-political issue made by any medium can be measured by the same yardstick, provided that the authors live in the same society. The democratic, capitalist West is usually measured against:

> [the] image of a 'just' society, for example, a society which offers its members equal opportunities for developing their human potential, participating in decisions concerning matters which affect their lives and creating culture. They [the critics of society] argue that capitalist society, in contrast, is usually run by a small minority that wields power in all walks of life. Not only is access to opportunities for participating in the affairs of society controlled by the dominant group but by steering the entire process of communication and controlling cultural production, the ruling minority determines the very content of their subjects' lives. (Jansen & Steinberg, 1991:70-71.)

Socio-political critique is subversive in nature as it resists acceptance of and capitulation to propaganda[2] of the governments and societies that it confronts. Prominent examples of twentieth-century socio-political critique include George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945), dealing with the abuse of power as well as the dangers of propaganda and dictatorship and Salman

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[2] The concept of propaganda is diametrically opposed to that of socio-political critique. It is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as: "Any association, systematic scheme, or concerted movement for the propagation of a particular doctrine or practice" and "The systematic propagation of information or ideas by an interested party, esp.

Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (1988), highlighting the tensions between secular and Islamic thought with reference to Muslim immigrants in Britain.

Orwell experienced trouble when trying to get his work published in post-war Britain, where it was unofficially censored. He struggled to find a publisher (Orwell, 1972:SM12). In addition, once a publisher had been secured, Orwell's polemical preface was subjected to the censorship of omission (Crick, 1972:SM12). Rushdie experienced a far greater reaction to his socio-political critique. It began with a refusal of publication in Muslim countries, and book burnings in Bradford in 1989. Later that year, Ayatollah Khomeini called for a *fatwa* demanding Rushdie's death. A million pound reward was offered to any Muslim who succeeded in murdering Rushdie.[3] The subsequent publicity fuelled book sales and heated debate. There were violent demonstrations in Muslim countries, a break in diplomatic ties between Iran and the European Community states, and the murder of moderate Islamic leaders in Belgium. (ORO, 1999a.)

2.2 The nature of communication

People react in disparate, unpredictable ways to works of art that contain ideological statements. They may ascribe meaning which is entirely at odds with any altruism or social responsibility that the creator intended.[4] To understand any meanings attributed to these works by an audience, the context in which the message is delivered as well as the viewer or listener's lived experience must be taken into account (Clark, 1997:13). The artist's intentions are closely linked to the wider question of authorship, first confronted in philosophy and literature by Michael Foucault and Roland Barthes. Musicologist Jane Fulcher takes their work as a starting point and concludes that the concept of an artistic work in itself is "no longer a given, but rather something continually re-created through variations in modes of presentation and reception." (Fulcher, 2001:147.) She further concurs with philosopher Roger Chartier, who applied this concept to theatre, when she states that in opera "the author is only one member of the 'committee' that produced the work, and thus typically has little control over its subsequent productions"

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in a tendentious way in order to encourage or instil a particular attitude or response. Also, the ideas, doctrines, etc., disseminated thus; the vehicle of such propagation" (OED, 1989d).

[3] After 1990, Iranian authorities hinted that the *fatwa* would no longer be carried out even though in theological terms it could not be rescinded and after an intense period of diplomacy with Britain, the Iranian government officially dissociated itself from the *fatwa* in 1998 (ORO, 1999a).

[4] Civil rights activists, feminist activists, AIDS activists, anti-war protestors and all creators of political art are united by the common thread of altruism and social responsibility. The need to help others as well as to create a just and equal society has its roots in the philosophies of David Hume (1711-1776).

(Fulcher, 2001:147). Thus, all socio-political art which focuses on protest, dissent and subversion or propaganda and capitulation may become either socio-political critique or propaganda by virtue of the social context in which it is performed, regardless of the creator's specific intent.

2.3 The facets of resistance art

Arts activism is a form of socio-political critique. It is created to "challenge, explore or blur the boundaries and hierarchies traditionally defining culture as represented by those in power" (Felshin, 1995:10). Contemporary arts activism evolved as the offspring of protest activities in combination with the democratic compulsion to give voice and visibility to the disenfranchised as well as the desire to connect art to a wider audience (Felshin, 1995:10).

Participation in activist art is seen as a dialogical or discursive process that effects change on both the participant and the artist. Any art that can initiate public debate or influence public opinion can be considered activism (Felshin, 1995:12). According to Finnish art critic and arts artist, Leena-Maija Rossi, two factors make it possible for art to function as activism, namely power[5] and resistance (Itkonen, 1999). Art has the power to bring up and address specific issues as well as the power to move the audience to emotional and cognitive responses (Scruton, 2006:6,9). The spirit of resistance allows the artist to refuse to accept hegemonic values and actually create resistance art, and also allows art to function as activism during its performative phase (Itkonen, 1999). For example, the narrative elements of Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* enabled the novel to address Islamic thinking through the use of symbolism, while resistance played a part in his refusal to write a work that blindly accepted fundamentalist values. When strictly orthodox Muslims read the novel (i.e. its performative phase) they were confronted with concepts and symbols that negated (or resisted) those values by which they define themselves to such an extent that the text had the power to evoke emotional and cognitive responses powerful enough to translate into outward reactions such as book-burnings and demonstrations.

5 The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy defines power as the ability of an individual or institution to achieve something. It further states that, "Power is the ability to mobilize economic, social, or political forces in order to achieve a result." This may be achieved by right, by control or by influence and it is not necessary for the 'powerful agent' to have consciously intended for the result to happen, i.e. the exercise of power may be exercised either deliberately or unknowingly (Blackburn, 1996a).

The act of creating or displaying an activist art work can also be a type of empowerment (Rossi, quoted in Itkonèn, 1999). The Homeless Collaborative Projects in the USA, for example, allowed homeless people to participate in pottery and fine arts workshops after which their work is exhibited in upmarket galleries (Felshin, 1995:12). Participating in the workshops — an act usually reserved for the middle and the upper classes who have time and money to spend on such diversion — is a reaffirmation of self-worth for the homeless who have lost their connection with wider society. Furthermore, exhibiting their creations gives the group visibility in upmarket galleries, affirms their continuing existence as human beings, and reiterates their right to be heard in all levels of society. From conception to completion, these workshops enable the homeless to access and use these rights (Felshin, 1995:12).

2.3.1 Choice of artistic medium: The Frankfurt School and popular culture

Art historian, Toby Clark, states (1997:13) that the "means of making an ideological statement, be it propaganda or critique, are almost limitless: Architecture, theatre, music, sport, clothes, and haircuts can communicate a political view, as can spectacles of violence, such as book-burning, assassination, suicide and terrorism". In Western society, the arts are valued as art for its own sake and not as a means to an end, and also as an instrument for delivering some recognized moral good. However, in Western aesthetics, the combination of an extrinsic function with the arts is seen as problematic. This is because the question arises of whether there are more effective means of producing the same result (Scruton, 2006:6,9.) This section therefore looks at popular versus minority forms in order to ascertain whether one or the other would be a more effective means of producing socio-political works.

When discussing music of the twentieth century, Lydia Goehr and Andrew Bowie note (2001:620) that anything which has immediate and popular appeal tends to function as "compensation for existing injustices, and will therefore encourage uncritical acceptance of the *status quo*". Their interpretation of mass culture is grounded in the philosophies of the Frankfurt School.[6] After World War II, Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) and Max Horkheimer (1895-1973)

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[6] The prominent philosophers of the Frankfurt School include Adorno, Lowenthal, Horkheimer and Marcuse. Their analysis focuses on Marx's early writings and cultural criticism rather than his widely known economic beliefs (Jansen & Steinberg, 1991:80-82). As a result of this analysis, the dominant paradigm within cultural analysis has included the assumption that popular culture is synonymous with mass culture (Story, 2003:30). Adorno and Horkheimer's interpretation of mass culture went against dominant previous critical analysis of popular culture by theorists such as Matthew Arnold (1882-1888), the Leavises and José Ortega Y Gasset (1883-1955). These philosophers had thought that popular culture represented a threat to cultural and social authority (Story, 2003:27).

proposed that the commodities produced by mass culture are similar and predictable in nature (Story, 2003:27). For example, in cinema, the ending of the majority of films is immediately obvious. In popular music, hit tunes allow the listener to hear the first few notes, guess the following material, and feel flattered when they are proven correct (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1973:98-99). The pair maintained that mass culture supports social authority by promoting dull conformity among the masses who, in response to mass culture, lose their imagination, spontaneity and aptitude for critical reflection. In this manner "… the working classes become depoliticized and their horizons are limited to political and economic goals that could only be realised within the oppressive and exploitative framework of capitalist society" (Story, 2003:28).

After the student rebellions in Paris, West Berlin and New York City's Columbia University in 1968, the views of the Frankfurt School of philosophy became influential in the anti-war movement. Frankfurt School scholar, Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), took on the role of prophet and father figure and frequently presented lectures to student groups of anti-war activists. Marcuse argued that contemporary, affluent society stifles everyone within it (even those who are successful) and their complacency is assured through the ersatz satisfactions of consumer culture. Affluent society therefore condemns its members to a one-dimensional existence lacking in both intellect and spirituality by providing only superficial experiences and blocking critical understanding of the true functioning of the systems that control them.[7] (Wolin, 2006.)

Dot Tuer and Elizabeth Hess both observe that in practice even seemingly socio-political pieces produced by popular genres tend to support prevailing hegemonies. This is because most popular artists take their subject from superficial media news coverage instead of discovering the truth and acting against those in power (Tuer, 1995:196-220; Hess, 1995:309-332). However, this is not a desirable situation where government regulated information systems may remain silent upon issues that need discussion and which condone skewed reporting. In contrast, artists from the traditional arts already reject mainstream opinion through their choice of minority artistic forms. They are thus able to bring audiences uncomfortable critique through their chosen medium without being compelled to blend into the mass pop arts market. (Hess, 1995:309-332.)

The perspectives developed by Arnold, the Leavises, Eliot, the Frankfurt School and McDonald all condemn popular culture but for differing political reasons. The left condemns popular culture as having manipulated the masses into comfortable submission, which prevents them from participating in revolution, while the right see mass culture as a threat to social authority and class based institutions. (Story, 2003:30.)

7 Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (1964), which was widely read amongst the New Left, is the most influential of his writings (Wolin, 2006).

In this interpretation, the artists of minority forms such as opera, ballet and the fine arts are more useful in producing relevant and effective socio-political critique as they already defy society's expectations through their continuing existence in the face of mass culture. The popular forms, in contrast, can only superficially rail against the mass culture of which they are an integral part.

2.3.2 Limitations imposed by the medium: Traditional venues as venues for protest art

Jay Griffiths acknowledges that the transcendental nature of the arts, namely its ability to "… unite people for the sake of a cause larger than themselves" is seminal with regards to political arts activism (Griffiths, 1997). In certain non-industrialized cultures, such as that of the Native American Indians, this characteristic allowed the arts to take on a utilitarian role that reflects the social organizations of the different tribal cultures.[8] The role of the artist in these societies was not merely to entertain or to keep accurate historical record, but to create the semi-magical designs. The creation process was accompanied by specific and indispensable ritual. (Dockstader, 2006:76.) Acts such as singing and dancing brought people together, created a collective emotional response, and prepared the group for common action (Griffiths, 1997).

In the West, the arts are also able to create a heightened emotional response (Scruton, 2006:9). They hold people's attention because they address themselves to emotion and elicit a response which is valued both for the response itself, and for any consolation gained (Scruton, 2006:9). The venue in which this response is created can play a role in the effect that art has (Griffiths, 1997). Concert hall music and images in a gallery, for example, create an emotional response, but do not offer a direct outlet for the emotion in the form of immediate group action.[9] Avgikos asks: "When an activity is designated as 'art' and its function is described as political, in the final analysis what efficacy does it possess to do more than rail against the limitations of its self-imposed status?" (Avgikos, 1995:86). In other words, can art retain its own traditional characteristics, such as venue, and function effectively as protest?

[8] The most important works of political and military societies such as the Plains, Aztec, and Inca civilisations, drew inspiration and material from that society's weaponry and ceremonial attire (Dockstader, 2006:76).

[9] Griffiths illustrates that in the West, there are instances where the creation, ritual and reception of protest art does mirror that of ancient societies. In her article "Art as a Weapon of Protest" she reports on the 'eco-warriors' in the Glen of the Downs, Ireland. These protestors celebrated their first year in occupation of a tract of land on which the trees had been earmarked for road-widening by using performances that included drummers, fire-juggling and singing in order to bond themselves together in support of their common cause. She then favourably compares this

2.3.2.1 The theatre

German playwright, poet and director, Bertolt Brecht (1889-1956) explored this question in his use of theatre during the 1930s.[10] Brecht credited working class audiences with the ability to adjust to the experimental and believed in using techniques that could involve the audience in the production of meaning. Brecht coerced the viewer into active mental engagement through his use of *Verfremdungs-Effekt*, or alienation effect. The A-effect does away with naturalist theatre conventions such as a suspension of disbelief. Illusion is avoided by allowing the audience to see scenery, props and actors for what they are. Characters' actions are not presented as inevitable, but the result of choice. Actors may even turn to the audience to demand, "What should I do next?" In this manner, the audience is prompted to take a critical view of the real world. They are invited to pierce the illusion of inevitability of the existing social order, and are able to conceive alternative realities. In Brechtian theatre, the act of criticism itself, and the cognitive engagement of the audience becomes the revolutionary aspect of the work. (Clark, 1997:24-27.)

Such was the influence of Brecht's works that from 1923 onwards his name was placed fifth on the Nazi's list of enemies of the state. After Hitler's election in 1933 Brecht was forced into exile. At first he fled to Denmark and then made his way to California where he worked on Hollywood films. During the first phases of anti-communist paranoia Brecht appeared before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947, but with no repercussions. He left America soon afterwards and settled in East Berlin. As the political environment changed in Eastern

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action to that of "Art Bypass" at Newbury. During this event (sponsored by Friends of the Earth), cars were symbolically destroyed, sliced up, and trodden on. (Griffiths, 1997.)

[10] Brecht's philosophies clashed with that of his contemporary, the Hungarian critic and philosopher George Lukács (1885-1971). Both took Marxian aesthetics as a starting point and both believed that art played a seminal role in politics and revolution. However, in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) had indicated a general preference for realism but had not referred specifically to the arts when they laid out their beliefs that bourgeois capitalism would be opposed by a revolution in which the proletariat would gain consciousness and emerge as the redemptive agent for a new historical phase (Clark, 1997:17). As a result artists such as Brecht and Lukács were the proponents of divergent practices in revolutionary art. Brecht had observed the success of travelling troupes of players, such as the Red Rockets, who performed theatrical sketches to German audiences using avant-garde theatre techniques and satirical cabaret to mock the ruling order, attack war and racism, awaken class-consciousness and increase awareness of exploitation and oppression amongst the working classes (Clark, 1997:26). This led him to believe that avant-garde techniques could be used to evoke a reaction from working class audiences. In contrast, Lukács took his queue from a letter in which Engels had called for art to be the mirror of life that produced an undistorted mirror of the world. He therefore expressly disapproved of Expressionism and modernist experimentation and preferred realist art and literature which could reveal the socio-political world and its underlying determinants through a popular, plain-speaking manner such as that used in the nineteenth century novel. (Clark, 1997:24-27.)

Europe so did attitudes towards Brechtian theatre. In 1954 Brecht was recognised for his commitment to communism when he was awarded the Stalin Peace Prize. (ORO, 1999b.)

2.3.2.2 The gallery

During the 1970s, protest art successfully delivered socio-political critique in formal environments such as the gallery. Hans Haacke's conceptual piece *Real Time Social System* (1971) is a point in case. The work featured photographs of a large group of New York slum buildings, all owned by one firm, while captions revealed an array of holding companies, mortgage data, assessed values and property taxes, thus exposing and critiquing the exploitation of the property market for personal gain. In order to avoid repercussions, the Guggenheim Museum cancelled his exhibition, and in response, Haacke produced an additional work tracing the various family and business ties held by the Guggenheim's trustees. In this instance, the act of protest is once again the revolutionary aspect and the Guggenheim's cancelling of the exhibition is the observable effect of the work (Chilvers, 1998.)

Brecht's development of the A-affect, which coerces the audience into cognitive involvement in art, illustrates the contention that innovation on the part of the artist can overcome the perceived limitations posed by the traditional characteristics of the form, such as its venue. In addition, Hans Haacke's *Real Time Social System* illustrates that while traditional venues do limit the possibility of immediate group action as a response to socio-political art, as experienced in ancient and Non-Western cultures, the emotional and cognitive involvement elicited by socio-political art as art is able to evoke external, observable effects when presented in these venues. The next section focuses on observable reactions to resistance art.

2.4 The reactions to resistance art

Human beings react to stimuli in a three ways: by feeling, thinking or doing something (OED, 2005a). Art is the stimulus of content delivered through sensory experience. Traditional Western arts usually evoke both an emotional and cognitive reaction (Scruton, 2006:6,9). It may be sufficient to judge a work of art on this reaction when approaching it from a purely abstract point of view, however, the aim of activism is that of effecting social and political change (OED, 2005b).

Brecht maintained that the act of criticism is in itself an act of revolution, because revolution is criticism taken to its logical (and successful) conclusion (quoted in Clark, 1997:25). But, as early as 1967, critics in Britain were grappling with the question of what standards to apply in judging intentionally political art as effective without being "… driven to the absurd position from where Britten's *War Requiem* must be rated unsuccessful because there is still fighting in Vietnam and Biafra" (McVeagh, 1969:390). In democratic peace time capitalist Western society, the Marxist concept of 'revolutionary art' is no longer applicable[11] (Clark, 1997:157). So, to judge all resistance art by its success as large-scale revolution is inappropriate. At some time in the future political circumstances may once again make revolution and revolutionary art an appropriate response.

It is reasonable to say that for socio-political art to be judged effective it must cause a reaction. The reaction may take place on an internal level, i.e. as an emotional and cognitive response that opens up critical thought. Chris Burden's anti-war performance art of the 1970s, where he was shot in the arm with a rifle while crawling over broken glass and then having his hands nailed to the roof of a Volkswagen, is such an example. It functions as an allegory for the passive act of watching the news footage of killings, burnings and wounding which was regularly screened on American television during the Vietnam War. Burden's actions forced the audience into some feeling of responsibility, and coerced them into asking whether they should passively watch someone deliberately harming himself. (Clark, 1997:126.)

However, to effect change, mainstream activism is based on the belief that at some point in political debate, action, not theory, is needed (Blackburn, 1996b). In these terms it is more desirable and effective for a socio-political artwork to elicit an external, observable response. The opening of public discussion a highly desirable effect. The widespread revolution suggested by Brecht, although rarely achieved in contemporary society, is the ultimate response and outcome for arts activism. Observable responses include those such as censorship (experienced by Hans Haacke's *Real Time Social System* or Orwell's *Animal Farm*), the issue of threats, pickets, demonstrations, violence and the opening of public debate[12] (all experienced by

[11] During his lectures on university campuses during the 1960s Marcuse had emphasized that anti-war activists were not the modern equivalent of the classical Marxist proletariat (Wolin, 2006).

[12] Public debate is traditionally propagated in newspapers and on television and radio. In addition, the internet is now playing a powerful and widespread part in public debate and counter-cultural activities through re-publication of newspaper articles and the publication of online articles as well as by virtue of forums, message boards and chat rooms. Public art work found in a Metrolink station in the San Gabriel Valley, Baldwin, USA, for example, was the

Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*). Lastly, contemporary arts activism has given rise to an additional effect that may be considered successful — that of the empowerment of disenfranchised people, such as that given to the homeless by the "Homeless Collaborative" (Felshin, 1995:12).

2.4.1 Mechanism of effect: The concept of nuisance

This section expands on the concept of nuisance and its role in socio-political activism, in order to illuminate its application in the case studies discussed in chapters four and five. The element of nuisance is a key characteristic of activism and is closely tied to the element of resistance. In resisting dominant hegemonies, a work of art is acting as a nuisance. Each of the examples of activist art given in the previous sub-section can be defined as a nuisance when the definitions discussed below are applied.

According to political scholar Davina Cooper (2004:133) subordinate and resistant forces play a powerful role in counter-normative politics. People or things that are "… out of place, distracting attention, obstructing social processes or causing sensory offence …" foster spaces in which political activities may take place (Cooper, 2004:134). The act of being a nuisance can therefore challenge authorities, structures and preconceptions. However, being dismissed as a nuisance can also be counterproductive and demeaning in the quest to win support and persuade outsiders to a cause (Cooper, 2004:134).

Cooper has observed three types of effective mainstream uses of nuisance by political activists. The first two are closely related and are of relevance to arts activists. First, the act of 'transgression': being in the 'wrong' place, resisting your 'assigned' place, or being an 'inappropriate' presence is considered an act of nuisance that traverses zones of conduct and identity (Cooper, 2004:134). This type of protest was commonly and effectively employed during the American civil rights movement, feminist rights movements and anti-apartheid protests. It often requires repetition in order to be effective; yet through repetition unacceptable, distasteful things that are labelled as 'nuisance', 'stigma' or 'taboo' become normalised and conventional (Cooper, 2004:134).

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subject of demonstrations and conflict between pro and anti-immigration groups. It resulted in police intervention in May 2005. A news article had been published in the *Los Angeles Times* and was subsequently reprinted online, with

The second type of nuisance is "…symbolic or theatrical modes of activism that use the out of place to gain attention" (Cooper, 2004:134). Protests which have used this type of transgression have included kiss-ins and wed-ins in gay and queer political movements and 'die-ins' by HIV/AIDS activists.[13] Such protests are most effective when they are unexpected and surprising, once-off, theatrical gestures. However, while they raise the profile of a cause and usually announce that a resolution to the nuisance is possible, they are less useful in communicating anger and highlighting discrimination.[14] (Cooper, 2004:134-135.)

The third type of protest in which nuisance is a key factor, is that of tactical obstruction. It incorporates pickets, mass demonstrations and the use of activists' bodies to block any activities, such as urban construction, that require forward thinking and planning (Cooper, 2004:135). This sort of protest may be effective if artists choose to perform or exhibit their works in a space where they can be considered an obstruction. It is of less relevance to activists who wish to make their statement through the medium of the traditional staged arts such as ballet, theatre and opera.

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a forum, by an activist website named *American Renaissance*. The article sparked heated debate on both sides of the issue, so that the effects of the art become a point of widespread discussion. (Pierson & Biederman, 2005).

[13] The HIV activist's act of falling to the ground at an appointed time proved effective in demanding people's immediate attention, attracting media attention and consolidating political communities (Cooper, 2004:134).

[14] In addition, this type of transgression is also likely to focus people's attention on their own anger and irritation at being confronted with a 'nuisance' or 'irritant'. This unfortunately detracts from the socio-political issue that the activists wished to initially highlight (Cooper, 2004:135).

2.5 Summary: The conditions necessary for art to function as relevant and effective socio-political critique

Taking all the research presented in this chapter into account, it seems that the following conditions are necessary for art to function as socio-political critique:

1. The art form must hold a position in society which enables it to give visibility to the chosen topic.
2. The specific form must have the potential to explore the chosen subject.
3. The performance or display needs the element of resistance so that it will have nuisance value. The resistance of hegemonic values is in itself an act of counter-normative politics.
4. For it to be relevant and effective, art should evoke a reaction that is preferably outwardly observable. This reaction is often associated with the element of nuisance.
5. The choice of medium and form may be in itself, an act of resistance: popular forms are less likely to provide effective resistance to the mass culture that controls and promoted them.
6. Socio-political art may exist as an effective single performance, but, as illustrated by Cooper (2004:134), repetition (which is required to foster change) is desirable.
7. An art work may contain the element of resistance and create controversy independently of the creator's intent. The effect on the viewer or audience is determined by changing contexts of performance, and by differing approaches from members of a creative team.
8. The creation of an art work containing subversive elements can be seen as an act of empowerment.
9. Art may function as socio-political critique in any venue, provided that the element of resistance is present.

3 THE POSITION OF OPERA IN WESTERN SOCIETY

The previous chapter illustrated a number of conditions needed for art to function as relevant and effective socio-political critique. This chapter illustrates that opera can fulfil the first criteria, namely the ability to give visibility and audibility to the chosen critique.

3.1 Opera in the media

The widest area of communication and information of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century is the mass media. Even though the audience for opera is not equivalent in number to that of popular forms,[15] Story has observed (2002:46) that there is an "increasingly shared public culture of opera, which includes opera on CD, on video and DVD, on television, in advertising, in films, on radio, and in books, together with other forms of popular culture with which there is a considerable overlap (opera stars performing with pop stars; opera stars hosting variety shows; opera stars performing at major sporting events)." This shared public culture enables opera to bring socio-political critique to audiences outside the opera house.

3.1.1 Radio

Radio is essential in extending awareness of opera. Since 1931, for example, the Metropolitan Opera in New York has provided over 1,400 live broadcasts of performances.[16] Furthermore, the advent of satellite transmission during the 1980s and internet real-time broadcasting, (which appeared in 2000), now allows live performances to be heard through c. 300 stations in the USA, Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Latin America, China and Japan It is estimated that performances reach c. 11 million listeners. (MET, 2005; Met International Radio Broadcast Center, 2005.)

National and local stations also play a role in supporting opera. In the USA there are currently at least 69 radio stations which broadcast classical music.VivaLaVoce.com, an internet station

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[15] Art music recordings in the USA in 1998 contributed circa 4 percent of all compact disk sales (Cowen, 1998:146).

[16] The dedication of the American public to these performances was demonstrated at the end of the 2003-2004 seasons when sponsors Chevron Texaco, who had provided sponsorship for both the radio and television broadcasts since the 1940s, ended their patronage. Soprano Beverly Sills, chairman of the Metropolitan Opera Company, launched the "Save the Met Campaign" and the broadcasts continued uninterrupted by virtue of donations from foundations, individuals and companies until September 2005, when a new corporate sponsor — Toll Brothers, America's Luxury Home Builders™ — was secured. (MET, 2005.)

based in Washington DC, is dedicated to vocal music. The United Kingdom supports BBC 3 and Classic FM broadcasting from London and Lyric FM in Limerick, Ireland. (Ribbens, 2005). The internet station OperadiO is dedicated to opera and is run from London and York. It provides not only audio programming but also video visuals. OperadiO aims to reduce opera's elitist image and increase the availability and popularity of the medium (Craig *et al.*, 2003). Europe has about 41 classical stations, all providing operatic and instrumental programming (Ribbens, 2005).

3.1.2 Television

Television, one of the bastions of contemporary society, provides a prime example of the way in which contemporary opera is able to engage with wider culture. Opera is frequently relayed live from the New York Metropolitan Opera as part of their prolific "Live at the Met" series. To date, over 100 live performances and gala performances have been presented[17] (MET, 2006a). The BBC is currently committed to broadcasting four live performances of opera or ballet from the Royal Opera House each year until 2008, with the stipulation that one of these performances should be a new work. In addition, the BBC has committed to provide four associate documentaries over the same period (BBC Press Office, 2004a).

The first opera commissioned for television, Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors,* was broadcast live in 1951 by NBC-TV in the USA (Barnes, 2003:1). The next four decades saw opera commonly commissioned for television. Works such as Bliss's *Tobias and the Angel* (BBC, 1960), Stravinsky's *The Flood* (CBS, 1962), and Menotti's *Labyrinth* (NBC, 1963), manipulated the entire spectrum of technological possibilities — technology which is unavailable when writing for the stage (Barnes, 2003:1).[18] The 1980s was a quiet period in television opera, but in 1989 Channel Four commissioned six one-hour operas, each from a different production company. The most recent of these was Gerald Barry's *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit* (1995), first broadcast in 1996 (Barnes, 2003:10).

An example of a more recent production of television opera is the 2003 BBC, Opus Arte and the Los Angeles Opera's version of Janacek's *The Cunning Little Vixen* (1924), which connected

17 In April 2005 the Met television broadcasts became international with the high definition digital broadcast of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* (MET, 2006a).

18 Television opera was not unique to Britain and the USA. Other examples of television opera, presented in highly experimental visual styles, are: Angerer's *Die Passkontrolle* (1959) for ORF in Vienna, Akytagawa's *Orpheus in Hiroshima* (1968) for NHK in Tokyo and Pannell's *Aberfan* (1977) for CBC in Canada (Barnes, 2003:9).

with contemporary culture through the popular art of animation. The musical component involved the production of a new edition of the original opera score by conductor Kent Nagano and composer Christophe Durrant. Designer and director Geoff Dunbar provided the animation, which was produced by hand drawing and digital imagery in the style of 1920s newspaper strip drawings by Stanislav Lolek (1873-1936) (BBC Press Office, 2003). Opera has also recently attracted the attention of celebrity director Sir Kenneth Branagh, whose film version of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* in English translation, set in World War I, has its release in 2007 (Beard, 2004; Conrad, 2006).

3.1.2.1 Realism and Reality TV

Television audiences favour a new style of television realism, termed 'hyper-realism' by the Hollywood industry (Barnes, 2003:99). In 2002, British opera composer Jonathan Dove manipulated this trend, combining fantasy and reality in the production of his opera *Death of a Princess* (2002). The work was based on the life of Lady Diana Spencer, Princess of Wales. It was commissioned by Channel Four. The opera used filmed scenes from South London, a recreation of Diana's fatal accident in Paris, dream sequences, news footage of Diana's wedding to Prince Charles, the crowds at her funeral, *Panorama's* interview with the Princess, security camera images of Diana and Dodi al-Fayed leaving the Ritz Hotel in Paris, and clips from Tony Blair's speech entitled 'The People's Princess'. (Aldridge, 2002.) Reviews were unanimous in their praise for the potential of the genre, but most critics felt let down by elements of the score.[19]

The following year an unusual and innovative project was extremely successful in raising the profile of the operatic form. BBC Three combined the concept of Reality TV with a fad taken from popular culture, that of the flashmob.[20] The creators of *Flashmob — The Opera*, used musical material from Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and Verdi's *La Traviata* to create a new work based on the Greek Orpheus myth. The myth was transformed into

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[19] See Christiansen (2002), Higgins (2003) and Lawson, Rankin & Walter (2002).

[20] According to BBC Three's documentation, street performance artist Bill W organised the world's first flashmob in Manhattan on 19 June 2003 at 7.27pm. One hundred and fifty people gathered in the rug division of Macy's department store, surrounding a fine carpet valued at ten thousand dollars. They proceeded to inform the sales staff that they were the residents of a communal warehouse and were shopping for a 'love rug'. Ten minutes later, they left. A month later, flashmobs had occurred in San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, Austin and Minneapolis (BBC Three, 2004). For further information on flashmobs see www.flashmob.co.uk which provides both local and global information on the phenomenon.

a contemporary satire in which an affianced couple find themselves in relationship difficulties due to the man's obsession with football. Characters include the couple, a potential new love interest and a chorus of football fans (made up of commuters and the flashmob) who all collide in London's busy Paddington Station (which was chosen as the performance venue). In October 2003 registered members of the public were sent text messages and e-mails, requesting them to form a flashmob at the revealed time at Paddington station. The performance featured the BBC Concert Orchestra, performers from the Royal Opera House and technical services from BBC Classical Music TV and BBC Comedy Entertainment. Consecutive transmissions were viewed by approx. 650,000 people, almost double the number who attend the Royal Opera House (approx. 350,000 per year). (Murphy, 2004; BBC Press Office, 2004b.)

Flashmob — The Opera also illustrated that opera is able to evoke discussion on internet message boards. The discussion was spurred on when a Boxing Day review noted that: "BBC Three's Flashmob: The Opera didn't quite live up to its billing" (BBC News, 2004a). People who had either participated in or watched the event were incensed at what they felt to be incorrect reporting. The internet message boards dedicated to the topic reflect an almost unanimous positive response. Simon Cox, an administrator of Flashmob.co.uk, stated: "Judging by the feedback left here on Flashmob.co.uk, we think the BBC are wrong in this statement and that it was a huge success. It seems to have generated a huge amount of new interest in opera and as a vehicle to do that Flashmobbing is obviously a success" (Cox, 2004). Furthermore, audience members gave descriptions such as "superb", "brilliant", "inspiring, brave, bold", "compulsive viewing" and "electrifying". Others described themselves as being "riveted" and "spellbound", while additional members posted queries as to why the transmissions did not receive dedicated advertising, increased publicity and a CD/DVD release. Commentary was consistently posted from 27 December 2004 until the most recent posting of 29 December 2005[21] (Cox *et. al*, 2004-2005).

The opera went on to receive official recognition for its success when it was awarded a Golden Rose in the music category at the prestigious *Rose D'Or Television Festival* in Lucerne in 2005

[21] The BBC Boxing day report was alone in its inaccurate reporting and subsequent reports from the BBC concurred with the sentiments expressed at Flashmob.co.uk. BBC chairman Michael Grade described the opera as "outstanding" (Grade, 2005). BBC director-general, Mark Thompson further believes that programming such as *Flashmob — The Opera* has raised the profile of classical music television and that televised classical music is experiencing a creative renaissance complimented by newly developing television technology (Thompson, 2005).

(BBC Press Office, 2005a). As a result of this success, BBC Three presented a second flashmob opera in April 2005, satirizing Goethe's *Faust* to depict an Olympic athlete who sacrificed private fulfilment for an Olympic career. Arias from *Carmen*, *Madame Butterfly* and *La Bohéme* were incorporated into the score and message boards once again indicate great success, especially for those involved at the venue in Sheffield (Cox *et. al.*, 2005; BBC Press Office, 2005c). Furthermore, the accomplishments of the flashmob operas helped to motivate the BBC to commission six comedy operas by lyricist Stewart Lee and composer Richard Thomas (creators of *Jerry Springer — The Opera*, 2002) to be based on contemporary television styles such as news, history and reality television (BBC News, 2004b).

3.2 Opera as staged art

The previous section illustrated that opera interacts with television as both a method of transmitting traditional opera from the opera house to a wider audience as well as a way in which operatic performance has been transformed into a studio-production (such as *Death of a Princess*) or a live television event in unusual settings (such as *Flashmob — The Opera*). However, emerging technologies have also had an impact within the opera house itself as directors frequently use all available multi-media in order to enhance their stage direction.

3.2.1 Multi-media in opera

Experimentation with multi-media effects within the operatic score has played a role in operatic composition since the 1960s[22] and has recently become one of the most important facets of stage direction. Multi-media technologies are commonly used in traditional stagings in the direction of

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The opera was subsequently broadcast in North America by Ovation, as well shown by The Dallas Opera in association with the Angelika Film Center in Texas (Cox *et al.*, 2004-2005; Calvin, 2005:1).

[22] One of the earliest operas to make ground-breaking use of developing multi-media such as tape, slides, films and multi-level staging was Bernd Alois Zimmerman's 1965 opera, *Die Soldaten* (Morgan, 1991:45). The 1970s then saw eminent composers such as Luciano Berio change their focus from serialism to the composition of electronic music utilising collage, quotation and parody focusing on texture and pitch logic for organisation. Berio's output included two operas: *Opera* (1970), an anti-opera tracing both the "decline" of the operatic genre with the composition of Montiverdi's *Orfeo* (1607) as the starting point, and *Re in Ascolta* (1983). British composer Harrison Birtwistle similarly turned his hand to multi-media experimentation in *The Mask of Orpheus* (1984) as did fellow serial devotee, Karlheinz Stockhausen who worked on his operatic cycle *Licht* throughout the 1980s. The operas were groundbreaking in their combination of pre-recorded tape music, pre-recorded synthesisers, on-stage solo instrumentalists, singers and vast, expansive performance spaces. Stockhausen began *Licht* in 1977 and aimed at composing an opera for every day of the week. Of these the best known are *Donnerstag* (1981), *Samstag* (1984) and *Montag* (1988), the second of which had to be premiered in a sports stadium in Milan due to its magnitude and complexity (Schwartz & Godfrey, 1993:163; Anderson, 2000:160, 383, 469, 500; Morgan, 1991:451; Griffiths, 1995:268).

new works as well as in innovative and radical reinterpretations of old works, and have played an important role in the growth of opera audiences. Multi-media opera has a resonance with today's multi-media world and strengthens the form's ties with contemporary artistic forms. Opera becomes less divorced from everyday experience and therefore less alienating for those who have little or no experience of classical music. In order to accommodate performance technologies, opera houses commonly undertake major renovations such as the digital system bought by the Seattle Opera in 2003. This system allows high resolution images to be projected onto a 79-foot by 39-foot backdrop and cinematic effects such as sunrises or gradually changing horizons to be incorporated into the direction (Peterson, 2003; Duffy & Feldstein, 1996:84-85).

Both traditionalist directors such as Franco Zefirelli and innovators such as Peter Sellars and Pierre Audi mount productions which frequently include complex multi-media effects in their stagings (Guinther, 2001:100; Blum, 2006). These can be used as an aid to realism, for the creation of naturalistic effects, to create an industrial-style spectacle or as part of a figurative artistic interpretation. For example, the multi-media technologies used in Seattle Opera's 2000 production of Wagner's *Ring* allowed the Rhine to appear to have depth as well as allow the Rhinemaidens to appear to be flying while the technology remained hidden (Rourke, 2000:1-3). In contrast, Alex Olle and Carlos Padrissa's 1999 production of Berlioz's *Faust* for the Salzburg Festival used multi-media to create a harsh, abstract, futuristic spectacle. Their production used a giant cylinder in front of a multi-level backdrop onto which repetitive, electronic, computer-generated images were projected (Olle *et al.* 2000). In contrast to both of the latter, productions such as minimalist composer Louis Andriessen's *Writing to Vermeer* use multi-media to create symbolic artistic interpretations of the work. British film director Peter Greenaway collaborated on this production which not only used video images but also required the vocalists to be submersed frequently in liquids representing blood, ink, varnish and milk. Finally, a deluge of flood water swept the singers, set and stage away. (Greenaway, 2006; Service, 2002; Tannenbaum, 2004:40-41; Lewis, 2006; Clements, 2006.)

Audi's collaboration with Andriessen's *Writing to Vermeer* was particularly important as it focused on the significant film and visual arts public in the Netherlands, opening the way for the public to become attracted to the hybridity of opera as opposed to its traditional classical image (Cody, 1994). Similarly, minimalist composer Phillip Glass has also found success in hybrid

productions: his multi-media operas[23] have a far wider following than that of traditional opera. His trilogy of multi-media operas, *Orphée* (1993), *La belle et la bête* (1994) and *Les enfants terribles* (1996), attained international critical acclaim. Glass used scripts from Cocteau's films by the same names and used them as cinematic opera libretti, projecting the films, with soundtracks removed, during the opera productions. Between the latter two works, Glass again collaborated with Robert Wilson on an additional multi-media opera, this time termed 'music theatre' as opposed to opera. *Monsters of Grace* (1998) combined live performers and a digital 3D stereoscope (Millington, 1998:38; Strickland, 2001:934-935).

3.2.2 The expanding role of the director

The growth of multi-media technologies in opera has contributed to the rise of the director as a seminal creative figure in contemporary opera. While opera is by nature a staged art, in previous eras the diva and conductor alternately dominated the creation process and held the attention of the public. Without a change in these roles, opera would have remained trapped in an irrelevant and untheatrical period-costumed[24] 'stand and deliver' style of direction that would have limited opera's ability to give weight to any social issues. (Anon, 1996:88; Allison, 2006:2.)

Millington notes (2001:464) that the key historical moment that allowed directors to take on a changing role in opera came in 1951 when the Bayreuth Festspielhaus reopened. During the war, the house had become associated with the patronage of the Nazi party. Wieland and Wolfgang Wagner decided to make a pronounced and symbolic break with the past by discarding all pictorial sets and props, reducing the set to the bare essentials and placing the action on a circular platform which represented an endless horizon. Their aim was to present the work as a psychological truth as opposed to Wagner's written stage directions, which they considered to be inner visions as opposed to explicit demands. This innovative approach became a precedent for any composer's stage directions, constrained by the period in which they were written, to be

[23] It was through the 1976 premiere of his opera *Einstein on the Beach* in New York, that Glass achieved fame. The opera, a five hour performance during which audience members would enter and exit at will, was produced in collaboration with Robert Wilson, whose expertise lies in multi-media stagings termed "theatre of visions" or "theatre of images" which combines media and stage action in a non-chronological order to evoke dream sequences rather than linear narrative. Its performance formed a pivotal moment in Glass's career — turning him towards composing for theatre, film and dance as opposed to the concert hall.

[24] The reduced use of period costumes has allowed the modern singer to move naturally. Their earlier counterparts were restricted by the cumbersome weight and shape of the costumes and movement was kept to a minimum to ensure that the performer had enough energy left to sing (Anon, 1996:88).

disregarded in favour of the timeless ideas embodied within the works themselves (Millington, 2001:464; Allison, 2006:2; Evans, 1999:299-315).

Concurrently, another production ideology was under development in Germany. Walter Feldenstein was founder and director of the Komische Oper in East Berlin from 1947 until 1975. He established "… realistic music theatre", incorporating long rehearsal periods,[25] ensemble playing and a focus on the actor-singer as the central figure. He required the singers to draw upon emotional reserves and personal experiences in order to give dramatic portrayals and convincing interaction between characters. Millington (2001:464) describes his legacy as one of psychological and social realism, with emphasis on role identification. Feldenstein was instrumental in infusing his productions with social and political commitment, a trait which his pupils such as Joachim Herz and Götz Fredrich then combined with Brechtian techniques to give their direction a sharper ideological edge[26] (Millington, 2001:465-466).

Interventionist directors such as Feldenstein's pupils tended to explore developing critical theories such as structuralism, post-structuralism, feminism, reader-orientated approaches and questions of authorship. These approaches have revolutionised the way in which classical and modern works were and still are presented (Millington, 2001:466; Milnes, 1983). The transition from old operatic acting techniques to new theatrical acting was a difficult one for many singers to make. Directors such as Jonathan Moore, Nikolaus Lehnhoff, Deborah Warner, Peter Stein and Peter Brook were all dogged by singers who refused to change traditional methods of staging during the 1980s and 1990s (Clark, 2006a:93; Evans, 1999:320-321; Moore, 2004). The struggles of these directors paved the way for younger generations such as David Alden, Richard Jones, David Poutney and Peter Sellars to create their own directorial niches and create innovative productions which are of comparable standards to straight theatre, thus keeping opera in touch with contemporary culture[27] (Millington, 2001:467).

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[25] The traditional operatic routine incorporated almost no rehearsal time and singers toured with their own costumes, indicated to the director where they wanted stand and then performed block signature roles as guest stars in different cities (Anon, 1996:88).

[26] Ideological involvement in operatic staging was not a unique influence of German directors and was perpetuated across the continent by producers such as Giorgio Strehler (who directed at La Scala) and the Frenchman Patrice Chéreau, acclaimed for his 1976 Bayreuth *Ring* and his mid-1980s work at the Théâtre des Amandiers in Nanterre (Millington, 2001:466-467).

[27] It is widely observed that American opera lags behind its European counterpart in theatrical experimentation in opera direction.

While many productions by the directors discussed above contain iconoclastic and interventionist ideologies adapted for modern day use, a traditionalist school of operatic direction continues to be maintained. The Metropolitan Opera and La Scala, in particular, prefer directors such as Franco Zeffirelli and Peter Hall. Zeffirelli in particular retains a great deal of power on the international opera, film and theatre circuits, having directed opera from the 1950s right through until the present day (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2006a). Neither traditionalist nor interventionist directors dominated until the early 1990s, when critics and traditionalist audiences began to rebel against iconoclastic productions., This development, taken in conjunction with the general sense of ideological apathy and cultural malaise in Western society, led to financially unstable opera companies favouring traditionalist productions in order to ensure financial success (Millington, 2001:466). However, several factors prompt many directors to resist this trend and to continue with their innovation and experimentation. These factors include the pressures placed on socially exclusive traditionalism by 'popular opera', a growing disillusionment with repeat productions of standard repertoire by artists themselves, frequent shifts in public tastes due to the ever-changing social and political environment, and the fact that in the current post-modern age cultural identity is uncertain (Evans, 1999:420-421; Millington, 2001:466; Ang, 1996:2).

This continuing multiplicity of styles means that the director is now often responsible for achieving a balance in each season's programming. This balance ensures opera's visibility by maintaining the support of traditional audiences, while renewing old repertoire and garnering support from new or potentially new audiences through the frequent presentation of radical and unique new opera. Pierre Audi has managed this role well in the Netherlands — he was head-hunted to become the artistic director of the Muziektheater in Amsterdam in 1988 and is credited with creating a loyal audience base for opera and new opera within the Netherlands, where there are historically few opera-going traditions. The Dutch National Opera now produces eclectic programming, including traditional operas by Puccini, Handel, Wagner, Rossini and Verdi, works by modernist composers such as Stockhausen, Boulez and Birtwistle and living composers such as Vivier. Audi's own style of direction is commonly described as innovative. Productions consistently receive favorable reviews, be they traditionalist or experimental in nature (Clark, 2006b:24; P.J.S., 1993:54; Riding, 1996:C11; Van Oorschot, 2002; Loomis, 2000:72-73.)

3.3 The opera market

Capitalism and the market economy form the financial framework against which all new art is created and performed and old art revived in the West.[28] The tastes and preferences of the majority of consumers within this market do not run towards classical music (Peacock, 1993:122). However, art music continues as a sustainable, albeit relatively small industry, which American economist Tyler Cowen describes as flourishing (Cowen, 1998:149). Live performance has grown since the 1950s, especially in the US market (Cowen, 1998:149). Between 1965 and 1990 the number of symphony orchestras grew from 58 to over 300, opera companies from 27 to 150, and non-profit regional theatres from 22 to 500, thus outpacing the European market. The contemporary demand for early music performed with original performance practice and period instruments has also supplemented the art music market (Cowen, 1998:149). In 1990, despite the flagging of forms such as the symphony,[29] opera entered into a new phase of success as a commodity, thus increasing its overall visibility (Duffy & Feldstein, 1996:84-85; Cowen, 1998:22-31).

3.3.1 Cross-over opera: The Three Tenors

During the nineteenth century in Europe and the USA, opera was an integral part of public culture, simultaneously defined as both art and entertainment, depending on by whom it was consumed and in which context (Story, 2002:44). However, at the turn of the century opera underwent a transition and became a preserve of the elite classes, remaining that way until the early 1990s when the appearance of the Three Tenors had an immense effect in raising the profile and popularity of the operatic industry (Story, 2002:33-43).

Tenors Luciano Pavarotti, Placido Domingo and José Carreras first performed as a trio at the Caracalla Baths on the eve of the final of the Football World Cup in Rome. The performance

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[28] Capitalism manifests itself in every tier of society and in 1992 the study of the relationships between financial markets and the arts and culture sector was officially recognised by the American Economic Association by adding 'Cultural economics' to its 'Classification of Economic Disciplines' (Peacock, 1993:2).

[29] Tindall (2005) provides insight into the difficulties faced by struggling symphony orchestras which received an over-abundance of funding during the 1980s and 1990s resulting in unsustainable growth in the numbers of orchestral musicians in the USA. Despite the bleak outlook for the symphony in the West set out by Tindall, globalisation has proved a positive force of the symphonic form and by 2000 classical music had permeated the cultures of countries as varied as Taiwan, Egypt, Indonesia, and Turkey (Wilson, 2002). These countries are now home to composers, performers and consumers who contribute to the artistic and monetary wealth of the

was broadcast live to a world-wide audience of approximately 1.5 billion people (Evans, 1999:356). The event was a phenomenal success and the BBC decided to use Pavarotti's recording of Puccini's 'Nessun Dorma' as the theme tune for the rest of their World Cup coverage. The record release of the concert reached the top of the UK, Dutch and Spanish pop charts, the video toppled Madonna to take number one on the UK pop-video chart and Decca sold approximately 5 million CDs and cassettes world-wide the next twelve months (Evans, 1999:356). The trio then went on to perform at three subsequent World Cups[30] and were imitated by a number of vocal groups such as the 'Three Sopranos' and the 'Three Chinese Tenors'. By 2003 the record was still the best selling classical album in recorded history (Lee, 2003:14).

The unprecedented commercial triumph of the Three Tenors set new standards for the industry and showed that it is feasible to sell classical albums in their millions (Lee, 2003:14). Record companies responded with vigorous and relentless searching for the next blockbuster[31] (Lee, 2003:14). Te Kanawa, Carreras and Domingo all released cross-over albums during the 1990s, as did the opera stars of the next generation such as Bryn Terfel and Renée Flemming. Despite the difference between popular and operatic techniques and timbres, cross-over albums are successful, possibly because there is a perception that acclaimed opera singers confer sophistication, glamour, and a measure of respectability on popular music (Evans, 1999:359-360). Simultaneously, however, British soprano, Lesley Garrett, is admired for her working class background and unaffected manner. Her albums such as *Diva: A Soprano at the Movies* and *Prima Donna* outsold similar offerings from Carreras and Te Kanawa in 1993. By marketing herself as a sexual commodity, Garrett has achieved the title "Britain's Favourite Opera Star" and "the people's soprano" (Evans, 1999:360, 361).

Commoditization of sexual appeal in the opera market does not only extent to female singers but has also produced a 'popra' version of popular music's boy band. Il Divo,[32] in particular, have dominated popular music charts. Albums from this all-male quartet achieve high sales: In 2006 they sold 156,000 copies of their debut album *Ancora*, thus surpassing popular artists Jamie

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international music industry. By 2001 Japan was home to twenty-three full time symphony orchestras (Okayama, 2001).

[30] 1994: Los Angeles, 1998: Paris, 2002: Yokohama (Lee, 2003:14).

[31] Pavarotti himself further capitalised upon the three tenors' achievements by creating and performing in the popular concert series 'Pavarotti and Friends' in which the tenor performed with popular artists such as Sting, Bryan Adams, Eric Clapton, Elton John, Sheryl Crow and The Spice Girls, amongst others, in large venues such as football stadiums, eschewing the conventional ritual of the opera house to tap into a mass audience. (Rosenblum, 1995:16, Seligmann, 1998:65; Reece, 1996:13.)

Foxx and Mary J. Blige, and achieving the top album sales in the USA for the week of 2 February 2006 (Gunderson, 2006:01d). The quartet had occupied both first and third positions on the American classical crossover chart during the previous week, separated by John Williams whose soundtrack to *Memoirs of a Geisha*, featuring Yo-Yo Ma and Itzhak Perlman, occupied second position (Anon, 2006a:71).

3.3.2 Record Sales

The current proliferation of classical CD recordings means that art music is readily available through the internet, mail order or immense chain-stores (the world's larger stores may hold up to 22,000 titles by well-known, lesser-known and unknown composers). The availability of recordings by lesser-known composers and performers on the internet and in both small and large record stores is a positive step for the industry. However, by presenting the public with an abundance of recorded stock repertoire of an exceptional standard, the market has become saturated. Studios routinely refuse to re-record 'old favourites' such as Mozart's symphonies. In addition, Cowen has observed that, in the current market, the consumer prefers "… performer-based music when it is available at low cost … [and] products that are accessible, direct and tied into a charismatic personality" (Cowen, 1998:146). Studios therefore focus their resources on the marketing of vocal music sung by 'stars' or the production of CD's with potential in music markets other than classical (Cowen, 1998:150). As illustrated in the previous section, the opera cross-over industry fits directly into these aims, but recordings of full productions do not.

Recent developments have gone some way to solving this problem. Firstly, many small but adventurous recording companies have appeared. They produce recordings such as full length opera that larger studios do not consider. These companies range from musician-run labels like Bridge, Oxingale and Cantaloupe as well as ambitious mid-price mass-marketers such as Naxos, whose recordings span across the entire operatic repertoire. Secondly, while large record stores such as Virgin Music and Tower Records may no longer stock a wide range of classical CDs, classical music sales are not affected because the mode of sale has altered to favour online stores (Kozinn, 2006:AR1). (Bambarger, 1998:3.)

[32] See Gardener (2005:5e) and Gardener *et al.* (2006:6d).

3.3.3 The Internet

By 1998 many online retailers attributed 4.5 percent of turnover to the classical share of their business. Some, such as N2K's Music Boulevard, achieved classical sales as high as 8 percent. In addition, Amazon.com unveiled its new search engine, which created extensive and detailed search criteria. Users can now locate classical recordings through a variety of cross-referenced information such as composer's name, title of the piece, performer's name, the type of work, record label, best sellers and other information. Customers may find their music quickly even if they misspell the keywords. Amazon also hired experienced classical music editors to compile album reviews, artist reviews and lists of recommended recordings. (Bambarger, 1998:3.)

The internet has now (2006) become the primary resource for obtaining classical music recordings, whether CD's or MP3 downloads, and it is also the primary source of information about recordings. Internet deep-catalog shops like arkivmusic.com offer almost any CD in print (Kozinn, 2006:AR1). Kozinn (2006:AR1) reports that on Apple's iTunes, classical music has accounted for 12 percent of their billion track sales over their first three years; this percentage constitutes approximately four times that of the classical music share of the CD market. Statements from both Sony-BMG and Universal show that their download sales have also increased while CD sales have remained constant. Downloaders are a new market and audience for classical music as opposed to the same consumers switching formats[33] (Kozinn, 2006:AR1).

Similarly, opera houses now make their recordings available on web-sites which support the sale of online downloads. The most prolific is iTunes. Individual companies also offer a variety of complementary downloads from their websites, for example, the Welsh National Opera provides free samples of its productions via video streaming and MP3 download. These downloads include director David Poutney's 2005 production of Wagner's *Der Fliegende Hollander*, featuring tenor Bryn Terfel, and Virginia Opera, which offers free opera 'trailers', opera-related desktop wallpaper, and sample arias via streaming audio. (WNO, 2006; VO, 2006.)

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[33] The New York Philharmonic took note of this success and made a Mozart concert download available on iTunes, which then successfully sold 2,000 complete copies and about 1,000 individual tracks in its first six weeks, while the Los Angeles Philharmonic's two concerts of minimalist music sold 900 copies and around 400 individual tracks collectively in their first six weeks. Music downloads possibly represent a new avenue for the rejuvenation of the symphonic form. Other orchestras, such as Milwaukee Symphony and Philharmonia Baroque in San Francisco have followed suit and begun to offer downloads directly from their own websites. (Kozinn; 2006:AR1; Gramaphone, 2006.)

With regard to contemporary and new music, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies believes (2005:7), as does Kozinn (2006:AR1), that music's availability on the internet can only represent a positive development for new music as a growth industry.[34] When commenting from the composer's point of view, Davies states: "Bearing in mind that the possibilities of performance and recording of new classical music in the concert hall are at present limited, is it not a good idea to compose music which, from its conception, has the downloading of a recording in mind?" (Davies, 2005:7.) Davies's manager, Judy Arnold, oversees Davies's own web-site,[35] from which works can be directly downloaded and a score or CD paid for by credit card and delivered by post. This site currently offers 70 titles and, according to Davies (2005:7), response has come from numerous countries and has been encouraging enough to ensure his future output. As the cost of web-based technologies, such as those used by Virginia Opera, the Welsh National Opera and Sir Peter Maxwell Davies decreases, so does the investment needed for new creative ventures. Composers can create works with little personal cost, despite no guarantee of compensation. In this manner, innovation in new music will be subsidised by people willing to act in a non-commercial manner and, although the majority of ventures might possibly fail, new styles and innovation can break through to establish new markets.

3.3.4 Marketing techniques

3.3.4.1 The traditional audience

According to Michael Letchford, the marketing director of Warner Classics International, the ingenuity of the Three Tenors' marketing campaign lay not only in their transformation of classical music as a powerful brand, sold as a pop record, but also in the fact that this did not alienate traditional audiences (quoted in Evans, 1999:357). During most of the twentieth century, opera audiences constituted the elite minority[36] (Story, 2002). A discussion of the traditional

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[34] After Kozinn's article "This Is The Golden Age" set out his optimistic interpretation of classical sales figures, the *New York Times* received several letters, such as that from Gabrial Rossman, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of California. He believes that such statistics are not representative of actual audience numbers and are instead a symptom of "manyniche tastes" (Rossman, 2006:AR6). Ronan Segev, artistic director of a non-profit organisation named Ten O'Clock Classics, claimed that in looking at such positive statistics, Kozinn neglected to mention that classical music "does not have an important place in the fabric of today's culture" (Segev, 2006:AR8). See Cowen (1998) for further discussion on the ongoing debate between "cultural optimists", such as Kozinn and "cultural pessimists", such as Rossman and Segev.

[35] http://music.maxopus.com

[36] Story (2002:33) shows that after its development as a genre during the 1600s, the operatic oeuvre evolved in such a way that by the nineteenth century it had become a widely popular form of entertainment, enjoyed by all echelons of society in both Britain and the USA. It was, however, during the latter period that opera began to gain the epithet

opera-going audiences is therefore commonly accompanied by an associated mental image of formal dress, outmoded behaviour, champagne, quail's eggs and a dislike for any deviation from traditional presentation in period costume, staging or decorum — anything which might blemish opera's 'snob value' (Evans, 1999:411, 412, 416). While an audience of this description is still to be found at Glyndebourne (housing Britain's most conservative audience), the majority of opera-goers are not fanatics. Current opera audiences now comprise an eclectic mixture of people who come together for differing reasons. These include appreciation of the art of the music (these audience members are now commonly found in occupying the cheap, partial view seats), desire for pure entertainment, corporate obligation, and social networking (Evans, 1999:400-408).

A similar misconception exists as to the general age group of opera audiences. Many companies believe that their audience is aging, yet a 1995 survey by the English National Opera at the Coliseum showed that the age group of 25 to 35 constituted a majority when compared to the general indicator of ages 35 to 54 as the most common in the 1993 survey (Evans, 1999:402). In addition, between 1986 and 1990, the British Market Research Bureau (BMRB) found that opera audience numbers in Britain rose by 15 percent, drawing increasing numbers of "up-market", "enthusiastic" and "involved" people aged between 15 and 24 years (Evans, 1999:401). Evans (1999:401-402) provides a comprehensive account of the demography of contemporary opera audiences:

> The findings [from the BMRB] show that ABs ('upper middle class' and 'middle class' …) constitute 30 per cent of opera audiences: C1s ('lower middle class') 25 per cent: C2s ('skilled working class') 20 per cent: Ds ('working class') 12 per cent and Es (those at lowest level of subsistence) 13 percent. Within such a social class schema the 'upper class' or 'Establishment' audience for whom, as we have seen, the ROH has been described as a club who run the finance of opera; is hidden within 'upper middle class'.

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of high art (or culture) that currently inhibits mass appreciation. Story (2002:33) discusses the research of McConchie, who claims that in the USA the upper-classes appropriated the operatic form through three intersecting social strategies: first by distinguishing it from theatre by the creation of venues dedicated solely to operatic performance, secondly through the imposition of behavioural and dress codes deemed appropriate by the upper-classes at such venues, and thirdly through the insistence that only foreign language opera could meet the stringent standards of the elite audience. Story (2002:34) further illustrates that researchers such as McConchie, Levine and DiMaggio differ on the time frame in which this transformation occurred. McConchie believes it to be complete circa 1865, Levine contends that it was only at the end of the nineteenth century that opera became isolated from other forms, while DiMaggio proposes that the change was completed during the 1930s when opera houses adopted non-profit funding schemes and finally legitimised the form as 'high culture'. Despite these differences, all three agree that during the early twentieth century, the opera house became a place in which to exclude all but the educated upper-classes (Story, 2002:35-37). A similar transformation occurred in the United Kingdom, where pre-industrial cultural pursuits were gradually replaced by class-specific entertainment. In this manner opera was transformed from a genre that provided entertainment for many classes into so-called 'high-culture with restricted access in favour of the elite minority' (Story, 2002:37).

> Even so the Arts Council of Great Britain (1991) reported that whilst 11.7 per cent of the population attended at least one classical concert during a year (only 4.8 per cent attended more than one), only 5.9 per cent attended an opera, so the audience being dissected in these other accounts is a very small one. For example, CACI Ltd. carried out an analysis of the Welsh National Opera's audience on its regular visits to Birmingham employing ACORN residential location/consumption group neighbourhood groups (CACI 1994). The most significant four groups in the WNO Birmingham audience were labelled 'Affluent Urbanites' (at 4.7 per cent): 'Prosperous Professionals, Metropolitan Areas' (4.1 per cent): 'Better off Executives, Inner City Areas' (4.7 per cent) and towering above all others 'Wealthy Achievers, Suburbia' (36.0 per cent). Unfortunately this research didn't pursue the importance of opera consumption to these groups but rather sought correlations against other socio-economic data such as overall income (emphatically correlated with regards to households with over 40,000 [Pounds] pa) and education level (the percentage with degrees also extremely high). One further group was singled out by CACI—'Comfortable middle Agers, Mature Home-Owning Areas'—high in audience attendance but low in income.
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> Females constitute 60 percent of audiences and the over 55s (23 percent of the population) half and the over 65s 30 percent. Many commentators and companies believe that their audience is aging, but the 1995 ENO survey of its Coliseum audience showed 25-34 year-olds constituting the largest age-range presence, higher than the 45-54s who had dominated their 1993 survey (Kimberley 1995:1273-4).

These surveys indicate an increasingly varied demographic in age and class of the core opera audience. Between 1985 and 1990, 60 percent of opera's new audience members were under the age of 35. With regards to class variations, Evans (1999:403) believes that, despite increasing in number, younger members of the audience are merely the next generation of opera's traditional audience. However, this is of less concern to opera houses when viewed in the light of the ENO's 1995 survey, which indicated that with regards to production, the over 55's prefer known works and stagings, while the under 35's are the most likely to go to radical productions and performances of lesser known works (Evans, 1999:402).

3.3.4.2 Combating public misconceptions

Even though operatic singing is now experiencing newfound popularity and the industry is able to make head-line news, changing audience demographics do not necessarily provide full houses. Philip Glass's minimalist opera *The Voyage* (1992), for example, attracted a totally different type of audience member, but did not manage to fill all the seats at its Metropolitan Opera production (Duffy & Feldstein, 1996:84; Evans, 1999:403.) The public still holds a number of misconceptions about the current operatic experience and these views influence their willingness to attend performances. In the USA, there is a general dislike for anything that is associated with

European aristocracy and opera is frequently accused of Eurocentricity (Midgette, 2006a:AR1; Allen, 1993:22). In Britain, there is an equivalent dislike of foreignness — many Britons believe that if they do not have a good command of Italian, all opera will remain garbled and confusing (Hampton, 2006:2). Other generalized misconceptions include the perception that opera is dull, elitist, expensive and overly formal (Hampton, 2006:1-2).

These perceptions do have factual causes: until the 1970s, for example, the majority of opera company managers in America were European (Midgette, 2006a: AR1). Opera tickets from the most prominent houses are often extremely expensive.[37] In addition, opera is sung in many languages. This makes it difficult to understand the intricacies of the plot if the audience do not speak the foreign language or have not pre-read the libretto. Operatic acting was, until recently, (see the discussion on operatic directors) un-theatrical in nature: it involved a 'stand and deliver' and single gesture approach on the part of star singers who often wished to display vocal virtuosity rather than dramatic ability. At the Vienna Staatsoper, formality is still required and if a patron dresses casually, staff are visibly hostile (Melick, 2004:56-59). In addition, older audience members do attend out of appreciation for the ritual, ambience and art of formal classical concerts and will express disapproval at what they perceive to be disruptions of these elements (Owen, 2003:456). Audiences at Glyndebourne boycott progressive productions and commonly respond with noisy boos and catcalls (Milnes, 1994:33). Lastly, pessimism from within the classical music industry itself, which includes the referral to opera as a museum culture by those such as Lukas Pairon, the artistic director of the *Ictus* ensemble, filters through into public opinion[38] (Pairon, 2001).

The industry has acknowledged these stereotypes and responded to the problems (Hampton, 2006). One of the earliest practical approaches to marketing opera was the publication of opera text books written in an accessible style. The Three Tenors' success had illustrated to the public that opera was art but that it could also be entertainment (Story, 2002:37). However, in defining

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[37] For example in 2006, La Scala's production of Massenet's *Manon* commanded a fee of 204 Euros per box seat; full view tickets for Sydney Opera House's production of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* cost between AUS$96 and AUS$230; Wagner's *Götterdamerung* at the Royal Opera House required 180 GBPS and 80 GBPS for a grand tier seat; and Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* viewed from the Metropolitan Opera's grand tier was priced at $325 (Teatro alla Scala, 2006a; SOH, 2006; MET, 2006b; ROH, 2006). Prices for innovative productions can rise even higher, illustrated by the Lincoln Centre, which announced that they would charge $500 for all 1,500 seats, with no added concessions, for their presentation of Wagner's complete *Tristan und Isolde*, directed by Peter Sellars in collaboration with video artist Bill Viola on 27 April 2007 at the Seventh Regiment Armory building in New York (Blum, 2006; Lincoln Centre, 2006).

opera as an art (albeit entertaining art), there is an automatic implication that the listener needs to hold some sort of education in order for the work to be understood (Story, 2002:37). As a result, the early 1990s saw the publication of a number of introductory textbooks that propose to educate the readers to a level where they may then enjoy the gratification provided by understanding the meaning of the work as well as the artistic value that is supposedly hidden within operatic performance (Story, 2002:37). Thus, through popular, and often humorous, publications such as Pettitt's *Opera: A Crash Course* (1998), Pogue and Speck's *Opera for Dummies* (1997), Boyden's *Opera: The Rough Guide* (1997) and Dobkin's *Getting Opera: A guide for the Cultured but Confused* (2000), the industry made the previously inaccessible accessible to the public at large (Story, 2002:37-40).

These textbooks were the seed of a cross-pollination of writing styles in articles and internet websites that aim to popularise opera for a wider audience. Hampton's (2006) "London Opera" for the online magazine *Life in London*, and Peterson's (2003) "The Fat Lady Keeps on Singing" for *Business Week Online*, for example, use colloquial language to advertise the changes made by the operatic industry. They use positively worded, enthusiastic text to advertise opera's new draw cards; namely sur-titles, reduced ticket prices, aesthetically pleasing venues, the reduction in formal dress-codes, the customs at different houses and the use of multi-media technology within the production itself. Estrella (2006) further notes that online resources aiming to combat the young's "unfounded belief that opera is boring, unintelligible, and attended by bluebloods with blue hair" are abundant: Teachopera.net (2006) and Operamania.com (2003) are points in case. Opera companies have also taken note of such articles and now offer pages on their websites specifically designed towards the newcomer who wishes to attend the opera for the first time. The copy is written in a warm and conversational tone. Examples include the home pages of the Welsh National Opera and the Canadian Opera Company, which feature colloquially written information on the 'draw cards' discussed by Hampton as well as advice on how to deal with potentially intimidating opera enthusiasts, and assurances that opera is definitively a non-elitist form (WNO, 2006; COC, 2006).

Once people have been provided with a positive perception about the form and feel ready to try it, the next logical step is to enable them to attend. This has been done through the lowering of ticket prices at most of the world's major opera houses. In London, the Royal Opera House's

[38] Menuhin & Davies (1980:222-225) provide an exemplary discussion that illustrates the origins of such pessimism,

seating plan covers a broad spectrum of prices for all its productions. The 2006 production of *Don Pasquale* is typical: 5.9 percent of the tickets sold for four to ten pounds, 7.2 percent for ten to twenty pounds, 14.2 percent for twenty to thirty, 22.7 percent for thirty to fifty and 50 percent between fifty and one-hundred and fifty pounds. 42 of the cheapest tickets were priced at four pounds for the matinee (ROH, 2006). In the USA, the Metropolitan Opera has discounted tickets, and patrons are able to purchase cash tickets for fifteen or twenty dollars on Saturday mornings (resulting in lengthy queues) For their 2006 *Le Nozze di Figaro* 873 tickets will be sold at 26 dollars or under and 442 at 65 dollars (MET, 2006b). In Europe, La Scala continues to keep the house tradition of cheaply priced seats (417 tickets are available at ten, twelve, fifteen and thirty-five euros for its most devoted opera fans, (Hamblin, 2004:PO2; Teatro alla Scala, 2006b).[39]

In addition to extending the price range of tickets, the management of opera companies also encourage informal dress. In America, especially, formal dress codes are seen as something that "smacks of elitism" (Guinther, 2001:100) and opera houses such as San Francisco Opera and the Chicago Lyric now encourage people to wear anything they please, be it jeans or tuxedos (SFO, 2006; Lyric Opera, 2006). The Metropolitan Opera has made less of a compromise: it requests comfortable, yet professional attire (MET, 2006c). Critic Tim Page believes that such changes have had an effect and describes the large houses in the USA as having welcoming atmospheres (quoted by Melick, 2004:56-59). In Britain strict dress codes are no longer applicable in most houses: casual or evening-wear generally passes without comment. Similarly, in Europe many houses accept casual or evening wear, but tourists are advised to confirm the dress code before going (Hampton, 2006:2; Melick, 2004:56-59; Jenkins, 1998).

Admission into the opera house has also been backed by changes in accessibility of the operatic production: the use of supertitles (also known as surtitles) is crucial. This technology means that no additional language skills or previous knowledge of the libretto are now required to understand the plot because translations are provided on electronic boards above the proscenium arch. In the USA, as in Britain, all major houses now support surtitles.[40] Between 1982 and 1992 there has been an increase of eighteen percent in the number of patrons aged between eighteen and twenty-four (Duffy & Feldstein, 1996:84). In Europe, opera has traditionally been translated

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especially on the part of classical performers.

[39] These fans are recognised in the industry for their vocal cheers, hisses and boos, which contrast with the decorum of those seated in the central plateau (Hamblin, 2004:PO2).

[40] See Bonwit (1998:30) for a discussion of the surtitle technology provided by Apple.

into the vernacular of the European country in which it is presented, making supertitles unnecessary.[41] However, La Scala has installed screens mounted on the theatre's seat-backs, providing English, French and Italian 'seat-back titles'. Other theatres are following suit: The Teatro del'Opera di Roma will perform Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* in the original German with Italian surtitles in November 2006 (Teatro del'Opera di Roma, 2006; CBC, 2004b).

The audience's ability to understand and relate to an opera plot is linked to its dramatic and visual aspects. The role of the director (who controls both dramatic and visual interpretation) has greatly increased in importance. Innovative productions challenge audiences and the inclusion of contemporary themes (including socio-politically critical works) negates the idea that opera plots are outmoded. Successful singers, such as Anne Sofie von Otter, have excellent theatrical acting techniques which allow them to work with the best stage directors. Singers are further required to be stylish and slim or face unemployment. For example, Debra Voight's contract to perform her signature role of Ariadne in Strauss's *Ariadne Auf Naxos* at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden was terminated due to her excessive weight. The production's modern costume requirements included figure-hugging eveningwear and as a result the slimmer German soprano, Anne Schwanewilms was hired as a replacement. The incident was highly publicised and became tabloid news, creating controversy and further enhancing opera's popular image with the British public who are known for their penchant for celebrity gossip (Anon, 2004a:78; Winters, 2004:79). (Rauch, 1998 & 2006; Duffy & Feldstein, 1996:84-85.)

Opera companies have illustrated flexibility in extending their marketing strategies. There are opera tourism packages in association with travel agencies, promotional offers including opera tickets within national press, junior opera clubs for teens and children, under 35's clubs for young professionals, performances held in unusual venues, and performances at which high-profile personalities perform non-speaking roles. Berlin's Komische Oper hosted the world's first opera singles party in 2003: audience members were encouraged to write flirtatious notes to each other during intermission. That same year, London's Royal Opera House worked in collaboration with Ministry of Sound (one of the United Kingdom's most famous dance clubs) to gain permission to hand out promotional DayGlo cards, advertising opera and ballet. These marketing strategies seem to have brought financial returns: the Philadelphia Opera's under-35's

[41] Audiences at the Vienna Volksoper recently confirmed their continuing preference for this practice by participating in a poll in which they indicated their preference for German translation as opposed to surtitles (Lash, 2003).

events, such as the "Puccini-tini" martini tasting, are credited with a general increase in subscriptions from 3,099 in 1990/1991 to 7190 in 1996. (Duffy & Feldstein, 1996:84-85; Evans, 1999:369-378; Sumrall, 2004.)

3.4 Venues: The opera house and the opera festival

3.4.1 The opera house as an element of urban regeneration

Public awareness of opera is enhanced by the changing status of the opera house. The building itself is no longer seen as an outmoded landmark reserved for traditional opera. In recent urban planning, city leaders have responded to the need for urban spaces designed for pleasure and leisure activities (Mourby, 2004:4-5). Many old opera houses have been renovated, and innovative new houses built. The trend is towards, inclusion, and urban regeneration.[42] The opera house now plays a vital role in increasing opera's visibility and status. Mourby (2004:4-5) describes the transformation in attitude as follows:

> For many modern cities, opera houses have become the new cathedrals. Whereas the crowning glory of a city or state in medieval times would have been its religious buildings — and, in later years, its grand railway station or hubristic high-rise office block — the opera house, in the last decades of the twentieth century, became the new status symbol that every ambitious city wanted. Ever since Sydney proved that modern opera houses could be sexy, city planners have exploited their potential for eye-catching extravagance.

New houses which have become symbols of status and urban renewal include the Cardiff Millennium Centre (2004), which was built on a disused dock, the Helsinki Opera House (1993), built on the site of an old factory, the Copenhagen Opera House (2004), built on an old barracks and Singapore's Durian (2002), built on an abandoned gun battery located on the unfashionable

[42] Urban regeneration schemes became widespread following the success of New York's "I love New York" campaign, in which stone-cleaning, tree-planting and refurbishment exhibited the city's notable architecture. An increased tourist and domestic use of the city resulted, bringing with it further investment in catering, shopping, entertainment and increased public investment in prominent arts organisations (Lewis, 1990:131 & 132). In 1983, Glasgow was the first British city to implement city rejuvenation through the cultural industry. The campaign was titled "Glasgow's Miles Better". The campaign countered the prevalent negative view of unemployment, drunkenness, bad housing and violence that most Britons and tourists associated with the city. After substantially increasing its contributions to the high profile Scottish arts companies, including the Scottish Opera, the city was named "European City of Culture" in 1990, ranking it on a level with international cities such as Athens, Amsterdam, Berlin and Paris (Lewis, 1990:132). After the initial campaign, twice as many people thought of Glasgow as a pleasant place to live, associating it with culture, entertainment, music. The number of tourists tripled from 700,000 to 2 million people between 1982 and 1984 (Lewis, 1990:133).

side of the Singapore River (Mourby, 2004:4-5). Cities such as Toronto, Oslo, Dallas and St Petersburg have implemented plans to build their own new opera houses (Mourby, 2004:4-5).

Covent Garden Opera House and the Coliseum in London, La Scala in Milan and the Seattle Opera House in the USA have all completed significant renovations in recent years. The effects on public perceptions of renovation were researched by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland after the refurbishment of the Belfast's Grand Opera house (ACNI, 2005). The Council concluded that the Irish public now views the house with a sense of pride, with virtually no negative impressions, and with a limited sense of elitism (ACNI, 2005:10-11). In addition, the refurbishment has had a positive impact on the wider economy, especially in subsidiary businesses such as hospitality providers. The opera house is now considered a key element in Belfast's infrastructure because it increases the attraction of the city. (ACNI, 2005:10).

Moreover, opera as a medium has become an international rather than nationalist form of expression, with new opera houses attracting the attention and patronage of high-profile performers such as Domingo, Pavarotti, Cura, Carreras, Bartoli, Te Kanawa, Von Otter and Terfel, who in turn generate substantial audiences, press coverage and foreign tourist numbers. Modern opera houses are no longer the exclusive domain of operatic productions, but also host musical theatre, straight theatre and cross-over productions. In these ways they provide additional justification for sponsorship and investment (Mourby, 2004:4-5).

3.4.2 Non-traditional venues, festivals and out-door presentations

Opera performed in non-traditional venues often counters negative public stereotypes and may raise the profile of operatic performances. Hampton (2006:3) contends that a series of live screen relays, allowing Covent Garden productions to be seen and heard in Trafalgar Square, Covent Garden Piazza and Canary Wharf in 2003 have positively raised the English National Opera's (ENO's) profile in London. Similarly, in the United States of America, opera companies have taken steps to diversify their audience through out-door events: The Houston Grand Opera in the USA project their productions onto an outdoor screen with the capability of allowing approximately four thousand patrons to attend at no cost. The Metropolitan Opera annually presents two free outdoor operas performed in various parks in the five New York boroughs as well as in New Jersey (Peterson, 2003; Cross, 2005:1-2).

In recent decades music festivals have become increasingly popular within Western society. Quinn (2003:333) proposes that this is due to the "increasing desire of Western societies to re-assert and commemorate links with time, place and community, in an effort to combat the sense of dislocation allied with globalization". It is increasingly acknowledged that festivals are not spontaneous events that occur in random geographical locations. As a result, geographers have undertaken studies attempting to analyse festival authorship. The studies[43] have shown that festivals could be interpreted as "… authored landscapes," where "… dominant groups promote particular sets of values, attach specific meanings to place and attempt to reproduce hegemonic meanings" (Quinn, 2003:332). In this manner, festivals become an environment in which dominant groups may realise personal political ambitions or institutional goals through the control and exercise of their right to imprint their personal cultural beliefs and practices upon that environment (Quinn, 2003:331-332).

The nature of festivals provides the operatic industry with potential environments through which to implement institutional goals — namely, widening the audience for opera, satisfying the desires of the traditional opera audience for traditional opera, well performed by star performers, and challenging that same traditional audience by presenting innovative new works. The Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts is, for example, a popular festival which provides popular music acts on multiple stages to patrons who camp at the venue. The festival has always attracted an extensive popular music audience, but by 2004 no-one had staged an operatic act. This was therefore a custom-made situation in which to perform opera to those who are most unlikely to attend an opera house. The ENO staged the last act of Wagner's *Die Walküre* on the pyramid stage to an audience of over ten thousand people. The eleven soloists were dressed in black leather, with hair extensions. They performed the act in English translation, accompanied by a ninety-one piece orchestra (Thornes, 2004; Aaronovich, 2004).

David Aaronovich of *The Guardian* described the event as a cultural collision in which the "…royal box meets drugs 'n' mud", and further posed the question of how the festival-goers would react to the opera, and how the ENO would react to the festival goers? F. Jones (2004:44) provides an account of the initial contact that answers this question:

[43] Quinn cites (2003:332) studies conducted by Jackson (1988), Marston (1989) and Smith (1993). She notes (2003:333) that such studies however, are often reluctant to look beneath the staged surface of festivals and examine the layers of meaning and hierarchies that exist between all parties involved in the implementation and execution of festivals. Quinn's study therefore examines the interests of the local people at the Wexford Festival of Opera held in the Republic of Ireland.

> Across the security fence, two curious groups scrutinised each other: on the one side, a formally attired, respectfully seated group; on the other, a mud-caked, huddling mass. The musicians had approached their unusual audience with apprehension. The stand-off was broken by a chant, which grew louder and louder: "ENO, give us a wave, ENO, ENO, give us a wave!" En masse, the orchestra laid their instruments to one side and raised their hands in salute.

Both journalists note that the production was an undoubted success. They give accounts of mid-performance shouting, commentary and cheering as well as three standing ovations and a demand for an encore. Unfortunately, having not expected such an overwhelming response, the ENO could not provide one (Jones, F. 2004a:44; Aaronovich, 2004). Jones further notes that as a venture aiming to 'popularise' the operatic medium, the ENO performance was a success. His supposition is supported by the interviews with audience members published by the *The Guardian Online*, in which all those interviewed are overwhelmingly positive and one patron stated that he would definitely want to attend more opera (Guardian Unlimited, 2004).

While popular festivals such as Glastonbury cater for popular tastes and are useful for once-off gestures such as was provided by the ENO, existing opera audiences are catered for by a number of high-profile summer festivals through which directors present both traditional and challenging programming. In Europe, those such as Austria's Bregenz Festival, in which performances are presented on a floating stage on Lake Constance, command lucrative numbers of ticket sales in comparison to their American counterparts (Wasserman, 2005:58). Austria, Germany and Italy provide the largest number of summer festivals, within which Germany's Bayreuth-Richard Wagner Festival is highly valued, requiring patrons to submit their names to a ten-year waiting list in order to obtain tickets. Austria's Bregenz Festival drew more than a quarter of a million patrons in 2004 (Wasserman, 2005:59-68). France, Italy, Finland, the Czech Republic, Sweden, Spain, Switzerland and Russia all present festivals, the fastest growing of which is Finland's Savonlinna Opera Festival, held in the courtyard of the medieval Olavinlinna Castle, (built in 1475), which attracted over 72,000 patrons in 2004 (Wasserman, 2005:56-69; Carvalho, 1996:44).

In the USA, cities that hold opera festivals include Cincinnati, St Louis, Charleston and Cooperstown (Anon, 2002:76-77; Toppman, 2005:74). The Spoleto Festival is highly commended by critics for its varied programmes. In 2005, for example, Spoleto produced Respighi's fantastical marionette opera, *La Bella Dormente nel Bosco* (1922), based on Charles

Perrault's fairytale, *Sleeping Beauty*; Braunfel's semi-political opera, *Die Vögel* (1922), which was banned by the Nazi's in the 1930s (owing to Braufel's Jewish origins); and German director Günter Krämer's production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, which focused on the sexual rather than moral aspects of the work (Toppman, 2005:73-75).

Festival programming, such as that at Spoleto in 2005, is indicative of opera's popularity with traditional, popular and avant garde audiences. A critic for the *Economist*'s books and arts section notes that city-dwelling opera patrons will only be persuaded to attend festivals if the works presented are unlikely to be performed during a standard season, whereas those who do not live near major arts-centres, will be attracted to festivals by the unusual opportunity to see a production. The latter will probably purchase tickets for popular repertoire such as Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and *Die Zauberflöte*. Both groups' decision will also be influenced by the aesthetics of the town in which the festival is held. Successful festival programming is chosen to draw both the novice and the cognoscenti - as illustrated by the Salzburg festival presentations of the world premiere of Zemlinsky's *Der König Kandaules* and the fiftieth anniversary of the first performance of Strauss's *Die Liebe der Danae,* or Munich's presentation of Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* and Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (Anon, 2002:76-77).

3.5 The importance of repeat performances

As discussed in the previous chapter, Cooper illustrates that nuisance can be effective as a once-off theatrical gesture but, in order to extend dialogue and interest, repeat performances are highly desirable. This chapter has illustrated that opera through its position in Western society is able to raise awareness and initiate debate about a cause. In addition to its position, as a formal staged production, many repeat performances are possible.

Although during the 1990s, new opera was commonly premiered, it seldom received repeat productions (Lipman, 1990:132; Driver & Hossack, 2001). This situation has changed: many new operas have multiple productions (the case studies of chapters five and six are high-profile examples). Judith Weir's *Blond Eckbert and other stories* (1993), for example, has been televised, has been performed many times and will enjoy multiple performances in London, Sheffield, Manchester, Cheltenham and Oxford in 2006, by the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (Clark, 2000:20; ROH, 2006; BCMG, 2006). In Europe, Kaija Saariaho's *L'amour de loin* almost had overlapping runs in Paris and Bern in 2001, after its extremely successful

premiere at the Salzburg festival in 2000, under the direction of Peter Sellars (Stearns, 2001; Schirmer, 2004). Similarly, in the USA and Japan, Mark Adamo's *Little Women* has had over thirty productions since its premiere in Houston in 1998 and continues to receive approbation. It is scheduled for an Australian premiere in 2007 (Schirmer, 2006; Rockwell, 2003a).

High profile opera singers are often willing to give their support the performance of new opera. Singers bring a fan base with them which allows for the production's marketing to be tailored to personality based strategies, which gain the best response from contemporary audiences. Soprano Dawn Upshaw has recently, and successfully, turned away from a fruitful association with the traditional repertoire to specialise in contemporary works. She has performed in Kaija Saariaho's *L'amour de loin* (2000) and her 2006 schedule contains no fewer than five high-profile concerts of contemporary works, such as the performance of John Adams's *El Nino* in Los Angeles.[44] Susan Graham has lent her name to John Harbison's *The Great Gatsby* (1999), Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* (2000) and Tobias Picker's *An American Tragedy* (2005) (Kettle, 2004:7; Tommasini, 2006b: AR31).

As artistic director of the Los Angeles Opera, tenor Placido Domingo made his support for new opera felt by appointing Kent Nagano as resident conductor (Nagano is a specialist in twentieth century repertoire). At the outset of their terms with the company Domingo and Nagano committed themselves to produce at least one world premiere per season, beginning in 2002-2003. In addition, Domingo himself has further committed to performing in the world premiere of Tan Dun's *The First Emperor* at the Metropolitan Opera in 2006, and Mexican composer Daniel Catan's opera *Il Postino.* He will work with his protégé, Mexican tenor Rolando Villazon, in Los Angeles in 2009 (Duchen, 2006; Service, 2006:34).

While Domingo's gestures are excellent publicity for new music, they cannot compare to Andreas Rocholl's founding of the Zeitgenössische Oper in Berlin. The company's long term goal is to present contemporary opera in the first opera house designed for the sole performance of contemporary music theatre. While this building remains in the design phase, they have already successfully produced numerous contemporary operas beginning with the 2004 production of Hans Zender's *Don Quixote* (premiered 1993, Stuttgart) in Berlin, the world premiere of Qu Xiao-Song's *The Test* in Munich in 2004 and a repeat production thereof in

Berlin, and a 2005 production of Wolfgang Rihm's *Séraphin* (premiered in 2003 at Haus de Berliner Festpiele) at the Biennale di Venezia, 49th International Festival of Contemporary Music as a few examples. (ZOB, 2006; ZOB, 2004; Apthorp, 2002.)

The work of individual performers such as Upshaw and Graham, administrators such as Nagano and Domingo and companies such as the Zeitgenössische Oper, combined with the success of operas such *L'amour de loin* and *Little Women*, is evidence that contemporary opera is able to secure repeat performances, needed to extend dialogue and interest in a cause.

3.6 Summary

In his examination of opera as popular and elite culture, cultural historian John Story concludes that opera is simultaneously a popular and an elite art form (Story, 2002:44). The research presented in this chapter supports his proposition and has illustrated that opera is a vibrant art form that continues to reach people in contemporary society via the media, through marketing, in non-traditional venues such as festivals and through repeat performances of the same production in traditional venues. Furthermore, it has shown that opera interacts with contemporary culture on an artistic level and is able to access up-to-date themes and production techniques relevant to the present age. It can therefore be concluded that opera is in a position to give visibility to any chosen theme. In addition, this chapter has acknowledged that opera is a minority form in the wider popular music market — this is of further consequence in the creation of socio-political opera, because while opera is able to reach a sizeable audience, it is in a position to resist popular trends that could lead to the sacrifice of resistance.

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[44] See Midgette (2006b:E1), Sirén (2003), Tommasini (2006b:B11), Schweitzer (2006), Kennicott (2005) and Loomis (2005:12) for details of Dawn Upshaw's 2006 vocal engagements.

4 OPERA AS SOCIO-POLITICAL CRITIQUE

The first characteristic of resistance art has been applied to opera in the previous chapter. This chapter attempts to illustrate that opera fulfils the additional conditions necessary for it to have a socio-politically critical function.

4.1 Opera as a medium that has the power to broach a topic

Opera is an essentially compound form which encompasses many semiotic determinants, including music, libretto, staging and context of presentation. Opera communicates with an audience through visual, narrative and aural elements. It is these elements which give opera the power to broach a topic. The individual elements may present ideological meaning or work as a unified ensemble (Fulcher, 2001:147 & 158). A single operatic composition can be continually re-created in differing productions, creating differing meaning and receptions (Fulcher, 2001:147). Furthermore, the same operatic production can communicate different meanings and have different receptions within changing performative contexts. Similarly, the intentions of librettists (narrative element), stage directors (visual element) and composers (aural element), may or may not coincide with each other, and further political meaning may arise from action of any one of these contributors (Fulcher, 2001:154).

The narrative element in opera allows it to present socio-political topics. For example, Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* (2000) follows a biographical narrative by the activist Sister Helen Prejean's about her work with convicted murderer Joseph de Rocher. The opera engaged with the issue of the death penalty at a time when it was being contested in the USA. (Druckenbrod, 2004.) Music critic Samuel Lipman believes that the choice of socio-political topic is not simple. He observes that most opera plots deal with the intrinsic contradictory emotions and concepts experienced in human life. These include love and jealousy, loyalty and treachery, devotion and hatred, the individual and the family, God and man, vengeance and reconciliation. Lipman believes that for socio-political operas (based on topics such as HIV and AIDS, a multiracial society, the environment, technology, wealth distribution, homelessness, gender, power abuse, and censorship) to achieve success as art with lasting value, they should combine the greater concepts and emotions of human life with socio-political commentary. If they do not achieve this blend, Lipman feels that all they can amount to is "an empty version of socialist realism". (Lipman, 1992:295.)

The way in which opera's visual elements of costume and dramatic staging are able to present a socio-political topic is fairly self-evident. It is currently popular to update traditional repertoire by setting the narrative in modern or unusual contexts, using contemporary costumes and sets. The director is therefore free to choose any context, costume or set that will act as a social or political symbol to ignite debate. For example, Peter Sellars's controversial 2003 production of Mozart's *Idomeneo* functioned as protest against the coalition-forces' invasion of Iraq[45] through his visual reinterpretation. Sellars set the production in Washington DC in current times, Idomeneo's costume was imitative of George Bush's usual dress (a business suit with a patriotic pin), Ilia was portrayed as a Muslim captive, her murdered brothers appeared in body bags on the stage floor, Arabace was styled as Idomeneo's spin-doctor[46] and Ilia's incarcerated compatriots were shown as internees of Guantanamo Bay under the guard of hardnosed marines. (Conrad, 2003:30.)

Opera's musical element also has the power to broach a topic: the belief in the fundamental importance of the ability of music ability to sway the listener and announce a vision of the world pervades recorded history.[47] In practice, Brett observes (2001:370) that the political requests

[45] On 19 March 2003 coalition forces from the USA and United Kingdom staged an invasion of Iraq in search for reported weapons of mass destruction as well as with the goal of toppling the Sadam Hussein regime. Human rights violations by US soldiers upon Iraqi POWs were reported and soldiers and non-combatants from both the USA and UK have been the targets of innumerable kidnappings, suicide bombings and other terrorist activities.

[46] The US slang word for a press agent hired to interpret news events for public presentation (putting a favourable slant on events to show a personality — most often a politician — in a favourable light). (Barnhart & Barnhart, 1990a:2015.)

[47] The Chinese philosopher Confucius (451-479 BC) believed that music and government were closely linked, with music occupying an important place in the service of an efficient ethical universe and he asserted that music reveals true character through emotion thus reflecting truth and negating the possibility of dishonesty or fabrication (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2003:494). Plato (428-c.347 BC) considered music to need state regulation and, like Confucius, regarded music as a psycho-sociological phenomenon of ethical importance. He distrusted its emotional power and suggested that certain modes should be regulated due to the effect that they had on the listener (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2003:494; Grout & Palisca, 1996:4-5). Aristotle (384-322 BC) regarded the arts as imitation of surrounding life and concurred with Plato, believing that the passions (be they gentleness, anger, courage, temperance or the opposites thereof) represented by music would induce those same emotions within the listener. His pupil, Aristoxenus (b. c.370 BC), was the first to find the human listener of principal importance, whereas those before him had considered only the mathematical and theoretical composition of music to be the prime emotional control (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2003:494; Grout & Palisca, 1996:6-7). St Augustine (354-430) believed music to be of value in religion, but was fearful of its sensuous element and the possibility that the music might supersede religious texts. St Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274) re-iterated this concern and furthermore believed that the mathematical quality of music reflects celestial movement and order. German Protestant reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) subscribed to Plato's tenets that music should be simple, direct and an aid to piety with only certain modes used. French Protestant reformer, John Calvin (1509-1564), was fearful of music's power and warned against voluptuous, effeminate and disorderly music. (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2003:494; Isaacs, 1990m:215.) Echoing these earlier sentiments, music was later described by Marx (1818-1883) as the "… mirror of reality", by Nietzsche (1844-1900) as "… the expression of truth" and by Freud (1856-1938) as a "… text to decipher" (quoted in Attali, 1985:6).

made by Britten's *Peter Grimes* (1945), were a transformed into a "brilliant appeal, made more palpable and convincing through music". Music evokes extra-musical meaning through its suggestive power, and its ability to evoke emotion. A discernable theme of Romantic opera composition, for example, is the use of exoticism. In evoking a 'foreign' culture, such as the oriental, it is not the composer's priority to give an authentic version of a culture specific ethnic music. Instead, a number of distinguishing musical signifiers are used to evoke the image of that culture. Analysis conducted by Dereck Scott shows that *Madame Butterfly* and *Turandot* both make use of "… staccato chords, glittering timbre (harp, celeste, glockenspiel), pentatonicism, and singing in octaves rather than harmony" to suggest China and Japan respectively. (Scott, 1997.)

Socio-political music also makes use of signifiers. Examples of these can be clearly heard in Italian composer, Luigi Nono's radical socialist compositions such as *Como Una Ola De Fuerza Y Luz* (1971-1972) for soprano, piano, orchestra and magnetic tape. The work includes dissonant tone clusters, violent, pounding articulation on the piano and electronic effects that whine in order to create disquiet, discomfort and violent images in the listener's mind in order to support the work's theme of assassination, oppression and humans rights violations in Chile.[48] (Nono, 2001.) The case study of *The Handmaid's Tale* provides further discussion of the use of musical signifiers as socio-political critique in chapter 6.

4.2 Opera as a medium which embraces the element of resistance

The way in which music is composed, performed, heard and interpreted is significantly influenced by the need to maintain or resist order. Musicologist Susan McClary therefore separates those who participate in music into two distinct categories: those who desire the musical experiences as a pure order which provides escape from the chaos of reality, and those who use music vicariously to experience and act out opposition to the restrictions of socio-political norms. (McClary, 1987:18.)

[48] The work uses text written by Chilean revolutionary Lusiano Cruz, who was assassinated in 1971 (Petazzi, 2001:5). In 1973, Chile's Marxist president Salvador Allende (1908-1973; who had been freely elected in 1970), was murdered in a military coup executed by General Pinochet (b. 1915) (Dictionary of World History, 2000a). Augusto Pinochet then took control of Chile, implementing a fascist dictatorship which lasted until 1990 when Chile gained a democratically elected president in forced elections. Pinochet was responsible for over 3,000 murders and numerous human rights abuses (Dictionary of World History, 2000b).

As illustrated in chapter two, resistance to prevailing socio-political norms is in itself an act of nuisance in counter-normative politics. Opera incorporates the use of the first two kinds of nuisance as 'transgression' discussed in chapter two. 'Transgression' aims to make people question norms and injustices by bringing subjects deemed to be unsavoury, unsuitable and shocking into the opera house, combining them with challenging staging, and often using musical language to support the expressive subject. The act of staging a socio-political opera is in itself a counter-normative act[49] because it confronts those wishing to attend the opera but who may not wish to be confronted with harsh socio-political realities. The audience may favour the Romantic or Classical repertoire which speaks to the emotions but does not foster any active response. Furthermore, socio-political topics create discord with the opera house's traditional red-carpet, gilt-edged décor; the act of being out of place is constitutes a further element of nuisance.

4.2.1 Historical overview: Operas of resistance and their effect

Operatic history is punctuated by works containing sedition. The plots of even the earliest operas involve the repeated subversion of the social hierarchies of the corresponding age. Monteverdi's Orpheus (*L'Orfeo*, 1607) breaks down traditional barriers between the gods and plebeian shepherds, while Monteverdi's Poppea (*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, 1642), Cesti's Alidoro (*Orontea*, c.1649) and Scarlatti's Griselda (*Griselda*, 1721) all infiltrate the aristocracy through their erotic charm, talent or virtues. These characters subvert the order of static seventeenth and eighteenth century society with its established, hereditary class systems by the defiant acts of a superior middle class individual. (McClary, 1985:155.)

The element of resistance continued during subsequent periods.[50] In nineteenth century Europe, the concept of nationalism manifested itself prominently in opera. The use of nationalist expressive forms such as folk songs, folk dances and folk rhythms, and culturally specific subjects, encouraged people to react politically against foreign rule and dominant foreign music

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[49] Finnish artist, Leena-Maija Rossi illustrates that while an audience experiences their own individual interpretation of political art, the artist has power to influence their view of reality and to move the viewers' thoughts and emotions in a specific direction. The choice, therefore, of an artist not to use this power is in itself an act of power (Itkonen, 1999:5). The writing of philosopher Michael Foucault (1926-1984) discusses the concept of power and domination within modern society and is an influence on the socio-political arguments given by artists such as Rossi (Itkonen, 1999:5; Faubion, 2006:3).

practices.[51] The music burgeoned alongside political movements for national independence. The operas of Verdi and the Russian Five, including Balakirev, Borodin, Cui, Mussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov, and their predecessor, Glinka, are prominent proponents of nationalism in opera.[52] In particular, Mussorgsky's *Boris Gudenov* (1874) represented a fully developed Russian musical style in which classical forms, harmonies, and compositional techniques are usurped by new ones inspired by Russian folk material and innovation. Verdi's operas, such as *Nabucco* (1842), utilised pointed subject matter and rousing choruses in the resistance of foreign occupation. (Warrack & West, 1996; Kennedy, 1996; Temperly, 2002.)

4.2.1.1 The element of resistance in early twentieth century opera

German composer Arnold Schoenberg exemplified political feeling on the part of early twentieth century artists when he stated the following in Berlin's *Die Musik* in 1909:

> Art is the cry of distress from those who live out within themselves the destiny of humanity, who are not content with it but measure themselves against it, who do not obtusely serve the engine to which the label "unseen forces" is applied, but throw themselves into the moving gears to understand how it works. (Grout & Palisca, 1996:735.)

Despite Schoenberg's feeling, for much of the first half of the twentieth century modernism in composition eschewed overly socio-politically critical concerns.[53] Furthermore, it was not until after World War I that composers began to write works expressing a desire for peace (Arnold, 1991:316). Until this time, war had been portrayed as a heroic, noble pursuit, with patriotic compositions dominating. During World War I, composers began to re-evaluate their attitudes.

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[50] Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* (1786) is a popular example of socio-political subversion in operatic history. The opera is based upon Beaumarchais's play which had been banned for its inflammatory content and features the working classes frequently outwitting the oppressive aristocracy. (Warrack & West, 1996)

[51] Italian musical practices dominated the early nineteenth century, but were usurped by German dominance later that century. (Temperly, 2002.)

[52] During the eighteenth century, German national character and pride had been almost non-existent. However, German culture rose to prominence during the nineteenth century and by the late nineteenth century dominated all of Western musical culture. Therefore, even though they are prominent examples of nationalism, the operas of Weber and Wagner do not represent resistance, but are instead celebratory and propagandist in nature as they were written at the highpoint of German hegemony. (Temperly, 2002.)

[53] German composer Hanns Eisler (1898-1962) was an exception to the rule and utilised resistance in his compositions even in the early twentieth century. He was an active communist and joined the German worker's movement. Despite having been a pupil of modernists such as Schoenberg and Webern, his commitment to political action spurred him to promote socially involved music written in simple, accessible idioms. As a result, he produced workers' songs, children's songs and festival pieces along side his more ambitious and complicated compositions. Although a number of contemporary composers would concur with Eisler's philosophies, he remained a generally exceptional figure in his generation and country. (Morgan, 1991:455-456.)

Themes of elegy and *in memoriam* began to appear frequently — Berg's *Wozzeck* (1925) for example, plays out the theme of a soldier's extreme psychological trauma which has devastating results and is in no way supportive of the idea of the nobility of warfare (Arnold, 1991:316). During World War II patriotic compositions co-existed alongside lament traditions and a new compositional genre like *Wozzeck*, which "… illustrated the horrors and devastation of war through music and text" (Arnold, 1991:316).

Benjamin Britten rose to prominence as a composer near the end of World War II. He embraced left-wing, pacifist, agnostic and queer political values.[54] The large orchestral song cycle *Our Hunting Fathers* (1936) was Britten's first major work to embrace socio-political critique and successfully incorporated elements of resistance in a vocal idiom. The cycle attacked fox hunting and acted as a parable for the deteriorating political situation in Europe. (Brett, 2001:366-367.) It purposefully challenged prevailing opinion through the unusual combination of "… high drama and biting irony in an up-to-date eclectic score brilliantly orchestrated" (Brett, 2001:367).

Motivated by passive resistance to conscription, Britten lived briefly in America during World War II. It was here that he was introduced to Crabbe's *The Borough,* a work which formed the basis for Britten's best known socially critical opera, *Peter Grimes* (1945). *The Borough* promoted left-wing pacifist ideology and queer politics but Britten and his partner, the tenor Peter Pears, transformed Grimes into a misunderstood dreamer with whom any audience member could empathise. The opera critiques the fact that individuals (namely homosexuals) are often persecuted by the wider community simply for being different. The work illustrates society's destructive persecution of scapegoats whom they (wrongly) perceive as a threat. Furthermore, the work illustrates that individuals who experience discrimination internalise oppression and often begin to believe others' low opinion of themselves. Grimes takes society's judgement of himself and enters a self-destructive cycle that ends in his suicide. The work uses alienation to prompt the audience into self-reflection and the realisation that there is a small part of Grimes within every person. They are prompted to examine their own behaviour towards others who are different from themselves. On a more complex level the opera asks what an individual's own responsibility is when both victims and aggressors become brutalised by violent acts in modern democracy. (Brett, 2001:370-371.)

[54] Britten was introduced to these values in 1935 by W.H. Auden and his inner circle of artist and writer friends. Britten readily embraced them as they offered him an identity niche in which to place his personal concerns. (Brett, 2001:366-367.)

While Britten was free to express his critique through opera in the United Kingdom, Soviet composers such as Dmitri Shostakovich found themselves trapped in Stalin's communist state. Shostakovich held an official government post and his safety would be compromised if he openly criticised his government.[55] Shostakovich used his music as an outlet for resistance by composing *The Nose* (1928) and *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (1932) which explore the nature of oppression. (Volkov, 1979:xxii.)

The Nose critiques the concepts of a police state and mass hysteria. The audience is prompted to empathise with 'the nose' and the nose-less Kovaloyov (Volkov, 1979:xxii). Shostakovich himself took the work's critique as a serious matter and did not look kindly upon those who found humour in its grotesquery and described his resistance as follows:

> *The Nose* is a horror story, not a joke. How can police oppression be funny? Wherever you go, there's a policeman, you can't take a step or drop a piece of paper. And the crowd in *The Nose* isn't funny, either. Taken individually, they're not bad, just slightly eccentric. But together, they're a mob that wants blood. (Shostakovich, 1979:160.)

The opera's political critique did not go unnoticed by Soviet authorities. When communist Party leader, Sergei Mironovich Kirov (1886-1934) attended a production, his reaction was strongly negative. Reviews were hostile and the opera was removed from Russian repertory under the pretext that too many rehearsals might tire the artists, despite the fact that an audience questionnaire had shown them to be appreciative of the production.[56] (Shostakovich, 1979:71; Fanning, 2001:284.)

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[55] According to Shostakovich's student and biographer, Solomon Volkov, this forced him into the traditional Russian role of 'yurodivy' for Stalin. The 'yurodivy' is a Russian political and religious figure intrinsically linked with Russian history and culture. Such individuals have the ability to see and hear those things that others cannot, but they must expose their insights in a deliberately paradoxical and codified way to protect their own safety. Volkov further describes the 'yurodivy' as "…an anarchist and individualist, who in his public role breaks the commonly held 'moral' laws of behaviour and flouts conventions. But he sets strict limitations, rules and taboos for himself." (Volkov, 1979:xxi). In Russian history, a number of educated men became 'yurodivye' and in the twentieth century the Leningrad Dadaists and satirist Mikhail Zoshxhenko fulfilled this function when they acknowledged that Russia's attempts to create a new society were a 'failure' that had left their world in ruins. These protestors differed from previous 'yurodivy' in that their protest was made in a secular, as opposed to religious, capacity (Volkov, 1979:xxi).

[56] The composer's relationship with the Soviet system is illuminated when Shostakovich explains why he could not be enraged at his work's cancellation when he states: "Should I have been upset? It seems a strange question. Of course not! That would be the simplest answer. But the simple answer isn't enough. These weren't mere acquaintances, men on the street. They were men wielding unlimited power. And the comrade leaders used that power without thinking twice about it, particularly if they felt that their refined taste was offended. An artist whose portrait did not resemble the leader disappeared forever. So did the writer who used 'crude words'. No one entered

Similarly, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* critiques the communist police state (Volkov, 1979:xxii; Fanning, 2001:289). Shostakovich himself described it as a homily about the joy of love if there were no "vileness in the world, namely no oppressive laws, properties, financial worries and state police system (Shostakovich, 1979:81). At the time of its 1935 Leningrad premiere, the work's success was almost unparalleled by any other contemporary opera.[57] However, in January 1936, Stalin attended a production and was allegedly enraged. His response was woven into a now infamous editorial entitled 'Muddle instead of music' in the communist party's *Pravda*, which condemned the opera as a flabbergasting, screeching confusion (Volkov, 1979:xxiv). In the wider political context, the country was experiencing devastating police purges and, according to Volkov (1979:xxiv), the article led Shostakovich to despair and near-suicidal paranoia regarding his own safety.

Despite Shostakovich's statements in various late essays as well as in *Testimony,* the critical element *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* may not have been part of his initial artistic intent. Fanning suggests that his obsession with Katerina's passion, his barbed sense of humour and his admiration for the works of Berg and Krenek may have been more important influences during the work's conception (Fanning, 2001:289). The opera seems to illustrate the contention, explored in chapter 2, that communication may hold the element of resistance, regardless of the composer's intent.

4.2.1.2 The element of resistance in operas of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century

During the two decades following World War II, musical concerns paralleled those of the fine arts. Modernism was a dominant force. Modern composers, disillusioned by the horrors of war, aimed to separate their music from the larger social context. Following this train of thought means that music becomes most meaningful when it acquires a disembodied status or is totally isolated from everyday concerns. Innovation and experimentation leading towards abstract

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into aesthetic discussions with them or asked them to explain themselves. Someone came for them at night, that's all. These were not isolated cases, not exceptions." (Shostakovich, 1979:71.)

[57] It was given thirty-six performances in the five months following this premiere, was performed ninety-six times in Moscow in two seasons and received almost immediate presentations in Stockholm, Prague, London, Zurich and Copenhagen. Toscanini added selections to his repertoire and Shostakovich was hailed as a genius (Volkov, 1979:xxiii).

concepts and depersonalisation characterised the musical output of such philosophy. By the 1970s, however, younger generations of composers became disillusioned with modernist academia and elitism and Philip Glass, for example, colloquially dismissed Boulez and other post-war modernists as "… maniacs …" who composed "… creepy music …" (quoted in Simms, 1986:421). The years 1977 through 1984 in particular saw a major shift away from serialism and private-language music toward music that strives to communicate with a wider audience. Younger composers attempted to create new compositional styles using eclectic forms and techniques with flexibility of function, further combining new ideas with styles and materials from various periods in history.[58] (Simms, 1986:420-421; Morgan, 1991:455; McClary, 1985:157.)

These changing artistic concerns, especially the issue of wider audiences, have prompted composers to take an interest in wider topics such as those which foster resistance. Wider culture had experienced the revolutions of the 1960s; globalisation was increasing through the growing networks of communication. There was an increase in the availability of political information: individuals could access information rapidly and independently.[59] For these reasons the composers' awareness of issues affecting their own countries as well as global political and social injustices has grown. John Bokina (1997:11) describes contemporary times, in particular the compositions of Glass, Adams and Corgliano as "… one of the most self-consciously political periods in opera history" and composers are now able to access ample material, interpretations and contexts for works of social and political resistance. (Morgan, 1991:455-456; Levang, 2003.)

Steve Reich's video-opera documentary *Three Tales* (2003) focuses on three seminal moments in the history of technology: the destruction of the airship Hindenburg in 1937, the first tests of the hydrogen bomb on Bikini Atoll in 1946, and the cloning of Dolly the sheep in 1996 (Clements, 2003:27). Reich and his wife, video artist Beryl Korot, are both committed members of the Orthodox Jewish community. They used the combination of video and opera to create a

[58] Changes in style after the 1970s have created a unique atmosphere where new compositional tastes exist side by side with the modernism that they attempt to refute. Boulez, Carter and Lutoslawski continued to compose works in the modern idiom and younger composers who chose modernist ideas over the post-modern emerged. Rihm (b. 1952) and Birtwistle (b. 1934) in particular have also continued in the former tradition. (Simms, 1986:420-422.)

[59] As early as 1967, McLuhan & Fiore (1967:22) observed the growing effects of globalisation on politics when they stated: "A new form of 'politics' is emerging, and in ways we haven't yet noticed. The living room has become a voting booth. Participation via television in Freedom Marches, in war, revolution, pollution and other events is changing *everything*".

work that critiques modern day society's commitment to technology because they believe that it has become a destructive surrogate for religion. The team's main act of resistance is not only found in the opera's performance to an audience who are divided on the social issues; their act of creation was one of resistance. The pair interviewed prominent scientists, such as Richard Dawkins[60] from Oxford, on video and then distorted their voices through a sampler, thus symbolically attacking their words during the creation process itself. (Shatz, 2002:AR28.)

Another work which incorporates resistance into its creation, but at an even earlier point in the process than *Three Tales* does, is Anthony Davis's (1951-) *"X": The Life and Times of Malcolm X* (1986) which highlights AfricanAmerican rights. Choosing an African- American topic for a Eurocentric, traditionalist genre such as opera is in itself an act of empowerment because African -Americans are often marginalised by the operatic industry in the USA (Amirkhanian *et al.,* 1989:20-22). The theme therefore goes against the norm, constituting its own small element of nuisance and opening the possibility that through repetition greater equality and representation can be achieved.

Operas of the most relevance and resistance of the twenty-first century most often relate to the intertwining themes of George Bush's American presidency, the war in Iraq, the War on Terror and the growing political and religious antagonism of the Muslim world towards the West. Anti-American theatre has, for example, become prominent and *Time* magazine reports *Jerry Springer — the Opera*[61] to be "just one example of a wave of new stage works overseas that put the U.S. in a distinctly unflattering light". When taken in the context of wider contemporary political theatre — which includes the French satirical impromptu *George W. Bush or God's Sad Cowboy*[62] and the West End comedy *The Madness of George Dubya*[63] — this opera's political

[60] Dawkins is a proponent of genetic determinism (Shatz, 2002:AR28).

[61] *Jerry Springer — the Opera* will be run on Broadway in 2006. It has been screened by BBC television, is currently touring in the United Kingdom and during 2004, won several prestigious theatre awards including six Olivier Awards for musical theatre, both the 'Critics Circle' and 'Evening Standard' awards for best musical, two 'What's on stage' awards and four 'Nawt2do.com' awards (Avalon, 2006; Van Gelder, 2005a:E2). The success of the work has further encouraged a high media profile which has in turn sparked debate and protest over religious and political content as well as the libretto's liberal inclusion of around 3,000 expletives. Church groups and conservative communities continue to picket performances and compose heated letters of complaint to theatre boards and local authorities. (Probert, 2006; BBC NEWS, 2005a.)

[62] This work had to close for two weeks after its writer-director, Attilio Maggiulli, was assaulted by pro-Bush "thugs" and drew large numbers to the audience after its re-opening. The work portrays Bush as a "spoiled 6-year-old who sucks his thumb and plays toy soldiers with his pal, Tony Blair". *Time Magazine* described the conclusion to the work as follows: "By the end of the play, Bush is trying to annex the entire Middle East as the 51st state. 'Not bad,' he boasts, 'for the biggest idiot in America'" (Anon, 2003a:58-59).

dimension is not found in its religious tomfoolery- to which there have been numerous and vocal protests from British Christian groups.[64] Instead, the resistance is found in its ridicule of the American people, thus forming part of wider artistic objection to George Bush's aggressive foreign policies (Anon, 2003a:58-59.)

The 2005 Edinburgh Fringe Festival's stage programme heavily featured the element of resistance with approximately 15 of the 90 stage works tackling socio-political subjects.[65] Keith Bursten's opera, *Manifest Destiny* was presented as a complete work for the festival and it takes 9/11 as its main theme. However, rather than taking a satirical anti-Bush stance as does *George W. Bush or God's Sad Cowboy* or *The Madness of George Dubya*, it makes its central character a suicide bomber. The opera explores the problems caused when the title character, Leila, forsakes life as a poet in north London to become a suicide bomber and attempts to bring the question of where and why suicide bombers come from rather than automatically labelling them as evil and inhumane (Stillito, 2003). At the opera's conclusion, the terrorists experience a transformative moment in which they reconnect with humanity and renounce violence, begging the question of what Bush and Blair would do if al-Qaeda became a peaceful movement. (As Hoggard notes [2005:6], music theatre is often concerned with the idea of 'wish fulfillment'.) The timing of the production in 2005 was particularly controversial when considered in the light of the London 'July 7' bombings earlier that month. An added element of resistance therefore appeared as the opera humanises those who believe themselves to be the enemy of Western culture (Hoggard, 2005:6).

Muslim relations with the West continue to ignite the element of resistance in opera especially as discussed in 4.1, operas can become increasing elements of social resistance as a result of changing contexts of presentation for the same production. This factor affects both the case studies. However, a much publicised recent production also serves as an example. Hans Neuenfels's production of *Idomeneo* was first performed in 2003. It caused religious offence but no organised protests. However, its subsequent revival in 2006, the element of nuisance became

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[63] The title character of this comedy is a "childish dimwit", wearing red cowboy pyjamas, who cannot pronounce the names of his enemies, such as "Saddama bin Laden". (Anon, 2003a:58-59.)

[64] These groups find the work offensive and unacceptable on the grounds of the numerous expletives and its final scene in which Springer conducts a face-off between Jesus, dressed in a diaper, the Devil and God.

[65] These works included the comedy *The Bicycle Men*, tackling American Francophobia, *Asbo's,* tackling teenage delinquency in Britain, and *Korczak*, the true story of Janusz Korczak, who led a revolutionary orphanage movement in the Warsaw Ghetto and kept 200 children alive until they were deported to Treblinka (Hoggard, 2005:6).

such that the work was censored by cancellation as a result of enflamed Muslim-Western relations in Europe.[66] In the production, Idomeneo carries the heads of Muhammed, Jesus, Buddha and Poseidon on to the stage, placing each on a stool. After receiving an anonymous threat, the German police decided that there was an incalculable risk to both performers and audience members if the work was staged as the head of Muhammad could be seen as criticism of Islam. Deutsche Opera's decision to cancel the production was met with great public anger. A spokesman for Angela Merkel's government interpreted the house's decision as capitulation to Islamic terror and a signal to other theatres to avoid works that encourage political discourse. A spokesman for the Islamic council agreed that the work could have caused offence, but conceded that the creation of fear is not the correct way in which to foster dialogue. Overall the cancellation was seen as surrendering (artistic) free speech — which Islamic fundamentalism itself does not support. (Dempsey & Landler, 2006.)

4.3 Socio-political music as art

When opera exists as socio-political critique, it is still judged as a work of art[67] (Lipman, 1992). In Western society art works are traditionally valued for their longevity and their innovative contribution to the growth of the art form. In practice most socio-politically minded composers are not concerned with longevity, instead they aim for their works to have validity in their own time. Britten, for example, believed that the creation of art that has social and political value supersedes any idea that it gains importance only through aesthetic value. He asked contemporary composers to accept their social responsibility and pressed them not to "… worry too much about the so-called permanent value of our occasional music. A lot of it cannot make much sense after its first performance" (Britten, 1967:120).

While the idea of posterity may not be important in socio-political opera, the question of what sort of musical style and language to use is often asked. Should the most modern and up to date

[66] Satirical cartoons featuring the prophet Muhammed appeared in Danish newspapers and caused impassioned protests in Muslim communities across Europe in early 2006. Pope Benedict XVI[th] further fuelled bad relations in a public speech in Germany containing a controversial biblical passage criticising the Muslim community. In response to the controversy and protests that followed the Pope's words, Germany broke away from its neutral global political stance adopted following World War II and committed naval forces to the United Nations contingent in Lebanon, thus supporting Israel. In addition, Prime Minister Angela Merkel came out in open support of the Pope and committed her people to fight for Western values. (Dempsey & Landler, 2006; Vinocur, 2006).

[67] Goehr & Bowie (2001:620) go as far as to say that sociological studies of music confront two seemingly mutually exclusive elements: that of the social, economic and political factors and music itself, which in analysis usually becomes aesthetically significant only because it transcends the social, economic and political factors.

techniques and innovations be used in order to further music's growth as an art form, or should accessibility be of prime importance? As Brecht did in theatre, composers must choose their own, possibly unique, avenue of exploration as art resists objective qualitative analysis. Composers such as Britten and Henze (b. 1926) were eclectic in their stance with Britten using innovative musical language in his works, but placing little value on the inaccessible when he stated that that it "... is insulting to address anyone in a language that he does not understand" (Britten, 1967:118). Henze promotes dual responsibility in the composition and feels that composers should satisfy their own needs by pushing the boundaries of musical techniques, while testing how far their music is suited to agitation by trying different forms and experiencing the responses of a wide variety of audiences. (Henze, 1982:169).

In contrast to Britten and Henze, the next generation of composers was more dogmatic in their approach. Active communist composers such as Englishman Cornelius Cardew (1936-1981) and Italian Luigi Nono (1924-1990) were both radicals who chose to their musical language in service of political function. Cornelius Cardew grew to distrust the elitism of new music and constantly sought out new forms of music education. These forms were an act of socialist resistance as they were an attempt to overcome class barriers. His experiences with the Scratch Orchestra[68] resulted in his total political conversion to communism. He rejected the idiom of his previous works, turning instead to workers' songs, rooted in tonality, as well as political tunes intended for performance at party meetings. As a result, most of the compositions from the last decade of his life were political songs for specific occasions, interspersed with a few more virtuosic, but politically orientated concert pieces based on folk melodies. Cardew participated extensively in extra-musical socialist activities and took up the struggle in the field of music and culture. He played and sang at May Day and anti-fascist demonstrations and was open in his support of the Irish national liberation struggle. His many concerts in Ireland included one in Andersonstown Community Centre, a Republican stronghold in Belfast, During his performance of *Lid of me Granny's Bin*, four armed British soldiers walked into the hall and began to harass

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[68] The orchestra was formed in 1969 as a co-operative of fifty members from all walks of life — including musicians, artists, clerks and scholars who wished to participate in experimental musical activities. The repertoire included improvisation, new compositions supplied by members, and paraphrased works based on popular classics. After a brief period in which they supported anarchic and fragmented politics they turned to Marxism, inspired by the works of Mao Zedong and the Chinese revolution. Despite enthusiasm, the orchestra's existence was brief and tumultuous with internal tension and conflicts over policy leading to its disbandment. Cardew himself felt that the downfall stemmed from too much emphasis being placed on allowing each participant to do precisely as he felt like doing. (Morgan, 1991:457-458; Tilbury, 2001:120.)

the audience. Cardew was arrested along with the other performer, held and questioned for several hours by the RUC. (Tilbury, 1983:4-12; Morgan, 1991: 457-458; Tilbury, 2001:120.)

In contrast, Nono was committed to atonal and electronic modernist experimentation. His works embraced radical resistance in both their political and musical dimensions. Nono favoured angry, revolutionary texts, folk material and melody with political overtones, but he did not leave these materials in their simple, accessible forms. He subjected them to all the technical and technological resources available to composers of his era — drastically distorting their sound so that they lost all familiarity. Nono's works often sparked controversy and reaction. His opera *Intolleranza 1960* (later revised as *Intolleranza 1970*), which attacked fascism, the atom bomb, and segregation is a point in case. The opera ends with a cataclysmic flood in which all of humanity is destroyed. When it was premiered in Venice in 1961, the performance was stormed by neo-fascists who became embroiled with the communist audience. (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2006b; Schwartz & Godfrey, 1993:277; Morgan, 1991:458-459.)

After examining the opinions and works of Britten, Henze, Cardew and Nono, two conclusions can be drawn regarding artistic value judgements of socio-political critique. Firstly, the artistic value judgement of longevity is not of any concern in the creation of music that embraces socio-political resistance because it is this resistance that overrides music's status as art during its time period. However, as illustrated by Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* or Verdi's *Nabucco*, socio-politically critical works may receive a place in permanent repertoire and exist as a museum art, entertainment or pertinent socio-political critique within changing performative contexts. Secondly, both experimental avant-garde music that aims to expand the boundaries of art and accessible traditional musical language can be applied to the creation of resistance music. Its effect should be judged on a case by case basis, taking the performative context into consideration.

4.4 Summary

4.4.1 Determining the effect of socio-political opera

The previous sub-section illustrates that the creation of socio-political opera such as Davis's *"X": The Life and Times of Malcolm X* is in itself activism against the traditional Eurocentric institution of opera. Reich's *Three Tales* is a symbolic act of violence against scientists. However, most socio-political critique in opera is judged as relevant and effective because it evokes an observable reaction. This reaction is sparked by two factors: the element of resistance which has effect because it acts as nuisance and the power of music to manipulate emotions.

Heightened emotional responses, such as the discomfort elicited by the socio-political compositions of Luigi Nono, and cognitive responses, such as the self-reflection prompted by *Peter Grimes*, translate into several external actions. These include the opening of dialogue through discussion, complaints and even threats via media such as newspapers, radio and internet as well as through letter writing and phone calls. Examples of these behaviours were experienced during productions of Lee's *Jerry Springer — the Opera*, Shostakovich's *The Nose* and *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, directors Peter Sellars and Hans Neuenfals's respective productions of Mozart's *Idomeneo* and Nono's *Intolleranza 1960*. Censorship through cancellation of performances has also been illustrated in works such as Shostakovich's *The Nose*, Hans Neuenfals's production of *Idomeneo* and Cardew's *Lid of me Granny's Bin*. Lastly, pickets and physical interventions were experienced during performance such as Nono's *Intolleranza 1960* and Lee's *Jerry Springer — the Opera*.

4.4.2 General characteristics of socio-political opera

This chapter has illustrated that opera can fulfil the requirements of socio-political critique. It is owing to the following factors that opera is able to fulfil this function:

1. Opera is in a position to give visibility to socio-political issues.
2. Opera's many facets allow it to explore, amongst others, socio-political topics such as racism, the environment, the role of technology and war protest.
3. Opera is able to embrace the element of resistance through topics that challenge the beliefs and standards of the reigning hegemony. In addition, the act of bringing an unusual topic into the opera house can itself be an act of nuisance within that space and therefore function as activism in counter-normative politics. Furthermore, as creators of a minority form, composers are able to resist the pressures of the mass market, thus opening the way for independent thought. Also, any element of resistance is affected by changing performance contexts and deliberate changes in production.
4. Any type of musical language may be used in the creation of socio-political opera, but this may effect its aesthetic value judgements when the work is removed from its socio-political context and judged as art.
5. In order to evaluate socio-political critique as effective it must evoke a reaction. This reaction is linked to the mechanism of nuisance. It may be an emotive reaction which sparks a dialogical process. However, these reactions are only observable as external actions.
6. Resistance may be a result of the artist's social conscience and desire to make a socio-political cause, or issue public knowledge, or resistance may arise through changing performance contexts and the director's interpretation.

5 CASE STUDY: *THE DEATH OF KLINGHOFFER*

John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer* functions as socio-political critique. This chapter explores the specific political issues that the opera addresses, the political contexts in which the work has been performed, the ways in which the opera has been presented, and its reception history. The characteristics of socio-political opera, as defined in chapter four will be used to analyse this case study as socio-political critique in the concluding chapter, chapter seven.

5.1 The factors influencing John Adams's composition

American composer John Adams (b. 1947) was born into a family of musicians — his father was a jazz saxophonist and his mother a singer — and his musical influences date from early childhood (Schwarz, 1996:171). According to the composer, his social conscience and political leanings date from this childhood period. His mother was an actively involved party volunteer for the Liberal Democrats, thus giving him "… an early fascination for American political life" (Adams, 2000a). Adams had the opportunity to meet John F. Kennedy during his 1960 primary election campaign as Concord[69] frequently hosted primary presidential campaigns. The composer voted against Lyndon Johnson in protest against the Vietnam War in 1968 and, as will be illustrated in the discussion of his operas, he takes an earnest approach towards social responsibility (Adams, 2000a).

John Adams is most often described as a minimalist composer. He received his Bachelor of Music under the tuition of Leon Kirchner, Earl Kim, Roger Sessions, Harold Shapiro and David Del Tredici at Harvard University. By the time of his graduation in 1971, Adams wanted to escape the university's obligatory modernist doctrine. But it was through reading John Cage's *Silence* that he first learned that there were a variety of different musical avenues available to him. He therefore moved to more liberal San Francisco to pursue his new musical goals (Schwarz, 1996:172; Cahill, 2001:144).

The first ten years in San Francisco allowed Adams to explore a style that Schwarz (1996:176) describes as an "… avant-garde crusade dedicated to burning down the last bastions of stylistic

[69] The town in New Hampshire where Adams attended high school (Adams, 2000a).

authority and musical formalism." Cage's books, *American Standard* (1973) and *Lo-Fi* (1975) were initially influential, after which Adams became interested in electronic music. However, disillusionment once again set in, and the composer lost confidence in both atonality and the synthesizer, resulting in his search for a modern musical idiom that embraced tonality. Adams found his solution in minimalism after attending Steve Reich's 1974 performance of his work *Drumming* and a 1975 concert by the Phillip Glass Ensemble. Thus, after initial experimentation in works such as *Phrygian Gates* (1977-1978) and *Shaker Loops* (1978), he fully embraced the style, all the while retaining a specifically anti-modernist stance. Adams describes his individual approach as follows:

> What sets me apart from Reich and Glass is that I am not a modernist. I embrace the whole musical past, and I don't have the kind of refined, systematic language that they have. I rely a lot more on my intuitive sense of balance. I've stopped worrying about whether intuiting a structure is right or not; as far as I can tell, most nineteenth-century composers wrote on intuitive level … All of my music has this feeling of *déjà vu*. The issue of vanguardism, the whole avant garde, has burned itself out. As we approach the end of this century, there is an exhaustion of this intense need to run the barricades, to forge ahead to the future. (Quoted in Schwarz, 1996:179, 182.)

Adams's approach therefore looks frequently to the past. Of all the composers labeled as 'minimalist', Cahill (2001:144) believes him to be the most anchored in Western classical traditions because he makes use of tonal centers, fluid tempos and formal schemes in combination with elements of popular American culture, such as jazz. Schwartz & Godfrey (1993:336-337) similarly describe his techniques as embracing "… all of the standard gestures of European romanticism" as his work is characterised by the use of *crescendo*, *diminuendo*, the sudden *sforzando*, and long "arching" phrases. In order to create the new, he transports these elements into his minimalist scores by setting them against repetitive "pulsing patterns" (Schwartz & Godfrey, 1993:336-337). Adams himself is derisive of the term minimalist when applied to his music; he likens his position to that of Mahler, Bach and Brahms, all of whom were "…standing at the end of an era and were embracing all of the evolutions that occurred over the previous thirty to fifty years." (Schwarz, 1996:182.)

Adams initially rejected opera, but in 1983 he was approached by Peter Sellars with the concept of an opera based on Richard Nixon's 1972 meeting with Mao Tse-Tung in China. As illustrated in chapter 4, the modernist avant garde, who had taught Adams, had preferred their work to remain abstract, pure and disconnected from external influence. In addition, Adams had believed

that opera could only be created on classical models and myths. However, after careful deliberation he agreed to compose the work, believing that the novelty of a contemporary subject would bring opera closer to present-day audiences (Schwarz, 1996:184).

Nixon in China's (1987) topic automatically raised gender, capitalist and communist issues. Elements of satire and paradox are also present as are the serious historical and philosophical importance of Richard Nixon's pivotal trip. During its two year creation phase, public anticipation grew exponentially with both the media and musical community constantly speculating over the success of such a topical venture (Adams, 2000a). The eventual premiere in Houston in 1987 was a great success. As a result Adams received a large amount of publicity. There were over 70 performances in the next few years; it was awarded both an Emmy and a Grammy and was televised by American station PBS. In addition, *Time* magazine named the *Nixon in China* recording (on the Nonesuch label) as one of the ten most important recordings of the decade (Cahill, 2001:144).

Through this success, Adams experienced the power which art holds in approaching topical subjects. He became enthused with the idea of controversy, stating: "We hardly need another opera based on a Shakespeare play or Greek myth … if you mention Hitler, or Donald Duck, or Marilyn Monroe, any number of buttons in our psyches are pressed" (Schwarz, 1996:185). His music, therefore, generally focuses on the exploration of human values and interests, with both Britten and Mozart as influences. For opera, he prefers political and historical subjects and acknowledges that this in itself can cause controversy: "… if I were a filmmaker, novelist or playwright, it would be assumed that I would write about subjects from contemporary life. But somehow, doing that in the realm of opera is slightly shocking" (Smith & Smith, 1994:11).

During the work on *Nixon in China*, Sellars approached Adams with an additional operatic topic, once again taken from contemporary politics. The hijacking of the Achille Lauro in 1985, steeped in issues created by the long lasting Palestinian-Israeli conflict, would provide a theme. It had the potential to incorporate issues of national identity, destiny, racial confrontation as well as the high drama of Leon Klinghoffer's murder (Adams, 2000b). Adams consented. Together with Sellars and librettist, Alice Goodman, they created the contentious opera, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, on which they worked from 1989 until 1991. (Smith, 1991:21.)

Adams's subsequent stage works included the 'song-play', *I was looking for the ceiling and then I saw the sky* (1995), as well as the oratorio *El Niño* (2000). His most recent opera, *Dr. Atomic* (2005), also written in collaboration with Sellars, returns once again to contentious subject matter. It explores the final hours before the 1945 testing of the first atomic bomb (during the last years of World War II), in New Mexico. *Dr. Atomic* has a political dimension in its use of previously censored FBI documentation and letters written during the production of America's atom bomb. However, it has not functioned as resistance or nuisance and has instead found abundant praise for its dark, oppressive, menacing score. Particularly novel was Adams's inspiration from the earliest science-fiction films as well as his use of digitally engineered *musique concrète* that draws on the influence of early electronic composer, Edgard Varèse (Adams, 2005; May, 2006).

5.2 The origins of *The Death of Klinghoffer's* socio-political subject matter

The Death of Klinghoffer addresses two related, high-profile and sensitive political situations that affect the contemporary world, namely the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which continues to ignite violence in the Gaza strip and neighboring Lebanon and, secondly, the wave of global terrorism that began in the latter half of the twentieth century. In the West, the term 'global terrorism' has become synonymous with Islamic fundamentalists who continue to issue threats to Britain and the USA. Past attacks included the Achille Lauro hijacking, and more recently the September 11th 2001 hijackings, the 2002 and 2005 Bali bombings, as well as the July 7th 2005 bombings in London.

5.2.1 Global terrorism: The hijacking of the Achille Lauro

A brief examination of world politics between 1980 and 1990 reveals great social upheavals. Industry in the West, which had been prosperous for the previous 30 years, experienced the oil crises of 1973 and 1980, and the communist administrations of Eastern Europe finally collapsed, their end embodied by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. That same year, the Soviet army withdrew from Afghanistan and the pro-democracy movement in China was crushed. (Mercer, 1995:7.) During this decade, an increasing wave of terrorism in both the West and Middle East became apparent. Friedman (1990:496) pinpoints the capture of American embassy staff as hostages in Teheran in 1979 as a key moment in the rise of radical attacks against the USA by Middle Eastern terrorists. The suicide bombing of the American embassy in Beirut in April

1983, the bombing of the marine headquarters and another suicide bomb attack on the Eastern Beirut American embassy in 1984 are examples of attacks which followed. (Friedman, 1990:496; Mercer, 1995:1218, 1242.)

A number of incidents preceded the hijacking of the Achille Lauro. Nineteen-eighty-five was a particularly violent year. On 7 June, Israeli-backed militia seized 21 Finnish soldiers from the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon. On 24 June a car bomb was detonated in Beirut and killed 52 people. A highly publicized incident was the seizure of a TWA airliner at gunpoint just after it had taken off from Athens airport: The terrorists were trying to secure the release of 700 political prisoners held in Israel and the ordeal lasted for 16 days with 39 Americans held hostage. One young American sailor was executed. Little was reported about the hostages who were of other nationalities during the episode and the passengers were released on 30 June 1985. The next day, despite its denial by Israeli and US authorities, the 700 Lebanese Shias[70] were released as demanded. Ronald Reagan (1911-2004) pre-empted George Bush's current 'War on Terror', when, after the incident he stated: "We will not rest until justice has been done. Terrorists be on notice. We will fight back against you in Lebanon and elsewhere" (Mercer, 1995:1254). During the 1980s, as today, international incidents were not limited to attacks on Americans. On 23 June, 1985, an Air India Boeing 747 was bombed after leaving Canada. It plunged into the sea 120 miles off the Irish coast. The fatalities numbered 325. Sikh[71] extremists were blamed for the incident, as well as for a subsequent baggage explosion in Japan's Narita Airport (Mercer, 1995:1254).

The hijacking of the Italian cruise ship the Achille Lauro in October 1985 took place against the backdrop of such global terrorism and later became representative of the struggle local to the Gaza Strip. Despite a recent command decision to attack Israeli-only targets, commandos from the Palestinian Liberation Front took possession of the 25,000 ton liner while it sailed from Alexandria to Port Said with 454 tourists on board. Hijackers maintained that they would demolish the ship if their demands were not met, but no bomb was detonated. Instead, they

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[70] Also spelt Shiah, one of the two major Muslim sects (the other being the Sunnites), originating from Iran. Shias believe Ali, Mohammed's son-in-law, to be his true successor and reject the first three caliphs in the Sunnite book of tradition handed down under their protection. The better known word of 'shiite' is the adjective to the noun 'shia/shiah'. (Barnhart & Barnhart, 1990b:1920-1921.)

[71] A 'Sikh' is a member of a religious sect emanating from the Punjab region of North-West India. Sikhism, the religious system or practices of the Sikhs, was founded in the early 1500s and is a monotheistic religion, incorporating elements of Hinduism and Islam and specifically rejecting the Indian caste system. The concept of

executed the sixty-nine-year-old, wheelchair-bound, Jewish New Yorker, Leon Klinghoffer. His body and the wheelchair were thrown overboard into the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Syria. Following this development, the Syrian government (acting as intermediary), the Italian government and the terrorists concluded successful negotiations. The liner docked at the Egyptian port of Alexandria. Mohamed (Abu) Abbas, the PLF leader who had led the hijacking, arranged with President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, who was under the incorrect impression that no-one had died during the incident, for safe passage for him and his men from Cairo to Tunis. Abbas ordered the commando to surrender to Egyptian authorities and the group boarded their flight. However, US F14 Tomcat fighter planes intercepted the Air Egypt Boeing and forced it to land at the NATO base 'Sigonella' in Sicily. The US counter-terrorist unit, Delta Force, then illegally surrounded the aeroplane, but were in turn surrounded by the Italian Cabinieri's counter-terrorist unit, who asserted their territorial supremacy and took the malefactors into their own custody. Abbas took this opportunity to escape to Yugoslavia and Iraq. The subsequent scandal caused the collapse of Italian Bettino Craxi's presidency, additionally straining relations between Italy and the USA. Abbas was subsequently tried in absentia for murder and found guilty by the Italian court. (Mercer, 1995:1259; Glennon, 1995:619; Adams, 1986:22-25.)

5.2.2 The Palestinian-Israeli conflict

A crucial factor in understanding the tensions within *Klinghoffer* is the timeline between the hijacking and the opera's conception. The Achille Lauro was taken in 1985, *intifada*[72] was declared in 1987, and the opera was begun in 1989. Therefore, by the time that Adams, Sellars and Goodman decided on the events, it was no longer one terrorist incident among many — the issues embodied the conflict between the Israeli and Palestinian people.

The historical area of the 'Holy Land' that is now Palestine incorporates the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the River Jordan. It is sacred to Christians, Muslims and Jews alike. From 1556 until World War I, Palestine was ruled by the Ottoman Turks. During the 1830s it was mainly inhabited by Arab peasants. Conflict between the Arabs and Jews in the area dates to c.1882, when, due to the enmity towards Jewish people in Russia and Romania, the first

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Khalsa, a chosen race of warrior-saints is central to their beliefs (Barnhart & Barnhart, 1990c:1942; Isaacs *et al.*, 1990e:1116).

[72] The Arabic word for "shaking off" which refers to the Palestinian uprising within the West Bank and Gaza Strip. (Frankel, 1996:410; Friedman, 1990: xiv.)

extensive return[73] of Jewish settlers to the area took place (Isaacs *et al.*, 1990a:919; Friedman, 1990:xi).

The modern day conflict has its roots in the years following World War II. By late 1945, every fifth person in the western zones of occupied Germany was known as a 'displaced person'. Up to 20,000 refugees arrived daily in Berlin's British sector, hoping to move westward. Many more attempted to travel eastward (c. 5.5 million Russians had been prisoners of war and slave laborers). The need for emergency relief necessitated the formation of the UNRRA, or United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, which then became the United Nations Organisation. By 1947, the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) had taken responsibility for war-time refugees from communist Eastern Europe and by 1948 numbers had dropped significantly to 550,000 within Western Germany. As governors of Palestine under a League of Nations[74] mandate, Britain attempted to restrict Jewish immigration to the region, but many Jewish survivors from all over Europe made their way to the area and resettled there.[75] As a result, the UN voted in November 1947 to partition Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states (Pimlott, 1989:451-452).

Britain quit the region in May 1948 and shortly after their withdrawal, the State of Israel was declared. Immediately, surrounding Arab states including Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon invaded the territory and refused to accept any UN partition. By early 1949, their forces had been repulsed and Israel had gained control of 75 percent of Palestine, with the rest occupied by Jordan and Egypt, and Jerusalem divided between Jews and Arabs. In 1956, after the nationalization of the Suez Canal, Israeli forces occupied the Sinai Peninsula as well as Gaza Strip, gaining access to international trade from the Red Sea. During the Six Day War (1967) Israel defeated forces from Egypt, Syria and Jordan, and again occupied the Sinai Peninsula,[76] Golan Heights, West Bank, Gaza Strip and Arab sector of Jerusalem. (Isaacs *et al.*, 1990b:635.)

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[73] Beginning with the Babylonian exile in the 6th century BC, the Jewish peoples spread into many parts of the world, yet continued to regard the ancient territories of Israel as their homeland. The collective term for Jewish communities outside the land of Israel is *diaspora*, the Greek for dispersion. This dispersion is sometimes viewed in a negative and sometimes in a positive light. The founders of the World Zionist Organisation encouraged Jewish settlers to return to the area through the Jewish National Fund (1909) and the Jewish Agency for Palestine (1929). The main modern day centre for the *diaspora* is the USA. (Isaacs *et al.*, 1990f:364; Isaacs *et al.*, 1990g:1332.)

[74] The predecessor of the United Nations (Pimlott, 1989:451-452).

[75] The British captured Palestine in 1918. During their administration, Britain attempted to please both the Jewish population (in 1917 with the Balfour Declaration in which they supported the Jewish demand for a nation in Palestine), and the Arab population (in 1939 with attempts to limit Jewish immigration as well as irrigation and land purchase), further increasing tensions between the two groups. (Isaacs *et al.*, 1990a:919.)

[76] Israel withdrew from Sinai during the period 1980-1982 (Isaacs *et al.*, 1990b: 635).

In response to Israel's actions, the Arab heads of State, led by Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser, assisted in establishing the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) in Cairo in 1964. The PLO consisted of Palestinian factions opposed to Israel, led by Al Fatah (the Arabic word for victory). Al Fatah is also known as the Palestinian Liberation Movement, led by Yasser Arafat.[77] Al Fatah began guerilla warfare against Israel during the mid 1960s. The PLO has not been able to unite all the groups and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine under George Habash remains independent. Terrorist acts carried out by the PLO include the murder of 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Until 1982, the group used Lebanon as a base for guerilla operations, but Israeli forces invaded, expelling them from West Beirut. (Friedman, 1990:xii; Isaacs *et al.*, 1990a:919; Isaacs *et al.*, 1990b:635.)

Organised resistance against Israel included infiltration of the occupied territories by Palestinian guerrilla fighters who then confronted the Israeli army. However, the civilian Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip also carried out sporadic protests against Israeli rule. The Gaza Strip, 28 miles long and 5 miles wide, suffered from over-population and Palestinians were housed in impoverished refugee camps which were built in 1948 by Egyptian authorities for Palestinians displaced by the new Israeli state. By 1987, the Palestinian population had grown to a figure of between 650,000 and 800,000, and protests escalated in number and aggression. These culminated in December that year when the Palestinians began a sustained and violent revolt, or *intifada*, in the streets of Gaza. It spilled over into the West Bank. (Frankel, 1996:45-46; Isaacs *et al.*, 1990c:491; Isaacs *et al.*, 1990d:625.)

Frankel (1996:39) cites anger at their parents, who had lived with the "… personal humiliation and indignity of occupation"; anger at their leaders, who had become ensconced abroad and showed little motivation to changing already existing arrangements; lack of economic opportunity; frustration with crime and drug abusers; and powerlessness to make change, as the main reasons for the increasingly radical stance of the Palestinian youth. He states (1996:39) that the "… new Palestinian generation had few heroes. It paid lip service to aging figures such as Yasser Arafat and George Habash, but many felt abandoned by both the PLO and Arab world in general." A twenty-three-year-old university student stated: "… We have felt insecure ever since

[77] Yasser Arafat (1929-2004) became president of the PLO in 1968, but in 1983 his leadership was rejected by some members and Al Fatah split into factions for and against him. In 1988, he recognised the State of Israel and renounced terrorism. (Isaacs *et al.*, 1990h:67.)

we were born … Violence is the only way the whole world will see us and hear us. They may see us as terrorists, but this is the only way." (Frankel, 1996:39.) In addition, older Palestinians, who had initially pursued a peaceful existence under occupation, increasingly found themselves at odds with the Israeli authorities and the influx of thousands of settlers "… forced Palestinians to a new level of realization and desperation: the land was not being held in trust pending the end of Israeli occupation" (Frankel, 1996:4).

The Israeli army, the organised Palestinian movements such as Al Fatah and PLO splinter groups as well as the Muslim Brotherhood[78] were all taken unawares by the uprising as well as the extent of spontaneity and anger held by the people of Gaza. By 1988, the *intifada* had changed in nature and what had begun as "… a confrontation between stone-throwing Arab teenagers and youthful Israeli conscripts had blossomed into a full-scale intercommunal struggle between Arabs and Jews", with atrocities being committed with equal violence and fervor by both sides (Frankel, 1996:45-56).

Israel's attempts to suppress the *intifada* through harsh military action attracted international sympathy for the Palestinian cause. Pro-Israeli America in particular was "rudely awakened" by successive news-network footage of Israelis striking and shooting Palestinians who had been hurling rocks in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1987 (Friedman, 1990:496). The following year, Arafat, with the backing of the USA, endeavored to take a more peaceful approach, by officially renouncing terrorism and acknowledging the State of Israel. The latter, however, refused to enter into negotiations. After the PLO declared a new Palestinian state, they were forced to set up parliament in exile in Tunis. By 1990, approximately 730 Palestinians and 270 other Arab people had died in the *intifada*, as well as 58 Israelis and 4 foreigners (Isaacs *et al.*, 1990a:919; Isaacs *et al.*, 1990d:625).

[78] Israel initially (in the 1970s) attempted to encourage opposition to the secular PLO within the Palestinian community by encouraging the growth of the Islamic movement, which they (Israel) believed to be conservative and apolitical. By 1987, however, a militant strain of Islam, combining religion, nationalism and opposition to the Israelis had become prevalent. Islamic *Jihad*, the holy war against unbelievers, sanctions death over life in achieving victory and the liberation of land. The Muslim Brotherhood was quashed by the Israelis and in its place the Islamic Resistance movement known as Hamas, the Arabic word for 'zeal', appeared. (Frankel, 1996: 47; Isaacs *et al.*, 1990i:633.)

5.2.3 September 11 and Islamic *jihad*

While the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has continued into present times, acts of Islamic terrorism against the West, unrelated to the localised Gaza conflict, have grown in number and have gained high media profile. The most infamous and devastating of these was the September 11 (2001) hijacking of four Boeing airplanes on domestic American flights by Islamic fundamentalist terrorists (Webster, 2001:20; Anon, 2001a:5). American Airlines Flight 11, which was carrying ninety-two people, was forced to crash into the North Tower of the World Trade Centre in New York at 8:48am (12.48 GMT). United Airlines Flight 175, carrying sixty-five people hit the centre's South Tower eighteen minutes later (Webster, 2001:20). The third flight, United Airlines 175, crashed near Pittsburgh en route to San Francisco with forty-five people on board. The fourth plane, an American Airlines Boeing, carrying sixty-four people, was flown into the western section of the Pentagon in Washington (Webster, 2001:20). George Bush, in association with Tony Blair, retaliated by declaring a 'War on Terror' which included military action in Afghanistan aimed at rooting out al-Qaeda and their leader Osama Bin Laden (Walker & Moore, 2001:4; Evans, Watson & Philp, 2001:1; Philp, 2001:7; Campbell, 2001:10). Despite UN opposition, the war in Afghanistan was followed by the controversial invasion of Iraq in 2003 by British and American forces. The coalition aimed to locate and remove nuclear armaments (labeled 'weapons of mass destruction') and simultaneously remove dictator Sadam Hussein from power in order to hold him accountable for the gross human rights violations that he committed (Von Sponeck, 2002:13; Lashmar, 2003:9; Brown, 2003:2).

The Iraq invasion spurred on increasing terrorist threats on both American and British targets. The threatening of Heathrow Airport in London in February 2003, for example, resulted in the deployment of military troops on the runway, in and around the airport (Davenport & Hunter, 2003; Addley, 2003:2; Jones, M. 2004:5). In addition, attacks on British tourists on foreign soil by al-Qaeda and other Islamic fundamentalists who support *jihad*, continued to increase in frequency, killing not only British people but also nationals from many countries and many locals. The 'Bali bombings' during October 2002, in which 202 were people were murdered by Al-Qaeda, and the October 2005 bombings in the same country, carried out by Al-Qaeda sympathisers shortly before the anniversary of the first bombings, were well-publicised events. (Whitaker, 2002:1; Aglion, 2006:16; Anon, 2005e:8; Alderson, 2005:5). Most recently, the first

major *jihad* attack on British soil took place on 7 July 2005[79] when a series of bombs were simultaneously detonated to destroy three full underground tube railways and a double decker bus. Fifty-two people died, over 770 were injured (BBC News, 2006; Bowker *et al.*, 2005:2, Fenton *et al.*, 2005; Anon, 2005f:027).[80]

5.3 Synopsis and structures of *The Death of Klinghoffer*

During their collaboration on *The Death of Klinghoffer*, Adams, Sellars and Goodman opposed the creation of a 'docu-drama' — a simple re-telling on stage of the events before, after and including the hijacking. Instead, they endeavored to create, a fluid, timeless drama, which Sellars describes as a "… series of meditations" (quoted in Smith, 1991:22). These meditations include violence, tenderness, introspection or a leading character's monologue, and simultaneously highlight the ever-conflicting beliefs of the Palestinians and Israelis (Smith, 1991:22). Overt violence, spectacle and sensationalism were avoided and Sellars was pleased when people came to see *Klinghoffer* "… expecting machine-gun fire and bodies being thrown overboard, and what they [got was] … art" (Brussels, 1991:79).

In order to accommodate the notion of a 'series of meditations', the dramatic structure includes a prologue, split into two choruses, and two acts. The first prologue chorus portrays a group of exiled Palestinians, lamenting the predicament of their people, while the second portrays a group of exiled Jews, similarly reflecting upon their dire situation (Boyden, 1997:585). The musical arrangement is built into the dramatic construct. Adams chose five large choruses similar to the classical Greek chorus. These choruses were placed throughout the opera, and they acted as musical "… pillars of repose" (Smith, 1991:21). Although his choice resembles an oratorio-like structure, the unfolding events move towards the climax at a purposefully theatrical pace (Smith, 1991:22).

The events begin in Act I, which opens on the Achille Lauro where the Captain, passengers, crew and hijackers deliver their separate versions of the events surrounding the ship's hijacking.

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[79] Now commonly referred to as July 7 as the attack on America was referred to as September 11.

[80] This attack was followed by a foiled terrorist plot that aimed to detonate bombs on mid-air passenger planes travelling between Heathrow and the USA in September 2006 (Singh, 2006:6; Hawkes, 2006:25; Box, 2006:27). This resulted in the USA declaring their closest allies, the United Kingdom, to be one of its highest security threats owing to the rise of the reluctance of the wider Islamic community in Britain in denouncing the actions of the July 7 suicide bombers (Brogan, 2006).

The captain and his guard, Mamoud, then interact, discussing their circumstances together (Boyden, 1997:585). Act II draws away from interpretation and moves on to the actual events of the hijacking: The liner is waiting for permission to dock at the port of Tarius and wheelchair-bound Jewish New Yorker, Leon Klinghoffer is separated from the other passengers. An argument ensues and the old man and his chair are hoisted overboard, where his corpse sings an aria. The liner then returns to Egypt, the hijackers and passengers disembark and the captain tells Mrs Klinghoffer of her husband's fate. She in turn performs a lengthy aria, concluding with the statement: "They should have killed me, I wanted to die." (Boyden, 1997:585.)

Goodman's characters are easily recognized as their real counterparts, with one exception — the role of the young Palestinian terrorist, Omar, who is cast as a trouser role. Trouser roles are typically used to portray light-hearted adolescents boys such as Cherubino, Oscar and Stephano.[81] However, Omar departs from this tradition — he is a young, zealous, mentally conditioned radical who sings: "My soul is all violence/My heart will break/If I do not walk/In Paradise/Within two days." (Smith, 1991:22.) The meter within all the text is structured by half-rhymes and rhythmic off-beats, but for the Klinghoffers and Palestinian hijackers, Goodman uses Skeltonics.[82] The lines are deliberately short and often use rhyming words. Smith (1991:22) interprets this combination as being symbolic of the "… brutal dysphemia of events and of the explosive sounds of violence."

In response to Goodman's texts, Adams chose open-ended ariosi with long mellismas and no formal strophic shape, interspersed by the main choruses. Stylistically, the music for *Klinghoffer* exhibits some of Adams's origins as a minimalist, particularly in his use of repetition. Despite the long vocal lines, Adams's harmonies remain chordal in nature. He shows similarities to the works of Stravinsky with regard to the use of bitonality and modality. There is a discernable, over-all key scheme within the opera as the music for the Jewish characters clusters around G major and the Palestinians around C minor (Smith, 1991:22).

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[81] From Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Verdi's *Un ballo in Maschera* and Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette*, respectively.
[82] John Skelton (c.1460-1529) was court poet to Henry VII and tutor to Henry VIII whose most famous poems, e.g. *Speke Parot* (1521), are satirical in content, medieval in form and are often written in short irregular lines with frequent occurrences of the same rhyme (Isaacs *et al.*, 1990j:1123; Barnhart & Barnhart, 1990d:1955). Smith (1991:22) interprets Goodman's libretto as an attempt to highlight the existence of poetic art in a time when poetry has largely lost its impact and position within society.

5.4 Socio-political critique

The Death of Klinghoffer has created controversy not only at the time of its premiere, but also throughout the succeeding 15 years. Initially, the resistant element of the work was to be found in its unusually 'neutral' stance on the Middle Eastern issues. During the time in which Sellars, Goodman and Adams had begun work on *The Death of Klinghoffer*, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was common headline news in the USA as well as around the world. The majority of American news reports took a pro-Israeli stance and in 1990 Friedman observed (1990:446) that "… when it comes to winning the sympathies of the West[83] the Palestinians can never quite compete with the Jews no matter how hard they try and no matter how hard they suffer." In contrast, *The Death of Klinghoffer* allowed the Palestinian people's grievances to be heard alongside those of the Israelis. This functioned as a reprimand to the American public who are generally unquestioning in their support of Israel.

Bitterness at America's stance emerged in November 1988 when, three years after his escape, Mohammed Abbas faced Western reporters about the Achille Lauro hijacking during a meeting of the Palestinian National Council in Algiers. He was asked whether he regretted the fact that his men murdered Leon Klinghoffer. An incensed Abbas answered, "I wish that the names of our victims and martyrs were as well known as the name Klinghoffer. Can you name ten Palestinians who died from Israeli gas or ten pregnant Palestinian women who were crushed and killed?" (Friedman, 1990:446.) By the time of the opera's completion, little had been done to change the focus of such news coverage and in an interview, Adams similarly observed that "Klinghoffer … attempted to tackle an issue that is not particularly popular in this country — the destiny or rights of the Palestinian people. It's an issue that's rarely discussed in the media, and when it is there's always a demand for equal time for the other side, although that doesn't work both ways unfortunately." (Smith & Smith, 1994:12.)

After September 11 and with the advent of George Bush's 'War on Terror', the critique in *Klinghoffer* evolved to critique not only on the ongoing conflict in the Middle East but also the refusal by Americans to accept that global terrorism could be anything other than a clear case of 'good' versus 'evil'. Conrad described the post September 11 mood within America as one of "… compulsory piety and self-pitying rectitude" and believed that in 2002, *The Death of*

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[83] Here Friedman refers to the USA.

Klinghoffer would be unperformable in the USA (Conrad, 2002:40-41). Conrad (2002:41) ascribes to Hegel's interpretation of *Antigone* as an example of the classical tragedy which requires balance of sympathies between characters. In such analysis the tragedy is found in the conflict between two irreconcilable world views (Conrad, 2002:41). The American public, however, traditionally gives little thought to opposing and differing views and their mindset is thus criticized by Conrad as follows:

> America prefers the crude and self-congratulatory moral melodrama of George W Bush, which insists that "we are good" and demonises the country's foe as "the evil one" or "the bad guy". W H Auden once said that American foreign policy addressed a shy, ingratiating question to the rest of the world: "Do you love me as I love you?" Americans cannot imagine that this love, distributed as promiscuously as those care packages of peanut butter that were dropped on Afghanistan along with US missiles, will be unrequited. They seem unable to acknowledge that there are people in the world who might hate them, and have legitimate cause for doing so. *Klinghoffer* refuses to dehumanize the hijackers, who present themselves as "men of ideals, not vandals". (Conrad, 2002:41-42.)

Adams's own interpretation of the American people closely resembles Conrad's and in an interview with Elana Park for the magazine *Andante.com*, he stated:

> I was astonished to see this opera recently referred to in the news as a "terrorist opera." Terrorism is just the ignition point in the opera. The deeper, more complex themes are what resonate in the mind as one leaves the theatre. Americans are in danger of becoming so hardened and desensitized by years of consuming the television news and the daily papers that they can't imagine a representation of a story like the Klinghoffer event being anything other than a cliché melodrama with "evil" terrorists and "innocent" victims. Terrorism *is* evil and everyone who experiences it suffers immeasurably. But there are reasons why a terrorist behaves the way he or she does, and we would be foolish and self-deluding not to question why.
>
> In the weeks following the September 11th attack I noticed an unspoken imperative here in the United States which was summed up in the President's use of language. We were told that we are fighting "evil," plain and simple. We have been discouraged from examining the causes. It's a kind of Inquisitional posture, not unlike that of the McCarthy era: *they* are the enemy and *they* are evil. There is no point in asking anything further about them. (Adams, quoted in Park, 2001.)

Therefore, in giving voice to the individuals who perpetuate acts of terror, the opera embraces the element of resistance and challenges the beliefs of the American people.

A secondary challenge, which Conrad (2002:42) believes to be more volatile and therefore a greater risk on the part of the creators, also exists: The work prompts the audience to question to what extent the surviving characters are deserving of pity in light of their character flaws. The Swiss grandmother for example, anti-semitically thanks God that she was not born a Jew and looks forward to her opportunity to boast of her 'dreadful' experience to her friends. An Austrian woman is similarly repulsive and hides in her cabin, clutching her chocolate, refusing to die with her social inferiors. A brazen British tourist flirts with the hijackers and trades for cigarettes (Conrad, 2002:42). These acts cause audience discomfort because they prompt to self-reflection: if the surviving characters, who have realistic traits, are not deserving of pity, to what extent would each individual member of the opera's audience be deserving of sympathy in a similar plight?

After the July 7 London bombings, the act of allowing everyone, even terrorists such as the Achille Lauro hijackers, to have their views aired, supports the fundamental tenet of freedom of speech. This stance directly critiques Islamic fundamentalists who wish to curtail people's freedoms by disrupting everyday Western, democratic life. John Adams touched on this interpretation in 2001 when, in an interview with Elena Park, he stated the following:

> We have to remember that the goal of a terrorist is to disrupt and destroy the internal fabric of a society. The real fabric of American society is not all those flags you see on people's cars and at the ballpark: it's in the Bill of Rights and in our constitutional form of government. To stifle conversation or dialogue is exactly the response a terrorist would dream of. (Adams, quoted in Park, 2001.)

As long as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict ignites violence and remains an area of international concern, the neutral approach taken by *The Death of Klinghoffer* can function as critique of both the Israeli people and global Islamic terrorism as well as challenge complacent acceptance of official versions of terrorist events. In addition, the threat posed by Islamic terrorists against the West by networks such as Al-Qaeda currently engenders unease and fear, especially among the American public. The opera's humanization of the Muslim Palestinians, regardless of the creator's aim for neutrality, therefore remains critical of the current American-led Western 'War on Terror'.

5.5 The reception history of *The Death of Klinghoffer*

In its attempt to allow the Palestinian terrorists to appear as human beings with grievances, *The Death of Klinghoffer* attracted widespread accusations of anti-Semitism in the USA. However, in its empathetic setting of Klinghoffer's death and the grief of Marilyn Klinghoffer, the work was viewed by some Palestinians as anti-Islamic, thus supporting the contention that art may have differing effects in varying performative contexts. Reports, columns and critiques reacting to the opera span over a decade and for the purposes of this dissertation, they are divided into four chronological periods: The opera's first run of performances in 1991 and 1992, the 2001 post-September 11 cancellation of planned Boston performances, the 2003 release of director Penny Woolcock's film version of the opera, and the 2005 Edinburgh Festival's British premiere of the work. Despite being written over a fourteen-year period, these reports all converge on the core conflicts of anti-Semitism and the romanticising of terrorism versus the attempt to give voice to an oppressed people.

5.5.1 Initial performances: 1991–1992

The Death of Klinghoffer was co-commissioned by six European and American cultural institutions.[84] These institutions had planned for the same premiere production to be performed in Brussels in March 1991, in Lyon in April 1991, in Brooklyn in September 1991, the United Kingdom in October 1991 and July 1992, Los Angeles in September 1992 and San Francisco in October 1992, thus ensuring a wide audience (Anon, 1989). When Adams first began the composition in 1989, the USA had been vocal in their support for Saddam Hussein. However, by the time of the opera's completion on 12 February 1991, they had begun their military campaign in Iraq and were dropping smart-bombs on Baghdad (Steinberg, 1991:8; Cahill, 2001:145). The world premiere, held five weeks later on 19 March 1991 in Belgium at the Thèâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Brussels,[85] coincided with acts of international aggression that led to the constant scrutiny of both Middle Eastern issues and American foreign policy by the international media (Steinberg, 1991:8; Cahill, 2001:145; Anon, 1991:171; Rockwell, 1991).

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[84] The Brooklyn Academy of Music, LaMonnaie/De Munt, Opéra de Lyon, Glyndebourne Productions Ltd, The Los Angeles Festival and The San Francisco Opera (Anon, 1991:171).

[85] With choreography by Mark Morris, sets by George Tyspin and costumes by Dunya Ramicova (Steinberg, 1991:8).

Patrick Smith reported (1991:21) that from the moment *Klinghoffer*'s subject was announced the expectation of controversy was high. He described the topic as being "… as dangerous as a carload of nitroglycerin" and there was widespread speculation as to how it would be treated. Simultaneously, the ongoing Gulf War gave the Belgian organisers cause to speculate over the safety of staging the world premiere at all. They proposed postponement fearing that the performance might incite real new acts of terrorism (Walsh, 1991:79). When the premiere did take place, security was strict (Walsh, 1991:79) and the audience included numerous critics[86] from both the West and Middle East. Reviews ranged from highly positive to neutral. Katrine Ames, for example, found the debut to be "… a work that fires the heart" with a score both "powerful" and "evocative", further describing the staging as "controlled and emotive" (Ames, 1991:53). A neutral comment is exemplified in John Rockwell's observation that it "… deliberately cools passions into meditations from afar" (Rockwell, 1991).

Adams believes that muted responses to the premiere stemmed largely from the fact that the collaborators had avoided any "graphic exploitations" of the terrorist incident in favour of "a ceremony of almost Attic formality, complete with choreography and highly ritualized physical gestures" (Adams, 2000b). Ames too noted this disparity, observing that the masse of critics used to Sellars's "remarkable imagination", expressed in his signature Mozart updates, were "clearly stunned" by the production. He/she stated that they "… were dying to go home with a film clip of a man being shot in the head and dumped overboard … and instead they got this highly stylized event, more like a ritual than anything else." (Ames, 1991:53.)

While critics may have been divided in their response to the choice of staging,[87] there is no mention of anti-Semitism, anti-bourgeoisie, the notion of romanticizing terrorism, or other politically controversial interpretations of score and staging. Instead, reports such as those made by Walsh (1991) and Rockwell (1991) focus on the musicological criticism of Adams's score, both drawing favorable conclusions for the opera as a whole. For example, after his discussion of what he perceives to be the operas faults, Walsh (1991:79) generously states that "… none of this should impede Klinghoffer's success … This broad international debut will serve to confirm

[86] Rockwell's (1991) report of the evening describes the dearth of critics as follows: the "audience was overflowing with critics — they filled the foyer for an intermission reception, glowering at one another suspiciously — from seemingly every corner of the Western world and, perhaps, the Middle Eastern world as well."

[87] Walsh (1991:79) praises the director's decision to clothe the cast similarly in a symbolic confusion of friend and foe, while Rockwell (1991) dislikes this choice on the grounds that he believed it to reduce the action to a "faceless bustle".

Adams, Goodman, Morris and Sellars as the foremost creative team working today on the operatic stage, and perhaps on any stage" (Walsh, 1991:79). Similarly, Rockwell (1991) pronounced that, "the potential for eventual triumph is there … Last night's premiere brought warm, friendly but curiously curtailed applause. In a more pointed production, that applause could turn into ovations." Adams himself confirmed that there was a lack of contention surrounding *Klinghoffer*'s content in Brussels, as well as the subsequent European productions when he observed that, "*Klinghoffer* played many performances in Europe before it came to the USA, and there was very little comment about any perceived improprieties in our approach" (quoted in Smith & Smith, 1994:12).

In comparison to the European reception, the American premiere at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York on 5 September 1991 was followed by a markedly different, hostile reception as well as a public outcry which Adams termed "extreme" (Smith & Smith, 1994:12; Adams, 2000b). Many critics regarded the incendiary political nature of the work as an offense and as a result went on to ridicule its artistic merit, describing the libretto as clumsy and fashionably politically correct and the music as bland, derivative and ineffective (Adams, 2000b). The reviews and letters published in the *New York Times* in September and October 1991 are especially representative of this general response.

Jewish critic Edward Rothstein of the *New York Times*, for example, met the work with extremely negative reviews. His first review was written in the conditional, giving his interpretation of "… exactly what the creator wanted a listener to think" (Rothstein, 1991a). He stated that Sellars, Goodman and Adams wanted the audience to believe that they "… would treat yesterday's newspaper reports as mythic, ritualistic repetitions of timeless struggles" and that the "… Palestinians and the Jews would be shown as symmetrical victims of each other's hatreds. … the work would be beyond politics." After this speculation, Rothstein places a short satirical conjunctive section, stating, "That, at any rate, was what the work wanted us to feel and think; it was also the kind of reaction its premiere sometimes inspired. But in actuality the performance, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music … was something else entirely" and in this manner, introduces the main section of the review, which is characterised by sarcasm and condemnation.

Rothstein denounces the work from various angles, beginning with the music, finding that it is "…either atmospheric or emotionally elementary, while the text is set in so unmusical a fashion

that the surtitles are required to decipher it" (Rothstein, 1991a). He then moves onto the bulk of his disapproval. He perceives the opera to give unequal treatment to the plight of the Palestinians and the Jews, finding that the contrast between the squabbling bourgeois Rumour family and the 'Chorus of Exiled Jews' is a "... tourist's recollection of devotional sentiment about the Promised Land". In his opinion this chorus carries no words of historic weight in comparison to the "... empathetic evocation of the intifada" given to the Palestinians. He concludes by attacking both the opera and those who he believes to be the musical 'avant-garde'. Summarising his problem with *Klinghoffer*, he states:

> The work continues to give seemingly historical resonance to Palestinian wounds. There is even an extended narrative dance of Hagar and her son exiled by Abraham, wandering in the desert and giving birth, in the biblical account, to the Arab people. The plot doesn't gentrify the terrorists' acts, but their victims continue to be little more than variations of the offensive Rumours: narrow in their focus and vision, singing primarily about their physical condition, revealing the simple-minded historical blindness that the avant-garde has long attributed to the bourgeoisie. Even Marilyn Klinghoffer's final aria is just a display of purely individual pain that leaves one cold. Who could tell from this work just what the Jewish side really is — a sort of touristy attachment to an ancient land? (Rothstein, 1991a.)

Rothstein is clearly offended by the empathetic treatment of the Palestinian plight by the opera's creators and finds fault with what he sees as lack of insight into the plight of the Jews, while including his disapproval of those who would critique the typically bourgeois — and typically American — lifestyle. Such a reaction serves to underline the position of Adams, Sellars and Goodman that the plight of the Palestinian people is neglected and ignored by and pro-Israeli media. Their defiance of the norm through an attempt to find something human in the Palestinians people elicited both defensive and aggressive reactions such as those displayed by Rothstein, who further demanded, "Who could tell from this work just what the Jewish side really is ...".

Rothstein's review enters its closing section with the statement that he would not be as critical if "... the opera did not go out of its way to lay claim to historical insight and sensitivity". However, he attempts to retain a semblance of fairness by admitting that the overall structure of poetic monologues and musings can be effective in creating "... extraordinary challenge for the text in evoking character and ideas", as opposed to the use of traditional narrative. Yet, he then once again returns to his aggressive stance, finding that the libretto is "... not up to the challenge ... the text seems almost casually random in its use of imagery and portentous statement. Ideas

are underdeveloped, cryptic passages are chanted, mixed metaphors created, references left unclear. When this miscellany is combined with Mr Adams's film-scorish impression, the result is a monochromatic stage show that relies on the audience to bring along appropriate sentiments" (Rothstein, 1991a). The critic omits the fact that Goodman herself is Jewish and finally concludes that the team has created "… another monument to the avant-garde that is repeating old political and esthetic gestures while acting as if it is daringly breaking new ground."

Four days after Rothstein's review was published, Leon Klinghoffer's daughters made their displeasure at the opera known through a media conference (Kozinn, 1991:13). They had been invited by the Brooklyn Academy to attend, but had instead chosen to purchase their own tickets and view the work anonymously (Kozinn, 1991:13). Their reaction was one of outrage at what they perceived to be a bias towards the Palestinian cause and even though they claimed to understand artistic license, they were not in favour of linking the blatant terrorist act of murder of an innocent with the Palestinian cause. The Klinghoffer family's official statement, released through their personal representative, Letty Simon, was worded as follows:

> We are outraged at the exploitation of our parents and the coldblooded murder of our father as the centerpiece of a production that appears to us to be anti-Semitic … While we understand artistic license, when it so clearly favors one point of view it is biased. Moreover, the juxtaposition of the plight of the Palestinian people with the coldblooded murder of an innocent disabled American Jew is both historically naïve and appalling. (Kozinn, 1991:13.)

The final use of the words "naïve and appalling", used with regard to the linking of terrorism with the Palestinian cause is, as in Rothstein's case, an example of the persistent refusal of many/most? Americans to contemplate the causes behind world terrorism as well as a lack of comprehension that understanding of an act is not synonymous with the condoning of that act. Furthermore, the Klinghoffer family's interpretation directly clashed with the creative intent as Adams aimed not only to "… tackle an issue that's not particularly popular" in the USA, but also to do "… a great honour to the memory of Leon Klinghoffer" (Smith & Smith, 1994:12).

When compared to Rothstein's review, Kozinn's reporting on the Klinghoffer family is even-handed. In order to give the creators mention, he includes Alice Goodman's press statement, made through the publicity agent at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (Kozinn, 1991:13). In addition, he mentions Goodman's own Jewish heritage and quotes her reiteration of the fact that many audience members would attend with typical, anti-Palestinian, preconceptions:

> Anyone who attends this opera with an unprejudiced mind will perceive that it does honour to the destiny of the Jewish people and the memory of Leon and Marilyn Klinghoffer. … To those who come prepared to see and hear only what they want to see and hear, nothing one can say is of any use. (Kozinn, 1991:13.)

Kozinn also included the Brooklyn Academy's response, which was simple and concise. Their president and executive producer, Harvey Lichtenstein, stated: "I understand the sensitivity of this subject … However, I do not believe that the work is anti-Semitic. I believe that the Klinghoffers are treated with great sympathy and dignity." (Kozinn, 1991:13.)

Following the *New York Time*'s report on the Klinghoffer daughters' disapproval, Edward Rothstein issued an additional, damning review of the work, this time under the auspices of an analysis of minimalist opera and published under the title "Klinghoffer Sinks Into Minimal Sea". Rothstein begins by describing the minimalist opera tradition as one which "… began triumphantly" with Glass's *Einstein on the Beach* (1976), but has now "… sputtered into cliché and mannerism" (Rothstein, 1991b). He finds that *Klinghoffer* belongs to this tradition and then criticizes those very dramatic techniques that he had praised eight days earlier, finding the use of "repetitive meditations" as opposed to "evolving narratives" causes the operatic scenes to lose their "concrete and literal character and become mythic, allegorical." (Rothstein, 1991b.) Rothstein once again bemoans what he believes to be the opera's anti-bourgeois sentiment arising from the creator's links to the 'avant-garde'. Furthermore, the critic uses language of a more inflammatory nature than in his initial review, now describing the Rumours as an "agit-prop portrayal of a squabbling middle-class Jewish family" (Rothstein, 1991b). He includes sarcasm to express his disapproval of the creator's choice to give resonance to the Palestinian position, using double quotation marks for the word 'position', implying that there is no position at all to speak of. The same technique is then used in his discussion of the Arab meditations and choruses, which are "… suffused with historical consciousness, with 'complex' feelings and claims" to undermine the validity of these claims. Rothstein builds upon his anger in this paragraph, culminating in the accusation that there "… is no Israeli position here; it is collapsed into scorn of American Jews and anybody else without mythic claims on the world's attention."

The remaining text of Rothstein's second review is similarly disapproving and is devoted to delivering further insults to the opera. He states that the work's "…ideological posing is morally tawdry", adding that "… its libretto is too confused and Mr. Adams's music too limited in range

to really evoke the skewed sentiments it strains for." After these words, he seems to draw back from his passionate personal disapproval and instead attempts to give musicological substantiation to his political arguments. He thus returns to analysis of minimalist works, finding Glass's *Einstein on the Beach* to be the "… apotheosis of this tradition, ecstatic without being pompous, ambitious without being didactic", further condemning *Klinghoffer* by stating that: "As its [*Einstein*'s] successors strained at the political sphere, they have become more and more limited, the iconic turning cartoonish." (Rothstein, 1991b.)

Finally, Rothstein closes his heated review with an ideological discussion of the nature of "dramatic complexity", in which he reacts to *Klinghoffer*'s attempt to allow the Palestinian viewpoint to be heard. He states that dramatic complexity does not arise from political "… posing or proclaimed evenhandedness", but instead should remain free from political influence: "It requires a nuanced historical imagination, one able to think nonideologically (*sic*) and nonmythically (*sic*), while being sensitive to the resonances of the particular in the universal. It also comes from a musical score able to give voice to a wide range of sensibilities, able to engage, like an actor, in the lives of its subjects." (Rothstein, 1991b.)

Rothstein's view is not unlike that of critic Samuel Lipman (see chapter four). However, if art chooses not to tackle a controversial subject, the choice to remain silent is in itself a political act of support for current hegemonic values. Rothstein (1991b) ends with a final derisive comment about *The Death of Klinghoffer* as art: "The yearning for vital American operatic tradition is almost palpable. But this minimalist variety is stillborn; for the American avant-garde to become truly avant-garde it will have to leave itself behind."

Adams does not appear concerned with the search for the great "American opera" which the critics constantly yearn for. Like Britten and Henze, Adams is less concerned with artistic analysis of his work and more focused on opera's "… potential for great moral force." The views of composer and critic are therefore irreconcilable in the case of Adams and Rothstein. Adams believes that opera is "… a great territory to work in if you're interested in human dynamics, opera seems to be an art form better suited than any other to deal with what I call the Big Issues — national identity, national destiny or great confrontations between huge groups of people,

whether they be nations or races" (Smith & Smith, 1994:11).[88] Rothstein believes that a composer should search for the 'particular in the universal'. Where two nations clash, there are inevitably two differing opinions, which is the prerequisite for an issue to become socio-political in nature. Topics which would be universally pleasing cannot function as resistance or nuisance in any way.

In response to the developing *Klinghoffer* debate, the *New York Times* published two letters to the editor which further exemplify the diametrically opposed reactions that the work has prompted. The first, written by composer and associate professor at Oberlin Conservatory, Conrad Cummings, finds the anti-emotional and anti-Semitic accusations leveled by the 7 September review to be "misjudged". Cummings approved of Adams's choice to model the opera on the Bach passions, as well as Adams's choice to explore the explosive topic in a calm, reflective, meditative manner as opposed to engaging in a linear drama. Cummings also defended the Goodman libretto, stating that it "… is denser, less direct, more mysterious than an opera libretto; and the music favors contrapuntal plumbing of meanings over direct speechlike setting of words". Politically, Cumming's own heritage includes Jewish origins, but he levelled no accusation of anti-Semitism. He proposed that those who would oppose the opera, are those who oppose the fair treatment of the Palestinian people, concluding that: "In war, to humanize the enemy is to be guilty of treason; those Americans who in their minds are at war with Palestine will react to 'Klinghoffer' accordingly. Humanizing is not condoning." (Cummings, 1991.)

The second letter to the editor, published in October by the *New York Times* under the title "'Klinghoffer': Sympathy for Wanton Murder", is diametrically opposed to Cummings's letter. The writer, Shirley Fuerst from Brooklyn, was "… shocked and dismayed by the immoral

[88] Adams gives insight into the way in which opera is suited to dealing with confrontation when he describes his choice of opera characters: "As dramatic figures they [Nixon and Klinghoffer] are very appealing. Nixon was a fantastically complex and unpredictable figure, and I found it a real adventure to go 'under his skin' in writing the opera. And the same goes for all the other characters in that opera. We know very little about the real Leon Klinghoffer. He was not a particularly interesting figure in himself in the way that Nixon and Mao were. But he was a symbol. He was a symbol of an American tourist, a modestly affluent American tourist, a modestly affluent Jewish-American tourist, and, last but not least, a modestly affluent handicapped Jewish-American tourist who was caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. All of these identities that he stood for made him an ideal target for a young Palestinian fanatic. It made him an archetype, especially when set up against a young Palestinian who had grown up in a horrible refugee camp in Lebanon hearing nothing from his parents or from his contemporaries except how Israel and America were the great Satans and that there was nothing nobler than to die for one's beliefs and for Allah. So to put these two packets of energy together on the stage was an irresistible dramatic impulse." (Adams, quoted in Beverly, 1995.)

viewpoint of the opera" and found that John Adams and Alice Goodman "… glamorize the terrorists and rationalize their actions, even though the Palestinians brutally murder a harmless American Jewish cripple. The Palestinians then sneak off the ship in Cairo, claiming no one was killed." Fuerst seems to be unaware that her use of 'Palestinians' as opposed to 'terrorists' or even 'Palestinian terrorists' first implies that the Palestinian nation as a whole is responsible for Klinghoffer's death and secondly that the events in Cairo were invention on the part of Goodman and Adams. Fuerst is, as Rothstein was, clearly offended by any anti-bourgeois connotations, illustrated by her statement that, "… the Klinghoffers, guiltless victims, are trivialized as the type of middle-class people who go on cruises only to shop — hardly a capital crime. America is described as a 'fat Jew'." Finally, she concludes her letter with a view not yet touched upon in the *New York Times:* she does not appear to have qualms over or nitpick the equality or inequality of treatment of Jewish and Palestinian concerns as does Rothstein, but rather states that there should be no equality or even an attempt at such. She writes, "I can't believe that a terrorist murderer and an innocent victim have equal claim to an audience's sympathy — particularly in this case, when the murderer is shown with sympathy and his act is justified, and the victim is treated as a barely human prop." (Fuerst, 1991.) Thus, where Rothstein is angered at what he perceives to be unequal treatment of Palestinian and Jew by the creators, Fuerst believes that creators have no right to ask the audience to have any sympathy at all for the Palestinian people (Fuerst, 1991).

Other reviewers follow the tone set by Rothstein and Fuerst, but with differing levels of sarcasm and aggression and the inclusion of artistic critique alongside of political merit. Samuel Lipman's "The Second Death of Leon Klinghoffer" for the American Jewish Committee's *Commentary*[89] is, for example, derogatory of Adams's compositional skills. Lipman (1991:46-49) motivates his standpoint in a discussion of the composer's previous works. By finding Adams wanting in skill he creates a 'precedent' for his pessimistic judgment of *Klinghoffer*. However, this cool, rational approach within the body of the text is preceded at the outset of the article with a clear description of Lipman's intolerant opinion of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as he describes the topic as focusing on the "… moral pretensions of the Arab fight against Israel and the Jewish people" (Lipman, 1991:46). In admitting that he has no belief in the Palestinian people's rights, Lipman has opened the article in an anti-Arab tone that undermines the credibility of his musicological argument.

Leon Weiseltier is similarly antagonistic in his article with the telling title of "Clagic trash" for the *New Republic* (Weiseltier, 1991:46). He makes use of no musicological analysis of Adams's works as does Lipman, but rather chooses a prosaic opening, quoting Verdi (Weiseltier, 1991:46). The critic states outright that he believes the work to be "… a cheap and self-satisfied attack by a self-styled American avant-garde upon the ordinariness and the philistinism of the American bourgeoisie tricked out as the study of a tragic clash in Zion" (Weiseltier, 1991:46). He further finds the artistic qualities lacking and therefore proposes that "out of tragic clash they have made clagic trash. There is not a bar of emotional authenticity or artistic innovation in Adams's score" (Weiseltier, 1991:46).

Gerald Weales presents yet another example of dislike for the opera's musical content and libretto. In contrast to Lipman and Weiseltier, Weales tends towards political neutrality in his article "Destructive Idealists" for the *Commonweal*.[90] He finds the opera to leave neither the Palestinians nor the Israelis in a very good light, yet ends with his feeling that, "despite the negative judgments that mark the paragraphs above there is much to admire in *The Death of Klinghoffer*" (Weales, 1991:655).

The Brooklyn Academy performances discussed in these reports were followed by six San Francisco productions as originally scheduled. The opera was the second most attended opera of their season. Each performance was picketed by a Jewish information group who also wrote letters of condemnation to the local press (Adams, 2000b; Cahill, 2001:145). In response, co-commissioners Los Angeles Music Centre Opera cancelled their planned series of performances without any explanation and since then the opera has not been produced in full in the USA (Adams, 2000b; Cahill, 2001:145). Similarly, in Britain, Glyndebourne cancelled their premiere and it was not until 2005 that the work received its British premiere (Walton, 2005:30).

5.5.2 Performances by the Boston Symphony Orchestra

After a decade in which the work was not again attempted in the USA, the Boston Symphony Orchestra scheduled excerpts from *The Death of Klinghoffer* for performance in November and

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[89] New York based periodical presenting articles that deal with current events, with an emphasis on politics, social science and culture, with special interest in Jewish affairs (Ebsco, 2006a).

December 2001. However, the performances were cancelled on 1 November 2001, following the events of September 11. The orchestra cited "… proximity to the events of September 11th" as their reason. Once again, the work became the subject of augmented and heated press coverage (Anon, 2001b). When compared with 1991 press coverage, reporting on the 2001 Boston Symphony Orchestra's cancellation of *Klinghoffer* reflects the change in focus of USA politics from a largely dominant pro-Israeli feeling and concern from afar with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, towards the new global 'war on terror', with direct involvement by the US military following September 11.

Allan Kozinn reports that the orchestra wished to "… err on the side of being sensitive". Because the opera centers on conflict in the middle East, and takes a specific terrorist incident as its subject, the orchestra's management believed the work to be unsuitable in the light of Al-Qaeda's actions and the subsequent feeling of national grief (Kozinn, 2001:E3). The orchestra's statement was terse in tone. The administration gave Adams the explanation that it was "… important to give their audiences comfort" during their time of grief (Kozinn, 2001:E3).

Adams chose to respond in an interview entitled "John Adams Speaks Out About Art in a Time of War",[91] conducted by *Andante.com*'s editor in chief, Elena Park. The composer explained that he had declined the BSO's offer to substitute another work for *The Death of Klinghoffer* so that the public would know that he had not agreed with the BSO about the cancellation (Park, 2001). He confronted the media response to his work, citing a letter written to the *Los Angeles Times,* and reiterated his belief that classical music should challenge audience complacency: If composers and administrators were to "… cave in to people with opinions like this, we are essentially saying that classical music is little more than entertainment or background music for the weary" (quoted in Park, 2001). This returns to the fundamental argument, of a decade earlier, which had highlighted the difference between those desiring to use art as socio-political critique (such as Adams) and those such as Rothstein, who wish for it to remain universally pleasing.

Following the *Andante* article, conductor Robert Spano and officials at the BSO elaborated on their decision. They explained that the Tanglewood Festival Chorus were reluctant to perform

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[90] A New York based periodical that reviews public affairs, religion, literature and the arts and is edited by Catholic laypeople (Ebsco, 2006b).

[91] Adams has been extensively quoted from this article in section 5.4 with regards to the interpretation of the work's critical aspect.

the work as soprano Melanie Salisbury's husband, Ted Hennessy, was one of the victims on a hijacked flight (Kozinn, 2001:E3). In addition, the singers had felt uncomfortable with the violence of the 'Chorus of Exiled Palestinians' in which the Palestinians express their anger against Israelis, stating: "Let the supplanter look/Upon his work. Our faith/Will take the stones he broke/And break his teeth." (Kozinn, 2001:E3.) In a later conversation, their director, John Oliver, used artistic justification to support the orchestra's stance, contradictorily stating that the opera is a beautiful work and that, "… from a human point of view, to enter into the aggression of the music would have been utterly painful" (quoted in Tommasini, 2001b:27). Spano too remained steadfast in his support of his decision, stating: "I don't agree with him that we did the wrong thing. I, as a person, am deeply wounded, as so many people are, and I think we're being sensitive to that. The fact that these choruses were performed recently in Amsterdam is one thing, but we should realize that the situation is different in New York and Boston … I don't think this is about being escapist. It's about being inappropriate." (Quoted in Kozinn, 2001:E3.)

Once again, critical response to the work was conflicting: Several critics were vocal in their support of Adams and several were derisive. Those who came out in support of Adams included columnists such as David Wiegland for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and Mark Swed of the *Los Angeles Times*. Similarly, Anthony Tommasini (2001b:27) of the *New York Times* expressed overwhelming support for both the music and socio-political content of the work, while sidestepping the issue of anti-Semitism. Tommasini pinpointed the essence of socio-political critique in the work when viewed in the context of September 11, explaining that it sought to give voice to terrorists in order to find the motivations behind these acts, and to ask the question about how the world has given birth to such desperate people. Tommasini therefore questions the orchestra's decision and argues that art should be relevant to society and encourage debate and thought:

> But how patronizing for the orchestra's directors to presume what audiences will or will not find offensive. Of course, art can provide solace and comfort. Yet art can also incense and challenge us, make us squirm, make us think. The Boston Symphony missed an opportunity to present an acutely relevant work. It might have sponsored preconcert panels, bringing Middle East historians together with Mr. Adams, Ms Goodman and the director Peter Sellars, who was involved with this opera from its inception. (Tommasini, 2001b:27.)

In addition, Tommasini feels that *Klinghoffer* could go some way to answering the question posed by Democrat Senator John Kerry, who, while calling for decisive military action , believes

that Americans "… have not really tried to understand why so many Muslims hate us" (Tommasini, 2001b:27).

Not all the *New York Times* critics echoed Tommasini's view: Richard Taruskin was antagonistic towards the opera and its creators. Taruskin's "Music's dangers and the case for control" begins with an analysis of religion, and of music censorship and then goes on to give the grounds for his belief that by adopting a 'laissez-faire' attitude towards music, the West is negating its importance (Taruskin, 2001:1). Taruskin's stance is different from earlier opposition to the idea of socio-political art as voiced by Rothstein and Lipman: Taruskin recognises the importance and political power of music and art, but believes that because of this power, music and art should be tightly controlled, or censored. Taruskin thus asks, "… whence the idea of seeking answers and understanding in an opera peopled by wholly fictional terrorists and semifictionalized victims, rather than in more relevant sources of information?" (Taruskin, 2001:1).

Taruskin also introduces a new theme in his attack on *The Death of Klinghoffer:* a scene was removed from the opera after its initial performances and not included in the subsequent recording. Taruskin sees the decision to make this revision in a negative light. He writes: "In its original version, the opening 'Chorus of Exiled Palestinians' was followed not by a balancing 'Chorus of Exiled Jews' but by a scene, now dropped from the score, that showed the Klinghoffers' suburban neighbors gossiping merrily about their impending cruise ('The dollar's up. Good news for the Klinghoffers') to an accompaniment of hackneyed pop-style music" (Taruskin, 2001:1). He accuses the creators of choosing this "pop-style" music to purposefully mock the Jewish family, depicting them as contented and materialistic. This stereotyping had contrasted harshly with the "… musical language of myth and ritual" given to the Palestinians and, in his opinion, would have highlighted the "… unequal terms on which the conflict of Palestinians and Jews would be perceived throughout the opera" (Taruskin, 2001:1).

Taruskin uses the exclusion of the scene to attack Adams's observation that the opera had not seemed particularly unsettling to European audiences. Taruskin believes that Europeans would not have been be shocked by a pro-terrorist stance because "… the version European audiences saw in 1991 catered to so many of their favorite prejudices — anti-American, anti-Semitic, anti-bourgeois". Following this analysis, Taruskin includes some musical analysis, comparing the use of a halo effect, created by the violins and viola, that accompanied Jesus in Bach's *St Matthew's Passion* to similar thematic material used by Adams. The critic concluded that Adams

purposefully apportioned the majority of this effect to the Palestinian chorus and Palestinian terrorists, deliberately neglecting the tourist victims until the moment where Leon Klinghoffer dies. He concludes his analysis by stating: "Only after death does the familiar American middle-class Jew join the glamorously exotic Palestinians in mythic timelessness." As with earlier critical articles, Taruskin suffuses his criticism with cynicism in order to draw his readers into agreeing with his final plea for censorship, and simultaneously attacking pro-Adams authors: "Why should we want to hear this music now? Is it an edifying challenge, as Mr. Wiegand and Mr. Tommasini contend? Does it give us answers that we should prefer, with Mr. Swed, to comfort? Or does it express a reprehensible contempt for the real-life victims of its imagined 'men of ideals,' all too easily transferable to the victims who perished on Sept. 11?" Finally, Taruskin's closing statements provide his preferred alternative in political art, namely 'self-control'. In order to sound reasonable, he concludes: "Censorship is always deplorable", yet goes on to state, "but the exercise of forbearance can be noble" and "Art is not blameless. Art can inflict harm. The Taliban know that. It's about time we learned." (Taruskin, 2001:1.)

"Music's dangers and the case for control" provoked numerous opposing responses from fellow critics and readers. Martin Kettle of British paper *The Guardian* said that Taruskin echoed the McCarthy era in his use of the label 'anti-American'. Rather than enter into debate over whether the opera may or may not be anti-Semitic, Kettle focuses on the fact that Taruskin is a respected musicologist from the University of California who is now advocating censorship. Kettle interprets Taruskin's statement (2001:1) that "...censorship is always deplorable, but the exercise of forbearance can be noble" as follows: "The opera, in other words, should not be banned, but it should no longer be performed" (Kettle, 2001:5), thus highlighs the irony of Taruskin's words. Kettle suggests that Taruskin's attitude is indicative of the general "atmosphere in the US" after September 11. Adams had earlier drawn the same conclusion, explaining that Taruskin echoes the announcement of U S Attorney General, John Ashcroft, that any person who questioned his changing civil rights policies would be seen as aiding terrorists (quoted in Kettle, 2001:5). The composer further observed that there seemed to be "no space" for the Palestinian viewpoint in American art, expressing his agreement with Susan Sontag who had said that the nationalist "mood" among the American people was unprecedented in the previous forty years (quoted in Kettle, 2001:5).

Not only did Taruskin's article provoke a response from professional music critics, but it also encouraged dialogue with a wider public. Ingram Marshall, a composer from Connecticut,

condemned both Taruskin's support of the BSO's cancellation of the opera and his belief that the opera shows contempt for the real victims of the hijacking. Marshall described Taruskin's commentary as a misreading that "…veered off course", and was "hurtful" and "without merit" (Marshall, 2001:2). Jeffrey Shallit submitted a similar letter condemning the BSO's decision, and also broached the topic of freedom of speech. In Shallit's opinion (2001:2) the cancellation limited the "…total number of responses to Sept. 11 that are available to those who would listen". He places the responsibility for avoiding offensive material at the feet of the audience, who are free to attend or not as they wish rather than having that choice made for them by administrators (Shallit, 2001:2). Mark Swed of the *Los Angeles Times* submitted his response in letter form to Taruskin's attack on his *Los Angeles Times* article. Swed clarified his initial position, denying that he despised music that dispenses only comfort and warned that the public should not ignore art that has "…pertinent insights into the world situation" (Swed, 2001:2).

Not all letters, such as those above, which were submitted to the *New York Times,* were published. However, the internet has given John Adams an additional medium through which to communicate: he published one of the rejected letters on his website www.earbox.com. Gregory Freidin, Professor of Slavic Languages & Literature at Stanford University had voiced his support of the opera and of artistic freedom as a whole. Freidin interprets Taruskin's view as political propaganda, similar to that of Goebels, Stalin and the Taliban, further affirming that "… artists must take chances, challenge the pieties of their contemporaries, and provoke self-examination and critical thought". Freidin believes, especially in the light of September 11, that the challenge to critical thought is the most vital and important role of "high art" and that if modern day audiences are truly free, then they need not be "protected" by "…latter-day Platonists, be they city mayors or academics" (Freidin, 2001).

5.5.3 The film version of *The Death of Klinghoffer*

The film version of *The Death of Klinghoffer* was released in 2003 for Channel Four in the United Kingdom. Penny Woolcock directed the production and John Adams conducted the London Symphony Orchestra. Although September 11 exerted some influence over the work, the collaborators chose not to let it affect the continuing production phases (Macnab, 2003:10).[92]

[92] Woolcock described the moment in which the World Trade Centre was attacked as follows: "John left a rehearsal to call a cab. He came back in, grabbed me by the arm and said, 'We can never perform this opera again.' He

The film was screened in May 2003 by Channel 4, and then given its American premiere at the Sundance Film Festival, followed by screenings at film festivals in San Francisco, Rotterdam, Buenos Aires, New York's Lincoln Center and Brussels (Boosey & Hawkes, 2003). It was widely acclaimed as an artistic success. Penny Woolcock won the 2003 Prix Italia for TV Performing Arts, received a nomination for a Golden Iris and won the Special Jury Prize at the Brussels European Film Festival (2003). The film was nominated as best picture at the Buenos Aires International Festival of Independent Cinema (2003), and was nominated for a Grammy in the category of Best Long Form Music Video (2005) (IMDB, 2006).

Contrasting with the earlier condemnation of the opera in the USA, in addition to receiving artistic recognition, the film received positive reviews from critics at the European, Sundance and San Francisco film festivals, Billen (2003:47), for example, described the overall effect of Woolcock's adaptation as "a hugely moving drama". However, despite the inclusion of a New York premiere in May 2003, no US theatrical or television distribution for the film was forthcoming, apart from the planned DVD release.

Rockwell (2003b:37) also gave a favourable report of Woolcock's film, which makes the violence committed by the hijackers more immediate to the audience than the opera did. Woolcock added video imagery such as a the hijackers driving in a Mercedes in the Gaza strip after their release, and a scene in which a Palestinian woman is stoned for becoming secularised.. Rockwell acknowledged that the film "tweaks" America's material comforts, but is careful to note that this does not amount to anti-Americanism, anti-bourgeoisie, or anti-Semitism. He describes the work as "pro-human" and one which "shows unequivocally that murder is nothing more than that, vicious and unconscionable. To see the opera or the film otherwise, it seems to me, is to be swept up in the very tribal hatreds the opera so eloquently deplores". (Rockwell, 2003b:37.)

Despite Rockwell's praise for the work, the same issues and criticism that had been expressed in negative reviews from 1991 to 2002 were once again rehashed in the *New York Times* by critic Edward Rothstein (Rothstein, 2003:E1). Rothstein returned to the fact that Adams and Goodman had removed the scene involving the Rumour family, and his statements are largely revisions of

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dragged me out and we stood in front of the TV and watched the World Trade Centre collapse" (quoted by Macnab, 2003:10).

his 1991 writing. Here, for example, Rothstein contrasts the *Klinghoffer* opera to the television series *24*:[93]

> But "Klinghoffer," a more serious example than "24," looks far worse in the light of 9/11, which makes its skewed perspective (regularly hailed as even-handed) even more obvious. The opera is based on the idea that the "root cause" of Palestinian terrorism is Jewish sins; it accepts the terrorists' account of grievance and offers no alternative. The opening Palestinian chorus displays an elegiac historical consciousness; the opening Jewish chorus displays nothing more than the perspective of a sentimental tourist and reveals no compelling claims on our attention or sympathy.
>
> The film, affected perhaps by 9/11, makes the terrorists seem more misguided, but paradoxically, it also amplifies their grievances. As the Palestinians sing, a group of young Jews chase innocent Palestinians from a pastoral village on the day after the founding of Israel in 1948, clubbing innocents, shooting rifles. The Achille Lauro terrorists, Ms. Woolcock suggests, have their origins in those brutalized families. Meanwhile the Jews, as victims of the Nazis, are given their own historical vignette in which they are similarly chased from their homes, only to arrive in Palestine. In Ms Woolcock's invented scenario, a survivor, a tattooed camp number on his arm, viciously attacks the Arabs. (Rothstein, 2003:E1.)

This statement is followed by a one-sided account of Rothstein's own interpretation of the events that took place during the years 1947 and 1948 when the Arab states rejected the UN partition of Palestine. He concludes that in present times "9/11 showed what should have been clear long before: religious delusion, cultivated hatred and totalitarian ambitions create a terrorist culture; the perception of injustice may or may not be justified. The film resists seeing such complications." (Rothstein, 2003:E1.)

Rothstein's and Rockwell's opposing interpretations illustrate that, regardless of medium, the opera's content is consistently controversial in the USA. There is a wide variance of opinions about political situations, and many differences in the depth of understanding of views which are different from official propaganda. The opera is an effective catalyst for the airing of these opinions. For example, the liberal view of director Penny Woolcock can be contrasted to the conservatism of Jascha Kessler, a member of the public from Los Angeles. Woolcock speculates on the nature of peace and forgiveness when she states: "If the opera is about anything, it's that we have to forgive the unforgivable. Otherwise, we're lost as a species." (Quoted in Rockwell, 2003b:37.) Kessler's direct response to Woolcock's statement, however, was that she would now

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[93] A series revolving around counter-terrorist agent Jack Bauer, who reveals that right-wing oil-greedy Americans are to blame for a foiled Islamic terrorist plot (Rothstein, 2003:E1).

not purchase a ticket as she believed that "... in light of today's terrorist murders, Ms. Woolcock's statement is nonsense. The unforgivable is just that." (Kessler, 2003;AR4.)

In addition to the issue of world terrorism, the *Klinghoffer* film also remains pertinent to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As illustrated in the discussion of reviews such as Rothstein's and the Edinburgh Festival in section 5.5.5, the opera continues to be condemned by some sections of the Jewish community. Ironically, Palestinians also find fault with the work. It was chosen as one of nine representative British films at the first Ramallah International Film Festival in Palestine, held in association with the British Council in 2004. However, at the festival's commencement, Palestinian authorities expressed objections to both *The Motorcycle Diaries* (concerning revolutionary Ché Guevara) and *The Death of Klinghoffer*. Despite the confiscation of a projector, the former was not cancelled. However, *The Death of Klinghoffer* was not screened. British festival judge Nick Broomfield (2004:10) reported that the minister for culture refused to show the film after some members of the Palestinian Authority had objected that it was too pro-Israeli. (Anon, 2004b.)

5.5.4 The Boston multi-media performance

The Death of Klinghoffer received its first USA performance since 1992 in 2003 in a production billed as a staged concert performance at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Projected film and still images, created by filmmaker Bill Morrison and visual designer Laurie Olinder, were used. Reporting on the performance was not as widespread as the 2001 BSO cancellation, but Anthony Tommasini (2003b:27) reports that as a result of the previous contention, metal detectors were placed within the Brooklyn Academy of Music's entrance hall, and audience members were searched as part of the security check.. Tommasini's review is positive and includes little political comment other than the closing paragraph, which states:

> No one will be able to dissuade those who believe that "The Death of Klinghoffer" puts a simplistic gloss on impossibly complex hatreds or that it is even tainted with anti-Semitism. For what it's worth, my companion on this occasion, a young Israeli psychiatrist and an army veteran who could explain why Palestinians would not be likely to carry M-16 rifles, as the singers do here, found the opera humane, perceptive and engrossing. Whatever your take, this ambitious and deeply felt work deserves to be heard and debated. (Tommasini, 2003b:27.)

5.5.5 The 2005 Edinburgh Festival

The Death of Klinghoffer finally achieved its British premiere in July 2005 at the Edinburgh Festival. It was performed by the Scottish Opera, fourteen years after Glyndebourne had acted as a co-commissioning body for the opera's composition. Following the pattern of its American reception history, the production was not without opposition, and tensions were further increased by the July 7 London bombings. In contrast to the American responses, the majority of reviews were positive rather than hostile when exploring political content and score.

The main opposition to the Edinburgh Festival production emanated from the American Jewish community. Rabbi Cooper, the associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Los Angeles, called for a boycott of the Scottish Opera's premiere (in which members of the chorus sat in the audience with concealed replica guns and then stormed the stage as 'terrorists') on moral grounds, terming the production team "moral midgets" and calling for the work to be performed to an empty house (Van Gelder, 2005b:E2). Lawrence van Gelder, reporting for the *New York Times*, quoted the rabbi as stating: "To portray a terrorist in heroic terms and to, in effect, make the audience part of a 'terrorist onslaught,' I find it very difficult to express my level of outrage." (Quoted in Van Gelder, 2005b:E2; Higgins, 2005.) Additionally, the BBC reported the Rabbi as describing the opera as "stunning in its callousness" before claiming that, "Young people sitting in an audience today, especially young Muslims who are hearing mixed messages from their elders … will walk out morally befuddled and confused by this play" (BBC News, 2005b). William Lyons included a more comprehensive report on the Rabbi's commentary for *Andante.com* in which Cooper is quoted as stating:

> Where is the understanding and sympathy for the 7/7 victims and their families? It never ceases to amaze me that unfortunately there are always some among the cultural elite, whether it is in California or Scotland, who assume they are above the fray and are serving a higher cause. … If we take a snapshot of where we are now collectively after the events of July 7 and July 21 and the fact that the UK is potentially under the horrific cloud of more suicide bombers, how disconnected to reality are these people? … I think we are at the point where we understand that cultural elites do not always reflect a profound moral high ground. To actually have to talk about this in real time when you are deploying soldiers to safeguard people getting into the Tube in London is almost beneath contempt. (Lyons, 2005.)

Opposition to the Edinburgh production also came from the United Kingdom in the form of an article written by critic Bill Jamieson of *The Scotsman*. In his "Bad choice for Scottish Opera's

comeback", Jamieson felt that the Edinburgh Festival was neither the appropriate time nor the place for a production of *The Death of Klinghoffer* (Jamieson, 2005:24). His introduction acknowledges that, historically, the operatic form has often delivered critique on the socio-political context in which it is performed, but goes on to criticise the festival's decision:

> But an opera based on the murder of a Jewish pensioner in a wheelchair? A work that has been accused of anti-Semitism? Would we agree to use taxpayer funds to stage it?
>
> We might say that the work should be allowed on its artistic and aesthetic merits. But suppose there was a wide body of critical opinion which considered that the work had little aesthetic or artistic merit? What then would we say to those who protested over an inappropriate use of public funds?
>
> These questions are propelled to the fore by Scottish Opera's choice of production for this year's Edinburgh International Festival. It is breaking into its "year of darkness" with an opera of such disputed taste that it will only confirm to critics that it is either out of control or in the grip of an incomprehensible death wish.
>
> It has chosen to stage The Death of Klinghoffer, a highly controversial work by the American minimalist composer John Adams. (Jamieson, 2005:24.)

In support of his statement, Jamieson refers only to negative and derisive *Klinghoffer* reviews and asks, therefore, why the Scottish opera would choose a work of "limited appeal and questionable aesthetics." He speculates that popular opera such as Mozart or Puccini would better suit the company in their need to regain audience numbers after their recent difficult period. He concludes:

> I do not doubt The Death of Klinghoffer has its place. But at this juncture for Scottish Opera, it is hardly the right choice. In fact, it is an opportunity spectacularly missed. It may play well to a subset that likes its opera agitprop, is equivocal on murder and considers murdering wheelchair-bound Jews fit for music.
>
> But there is a wider group of opera lovers — the majority, I am sure — that cannot but wonder why the company has made such an astonishing choice. (Jamieson, 2005:24.)

This article, which had the potential to repel local audience members, received an immediate published response, also in *The Scotsman*, from Brian McMaster, director of the Edinburgh Festival (McMaster, 2005). In "Opera is right to deal with real tragedy", McMaster points out that the Scottish Opera's choice embraced the opportunity for a world-class conductor, stage director and opera company to collaborate at a time of the year when the company usually goes without work. He further responds to Jamieson by writing:

> The Death of Klinghoffer is a deeply serious work. It takes the real-life tragedy of a brutal act, and attempts to understand the human motivations behind such an act. The tone is reflective, even spiritual. It is "controversial" only in the sense that its subject matter is. It is even-handed in its approach — which is no doubt why both sides of the debate over the years have waded in to condemn it. (McMaster, 2005.)

In addition, McMaster made an appeal directly to the local community and readers of *The Scotsman*. Firstly, he reminds them that in previous years the local audiences had championed Adams's *Nixon in China* by leading a fundraising campaign for the UK premiere of the work at the Festival. Then he asked them to similarly support *Klinghoffer* as an example of an opera retaining relevance and vital connection to the modern world. "I hope that everyone who believes in the future of this great art form will come to see *The Death of Klinghoffer*." (McMaster, 2005.)

Praise for McMaster's decision to present the opera was widespread. Critics such as Anthony Holden of the *Observer*, Andrew Clements of the *Guardian* and Andrew Clark of *The Financial Times* did not seem to have reservations about the opera's political content.[94] Heated political debate or moral stances were replaced by discussion of the historical aspects of the Palestinian-Israel conflict, and acknowledgement of the opera's renewed relevance with reference to the organised Palestinian re-settlement and Israeli withdrawal from homes within the Gaza strip (prominent world news in 2005).[95] In addition, the majority of reports concluded that *Klinghoffer* was successful in promoting debate upon a contemporary, relevant political subject (Clark, 2005:11; Holden, 2005:12; Clements, 2005:7).

While most mainstream critics were united in their support of political content, this was not the case when the staging itself was examined. Holden, Clements and Picard remained unenthusiastic in response to Neilson's attempt at a television-like narrative and staging, but they expressed good opinions of the singers (Holden, 2005:12; Picard, 2005:8; Clements, 2005:7).

In contrast, Clark (2005:11) wrote: "It is Anthony Neilson's staging, atmospherically designed by Miriam Buether and Chahine Yavroyan, that stands Klinghoffer on its feet. Jews and Palestinians are dressed alike. You cannot escape the tension and fear, or deny the brief touches

[94] Holden, for example, concluded (2005:12) that the opera "deserves to be heard all over a world" and that "no-one should doubt the power or honesty of its message".

of humour. After all the controversy and obfuscation, Klinghoffer finally illuminates — and persuades." Of *Klinghoffer*'s score, Clark writes:

> … the question is this: does the impact of Adams's opera depend solely on the notoriety of the event it portrays, or is it a convincing musico-dramatic entity in its own right? Did the authors simply milk a contemporary controversy to serve their own liberal agenda? If the piece had been artistically phoney, we would have seen through it long ago. The serene lines of the chorales create their own meditative pulse; several of the arias — notably Omar's paean to martyrdom and Marilyn Klinghoffer's closing aria — are extremely beautiful. The music constantly supports and sustains the drama, not just in the way it achieves "operatic" climaxes but also in its characterisation of ocean and night sky. (Clark, 2005:11.)

Non-specialist reactions of the Edinburgh production on the public's part are abundant on the internet. They too reflect divided opinion on the works political content and serve as further evidence of effect that *The Death of Klinghoffer* can have as a catalyst for debate. An anonymous IT worker from London delivered a positive verdict in his 2005 Edinburgh Festival Review:

> The British premiere of John Adams' opera 'The Death Of Klinghoffer' counts as something special in my book, particularly given the whiff of controversy associated with the work. People from the Scottish Chief Rabbi down have been demanding the opera's withdrawal from the Festival, or at the very least an audience boycott; in the end, it plays to a full house regardless, and the TV crew in the foyer hoping to pick up some protests are left twiddling their thumbs.
>
> What sort of opera could inspire this sort of reaction? One based on the real-life hijacking of the cruise ship Achille Lauro in 1984. A group of Palestinian terrorists, led by Mamoud (Kamel Boutros), take the passengers and crew hostage, demanding the release of a number of political prisoners. One of the passengers is the wheelchair-bound American, Leon Klinghoffer (Jonathan Summers). You can probably work out the rest from there. Historically, the opera has always been attacked by both sides on the Middle East conflict, which to an outsider like myself looks like a good thing. Nobody is shown as being wholly good or wholly evil, as it's acknowledged that things are much more complex than that.
>
> *Klinghoffer*'s never been performed in the UK before, but a couple of years ago a film version was made for Channel 4. It was astonishing for its commitment to documentary realism — filmed on a cruise liner at sea rather than on a set, with all the singing being performed live rather than mimed. Anthony Neilson's production for Scottish Opera is obviously a lot more stripped-down, using very little in the way of props and sets. His most distinctive addition is the use of the theatre itself, and it's a shame that the Scottish Chief Rabbi saw fit to spoil one of the best surprises in the production; even though you

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[95] See Erlanger (2005:3) and Doucet (2005) as examples of reporting on the withdrawal.

> can see this is dangerous imagery for Neilson to be playing with, there's no denying the frisson it produces, particularly in days like these.
>
> Musically, it's all very fine stuff, well sung throughout, with Kamel Boutros particularly impressive as he reprises the role he played in the film version. The one thing separating this production from true greatness is the quality of the sound mix — even though every singer is miked up, a lot of the words are lost during the more bombastic orchestral passages. That aside, the International Festival has an undeniable success on its hands. (Anon, 2005d.)

Another anonymous writer for *OperaOnline.us*'s 'Commentary', however, responded to the work with condemnation. He or she compared the work to *Jerry Springer — the opera*, finding them both offensive, and is effusive in their praise of Bill Jamieson's *Scotsman* article. *Opera-online.us* published the following antagonistic conclusion by this author:

> While different, both in terms of their subject matter and the reasons proffered to justify their shelving entirely, the larger issue which interests us here is the debate itself. After years of being bombarded by patently offensive productions that glorify vulgarity, self-indulgent sadomasochism and brutality in the name of high art, we are beginning to see a trend emerging where critics and private citizens are speaking out — in small numbers to be sure, but remember: from little acorns do mighty oaks grow. It is a debate that those of us who follow opera should involve ourselves in more deeply because the future doesn't just happen; it is shaped by what we do and fail to do today. (Anon, 2005b.)

The last review analysed here is that of a non-music-specialist Jewish audience member at the Edinburgh production. The editor of *Jewishcomment.com* was bemused by the production. This author found that the Jewish side of the Middle-Eastern conflict was obscured by the staging and cuts made to the score, and goes on to state that, "…the events on the liner are obscured by scenes that try to show the humanity of the terrorists. One wonders what sort of opera might have been composed by a team that had some element of sympathy for the terror-plagued Israelis." (Anon, 2005c.) However, this author did not find the content of the work as perplexing as the audience's response to the work: When applauding, they reserved their loudest praise for the Palestinian 'terrorists':

> When the artists came out for their bows on the night we attended, the applause was hearty but polite. When the men playing the Palestinian terrorists came out, the audience at the Edinburgh Festival Theatre went wild. Very possibly the upper seats were jammed with jihadists but the difference in tone of the appreciation shown the other performers and that shown the Palestinians was stunning. Yes, Kamel Boutros, Oriol Roses, D'Arcy Bleiker and Darren Abrahams were superb but this incident stayed in the mind (Anon, 2005c).

The editor's final verdict is not one of harsh condemnation, but rather muted disapproval, closing by writing that, "The Adams score is uneven, but this may be due to the many cuts made; like 'Prayer Room,' this piece does nothing to improve Muslim-Christian-Jewish relations" (Anon, 2005c).

5.6 Summary

This chapter has focused on Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer* as a case study and has provided detail of the specific socio-political critique delivered by the opera, namely criticism of Western Society's ongoing bias with regards to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and the inability of post-September 11 USA to see beyond terrorism and accusations of anti-Semitism to examine the national grievances (perceived or factual) that may be the root of such violence.

This chapter has also provided detail on the origins of this socio-political critique, namely the Palestinian-Israeli confrontation in the Gaza strip and the events of September 11 and July 7, in order to provide the political contexts in which the opera has been performed, and to illustrate its relevance to contemporary events.

Lastly, a detailed reception history, sourced from newspaper and internet reviews and interviews, provided evidence of the controversy that the opera has engendered over the past fifteen years. The research provided by this chapter will be drawn upon in the final discussion of contemporary opera's relevance and effectiveness as socio-political critique, especially when measured by the criteria for resistance art, in chapter seven.

6 CASE STUDY: *THE HANDMAID'S TALE*

Poul Ruders's *The Handmaid's Tale* functions as socio-political critique. This chapter explores the specific social and political issues that this opera addresses in relation to its political context, the ways in which the opera has been presented, and its reception history. The specific details of September 11, the 'War on Terror', the war in Afghanistan and the War in Iraq are the major influences on the political climate in the West after the year 2000. They have already been covered in the previous chapter with regards to the political context in which *The Death of Klinghoffer* was performed. As can be seen from this chapter, *The Handmaid's Tale* has been performed in this same context. While this context is referred to in this chapter, unnecessary repetition of detail has been avoided. The characteristics of socio-political opera, as defined in chapter four, will be used to analyse this case study as socio-political critique in the concluding chapter, chapter seven.

6.1 The factors influencing Poul Ruders's compositions

Danish composer Poul Ruders (b.1949) studied the piano and sang in the Copenhagen Boys' Choir during his childhood years. It was as a teenager that he became interested in composition. He first heard Penderecki's *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* (1960) at the age of sixteen and this was a seminal early influence. According to Burton (2001:862), this is particularly evident in Ruders's "… fondness for large-scale orchestral gestures and effects".

The composer graduated in 1975 from the Royal Danish Conservatory where he had majored in organ studies. He went on to work for a short time as a church organist and freelance keyboard player. He attended some lessons in orchestration with Ib Nørholm and Kar Rasmussen, but as a composer he is largely self-taught. After his first few attempts at composition, Ruders followed the course of other contemporary Danish composers in experimenting with minimalism, designing his own pitch system based on English change-ringing (e.g. *Manhattan Abstraction*, 1982). However, the composer can most accurately be described as post-modern in his embrace of a plurality of styles. He has, for example, used quotation and parody (mainly using medieval sources, for example *Medieval Variations*, 1974) and has incorporated popular musical idioms such as rock (*Break-Dance*, 1984) and Latin-American dance (*Cha Cha Cha*, 1981). (Burton, 2001:862; Ruders, s.a.)

Ruders's 'mature' compositions have been highly successful. *Symphony No. 1* was the recipient of the Royal Philharmonic Society Award and in 1991 Yale University offered him a guest professorship (Burton, 2001:862). These awards were followed by numerous commissions, including the *Solar Trilogy*[96] (1992-1995) which won the Critic's Choice Award from the *American Record Guide* 1997, the *Viola Concerto*[97] (1994), *Cello Concerto No. 2 — Anima*[98] (1993), *Piano Concerto*[99] (1994), the Guitar Concerto *Psalmodies*[100] (1990), *Credo*[101](1996) for chamber orchestra, clarinet and two violins, and *Concerto in Pieces*[102] (1994-1995) (Edition Wilhelm Hansen, 2002).

The Handmaid's Tale (2001) slots into Ruders's compositional history at this point. Its success resulted in further commissions by the Berlin Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic, the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Danish Opera. These commissions were then followed by Ruders's third opera, *Kafka's Trial*, which premiered in March 2005 at the newly completed Copenhagen Opera house (Starobin, 2005).

6.2 The origins of *The Handmaid's Tale*'s socio-political subject matter

The Death of Klinghoffer has its origins in reality. In contrast, *The Handmaid's Tale* is science-fiction as it is based on the novel by the same name, first published in 1986, by Canadian author, Margaret Atwood (b.1939). Atwood is a highly acclaimed author and has received awards for novels such as *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Bluebeard's Egg* (1987), *Cat's Eyes* (1989), *The Robber Bride* (1993), *Alias Grace* (1996) and *The Blind Assassin* (2000). *The Handmaid's Tale* won the Ida Nudel Humanitarian Award, the Los Angeles Fiction Award as well as the Toronto Arts Award and has been translated into 35 languages. It was banned for short periods in both the USA and Canada and has achieved cult status. (Reynolds & Noakes, 2002:156-158; Atwood, 2003.)

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[96] For the Odense Symphony Orchestra and Michael Schønwandt (Edition Wilhelm Hansen, 2002).
[97] For Yuri Bashmet and The Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra (Edition Wilhelm Hansen, 2002).
[98] For Heinrich Schiff and Northern Sinfonia (Edition Wilhelm Hansen, 2002).
[99] For Rolf Hind and the London Philharmonic (Edition Wilhelm Hansen, 2002).
[100] For David Starobin and Speculum Musicae (Edition Wilhelm Hansen, 2002).
[101] In celebration of Yehudi Menuhin's 80th birthday (Edition Wilhelm Hansen, 2002).
[102] Commissioned for the BBC, this work was broadcast live via radio and television in 1995 during the Last Night at the Proms, London, and given its US premiere by the New York Philharmonic with Andrew Davis in 1996 (Edition Wilhelm Hansen, 2002).

As a novel, *The Handmaid's Tale* exists as a general manifesto against intolerance, dehumanisation and totalitarianism in its multiple forms. It issues a warning against extreme religious fundamentalism, conservatism and traditionalism wherever they may appear in the world. With regards to the West, the novel implies that if these elements are allowed to flourish in reaction to terrorist attacks, then a dystopia is a realistic permutation for the future. References to the book have found their way into many levels of political discourse and it is frequently referenced on the internet in informal political discussion such as that provided by Kaplan (2004) when he states, "If you think that what's been happening in the United States is as scary as it can get, you probably don't know Margaret Atwood's 1985 novel *The Handmaid's Tale*".

Atwood identifies a number of major influences on *The Handmaid's Tale*. Firstly, in the late 1970s and early 1980s there was an increased awareness of the religious right wing within the USA with much publicity given to the slogan 'women back to the home'. Atwood began to ask herself how, in a modern world, a government would force women back into the home.

Secondly, while at Harvard, Atwood had studied seventeenth and eighteenth century American literature, including seventeenth century Puritan theocracy. Puritan sermons, the historical context in which Puritans lived, and their place within the development of American civilization became the foundation of her development of a fictional, totalitarian, hierarchical society. The Salem witchcraft trials became a particular focus of her interest, with the question: "What sorts of conditions produce a group mentality that so blatantly violates justice and defies common sense, in the name of God and righteousness?" (Atwood, 2003).

Thirdly, having been born during the outbreak of the Second World War, Atwood had an interest in both the Nazis and Stalinists. She read Churchill's memoirs, Orwell's *1984* and Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* shortly after they were published and became resolute in her choice of genre. Lastly, personal experience and wider world events also played a role in Atwood's conception of the work. Atwood herself remembers the McCarthy Era. She had also, during her student years, worked closely with immigrants wishing to learn English. She had met a woman doctor who had escaped from Czechoslovakia. Through these experiences she had become interested in, and kept abreast of, world news that affected women in particular. For example, in Romania women were

compelled by the Ceauşescu[103] regime to bear children, in China they were forced not to have children and in Iran, the Islamic Ayatollah's repression of women was harsh and complete. (Atwood, 2003; Reynolds & Noakes, 2002:11-13.)

By the time of the commission of the opera Atwood's novel had been adapted into a film, starring Natasha Richardson, with the screenplay by Harold Pinter. The book was widely studied at secondary schools and in universities in the USA, Canada, England and France. In addition, supplementary books such as *Cliff Notes: The Handmaid's Tale* by Mary Ellen Snodgrass, were published to enable students to understand and analyse the work's complex themes and influences (Atwood, 2003; Snodgrass, 1994). Ruders had read the novel in 1992. When he received a commission from the Royal Danish Opera Company in 1997 (for the first new opera in 34 years), *The Handmaid's Tale* sprang to mind. The composer believed the story to hold the necessary elements required for a contemporary dramatic opera, namely the clearly defined fundamental principles of love, hate, violence and tenderness. He made contact with Atwood. They met in Copenhagen where she agreed to the novel's transformation. Ruders contacted British writer Paul Bentley, who accepted the position of librettist. The book and opera are inextricably linked: Bentley adhered as closely as possible to Atwood's manuscript within the libretto. Atwood herself reviewed and approved the first draft before voluntarily withdrawing from active involvement in the final draft. Although intended as an English opera, this draft was translated into Ruders's mother tongue, as his commission stipulated a Danish premiere (it was then sung in English at all subsequent productions). (Hurwitz, 2001; Atwood, 2003.)

Both Bentley and Ruders agree that the opera could be interpreted as critique of the Taliban's rule, commentary on the plight of women in Afghanistan, and as a warning for the West in the face of rising right wing Christian fundamentalism in the United States, where, in Ruders's opinion: "… sober, dedicated, intelligent people study, they prepare, for the New Jerusalem — or you could call it Gilead" (quoted in Loader, 2000:71). At the time of the opera's world premiere the composer described his political expectations as follows:

> I believe that the audience should start to think twice about what sort of world we live in—Margaret Atwood's target is, of course, the Bible Belt in the United States, the

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[103] Nicolae Ceauşescu (1818-1989), the Romanian president from 1974-1989, repressed internal opposition, destroyed many rural communities, established his own personality cult and led the Romanian government with a hard-line Stalinist approach. He was overthrown in the 1989 revolution, when both he and his wife were executed by firing squad. (Isaacs *et al.*, 1990k:243; Isaacs *et al.*, 1990l:1047.)

> fundamentalist Christian right. But at the end of the day this is a story, an opera about or against intolerance, dehumanization, and totalitarianism. And this is important because these horrors do exist out there in some form or another as we speak. If I, as an artist, can contribute even a little by having a paying audience think about these issues, by moving them to think about them through the impact of my music, then I will have succeeded. (Quoted in Hurwitz, 2001.)

However, following the election of George W. Bush, the events of September 11, and the development of the 'War on Terror' (all discussed in chapter five), the opera's message became a more pointed socio-political critique[104] than the general message delivered by Atwood's novel.

6.3 Synopsis and structures of *The Handmaid's Tale*

In Atwood's novel the feelings of the title character, Offred, are most often expressed in an inner monologue. There is no traditional linear story-line and Offred's recollections are pieced together by the reader who is then able to construct a complete picture of events. Parts of these events are purposefully missing and at the end the reader is left to speculate about Offred's fate. Librettist Paul Bentley transformed the story by rearranging the order of events into two symmetrical halves: a prologue and the first act, then the second act and a short epilogue with the dramatic events and themes of the two acts deliberately mirroring each other. (Johnson, 2000b:12,13.)

The original story consists of many small scenes which amount to a complicated dramatic sequence of events. These events were clearly and concisely abbreviated by librettist Paul Bentley (2000:16-17):

> PROLOGUE
> AD 2195 — we are present at a worldwide videoconference: the Twelfth Symposium on the Republic of Gilead. In the first half of the 21st century the Bible Belt garroted America. Appalled by widespread pollution — physical, moral and spiritual — and above all by the low birth rate, right-wing fundamentalists assassinated the President and the Congress and installed their own Bible-based dictatorship, the Republic of Gilead. They denied women the right to work or possess property, to read or write. More: all women of childbearing age living in sin or second marriages were forcibly separated from their families and sent off to indoctrination centres, run by 'Aunts'. There the

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[104] Librettist Paul Bentley was in contact with colleagues and family members who lived in the USA at the time of the opera's British and American premieres. As a result of their reports he became convinced of the opera's value as specific socio-political critique and was far more assertive in the promotion of this aspect of the opera than the composer (Bentley, 2003).

women became Handmaids, due to be posted to selected childless households and ritually impregnated by the husband in the presence of his wife. Professor Pieixoto of Cambridge University introduces a recently discovered diary, recorded on audiocassettes by a Handmaid in hiding. He plays the first tape, and we hear her telling her tale … She is torn from her husband Luke (it was his second marriage) and their five-year-old daughter and taken to the Red Centre.

THE RED CENTRE PRELUDE

Here the classes are run by Aunt Lydia. Our Handmaid's friend, Moira, is dragged back after a failed escape attempt. Another woman, Janine, breaks down and thinks she's a waitperson again. Moira escapes a second time. The other Handmaids graduate.

ACT ONE

Three years later our Handmaid, who has not yet borne a child for Gilead, transfers to her third posting, where she is known as Offred (Of Fred), after the Commander of the house. She recognizes the Wife as Serena Joy, a Gospel singer in the Time Before. Offred goes shopping paired with another Handmaid, Ofglen, and they meet Janine, now heavily pregnant. When Offred visits the doctor, he offers to impregnate her. She declines, fearfully. Back 'home', handyman Nick tries to chat and the Commander approaches Offred's bedroom — both illegal acts. The household assembles for Forepray, and Offred undergoes her monthly ritual impregnation. Afterwards handyman Nick tells her the Commander wants to see her privately. Highly illegal. Next day all the Wives and Handmaids of the district meet at the Red Centre to celebrate the birth of Janine's baby. Back home Offred visits the Commander in his study at night. Afterwards in her bedroom Offred collapses, laughing hysterically.

ACT TWO

Next morning Rita the servant finds Offred still prone, and over-reacts. Offred visits the Commander again and begins to relax; but then he caresses her during the next ritual impregnation and she is terrified Serena Joy will notice. Offred and Ofglen go prayer shopping and discover they are both rebels. Ofglen reveals that there is an underground movement. Janine (whose baby turned out to be defective and was exterminated) joins them but breaks down again. Guards take her away to be hanged. Offred's night visits to the Commander continue. He explains things — why Rita over-reacted, for instance. Child-hungry Serena Joy secretly bribes Offred to try getting pregnant by Nick. The bribe is a photo of her missing daughter. Offred has mixed feelings … The Commander smuggles Offred into Jezebel's, a private brothel for top-ranking men in Gilead. She meets Moira there. Back home Offred and Nick make love. Often. Then Wives and Handmaids meet to witness the hanging of 'criminals'. The Handmaids are allowed to destroy a 'rapist'. Ofglen starts by kicking him unconscious to spare him the pain — he was in fact part of the underground. That afternoon Offred finds she has a new shopping partner. Back home Serena Joy has learned about Offred's affair with the Commander. As Offred, Joy, the Commander and Rita react to this the secret police (*sic*) the "Eyes of God" (*sic*) arrive to arrest Offred and take her away.

EPILOGUE

AD 2195, Prof. Pieixoto tells us that the ultimate fate of Offred and the men in her life is unknown.

Offred's present and past stories are told simultaneously through moments in which she experiences flashbacks similar to those found in cinematography. Two singers were therefore cast in the role: one represents her life leading up to the revolution and the second representing her days in the Gilead regime. (Johnson, 2000b:13.) The use of present and past eventually converge in Act Two, Scene Nine, after Serena Joy has offered to get a photo of her little girl for her, thus admitting that she knows where and with which 'Wife' she is living (Bentley, 2000:217-221). In the privacy of her room, the younger Offred, who has just been dragged into the Red Center after her capture and had her daughter removed, and the older Offred (who has just been informed that her daughter is alive and living with a 'Wife') rebuke each other in a cycle of blame with the vocal lines moving in unison and duet. (Johnson, 2000b:13; Bentley, 2000:218-225.)

Another dramatic moment in which past and present converge, introduces the use of a musical signifier taken from reality; namely the use of the Christian hymn 'Amazing Grace'. After meeting Serena Joy for the first time in Act One, Scene Two, the older Offred recognises her as the gospel singer she once was. As a result, she is transported into the past to the time when she was meeting Luke in a hotel during their initial affair and Serena Joy's 'Amazing Grace' had been playing on the television (Scene Three). The hymn then appears again as Offred is forced to undergo the ritual impregnation by the Commander (Johnson, 2000b:13; Bentley, 2000:104-109).

6.4 Socio-political critique

In order for a work's content to function as critique, it must resist hegemonic ideals and find present society wanting when measured against the ideal democracy (see chapter three). *The Handmaid's Tale* offers many direct parallels to the actions taken by the Bush Administration and issues a warning that if these parallels are allowed to go unchecked, then a dystopian future is highly possible. (Bentley, 2003a).

6.4.1 The response to catastrophic attacks

In light of modern day advertising techniques and mass communication, political theorists Fowler & Orenstein (1993:139) observe that, "… if people can be brainwashed or hoodwinked into hysterical patriotism or challenge, then our whole notion of thoughtful obligation and

rational, measured responses to illegitimate state behaviour loses meaning." In this situation moral values would be nullified and it would be possible for governments, private groups or challengers to use agitation and propaganda to "short-circuit" rational thought when the public are presented with that which they fear (such as terrorism) (Fowler & Orenstein, 1993:139). In the worst case scenario, fears for personal safety in turn lead to the development of a "surveillance and control state" (which can be easily implemented through use of the sophisticated technologies for prying that are available today). Fowler & Orenstein therefore warn that if we "… let our desire for security outrun our desire for a legitimate, fair, and open society, then we will have handed those already in control of the state a justification to extend and develop their already massive powers … then we will have manoeuvred ourselves into a situation where we have a massive need for revolt and a severely reduced capacity to do anything about it" (Fowler & Orenstein, 1993:139).

The Handmaid's Tale makes use of political science-fiction as an allegory for events such as those projected by Fowler & Orenstein. During the opening scenes a 'news footage' montage informs the audience that a nuclear disaster has befallen the world and the entire US Congress has been assassinated. Faced with environmental and social chaos, Christian fundamentalists have taken control of the country under the pretext of restoring safety and stability to the general population. In offering people freedom from war, rape and other 'evils', they establish a dictatorial theocracy, namely the Republic of Gilead. Within this republic, people are forced into a caste system[105] and old codes of human decency are now redefined. (May, 2003.)

As already discussed with reference to *The Death of Klinghoffer*, in 2001 the USA has already experienced a catastrophe, namely the September 11th World Trade Centre attacks which shocked every level of American society and engendered a new fear of the Middle East and Islam. George Bush was seen to have some justification not only for the retaliatory wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, but also for a number of internal changes to government policing and laws which have moved America closer towards being a "surveillance and control state" as described by Fowler & Orenstein. Although Bush did not seize power through a revolution (as did the fundamentalists in the opera), he is implementing change through many strategies that curtail

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[105] This system consists of the Commanders, who were instrumental in the revolution itself and now supervise the implementation of the new laws; the Guardians, private security staff; the Eyes, secret police; the Aunts, the women who implement the indoctrination programmes, the Handmaids, women who lived immoral lives (when judged by the laws of Gilead) in the time before the revolution but who are fertile and therefore kept alive as slaves to bear children for the infertile Wives of the Commanders. (Bentley, 2000; May, 2003.)

everyday liberties, thus begging the question of how far he will restrict people's constitutional freedoms in order to give them 'freedom from' terrorism. *The Handmaid's Tale* therefore acts as critique because every parallel between fictional Gilead and real American society implies that a dystopian future will be an outcome if present restrictive changes are allowed to continue unchecked.

The parallels between the fictional Gilead and present day America are most obvious in relation to the assurance of internal security. In Gilead, a fictional security force (the "Eyes of God") wield unlimited power, require no legal proceedings to detain or punish a malefactor and they encourage and force individuals within the community to betray one another should they not conform.[106] In the wake of September 11, Bush signed the USA Patriot Act (the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act) into existence after it was voted in, un-amended, by Congress with 98 votes in favour and one against (Library of Congress, 2006; Encyclopædia Britannica, 2006c). The act expanded the government's power to detain non-citizens, conduct searches and surveillance, and search and investigate people suspected of criminal activity (Rauch, 2003). Approximately 1,200 people had been jailed after September 11 and this law controversially gave the government leeway to hear the cases of immigration violators in secret, to hold people as material witnesses, and to reclassify certain US nationals as "enemy combatants" despite opposition from the courts, members of the US Congress and the press. (Rauch, 2003). The USA Patriot Act was closely followed by a restructuring of the agencies that enforce such laws to form, officially, the Department of Homeland Security in January 2003 (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2006c). The department describes their purpose as follows:

> The National Strategy for Homeland Security and the Homeland Security Act of 2002 served to mobilize and organize our nation to secure the homeland from terrorist attacks. This exceedingly complex mission requires a focused effort from our entire society if we are to be successful. To this end, one primary reason for the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security was to provide the unifying core for the vast national network of organizations and institutions involved in efforts to secure our nation. (DHS, 2006.)

[106] Punishment could include being banished to the colonies, hanging or death by beating such as that delivered by the Handmaids to a member of the resistance in Act Two, when they are told by the authorities that he is a rapist and are encouraged to kick him to death.

The change in state legislation was mirrored in public attitudes. For example, in a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, John Schlager from Springfield wrote: "Here's an idea for Tom Ridge, the head of the new Homeland Security Council in the White House: Why not enlist the army of retirees — the scientists, lawyers, engineers, computer specialists and expert tradespeople? Get them off their couches and golf courses and use them for surveillance, investigation and watchfulness. Many millions of retirees are out there, ready and willing to play a useful role for homeland security." (Schlager, 2001:A24.) This prompted a reply from another member of the public, Stuart Luth from New York, who worriedly asked: "Have recent events changed our worldview so radically that we are willing to endorse a police state? Is America to become a nation of spies?"[107] (Luth, 2001:A24.)

Luth's comment is not without reason and those who criticize Bush are often met with overblown reactions from their communities. ABC News, for example, reported that in 2004 neighbors called in the Secret Service to question a teenage rock band who were practicing Bob Dylan's *Masters of War* during the Boulder High School Talent Exposé in Colorado. The neighbours thought that they had heard the lead singer calling for the president to die and, as threatening the president is a federal crime, the Secret Service were called. The students claimed that they had not sung any threat but had rather been singing Dylan's lyrics: "I hope that you die and your death'll come soon. I will follow your casket in the pale afternoon. And I'll watch while you're lowered down to your deathbed. And I'll stand o'er your grave 'til I'm sure that you're dead." After they were questioned by the Secret Service, nothing was taken further; however the same school began to receive complaints of it promoting 'leftist' views as they had

[107] America has already experienced a period during the 1950s where people were encouraged to bring any concerns about 'un-American' activities to the attention of the government. Senator Joseph McCarthy, a right-wing Republican, maintained (in a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, 1950) that the American State Department was "infested" with communists. He professed to have in his possession a list of 205 people who were communists and involved in shaping American legislation and policy. He had no proof of any communist activity, yet many Americans believed McCarthy and participated in a campaign to root out suspected communists and have them "black-listed". Countless people from many walks of life, such as socialists, liberals, intellectuals, artists, pacifists and any who seemed to have vaguely un-orthodox philosophies were pursued until they were left jobless and viewed with suspicion within their communities for such "un-American activities". McCarthy was widely feared and garnered extensive support within the national newspapers. Hearings by the 'Committee for Un-American Activities' were often televised and audiences witnessed McCarthy pounding the table with rage, abusing and harrying witnesses. At least 9 million people were 'investigated', many lost their jobs and an atmosphere of suspicion and insecurity was created throughout the USA. However, when the Senator began to accuse generals in the Armed Forces of communist sympathies, many Republicans felt that he had taken the proceedings too far. As a result the Senate condemned him by casting 67 votes against his policies and only 22 in his support. McCarthy imprudently accused President Eisenhower of supporting the Senate. This act finally ruined his reputation and signalled the end of his power. (Lowe, 1997:409-410.)

allowed their students to stage a lie-in in the school library to protest against the results of the 2004 presidential election. (Freemuse, 2004; ABC, 2006.)

High profile performers who criticise Bush have also received overblown reactions. The Dixie Chicks, for example, made anti-war remarks during a concert in London in 2003, with the result that their songs were blacklisted by American radio networks. Members of the American public burned and destroyed Dixie Chicks CD's, they received death threats and were given a harshly negative response at the Academy of Country Music Awards in Las Vegas (BBC News, 2003a; BBC News, 2003b; BBC News, 2003c; BBC News, 2003d).). Light hearted banter is also not well received: in 2004 Whoopi Goldberg was fired from her position as the spokesperson for Slim-Fast after she had made sexual puns about the US president's surname (Davies, 2004:4). Davies (2004:4) reports that Slim-Fast is based in Florida, where George Bush's brother, Jeb, is governor. Davies implies that this was the reason for the termination of Goldberg's contract.

6.4.2 Political monopolisation of the media and freedom of speech

While boycotting a song or artist may appear a trivial response, merely that of an annoyed, patriotic public, control of play-lists is closely linked to media censorship, political intimidation, bullying tactics and the loss of freedom of speech. These allied forms of repression become easier to implement when activities such as the banning of play lists become common. Radio playlists in the USA are frequently censored by the Clear Channel Corporation, which owns over 1,200 radio stations across the USA.[108] After September 11 they issued a list of "questionable" songs to their affiliate stations in a bid to suppress anything which might evoke a public reaction (Strauss, 2001:E1). The Clear Channel Corporation does not limit its political activity to the control of broadcasting, but has organised and promoted pro-war rallies entitled "Rally for America" (Krugman, 2003:A19). Krugman (2003:A19) reports that George Bush and the vice-chairman and chairman of the Clear Channel Corporation have significant business ties that have secured lucrative sums of money for Bush. Clear Channel further strengthened their ties with the government by donating $42,200 to Bush's 2004 election campaign and only $1,750 to Democratic nominee John Kerry (Hopkins, 2004). The Clear Channel Corporation's actions[109]

[108] Radio censorship also takes place in Britain. In 2003, it emerged that stations were censoring playlists in order to spare their listeners any reference to bloodshed or war (Allison & Wells, 2003:10). Furthermore, BBC 3 disqualified the folk group Seize the Day from the BBC Radio 3 Awards for World Music in response to their strong anti-war message (BBC News, 2003e).

[109] See: Centre for Media and Democracy (2006) for further information regarding the Clear Channel Corporation.

represent the blurring of lines between the media and the government. Clear Channel's monopolisation of American radio would in effect result in the government's political monopolisation of radio broadcasting. Such monopolisations are endemic to a totalitarian regime such as that of Gilead.[110]

6.4.3 The legislation of religion

As is evident from the synopsis, Gilead is a theocracy that uses biblical scriptures to create laws and practices that would be likely to be condemned under a secular, democratic government. Fowler & Orenstein (1993:53) highlight the danger in taking such an attitude when they ask: "What if one does not share their beliefs? Community and authority are not automatically positive ideals. They can be dangerous to those who are seen — or who see themselves-as outsiders." The use of religion to make ethical judgements in politics automatically excludes those who do not adhere to the religious beliefs of the government. To whom does the politician owe his or her allegiance? The church or the state? Shortly after his 40th birthday, George W. Bush gave up drinking. According to the Encyclopædia Britannica (2006c), his decision was "partly the result of a self-described spiritual awakening and a strengthening of his Christian faith that began the previous year after a conversation with the Reverend Billy Graham, a Bush family friend."

During his presidency Bush has been accused of purposefully blurring the lines between church and state by using religious prescription when passing legislation and "… using taxpayer money to promote organized religion and erode the First Amendment" (Bumiller, 2004:A17). In 2001, for example, he established the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiative with the aim of facilitating government aid to religious-based social services (Steinfels,

[110] According to high profile entertainer, Elton John, the conservative and censorial leanings of the corporate entertainment industry have created a climate of fear in the USA, which he describes as follows: "Things have changed. I don't know if there's been a time when the fear factor played such an important role in America since McCarthyism in the 1950s, as it does now" (quoted in Davies, 2004:4). He further believes that entertainers might be "frightened by the current administration's bullying tactics when it comes to free speech…There was a moment about a year ago when you couldn't say a word about anything in this country for fear of your career being shot down by people saying you are un-American" (quoted in Davies, 2004:4). Furthermore, Davies reports (2004:4) that the performer specifically criticised the Federal Communications Commission in Washington, describing their regulation of radio and television as censorship. Jethro Tull is an example of a specific recipient of radio censorship. After making derogatory remarks in 2003 about the American flag, he was permanently banned from New Jersey based WCHR-FM's playlist. The Associated Press quoted the station's programme manager, Phil LoCascio as stating: "The reaction of our audience has been 99 per cent in favour of the ban and 99 per cent incredulous that he would say such stupid things … He is a smart guy. As far as we're concerned, this ban is forever" (Globe and Mail, 2003).

2001:B6). Bush pushed this agenda into action by using his administrative powers despite objections put forward by Congress. In 2003, the US government gave $1.1 billion in grants to social programmes initiated by churches, synagogues and mosques (Bumiller, 2004:A17). Furthermore, he has re-assigned money from sex education and reproductive health programmes to those that advocate abstinence. Changes in legislation accompanying funding changes and Goodstein (2004:A21) observes that "… his opponents and supporters agree that he has done more than any president in recent history to advance the agenda of Christian social conservatives." For example, he has prevented the legalisation of same-sex marriage, passed restrictions on abortion and limited the scope of embryonic stem cell research on faith-based grounds (Goodstein, 2004:A21).

6.4.4 Restriction of women's rights

In the Republic of Gilead, Handmaids have no reproductive rights — they are forced to bear children for the members of the elite castes and are systematically raped by the Commanders. Women's rights are non-existent and dictated by political distortion of the biblical scriptures. Gilead represents an extreme permutation of violence against women and the denial of all women's own choices over their bodies and futures. The wider concept of choice consists of a number of smaller, but no less vital rights and it is these rights that the Bush administration has taken steps to curtail, resulting in an increasingly bleak outlook for American women's rights organisations. The US president's lack of concern for women's issues was demonstrated in 2002, when he appointed Dr. W. David Hager, a Christian conservative to lead the FDA's Reproductive Health Drugs Advisory Committee (Shorto, 2006:48). Hager is author of *Stress and the Woman's Body* (1998) and *As Jesus Cared for Women: Restoring Women Then and Now* (1998). His appointment sparked an outcry from groups such as NOW and Planned Parenthood because these books clearly set out his extremely right wing Christian fundamentalist agenda for the treatment of women (Fagan, 2002:A04). It seemed highly probable that he would oppose new types of birth control, and would campaign for the chemical abortion drug known as RU-486 to be taken off the market (Fagan, 2002:A04). As a result of the objections, Hager was demoted to the status of an ordinary panel member. However, his supporters, such as Ken Connor, president of the Family Research Council, accused women's rights organisations of religious profiling (Shorto; 2006:48; Fagan, 2002:A04). David Stevens, executive director of the Christian Medical Association, also voiced his support for Hager and announced that "Dr. Hager is not saying prayer instead of medicine. He's saying prayer and medicine" (Fagan, 2002:A04).

However, *Amazon.com* reviews of *Jesus Cared for Women: Restoring Women Then and Now* indicate that most readers do not agree with this assessment and were outraged, shocked and incredulous that he could have been chosen for a position of legislative responsibility when he "… encourages women to turn to prayer and scripture to help heal ailments such as premenstrual syndrome, postpartum depression and eating disorders" (Ahrens, 2003). Similarly reviews of his *Stress and the Woman's Body* are incredulous regarding the contents of the book and the scandal that followed when Hager's wife left him. One reviewer went as far as to state that the work contained "Shades of a Handmaid's Tale and other dystopian visions of theocratic societies that want to put women back in their 'place.' (*sic*)" (Gordon, 2004).

Dr Hager's 2002 appointment sent out a message that Bush supports the anti-birth control campaign in the USA. The following year the administration succeeded banning late term abortion (a right which had been secured during the Clinton presidency). Moreover, no provision was made in this law whereby doctors could recommend late term abortion on health grounds, including those which would ensure the safety of a mother.[111] In this manner, a precedent was set for the outright banning of abortion (and possibly, eventually contraception) (Toner, 2003:A1). These legislative setbacks for the pro-choice movement sparked the largest protest in 12 years in April 2004 from women's rights campaigners. They held banners protesting with slogans such as: "My Body Is Not Public Property!" and "It's Your Choice, Not Theirs!" (Toner, 2004: A1). Elanor Smeal, president of the Feminist Majority and a sponsor of the march, described the recent developments as a "war on women." Toner reports that, "… speaker after speaker declared that President Bush and his allies in Congress were trying to impose an ideological agenda on abortion and family planning programs, both at home and abroad. The advocates warned that the erosion might be stealthy and incremental — regulations and restrictions rather than outright bans — but asserted that the trend was unmistakable" (Toner, 2004:A1).

As mentioned by the speakers at the 2004 pro-choice rally, Bush does not limit his anti-abortion agenda to internal affairs. In July 2004 it was confirmed that US funding would be denied, for the third year in a row, to the United Nations Population Agency because the UN cooperates with agencies in China that promote abortion (Marquis, 2004:A6). Furthermore, as Goodstein (2004:A21) reports, any organisation that receives American aid is now prevented from "…

[111] Following the passing of this law, three federal judges declared that the Partial Birth Abortion Act of 2003 was unconstitutional. Nebraska judge Richard Kopf, for example, found that the politicians who wrote up the statue had transgressed by failing to allow for exceptions where a women's health would be at risk (Anon, 2004d:A22).

promoting, referring to or educating about abortion as an option in family planning overseas even if they do not use American money to do it".[112]

6.5 The reception history of *The Handmaid's Tale*

6.5.1 Denmark: The world premiere

The Handmaid's Tale enjoyed its world premiere at the Royal Danish Opera House on 6 March 2000. It was the first premiere of a full opera to be performed by the company in thirty years and was judged an undeniable success (Fairman, 2000:9). The event was attended by several managers from the largest British opera companies who wished to bring the work from Denmark to the United Kingdom (Fairman, 2000:9). The critics were consistently generous in their praise with those such as Richard Fairman of the *Financial Times* titling his review: "Ruders strikes 24-carat gold". James Loader of *Time Europe* was very enthusiastic, reporting that the music, design and stage production provide an "exhilarating experience", positively analysing those scenes from Ruders's score that he found to be most moving, and making mention of Ruders's, Bentley's and Atwood's effective interpretation of the work's socio-political message. In his opinion: "The excellent performances in Copenhagen, the impressive contributions of British director Phyllida Lloyd and designer Peter McKintosh coupled with the strength of Bentley's libretto and the resplendent power of Ruders's score make *The Handmaid's Tale* an operatic message that its audiences will be unable to ignore." (Loader, 2000:71.) Stephen Johnson for *The Guardian* in London was also in attendance and was fulsome in his praise:

> Ruders's music is remarkable at every stage. The scoring, for full, colour-enriched orchestra, with exotic percussion and keyboards with samplers, is fabulously inventive; Ruders is the Richard Strauss of the computer-age orchestra. At first, tonal music, larded with all the cliches of fashionable Holy Minimalism, represents all that is false and stifling about the new regime, while real, forbidden emotions are expressed in pained atonality. There are some gruesome variations on the old hymn Amazing Grace. But later, these distinctions are blurred.

[112] More recent infringements on women's rights have included an attempt by John A. Cosgrove (R) of Chesapeake to push through a bill in Virginia which would obligate women to report a miscarriage within 12 hours if they are not attended to by medical personal — failure to do so would constituted a class 1 misdemeanour. In March 2006 the Republican National Committee (GOP) passed legislation that prevents county health clinics from providing birth control [for more information see New York Times Bioethics Forum (2006) and Democracy for Virginia (2005)].

> The orchestra is pushed to the limit. The writing for the singers, however, is sensitive … There is talk of bringing The Handmaid's Tale to London; after this performance, I'd say a British staging was just about essential. (Johnson, 2000a:11.)

While music critics such as Johnson focused on the score, author Margaret Atwood was animated in the expression of her enthusiasm, and her description of the evening was written as follows:

> The opening scene-setter, in which porn shots alternated with exploding architecture such as the White House and the Statue of Liberty, was shocking even in the year 2000, when it seemed like fiction. Soon we were in thrall, or at least I was. What were the Danes making of all this, I wondered.
>
> The Danes are not given to leaping to their feet, shouting "Bravo!" and hurling bouquets. Instead they stamp their feet, where no one can see them doing it. At the final curtain, after every driplet of emotion had been wrung from us, the foot-stamping was deafening. (Atwood, 2003.)

The recording of the premiere, produced and released by Da Capo, also received affirmation. Edward Bhesania (2001:14) of *The Observer*, for example, found it to be "… one of the significant operatic achievements of the past 50 years" and Victor Carr for *ClassicsToday.com* issued the release with a ten out of ten rating, accompanied by praise for the libretto, score, vocal performances and Da Capo's live recording technique (Carr, 2004). Tim Ashley of *The Guardian* used words such as "genius" and "masterpiece of operatic terror" (Ashley, 2001:15). He was particularly complimentary about the novel's transformation into a score, writing that the work's "… genius lies in Ruders's ability to find a sound world that mirrors the novel's oppressive tone. The strictures of tonality and minimalism are broadly equated with totalitarian suppression, while atonality is aligned with individuality — but emotional dissonance is rarely absent for long, and the cumulative impression is of an impending eruption that never happens." Anthony Tommasini of *The New York Times* was similarly enthusiastic in his praise, likening Ruders's tackling of polemics in opera to that of Verdi:

> The music is a triumph of stylistic pluralism. Mr Ruders, 52, has thoroughly modernist credentials, and he writes in a pungent, freely atonal harmonic language. But washes of diatonic consonance often flood his scores, and for a while he was associated with the Minimalists. He is a brilliant practitioner of musical parody, riffling everything from medieval chant to break-dance disco. A highly original ear for harmony and texture, as well as an infectious love of the large gesture, runs through almost every Ruders work (Tommasini, 2001a:AR26N-AR26L).

The opera's success encouraged the Royal Danish Opera to re-stage the work again the following season. The recording was nominated for two Grammy Awards in 2002, and Ruders was named composer of the year at MIDEM[113] (Ruders, 2002; Linton, 2003:14). Commissions for new works from the composer followed in rapid succession from The Berlin Philharmonic, The New York Philharmonic, The BBC Symphony Orchestra and The Royal Danish Opera. Furthermore, additional premieres were planned in the United Kingdom for 2002 and in the USA for 2003 (Ruders, 2005; Tommasini, 2001a:AR26N-AR26L).

6.5.2 The British premiere

The world and the British premieres (April, 2003) of *The Handmaid's Tale* took place three years apart. Complementary reviews, such as that by Keith Potter (2003:15) of *The Independent*, echoed the tone of those written for the Danish premiere. Potter praised Ruders's score as "… a stunningly successful example of how a strongly original voice can be maintained while eclecticism is turned to dramatically meaningful ends." He similarly endorsed Phyllida Lloyd's direction and Elgar Howorth's conducting, concluding that "The Handmaid's Tale is the triumph that English National Opera badly needs right now" (Potter, 2003:15). However, the years succeeding September 11, the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan, and the declaration of war against Iraq by the USA and United Kingdom began to harden public opinion against acts of terror and their perpetrators. The issues were reported daily in the Western media and the political climate in both countries became concerned with the 'War on Terror'. Atwood's novel and Ruders's operatic treatment of it began to receive the epithet of "prophetic" (Clark, 2003:17), with Atwood herself describing the work as 'prescient': "What seems particularly potent is this fundamentalist, Old Testament rhetoric that is coming out of America and has been coming out of it in spades since Bush became president" (quoted in Jury, 2003:14). Ruders, who is generally not enthusiastic about the linking of opera and politics, made similar remarks: "We are in the time of Gilead now. What Atwood wrote about is actually happening. I wouldn't call the novel science fiction; I prefer to call it science vision, and it's frighteningly prophetic" (quoted in Kimberley, 2003:7).

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[113] Cannes Classical Music Awards.

Critics too observed the increasing political relevance of the work and Tommasini (2003a:E5) described it as an "…eerie echo of present". Louise Jury's observations are illustrative of the growing anticipation of the 2003 premieres in light of the greater political situation:

> What, in 2000, seemed a shockingly unimaginable introduction to a dystopian vision of an America in the grip of a totalitarian theocracy has gained a potency in the years since that could not have been anticipated. With conflict raging in the Gulf, the 45-year-old British theatre and opera director Phyllida Lloyd feels that Poul Ruders' powerful, moving work — hailed as a triumph by the critics at its unveiling in Copenhagen — feels even more relevant to the modern world than when Atwood's book was first published in 1985 (and shortlisted for the Booker prize). (Jury, 2003:14.)

Similarly, Nick Kimberley came to the conclusion that "The Handmaid's Tale continues to accumulate resonances and the opera hardly less so, not least as we watch a religiously-driven, if not quite fundamentalist USA government attempting to impose Pax Americana on Iraq." (Kimberley, 2003:7.)

As in the case of *The Death of Klinghoffer*, the reception of the English National Opera production[114] was met with a mixed critical response. *The Daily Telegraph*, for example, assumed neutrality and advised readers that, "The jury is out on Paul Ruders's taut and sometimes confusing new opera, but it's worth seeing it for yourself" (Anon, 2003b). Janet Street-Porter of *The Independent on Sunday* was both admiring and unsure of the production, praising the ENO's choice to produce Ruders's work. She reported: "For the first time I felt that the ENO was presenting a work on stage which felt modern and thought-provoking. The use of large screens for projected newsreel footage and close-ups, the revolving set with searing lighting, the shocking red and green all-enveloping costumes of the imprisoned hand maidens and the evil nuns in charge of them, all worked together to provide a compelling and disturbing vision" (Street-Porter, 2003:7). However, she found Ruders's score itself to be the weakest factor, as she felt that he had sacrificed the audience's engagement in the music in favour of a more academic enterprise (Street-Porter, 2003:7).

Several critics were wholly unenthusiastic about the work's political relevance. *Financial Times* critic, Andrew Clark (2003:17), was highly critical of the opera's timing, sarcastically stating:

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[114] This production received additional mention in the press due to planned strikes on the part of the English National Opera's chorus due to job losses. The strikes were cancelled, allowing the performances to continue (Freeman, 2003:19; Leitch, 2003:20; Burrell, 2003:5).

"Here is a work, based on Margaret Atwood's 1986 novel, which demonises the Christian Right in the USA at the very moment when a born-again president is bombing the hell out of Iraq. Next minute, Ruders and Atwood seem to be saying, he's going to turn the guns on his own people — or us." He then moved on to the content of the work itself, deeming its political message to be "liberal grandstanding" and stated that totalitarianism is "… one of the many hazards of life on earth". Furthermore, he gave short shrift to the ENO's programme notes, writing that "George W. Bush didn't invent the '… manipulation of biblical language'" and "… he isn't the first to give a political agenda '… the ring of doctrinal certainty'" (Clark, 2003:17). Clark did include minimal praise for the work's qualities, but concluded that the characters lacked 'humanity.' He decided that the creators did "… justice to an extremely competent modern opera that speaks to our time in the language of our time — but is unlikely to withstand repeated hearing" (Clark, 2003:17).

Anthony Holden of *The Observer* and Brian Hunt of *The Evening Standard* made similarly derogatory remarks. Holden chauvinistically stated that, "… after a promising start, with dramatic (and timely) newsreel of the White House being blown up by dissidents, this overlong saga soon sags into the monotonous story of one woman's nightmare as she is robbed of her only child and turned into a brood-mare for corrupt officialdom" (Holden, 20031:10). Hunt's (2003:34) derision was twofold: he attacked the socio-political content and, while attempting to appear logical in his musicological criticism by initially acknowledging Ruders's ability as a composer, he also found little of merit in the score. He conceded that Ruders is "… one of the few composers working in a mainstream, largely atonal contemporary idiom able to write good and personal tunes" but then went on to attack the polemics of Atwood's novel:

> Atwood's novel postulates a religious Right takeover of the USA, leading to appalling repression of women. On publication in 1985 it was seen as a feminist fable; the subsequent rise of the Taliban has changed our perception of its feasibility, but ENO's collage of programme essays goes too far in trying to lump together Afghanistan, American evangelism, the current Gulf War and Tony Blair's Anglicanism as a supposed curse of "fundamentalism". I fear that only listeners eager to lap up such polemic are going to get much out of this opera. The 80 minutes before the interval are unrelieved gloom. (Hunt, 2003:34.)

Hunt then described Ruders's score as giving his singers little more than monotones and scales to work with, and concluded by finding that "… the authentic Ruders lyricism breaks through — but it's much too late" (Hunt, 2003:34).

In response to the work's negative reviews, Picard (2003:11) wryly observed that the discussion of "dystopia breeds dyspepsia" amongst her colleagues. Paul Driver, for example, entitled (2003:19) his review "No pain, no gain?" for the *Sunday Times*, and expressed his distress at the stern, violent, sexual and emotional content of Ruders's opera (Driver, 2003:19). He reproached Ruders for suppressing the 'joy' that is to be found through singing and described *The Handmaid's Tale* as an opera based on the "… pain principle … an opera for those prepared to take strong medicine" (Driver, 2003:19). Driver commended Ruders's score, Lloyd's stage direction, Howarth's conducting and the timely warning contained in the subject matter. However, he concluded that seeing the opera "twice was enough", thus reiterating his contention that "opera needs to be made of less stern stuff" (Driver, 2003:19).

Michael Kennedy of the *Sunday Telegraph* presents a negative, yet distinctly different argument to those critics who were discomforted by the work. Kennedy, who had written an earlier review praising the recording of the opera, now dismissed the Coliseum's production as "boring" (Kennedy, 2003:6). Furthermore, Kennedy observed that his boredom stemmed from the fact that modern audiences have become so desensitised by exposure to real-life horrors on television that they are now unmoved by stage presentations such as Lloyd's (Kennedy, 2003:6). Kennedy's comments sparked anger from librettist Paul Bentley. He composed an embittered letter to the *Daily Telegraph* pointing out the disparities in Kennedy's reviews and likened Kennedy to Saddam Hussein (Bentley, 2003b).

While Kennedy condemned the ENO's production, he did express bewilderment at the discrepancies in its critical reception, some were extremely positive and others were negative. Anne Picard of *The Independent on Sunday* gave one explanation for this discrepancy: Many critics' responses were influenced by gender (Picard, 2003:11). Robert Thicknesse, for example, wrote:

> Like Sophie's Choice last year, this turning of a well-known book into an opera might be described as an attempt to introduce it to a narrower public. Judging by the audience profile at the Coliseum — younger, more female than usual — most of those present were already familiar with Margaret Atwood's novel: a good thing given the lack of dramatic clarity in Poul Ruders's opera. (Thicknesse, 2003:27.)

Here, Thicknesse implied that *The Handmaid's Tale* reduced the ENO's audience because the audience was more female than usual and might have been made up of those who attended only out of familiarity with the novel. His view is at odds with that of audience member Imogen Edwards who stated that "Best of all was the audience which comprised non 'opera-types' and a large American contingent" (Edwards, 2003). It should be remembered that, in terms of the effectiveness of social critique, the auditorium does not have to be full for an opera to be successful in widening audiences. (See the discussion of Glass's *The Voyage* in chapter three.) Instead, the opera must draw a new demographic: in drawing readers of Margaret Atwood's novel, the work is fulfilling this obligation. In the remainder of his review, Thicknesse was critical of both Ruders's score and Bentley's libretto. He criticised the opera's explicit scenes, describing the systematic rape of the Handmaid as "… ritualistic threesomes with their masters and mistresses " and concluded that the evening was "morally lowering" and made respectable only by the excellent vocal performances given by Stephanie Marshall, Heather Shipp, and Alison Roddy. (Thicknesse, 2003:27.)

Picard described the many gender tinted criticisms and varied comments on *The Handmaid's Tale* as "… unprecedented levels of blokey scorn from most of my fellow critics" (Picard, 2003:11). She speculated that if the same critics were to review the Scottish Opera's *Gotterdammerung*, a production of approximately the same standard, its "few" shortcomings would instead be treated with benevolence. She summarised her fellow critics' reviews as follows:

> Much has been made of its "timely" nature and, um, "man-bashing" stance; with the clear inference that The Handmaid's Tale is playing to a left-leaning gallery of ball-breaking, anti-war wimmin and their all-cooking, all-cleaning, all-wimp house-husbands. The appalling suffering of Offred (Stephanie Marshall) under the Republic of Gilead's right-wing theocracy has thus been trivialised as modish feminazi propaganda, while the humiliation of indentured stud-servant Nick (Richard Coxon), along with the quotidian executions of Gilead's male doctors, priests and academics, have received scant attention. Less attention, in fact, than Marshall's "lithe" figure. (Picard, 2003:11.)

She was further disillusioned with the fact that gender so affects the responses to the work and made an ascerbic point in explaining that "… what one commentator described as 'an aria about menstruation' was actually an aria about the ambivalent regret/relief of failed conception, which is rather a different matter" (Picard, 2003:11).

In the face of her fellow critics' reactions, Picard searched for her own response to the work. She believed that her approbation has little to do with the fact that she is a woman or with the opera's left wing, anti-Bush politics. In fact, she found the statue of liberty's explosion during the prologue video the least successful part of the production. Instead, it was the sorrow and emotion of Offred's narrative, expressed through Ruders's score, that drew her in (Picard, 2003:11). Ironically, Offred's tragedy is one of the elements that so offended Thicknesse when he stated (2003:27) that the "slo-mo revisiting of the crisis of Offred's life — arrest and separation from lover and child — is done at least once too often." After praising Lloyd's stage direction and commenting on a few criticisms (e.g. the lack of surtitles, and conductor Elgar Howorth's musical direction), Picard closed her review with the riposte: "Is The Handmaid's Tale a mere 'chick flick'? I really don't think so." (Picard, 2003:11.)

6.5.3 The American premiere

After the negative responses that the London premiere had elicited, especially when compared to the much touted Danish premiere, expectations of controversy preceded the American production. Ruders's response to the London premiere is quoted in chapter one[115] and his interpretation of the work's controversial elements was embraced by the Minnesota Opera. They deliberately created a production in which some of the scenes were overbearing, uncomfortable and "brutal" (Wolverton, quoted in Peikin, 2003). The company's chief executive and managing director, Kevin Smith, observed that the "wonderful feel-goodness" of traditional opera is avoided in their production in order for it to become an "… emotional and thought-provoking" production. Furthermore, he openly admitted that "… there is the potential that the audience may not like it or may not come back. But we've done what we can to educate people and help the audience have a profound experience" (quoted in Peikin, 2003). Smith's words highlight the conflict between those who choose to promote socio-political critique and those who react negatively to it. As illustrated by Cooper (2004) in chapter three, the counter-normative is meant to challenge, to upset and to repel, in order to implement dialogue and, eventually, change. This standpoint is accepted by those, such as Smith, who support the production of works that contain socio-political critique and rejected by those such as Driver (2003:19) who wish for opera to be less harsh.

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[115] "Maybe it was just a backlash of the times, with the war and all, but make no mistake, we created something extremely volatile and controversial … You have illicit sex, perversion, betrayal, hope and love and such

In 2003, when budgetary constraints were affecting many opera houses,[116] the prospect of political controversy had attracted the Minnesota Opera to *The Handmaid's Tale*, yet compelled the Metropolitan and Santa Fe Opera Companies to withdraw their bids (Peikin, 2003). The Minnesota Opera were themselves unable to attract a corporate sponsor for their production, thus supporting Lipman's premise (discussed in Chapter 4) that should contemporary opera wish to criticise the financial establishments that supports it financially (namely right wing, conservative America),[117] it should be ready to accept the consequences of that action (Peikin, 2003; Lipman, 1992: 292-299).

According to artistic director, Dale Johnson, the Minnesota Opera was willing to face such consequences. He claimed that the company was positive that the "notoriety" they would receive would a reward in itself (quoted in Peikin, 2003).[118] He further observed that (in 2003) the USA was in "… a climate where perhaps people are afraid to … talk about freedom. We're afraid to talk about a sense of individuality … We're in a time right now where we're willing to put up with things for the sake of safety" (Johnson, quoted in Rico, 2003). In the face of this adverse climate, he committed himself to establishing the Minnesota Opera as a company which takes the necessary risks to ensure the expansion of the operatic repertoire. Johnson justified his decision by declaring that: "When the economy is bad, and there's so much fear in the world, that's when important pieces are produced" (quoted in Peikin, 2003).[119]

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heartbreaking loss. But if audiences are going to be trapped for three hours, you have to grab and entertain them, and this does that quite well" (Peikin, 2003).

[116] For example, despite increasing international recognition after the appointment of Placido Domingo as artistic director and Kent Nagano as resident conductor, the Los Angeles Opera continues to experience financial difficulties. This has led to the cancellation of many ambitious projects such as a 3 million dollar production of Prokofiev's *War and Peace* and a collaboration with Industrial Light and Magic (film director George Lucas's special effects company) on Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (Morowitz, 2001; Morowitz, 2002a; Morowitz, 2002b).

[117] When compared to America, the question of whether the arts are most supported by the left or right in Britain is contradictory. The Labour party has never benefited from openly aligning itself with artists, who are viewed as being part of the educated elite. Similarly, the Conservative party displays resignation towards open support of the arts as most Conservatives believe that artists are "leftist troublemakers" (Riding, 2005:1).

[118] Rico (2003) reports that Johnson was careful to stress that the Minnesota Opera did not take the work on to make a political statement. However, the majority of interviews with the artistic director indicate the company welcomed the operas topicality and embraced the controversy it engendered.

[119] The Minnesota Opera continues to create works which have social and political links In 2006 they produced Petitgirard's *Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man*. The production was accompanied by a public panel-led discussion held by experts in public policy, the arts, and medicine, and hosted by the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and The Minnesota Opera. They aimed to use the opera as a catalyst for discussion of public attitudes and policy toward disabilities throughout the decades (University of Minnesota, 2006).

Through their resolution to stage the work regardless of the outcome, Minnesota Opera's production grew in public profile and importance. Margaret Atwood, Poul Ruders and Paul Bentley attended, as did critics from the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* (Peikin, 2003). Reviews of the Minnesota Opera's production were more encouraging than those of the British staging.[120] In the *New York Times*, Tommasini (2003a:E5) described the score as "… so musically inventive that you get pulled in." In December 2003, he marked the performance as one of the classical moments of the year, describing it as "… dramatically messy but audacious and musically riveting" (Tommasini, 2003c:AR33). Similarly, Anne Midgette wrote (2003:AR34) for the *The New York Times*, under the same headline, that it was "… one of the most important new operas of the year". John Fleming's "In opera's brave new world, there's no balm in Gilead" for the *St Petersburg Times* praised the score, staging and the performance of the cast (Fleming, 2003). In contrast to British reviewers he praised the work's political content and element of resistance, describing it as an "… opera for our troubled time." He stated that the Minnesota Opera "… deserves a lot of credit for bucking the conservative climate in the arts". Fleming was also cheerfully upbeat about the negative reaction of several audience members, who walked out during the production's more explicit scenes, writing: "If you can't get a few people scandalized by such a lurid episode, then you probably haven't done your job in staging a daring new work." (Fleming, 2003.) Like Fleming, Michael Anthony, writing for *American Record Guide*, was also highly enthusiastic: he summarised the effect of the production as follows:

> In sum, it was energizing to see a new *opera* that is actually relevant to our times and to the dangerous world we live in, where fundamentalists are as noticeable in Washington, DC as in the Middle East. And while *Minnesota Opera* should be lauded for mounting such a bold, ambitious work, the company's pronouncements have been over-cautious, saying that neither the work nor the production is anti-right-wing or anti-fundamentalist — meaning, one supposes, anti-religion or anti-Christian. Sorry, but *Handmaid's Tale* is — all that. (Anthony, 2003:26.)

Again, a similar analysis was provided by *Andante.com*'s critic Thomas May who provided a detailed and complementary review. May (2003) found that *The Handmaid's Tale* managed to combine both political conviction and art by exploring the tensions that "… ideology generates between the characters' public and private selves". Like Fleming, he viewed the discomfort that

[120] With regards to staging, the British production had been most often criticised, in the reviews discussed in 6.5.2, for its lack of supertitles. This prevented the audience from following the dialogue and although the work was sung

the work produces in a positive light. He found the opening scenes required "… distressingly little suspension of disbelief" and the whole production had an "… intensely disturbing effect". The most striking factor about May's review is the contrast to those of British reviewers. May echoed the Danish reviews in his warm praise of Ruders's score:

> Ruders thwarts standard expectations of style and genre. His score conveys menace with the brooding, modernist disquiet of atonality and vertiginous chords, only to veer unexpectedly, and more eerily, into dominant-tonic tattoos and pure, sustained triads. There's a sensualist's delicate imagination in his exquisitely orchestrated textures; at times he uses Minimalism's rhythmic optimism to shift the emotional temperature. But just as you think "another postmodern grab-bag of tricks," Ruders stuns you with his heartfelt representation of the characters and their situation. (May, 2003.)

He also praised the vocal performances, and sums up by saying that the Minnesota Opera's effort "… left one with a giddy hope for the entire art form and its relevance for today." (May, 2003.)

While the American critics presented reviews that were generally more positive than their British counterparts, those who took offence at the opera were more inflammatory. The harshest criticism of the Minnesota Opera's premiere was delivered in an article entitled "The Bigot's Opera" written by Michael Linton for *First Things* ("a monthly journal of religion and public life") in November 2003. Linton (2003:14) outlined the opera's background, successes and comments that many critics have praised the work for its political resonance. He began his own interpretation with the words, "I feel obliged to protest". He then maligned Ruders's score as being no better than those of "… two hundred or so other living composers", Bentley's libretto as "superficial" and Atwood's story as "incomprehensible" in its complexity. Linton gave the work a damning nod, stating: "And if it is a triumph, it is as the first work of art to displace Andres Serrano's 1987 photograph of a crucifix submerged in urine as the pre-eminent work of art calculated to offend Christian sensibilities." (Linton, 2003:14.) Linton was clearly stating that his artistic judgements were made on the grounds of the offence he had taken as a Christian fundamentalist.

After a lengthy synopsis, Linton devoted little over a paragraph to artistic concerns. He followed the pattern of other negative reviewers by giving guarded praise in order to seem fair, stating that "… the opera's greatest strength lies in its scoring, which is consistently colourful and never

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in English, the high tessitura of the score made the words difficult to decipher. In comparison, the Minnesota Opera's production did include the use of supertitles (Peikin, 2003).

uninteresting." He then returned to his disparaging stance, accusing Ruders of having a "… tin ear for setting English to music" and "… problems being lyrical", further stating that these elements weaken the opera's most important dramatic points (Linton, 2003:16).

The bulk of Linton's review contained his analysis of the ways in which the opera offended his religious beliefs He claimed that all Atwood's assumptions about American Christian fundamentalists were "all wrong" and that *The Handmaid's Tale* is "stunningly successful" in its "… sharp depiction of how the postmodernist left views conservative American Protestants, or 'fundamentalists' (the left is typically a bit hazy on the taxonomy of religion)" (Linton, 2003:16). Linton maintained that most fundamentalists are not interested in politics and that, should cataclysmic events befall the USA, they would be caught in a crisis of faith, far removed from any thought of arming themselves and rising up to overthrow the government (Linton, 2003:16). Here he chose to give a literal rather than symbolic interpretation of Atwood's story. He failed to take cognisance of the overall symbolic critique of present day America that the work delivers.

Linton took further offence at the use of Rachel's story from Genesis 30, which was used as a precedent for the concept and naming of the handmaids by the Gilead government. He claimed to be convinced that no Christian fundamentalist would use biblical scripture to justify the use of concubines. In addition, he believed that no fundamentalist women would allow themselves to become concubines. Linton again took the opera at face value rather than acknowledging that the work's critique is not in the specifics of the events it portrays but in the idea that a dystopian future is probable if current events continue to follow oligarchic dictates. Some decisions by the ruling group might include the disempowerment of women, and might place them in a position where they are no longer able to resist domination. Furthermore, the extreme discomfort experienced by the women in the opera is experienced in far smaller ways on a daily basis world-wide. The opera intends to prompts the audience to think about women's rights in a light wider than the specific cases presented in the work (Linton, 2003:16).

The greatest objection that Linton had to the opera seems to be Ruders's use of the hymn, *Amazing Grace*. The hymn holds a sacred place in American fundamentalist life. He stated (2003:16): "I can honestly say that the hymn is my life, in sum and total. Tens of thousands, if not millions of other American 'fundamentalists' would say much the same." He accused Ruders of using operatic re-interpretation of the hymn to encourage the audience to believe that *Amazing*

Grace is in reality an "… anthem of fraudulent piety and institutionalised rape". Linton was angry in his response: "To have your religion distorted and ridiculed and then to have one of your culture's most deeply treasured expressions purposely profaned — well, it's not very pleasant … Some would go on further to call the opera — and not without justification — an example of 'hate speech." (Linton, 2003:16.) Linton concluded by lamenting the fate of Christian fundamentalists who are, in his opinion, too often ridiculed by society and remarked that, "…for the smart set, they are fair game. Diversity, tolerance and respect for 'the other' have boundaries. Christian fundamentalism can be found on the other side." (Linton, 2003:17.)

Linton's article gained further publicity through its listing for purchase on *Amazon.com*. If the search words 'The Handmaid's Tale' and 'opera' are entered, this article appears as the first listed entry (Amazon.com, 2006). His reaction was supported by an online audience member, who is totally opposed to the combination of opera and politics, and who described the Minnesota Opera's recent panel discussion of Petitgirard's *Joseph Merrick, the Elephant Man* as "… far removed from reality, you'd think it was a panel at a USCCB meeting" (Anon, 2006b). The anonymous blogger describes the production of *The Handmaid's Tale* as "execrable", approvingly discussed Linton's statements and concluded: "What's most incredible about all this is how clearly the Minnesota Opera attempted to peddle this filth, this political pornography, as 'art'" (Anon, 2006b).

Linton's aversion to Ruders's re-workings of 'Amazing Grace' was echoed on the internet by Jim Melcher. Melcher is a reader of Powerline, a news forum run by three American attorneys. He contacted the forum in order to for them to "… deal with outrages like the fawning reception the press has given to the Minnesota Opera's staging of *The Handmaid's Tale*". As a result, attorney Paul Mirengoff wrote a satirical posting for Powerline, incorporating Melcher's views to sarcastically pose two tongue-in-cheek incorrect guesses as to what an opera with such weighty subject matter should be about. He first guesses that it is about "the Taliban" and then says that it is perhaps "… a metaphor for U.S. college campuses". When his second guess is incorrect he self-deprecatingly writes: "I really have no business at the culture desk". He finally answered the question of what the opera is actually about by quoted Melchers agitated conclusion: "… his opera actually depicts a state-sanctioned rape, while Amazing Grace plays as background music. In the opera's twisted, depraved context, we are being warned against Republicans; basically we are being warned against the folks with the courage and moral

discernment to end a regime that actually used rape as a state-sanctioned torture and punishment." (Mirengoff, 2003a.)

Powerline included two more, condemning postings in May 2003 concerning *The Handmaid's Tale*. Mirengoff posted political satirist and humourist author James Lileks's ridicule of the Minnesota production and its reception under the heading "I Wish I'd written this" (Mirengoff, 2003b). This review had been posted on Lileks's blog, "The Bleat", and he aimed to invalidate the any resonance that the opera has with real events by writing:

> Let us imagine that a very bitter, angry old man writes a book about some horrible dystopian future. Due to ecological despoliation brought on by overpopulation, the society is now run by homosexuals who breed a ruling class through genetic manipulation. Religion and private property are banned. In concert with other nations, the ruling clique of gays is attempting to dissolve national boundaries and seek a socialist global order. The novel concerns the life of one man who defies his genetic programming.
>
> Let's imagine that this novel would be published and given wide distribution — doubtful even Regnery would touch it, but humor me. Now let's imagine the following:
>
> The novel is excerpted in a daily newspaper; the paper writes a story about the novel's Chilling & Ominous Vision, which is about to be made into an opera; the paper does a full-page story on the premier of the opera, then devotes half of a page in the book section to the author's latest novel; the newspaper runs a big review of the opera.
>
> And all of this happens 14 years after the book is written.
>
> Of course this would never happen. But it's happened with "The Handmaid's Tale" in the local press. "Tale" — as we ALL know by now — is a story about a horrid future world run by right-wing fundies who create a class of young fertile women for breeding purposes. (Note: I don't regard the two plots as directly analogous, just indicative of two speculative cultural paradigms.) Why is this the main cultural event of our town? Supply your own speculations. Perhaps it's because the Handmaid's Tale is a Cautionary fable — why, in John Ashcroft's America, it's more relevant than ever. It's double-extra cautionary with whipped cream on top now. It's ripped from the daily pages — you know, those pages where the government bans divorce and other religions.
>
> Oh, it's ripped from the headlines, all right. But they're headlines in the Arab News. There are theocracies that oppress women, and it's odd how they look like nothing Atwood describes. It's like protesting fascism in the late 30s by writing a play in which Lutherans take over and annex Canada, and telling interviewers you wrote the play to speak out against rising Lutheranism and anti-Canadian sentiment. *Yes, but what of Hitler?* What of him? I'm talking about the real threat to our society. Lutherans! Don't you see the way FDR smiles when someone brings up Quebec?

Powerline gave the opera one final, cursory mention with regard to the publishing of Atwood's next book (*Oryx and Crake*, 2003). Scott Johnson posted that he "… can't tell Margaret Atwood from Margaret Drabble, and the pain involved in paying attention to the opera was well above my threshold for pain. Thankfully, Deacon volunteered to man the Power Line culture desk to cover the opera." Johnson ridiculed Atwood's newest contribution by concluding that *Oryx and Crake* is "… a book that sounds unreadable even in the summary form" (Johnson, 2003). Johnson's writing reinforced the notion, set out by Lileks, that *The Handmaid's Tale* is so ludicrous as to be "painful" and that Atwood's writing is unintelligible.

While Lileks's ability to undermine the opera's political plausibility through satire is illustrated in Johnson's posting, recent informal postings on the internet have shown that like the book, the opera is now being referred to in informal political discussion. For example, in July 2006, a blogger, posting under the pseudonym Gnostic Rocket, was dismayed and "terrified" by George Bush's signing of Executive Order 13397.[121] This order effected the establishment of a "Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives at the Department of Homeland Security" with the purpose of co-ordinating "… agency efforts to eliminate regulatory, contracting, and other programmatic obstacles to the participation of faith-based and other community organizations in the provision of social and community services." The blogger posted this commentary under the title "Handmaid or Cannon Fodder?" and posted a picture taken at the Minnesota Opera's production. (Gnostic Rocket, 2006.)

6.5.4 The Canadian premiere

Richard Bradshaw, manager of the Canadian Opera Company (COC), attended *The Handmaid's Tale* at its premiere in Copenhagen and signed his company up to be the fourth to produce the opera four years later (Littler, 2004b:C11). The production was again directed by Phillida Lloyd, who had directed the ENO's production, and the sets and costumes were also imported from London (Knelman, 2003:F01). In addition, Canadian soprano Stephanie Marshall, who had performed the role of Offred, agreed to perform the role again in Toronto (Knelman, 2003:F01). The fact that an opera based on a novel written by Canada's "most celebrated living novelist" and was being produced by the COC, created significant publicity for the production. The work was widely lauded in anticipation of a coming 'home' (see Knelman, 2004:J01; Lianne, 2004:62;

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[121] See: The White House (2006) for further information and the full text of this Executive Order.

Goldberg, 2004 as examples). Atwood's status in Canada served to boost subscriptions for the 2004/2005 opera season, and even single tickets rapidly became unavailable (Knelman, 2004:J01). In addition, the author gave widespread interviews promoting the opera and discussing its creation and successes in Denmark (see Knelman, 2003:F01; and Lianne, 2004:62 as examples).

Reporting on the COC's production appears to be unanimously positive. Littler (2004b:C11), for example, wrote in the *Toronto Star* that "The highest compliment I can pay to the score is to say that it sounds true to the character of the story, with Richard Bradshaw, his orchestra and his cast serving it at an even higher artistic level than the one I experienced at the widely heralded premiere in Copenhagen." Brianna Goldberg, writing for The University of Toronto's newspaper, *The Varsity Online*, described the audience's approbation as follows: "Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* opened last Thursday night to ovations from the black-tie front row right through to the jean and t-shirt student seats." She shared their exuberance and wrote that the libretto "…packs aural punches", that Helen Todd's "…features oozed with conviction" and that the singer "…nailed her role, video clips of her indoctrinated pleading convincing enough to convert anyone", finally concluding that "…the COC has brought Atwood's tale home in fine style." (Goldberg, 2004.) Similarly, Tamara Bernstein of the *National Post* reported that "… all the elements — story, libretto, acting, sets, costume, lighting — come together in crackling synergy that holds you in a vice-grip from beginning to end" (quoted in Kunststyrelsen, 2006).

On a social and political level, most reviews make mention of two factors. The first was the work's emotionally challenging and explicit scenes: in his interview with the *Toronto Star*, Richard Bradshaw warned the public that the opera would be a "tough" experience for those patrons who had not read the novel (especially if they maintain that they have) as the production contained a great deal of sex and violence (Littler, 2004a:J12). Atwood herself described the production as "visceral" and "uncomfortable" and acknowledged that "… in the world of opera, things get emotionally charged" and complimented the work as "… a powerful piece of musical theatre" (quoted in Knelman, 2004:J01). In performing the work, Marshall acknowledged its challenge, saying that, "The whole thing is pretty unpleasant," further describing the reproductive rites of Gilead as follows: "Essentially she's just raped once a month and that's pretty horrific to have to experience … When you see the production, it's not a brutal scene, but it is certainly emotionally disturbing." (CBC, 2004a.) In light of these factors, Goldberg (2004) was "… surprised that many of the more traditional opera patrons didn't walk out on the

production, which featured public hangings, simulated sex, and nudity, but perhaps this is just an indication of the Toronto audience's reverence for the Atwood material." However, another, anonymous audience member who was complimentary about the opera but felt discomforted by the graphic nature of the nudity and explicit sexual content did observe several of the traditional audience members leaving, even though ticket holders had been pre-warned about "Strong Adult Content" (T.O., 2004). She described her experience as follows:

> The woman next to me, a season ticketholder, obviously didn't realize what the opera was about and kept clicking her tongue ("Tsk, tsk!") everytime a sexual act was emulated or when something 'rude' was done. I couldn't help but laugh at her reaction even though I wasn't comfortable with what I was seeing either. On the way out, I heard her remark to her partner, "Well, at least next Sunday's [Lucia di Lammermoor] will be decent." Tellingly, seven seats around me were empty at the start of Act II; this was a sold out performance. (T.O., 2004.)

The second factor that was mentioned in the majority of the 2004 reviews was the chillingly appropriate political nature of the opera in light of the rise of the right wing Bush government and the actions of the coalition forces in the Middle East. Richard Bradshaw observed that "… many of the things Atwood wrote have come to pass" He received angry letters written by the religious, right-wing public when he said in a commercial for the work that they "… have taken over" — meaning 'they' have taken over in the story, not reality (quoted in Littler, 2004a:J12). The Canadian Broadcasting Company reported that the mixed responses of the English and American premieres were often attributed to the "West's return to conservatism" after September 11 (CBC, 2004a). They interviewed Atwood, who interpreted the general responses to the opera's socio-political critique as follows: "People are very fond of saying, 'It can't happen here.' I think of [the fictional nation of Gilead] as a fundamentalist regime that uses religion as its camouflage — and you've seen those around the world … I think it always helps to picture what things would be like if they happened in your own place." (CBC, 2004a.) Assistant director, Michael Walling observed that the fact that the story is set in America, makes it no less relevant to the whole of the West, and describes the political import he attributes to the work as follows:

> Nowadays, if you write about the United States, you're writing about the world. What we do quite explicitly at the beginning of the piece is to date the revolution of Gilead a year ahead of the year of production, to make it immediate; here in Toronto we say the revolution happened in 2006. And obviously an enormous amount of what Atwood wrote has already happened. Look at George W. Bush's acceptance speech for the presidential

> nomination: I mean, the commandments of Gilead are now official Republican Party policy. (Quoted in Balzer, 2004.)

Tamara Bernstein of the *National Post* added an explanation of the ways in which the opera gave critique substance in a way that the book cannot. In her review she stated, "But how often do you get to sit in an opera house knowing that the piece unfolding on stage really matters — right now, in our own world … The opera gives us something no novel can: the force of communal experience. It's one thing to read a novel, quite another to experience Atwood's vision with thousands of others" (quoted in Kunststyrelsen, 2006).[122]

The words of an anti-war protester on the internet illustrate that in practice, the piece "really matters", as Bernstein proposed, not just in the eyes of critics but also in the eyes of the anti-war public. Firstly, the writer quotes an extreme, right wing excerpt written by Frank Pastore of the *Los Angeles Times*, entitled "Voters reject liberalism, an evil ideology".[123] In response, the correspondent writes: "As the US slouches towards the Republic of Gilead I respectfully (*sic*) suggest (again) that a reading of Margaret Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale' (1986) may be in order. Or (*sic*) see the movie or the opera." The comments were accompanied by an emotive picture, taken from the COC's publicity material, of a handmaid with her mouth tightly closed shut by several metal piercings, similar to those used for lip and tongue piercing. (Anon, 2004c.)

6.6 Summary

This chapter has focused on Ruders's *The Handmaid's Tale* as a second case study, and has provided detail of the specific socio-political critique delivered by the opera through reference to the political context in which it has been performed. This has included criticism of America's response to the catastrophic attacks of September 11, an account of political monopolisation of the media and restrictions to freedom of speech, the increasing legislation of religion and the slow erosion of women's rights. These events all indicate a move towards conservatism, and patriarchy, and hint at totalitarianism. All three factors threaten the existence of a free, democratic society. In addition, a detailed reception history, sourced from newspaper and internet reviews, and live interviews provided evidence about the response to the opera's socio-

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[122] Bernstein's enthusiasm for the opera's political prescience serves to highlight the subjectivity of political interpretation in opera, for in 2002 she attacked the Canadian Opera Company for anti-Semitism in their 2002 production of Strauss's *Salome* and called for the work to be censored (Clements, 2002:4).
[123] See Pastore (2004:B13).

political agenda, and the controversy that it has engendered. The research provided by this chapter will be drawn upon in the final discussion of contemporary opera's relevance and effectiveness as socio-political critique, especially when measured by the criteria for resistance art, in chapter seven.

7 ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

In today's society, 'worth' is most often judged by social, political and monetary standards. The arts, however, often resist such facile classifications. As a result, there is a general perception that classical music and opera is socially irrelevant and old-fashioned. This study investigates whether it is possible to produce effective contemporary musical repertoire that is relevant and engaging to a wide audience. While 'traditional' pieces continue to attract conventional classical music patrons, it is only through variety, innovation and contemporary value that opera manages to retain a place as a contemporary art form.

The Death of Klinghoffer and *The Handmaid's Tale* have attained a measure of notoriety and they are imbued with the idea of social conscience. When combined with the question of whether it is possible to produce effective contemporary musical repertoire that is relevant and engaging to a wide audience, the addition of social conscience as an influential factor prompts the question of whether it is possible to produce effective contemporary repertoire that is relevant and engaging to a wide audience, and simultaneously satisfies social conscience?

Finally, these wider issues were amalgamated into a single problem: whether contemporary opera could constitute relevant and effective socio-political critique.

Chapter two clarified that the term socio-political includes all social and political topics upon which the artist may comment. Socio-political critique judges the present regime by the yardstick of a democratic society and finds that regime to be sub-standard. The chapter then examined examples of resistance art in order to establish a set of criteria against which socio-political opera could be measured. In looking at both historical and contemporary examples of opera, chapters three and four illustrated that opera can fulfil these criteria and remain a vibrant and relevant art form that embraces continuing interaction with contemporary culture. Chapters five and six included the specific socio-political critique delivered by the two case study operas, illustrating that this critique was relevant to contemporary society through the discussion of current events, and providing evidence of their effect through the inclusion of reception histories. In order to conclude that they are relevant and effective as socio-political critique, these two case studies must now be analysed against the criteria for resistance art.

7.1 Analysis: *The Death of Klinghoffer*

The Death of Klinghoffer gave voice and visibility to its chosen critique firstly through its performances in the traditional opera house where it engendered a great deal of media publicity. Early performances were picketed, and ongoing debate continued in newspapers and on the internet for a period of more than fifteen years. Secondly, the work was released as a film version. This version reached the public through the popular medium of television, as well as through several film festivals. Thirdly, the opera was chosen for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival where it reached further non-traditional audiences. As illustrated in chapter four, festivals have become a space in which social and political goals may be realised. The organisers of the 2005 Edinburgh Fringe Festival chose theatre which gave voice to political topics, rather than presenting a full programme of popular, non-challenging entertainment.

Klinghoffer fulfilled what McClary identifies as the second criteria of resistance art — that of having the potential to explore a topic — through its plot, visual and musical elements. The work confronted the longstanding conflict between the Palestinians and Jews, and the highly relevant topic of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism. The events of the Achille Lauro hijacking were the primary plot. The victims of the hijacking, especially the Austrian, British and Swiss women, are displayed in an unflattering light, inviting questions about how deserving of empathy those victims are, and how deserving each audience member would consider himself to be if placed in a similar position. The disturbing issue is that of the moral right of the Palestinians to be considered as equal in value and as deserving of empathy as the passengers on the boat. Realistic staging, including the faux attack on the audience by the 'Palestinian terrorists', the use of multi-media images and the creation of a film which included background footage, formed part of the creative team's manipulation of the visual element. Lastly, the inclusion of the two major, reflective choruses of Palestinians and Jews allowed the musical structures to give voice and emotion to both groups. This musical element was a point of contention for disgruntled music critics, who, after analysis of the score, decided uneven treatment had been given to the depth of feeling and symbolism inherent in the music which expressed the responses of Palestinian and Jewish protagonists. The clichéd popular music written to accompany the appearance of the 'Rumour family' (in a scene later removed from the opera) particularly contrasted with the mythic treatment given to the music that accompanies the terrorists. In giving musical consideration to the Palestinian cause, Adams went against the tide of pro-Israeli opinion in the

USA and his attempt to give this cause visibility was often interpreted as being anti-Semitic as opposed to socio-political critique.

The Death of Klinghoffer acts as a catalyst for debate (particularly on the issues of anti-Semitism or anti-war critique) owing to the element of resistance. This opera provides an example of the ways that both the creator's intent and the changing political contexts surrounding each performance give rise to resistance.

At the time the opera was written by Adams and Goodman, the operatic form was seen as outdated and irrelevant. Together with the operas of Phillip Glass and *Nixon in China*, *The Death of Klinghoffer* was seminal in changing composers' attitudes towards the form. The works placed political current events in an 'inappropriate' setting — the grand opera house. This in itself was a symbolic, counter-normative act requiring the audience, who are accustomed to attending an opera which draws them into a fantasy world, away from everyday reality, to confront the harsh events the world outside the opera house. In *Klinghoffer* the drama of the hijacking takes place in atmosphere of heightened emotion elicited through music, stage lighting, technical effects, and stylised character presentation. The idea of violence and shock in an opera house thus complemented the work's main theme of resistance: challenging the norm of popular, pro-Israeli media reporting and public opinion within the USA by giving voice to the issues of the Palestinian people.

Acts of nuisance can be effective as once-off symbolic or theatrical events. However, they are more likely to effect change when repeated. Over the past 15 years, *Klinghoffer's* critique has remained resistant, relevant and offensive to society's norms. It continues to elicit feelings of discomfort in the audiences. and evokes heated responses from both professional critics and letter writers. These strong reactions often tend to reflect the pro-Israeli stance of current Western opinion, which, after the events of September 11, has become more anti-Islamic. Furthermore, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is now seen as symbolic of Western-Islamic enmity. Repeat performances of *Klinghoffer*, such as at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, continue to retain the element of nuisance (and simultaneously increase visibility of the opera's message). In this ongoing context, *Klinghoffer* continues to be critical of the US and British governments and it demands that empathy be extended to the people of Afghanistan and Iraq. Intrinsic to the presentation is the implicit insistence on the importance of free speech: through the act of delivering a critique, opera companies and their members exercise their right to freedom of

speech. Likewise, in condemning or praising the work, critics themselves are exercising their own rights and attesting to the work's discursive effect.

The Death of Klinghoffer engendered several obvious, observable effects. All performances sparked heated discussion in the media, and early performances were subjected to pickets. Several productions caused opera houses to tighten security. The work was also censored in response to the perceived political sensitivity of the American public in 2001. In addition, the opinions of the artistic worth of *Klinghoffer* often seem to reflect politically motivated responses: defensive about their pro-Israeli politics, critics justified their negative feelings by attacking Adams's and Goodman's creative talents and skills.

7.2 Analysis: *The Handmaid's Tale*

The Handmaid's Tale gave its message voice and visibility through consecutive premieres in Denmark, London, Minnesota and Toronto, and the release of a CD album (Decca, 2001). The success of the world premiere caught the attention of the press, and interest increased after the post September 11 performances. The work was based on a well-known, highly controversial novel. These origins gave the opera access to an additional audience. The author, Margaret Atwood, encouraged the opera's visibility: she holds a high media profile and tirelessly promoted the work and its critique. She publicly championed opera as a form which has the power to make profound statements and create an emotionally charged atmosphere.

The creation of the opera, *The Handmaid's Tale,* pre-dated September 11. However, the social and political concerns, such as the plight of women in Afghanistan and the growth of Christian fundamentalism in the USA, (which had influenced Atwood when she wrote the novel) were still issues after fourteen years. At the time of its world premiere in Denmark, the opera did not deliver specific socio-political critique but presented a political parable warning against religious fundamentalism, patriarchy, conservatism, and totalitarianism. Two years later, the changing political context of post-September 11 Western society transformed this parable into pointed socio-political critique. This opera therefore supports the premise that the composer's initial intent does not need to be the creation of socio-political critique for the work to continue function as socio-political critique. Changing performative contexts can give rise to the element of resistance.

The Handmaid's Tale broached its dystopian topic through the plot, the visual and the musical elements. The fictional story of Gilead and one woman's response to her disturbing predicament voices a critique of the ways in which the American social and political climate echoes elements of the Gilead regime. Like Orwell's *Animal Farm*, *The Handmaid's Tale* proposes that a dystopian future is possible if these parallels are allowed to extend. The opera therefore contains the element of resistance because its story criticises the religious, conservative and patriarchal standards of the reigning hegemony (the Bush regime). Furthermore, the airing of this story in the opera house — whose traditional audience is viewed as the conservative elite — is in itself an act of nuisance as the work critiques the section of society that is opera's staunchest supporter in the USA. The work prompts this audience to ask the uncomfortable question of whether they are turning a blind eye to unreasonable government actions because restriction of their freedom appears to be a reasonable response to September 11. The audience is asked whether ignoring infringements protect them, or make them potential victims of further repression.

The visual elements of the work's staging complement the critique. The opera makes use of multi-media technology in which video imagery allows for shocking realism; the elements of an on-stage birth, gynaecological examination and ritualised rape bring an element of discomfort into the opera house. This discomfort is a nuisance to audience members, who experience a strong emotional response to the unpleasant visual scenes, and perhaps draw parallels between what they see on stage, and what they know to be happening around them. The experience is very different from the anticipated entertainment and escapism which they usually associate with the opera.

The Handmaid's Tale uses dissonance with hints of tonality as its most prominent musical elements. This usage underlines its dystopian message and highlights the difference between the gritty pain of the dystopian present and the false hope offered by more tonal memory sequences. The glaringly kitsch tonal brothel is a musical signifier of the deviance from the dissonant norm of Gilead. Ruders incorporated the American Christian fundamentalist hymn, *Amazing Grace*, into the musical element of the work during the opera's most distressing scenes, such as the rape scene. Within the context of the opera, this hymn highlighted the hypocrisy of Gilead's rulers. However, the religious right in America interpreted it as a personal attack on their religion, amounting to 'hate speech'.

As relevant and effective socio-political critique, this opera elicited an observable response. Its most negative reviews came from London, where critics resented the idea that Atwood's grim view of the future could become a reality. Many of the opera's negative reviews had a gender bias or were expressing the opinion that the specific dystopia of Gilead is unlikely to occur in the USA because a geographically vast territory, with a diverse population, would be unlikely to accept a fundamentalist take-over. The political views and opinions expressed in reviews were often accompanied by unfavourable artistic reviews of the skills of Ruders and Bentley. *The Handmaid's Tale* illustrates, as does *The Death of Klinghoffer*, that artistic value judgements are often swayed by the critic's personal political stance. However, many reviewers readily acknowledged the parallels between Gilead and the Bush government. The most recent production, by the Canadian Opera Company, was received with the enthusiasm which had greeted the Danish premiere and the political relevance of the critique was widely acknowledged.

7.3 Conclusions

As the world becomes increasingly globalised, social and political injustices are known to a wide audience. There has been a growth of international conscience and an increase in global activism. The arts also have the power to influence opinion by expressing and commenting on social and political issues. Art can become a force for change by encouraging resistance and criticism.

The outcome of the performance, in terms of social activism, is dependent on the creator's intent, the intent of the directors, the effects of technology, the theatrical talent of the performers, and the wider political context in which the performance occurs. While artists have limited control over context, they can express resistance to their environment, as can those who subsequently reproduce or re-interpret that art. Professionals working in the arts, who are able to stand back from popular culture, are able to use the power of art to prompt critical thought. This prompting can function as a nuisance to those audiences who wish merely to be entertained by art. The value of the opera as political arts activism is therefore strengthened.

Some activist arts are accused of 'preaching to the converted' as they often broach subjects which seem to be political but are not contentious in nature. Works which elaborate topics that are supported by Western government and society cannot function as nuisance. The purpose of

socio-political critique is not vindication or the massage of political egos — critique must resist reigning hegemonies and highlight inequalities in order for these inequalities to be recognised (without recognition of a problem no solution can be found). However, the voicing of support for a resistant theme does not mean that the work has lost its resistance and become propaganda. Revolution or change, local, national or global, cannot take place without some level of support.

Contemporary opera can fulfil the requirements of resistance art. As an art form, opera retains relevance in Western society and interacts with contemporary culture in both popular and elite contexts, allowing it to reach a variety of audiences. In addition, contemporary opera can take on topics that are relevant to today's society, while directors now have the freedom and precedent to reinterpret and update traditional opera. Contemporary composers, directors and performers accept responsibility for the power that they have through their art to sway the audience and catalyse critical thought. In addition, opera is able to take on a social and political function if performed in a relevant context.

The Death of Klinghoffer is a prominent example of an opera which fulfilled a political function. Both the critique it delivers and the responses that audiences give to its production show that a wide range of people find Western society deficient in its views of democracy.

Western society, with its superior infrastructure, economy and safe, capitalist environment, has displayed an inability to see past Palestinian terrorists and radicals to the needs of a nation of human beings in the Gaza strip. Furthermore, some sectors of this society seem unable to accept that the ability to give consideration to a cause does not endorse or condone the use of violence or constitute racism. Those responding negatively to the opera do not appear to understand that the work does not ask the audience to forgive a single despicable act. Instead, it advocates introspection into value systems, and a questioning of commonly held beliefs and prejudices. Ongoing war on a people because of the sins of several radical individuals serves to only to encourage further radicalisation of those members of the population, including those who may have been opposed to violence. Some forgiveness is needed for the beginning of peace. As experienced in South Africa during the years ending apartheid, the transition into peace time can only occur if some middle ground can be found on which all parties are able to respond to and accept efforts at mediation (such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission).

Finally, it is understandable that the Jewish community is offended by *Klinghoffer's* stance and that the criticism that the opera delivers is harsh. However, an insular attitude of unquestioning support for anti-Palestinian, anti-Arab retaliation cannot lead to compromise. The concept of self-criticism is vital not only in the localized Gaza conflict but also in other conflict areas of the world. In Iraq, civilians have suffered during Anglo-American military attempts to root out Al Qaida; to secure 'weapons of mass destruction' in order to prevent future loss of Western lives; to avenge the victims of 9/11 and to try to bring stability and democracy to the oil rich Middle East (as oil forms an integral part of the American-dominated capitalist 'global' economy). The opera persistently raises questions about the validity of the USA's uncompromising labelling of 'good' and 'evil'. It is evident that civilian women and children are frequent causalities in confrontations: do these victims deserve their fate? In bringing democracy to a region through military rather than diplomatic channels, the USA implements a policy in which all human life is not given equal value. It seems that the USA is defensively deaf to criticism in its labelling of opposing views as anti-American. The opera serves an important purpose in that it is able to exercise the right to free speech where individuals may fear to speak out. As long as there is conflict between Israelis and Palestinians in Gaza as well or between Islam and the West, it is very likely that this opera will continue to act as nuisance, stimulating debate and functioning as socio-political critique whenever it is performed.

In contrast to the negative response that *The Death of Klinghoffer* often received, *The Handmaid's Tale* gathered a mixture of criticism and support as it fulfilled its political function. Some critics not only brushed aside the political implications of *The Handmaid's Tale*, but were also patronisingly slighting of the feminist concerns in the work. Their failure to empathise with Offred's predicament or understand the importance of the support shown for Atwood's material by female audiences, supports the opera's premise that a dystopian future, in which women's rights are lost, is possible. If women's issues are not debated in the media, then how are they to be protected when they are undermined by government legislation? Restrictive legislation has already been implemented in the USA; it is probable that erosion of women's rights will continue. Similarly, every small change in USA society that moves it towards moral rigidity should be viewed with apprehension. Gilead, as created so vividly on stage, is a reality which remains a constant critique. Even if, as the detractors of the opera suggest, the USA as a whole is unlikely to be overrun by fundamentalists, this does not mean that continual infringements of human rights are acceptable when measured by the yardstick of democratic society.

Positive reviews have increased the effect of the element of resistance in *The Handmaid's Tale.* As discussed (with reference to Cooper in chapter two), activism makes use of the element of nuisance caused by that which is unusual, offensive and resistant to the norm. In order for that resistance to gain in effect it must be repeated, and it must gather support. No revolution, regardless of its ideological basis, can take place without significant support. In voicing support of opera's right to criticise social evil, and the substance of the criticism, the reviewers are supporting and spreading the opera's resistant message. The reviewers are themselves becoming a part of the resistance.

The Death of Klinghoffer and *The Handmaid's Tale* are examples of opera fulfilling the requirements of resistance art. They have delivered socio-political critique, relevant to today's society, and the criticism has elicited an observable effect. The catalysation of critical thought plays an integral role in attempts to secure the ideal of a free, democratic society. This study therefore concludes that contemporary opera can be relevant and effective socio-political critique.

7.4 Further Study

During the research phase of this study it was difficult to limit its broad scope. It traversed the borders of philosophy, sociology, politics, art aesthetics and even ethnomusicology. Much of the literature prompted further questions and highlighted the need for new research.

First, an investigation into the importance capitalist society ascribes to operatic performance gave rise the question of how operatic composition can be a viable career in the context of contemporary capitalist society. In addition, marketing strategies form an integral part of any enterprise within this society. Opera houses in America and Britain commonly employ popular marketing techniques such as free cocktails or linking production publicity to a beer brand or a club.. However, while these strategies may draw audiences, they are not likely to engage their target market on an intellectual level. In the Netherlands, director Pierre Audi focused on marketing his operas to the sections of the public who already support film and visual arts and so encouraged them into the opera house. A study of audience interests in Britain and the USA could lead to a similar marketing strategy. The strategy would involve informing the potential audience that contemporary opera can function as contemporary socio-political comment and as a visual and auditory art form. Experience of exciting work, with a sense of immediacy, would

counter the perception of opera as nineteenth century museum art dressed up as popular entertainment. Such study would supplement essential existing popular marketing strategies.

Many activist arts function in formal and informal settings. Classical music and opera, however, tend to be viewed as formal arts. While festivals and non-traditional venues do expand the scope of the work, and in Britain amateur operatic societies do still produce opera, little is done to use opera at a grass roots level as social activism. There have been few studies of this topic since the early 1990s. The other arts are presently used on a grass roots level for conflict resolution, as part of counselling and therapy programmes — for example, victims of domestic violence are able to participate in amateur dramatic workshops in Wales. A new, long-term study into the social value of classical music (as opposed to music therapy which is a rapidly growing field in hospitals and health care settings in the West) would be beneficial. For example, could opera workshops be of any benefit in combating the teenage anti-social behaviour which plagues the United Kingdom? This study could be transferred into an American context to ask if opera workshops could be of benefit in reconciling, including and helping to add a new point of interaction for Mexican immigrants to the USA with other American citizens.

South Africa is a country which straddles first and third world economics. It is due to its history and increasing globalisation that the country embraces a hybrid of Western and African social and political values. In the South African context, questions of how opera, as a Western art form, are applicable in an African context have been answered by studies such as Willemien Viljoen's 'Composing mythologies: the role of Western classical music in the construction of South African ethnic identities' (2004). Here, further grass roots studies would also be of benefit. Is it possible for contemporary opera to function as arts activism in post-apartheid South Africa? Could it constitute empowerment on essential social issues such as HIV and AIDS? These questions can be asked in both grass roots and formal settings, further begging the question of which setting would be of more use to those disenfranchised by South African society? Is it better to create an opera which will give voice to the topic and reach upper income groups, generating revenue and compassion or should opera groups rather initiate community involvement?

A large number of South Africans, infected with HIV or limited by lack of skills are unable to meet even the most primary needs of shelter, food and water. Could grass-roots arts activism that involves performers in township areas be of any value under such extreme conditions? Would

artists' time not be better spent handing out food parcels, medical supplies and teaching basic literacy? Would traditional music therapy, as opposed to the Western arts, not be more applicable in such a setting? Lastly, even under the pressure of world globalisation, is the study of Western music therapy an anachronistic relic of colonialism and apartheid when applied to the new South Africa, defined as a country which should embrace solutions tailored to its African social and political context?

The first possible studies discussed here (those investigating composition as a career path and the widening of marketing strategies) would contribute to ensuring the growth of opera as an art form and ensure that this art will exist to inspire, influence and entertain future generations. The latter, altruistic studies would be of further benefit, as musicologists would be playing their part as responsible, interested and conscientious citizens who are contributing to the future of their country.

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