



School: School of Creative Industries

Researcher: Lee Scott

Project Title: Opera for Web and Mobile Media

UOA: 34

Research Questions

Key Aim

This creative research aims to investigate how the web and mobile media may be leveraged to present new modes of operatic expression. Its original contributions to knowledge comprise two examples of developmental practice - 'The Village' (web opera, 2015) and 'Fragments' (mobile opera, 2019).

Research Questions

Liveness

Opera is considered widely to be a live performance art. This status endures even for the majority of digital forms of opera that, although sometimes extended geographically using network technologies, occur at physical sites such as the theatre stage, club floor or street side. Opera for the web and mobile media is however not 'live' in the way that people typically perceive the term. It may instead exist perpetually on the network, and be stored on web servers and local devices that grant access on demand.

A 'digital opera' is however not a reproduction of a live event, but rather an original operatic artefact in its own right. It would be reasonable then to ignore liveness as a non-essential attribute of the form. This being the case, one may suggest that the longstanding traditions and conventions of live opera spectatorship place demands on web and mobile opera to offer a comparable auratic experience to its staged counterparts. Decisions on whether and how to embed a sense of liveness into a work are therefore important for creators of web opera to

make at the conceptualisation stage.

Given the above context, this study seeks to address two questions:

- How are qualities of 'liveness' retained, reimagined or removed in opera for web and mobile media?
- How might an entirely mediated opera advance a sense of liveness?

Co-creation and Participatory Practice

Opera production is a collaborative act with key creative agents including librettists, composers, performers and directors. Nevertheless such roles are often sharply delineated to form a clear hierarchy for operatic production. Creative input is also rarely granted to audience members. Instead of contributing to the unfolding of drama, listeners are positioned typically as spectators of a curated series of dramatic events. In addition, the musical composition of an opera is a typically independent pursuit. The networked nature of the web however suggests opportunities for a more open mode of operatic composition, in which the contributions of several or many talents come together to develop a single musical work.

Given the above context, this study seeks to address two questions:

- How can network technologies offer ways for listeners of web opera to extend their role beyond spectatorship?
- How are the aesthetic and curatorial effects of distributing the composition of an opera across multiple stakeholders?