The Composition of Opera for Young People

Omar Shahryar

Folio of Compositions

PhD

University of York

Music

September 2019

Abstract

This commentary is an auto-ethnographic analysis of a practice of composition of opera for young people accompanying a portfolio of three operas for young people. Young people, in this case, refers to people under the age of 21 years old between infancy and adulthood. Young people can play a variety of roles in the creation, performance and spectatorship of opera. Though mine is an interdisciplinary/multi-disciplinary practice, composition will come under the most scrutiny in this research. Opera for young people raises questions around educational value, ethics, power, agency and authorship, revealing a distinction to be made between opera as a musico-dramatic form and opera as a cultural institution.

Contents

List of Compositions

Lizzie and the Dark, a one act chamber opera for children (5-12 years)
(July - December 2016, 25 minutes)

A Shoe Full of Stars, a one act chamber opera for teenagers and professional ensemble
(September 2016 – March 2018, 53 minutes)

The Magic Lantern, one act opera for youth opera company and pianist
(September 2018 – August 2019, approx. 35 minutes)

List of Accompanying Materials

The following media are supplied on data DVDs with the permissions of the performers.

Lizzie and the Dark   **35'44"**
Venue: Lord Deramore's School, York
Date: December 9, 2016

A Shoe Full of Stars   **54'01"**
Venue: Lawrence Batley Theatre, Huddersfield
Date: March 21, 2018

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Illustrations

Acknowledgements

This work stands on the shoulders of researchers and artists such as François Matarasso and the members past and present of RESEO, the European Network of Opera, Music and Dance Education, among many others. I thank the University of York for creating a supportive and stimulating environment for my peers and me to do our best work in. I am particularly grateful to my supervisor Professor Roger Marsh, as well as my personal mentor Daisaku Ikeda; their faith in my potential is truly humbling. I thank all my collaborators, colleagues and friends who have supported, enabled or contributed these projects, particularly the librettists Ed Harris and Judi Sissons.

Crucially, I thank all the young people I have worked with over the years, but especially the students at Lord Deramore's Primary School and North Huddersfield Trust School, as well as their teachers Steph Jach, Portia Taylor and Belinda Rushworth.

Special thanks to my family for their constant support, especially to Sara for her patience and trust. Above all others, I dedicate this work to Shona Shahryar, my first and greatest teacher, to whom I owe everything.

Thank you, all.

Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. Libretti used in the accompanying portfolio of compositions have been accredited explicitly and any co-authored work therein is detailed in this commentary. Permission for reproduction of text from *The Dark* by Daniel Handler (Lemony Snicket) has been withheld by the author and has therefore been redacted from the score of *Lizzie and the Dark*. The accompanying video DVD of *Lizzie and the Dark* has been embargoed for reasons of child protection. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Preface

Engaging young audiences with contemporary opera has repercussions for composers as well as for young people. Sir Peter Maxwell Davies describes a sense of indebtedness resulting from his work with and for young people:

> "*Had I not served my time as a school music teacher, I would not have been the composer of Eight Songs for a Mad King and other music-theatre works. I learned more about liberation through music from the Cirencester children than they ever learned from me – or than I learnt from specialist new-music festivals like Darmstadt or Donaueschingen.*"[1]

I share this sense of gratitude to such work, as I hope will be made clear in this thesis. The first part contextualises my compositional practice from the following perspectives:

- An approach to opera
- An approach to young people
- A history of opera for young people
- An analysis of my compositional style

The second part of the commentary will profile three operas for young people that I have composed or co-composed. Though not intended to prove impact in a strictly empirical method, self-reflection on an evolving compositional practice and observation of outcomes will be presented.

My practice is not focussed on helping young people to like opera. Rather, I see the creation of opera for young people as a means for sharing and enjoying artistic experiences with others, offering participants and spectators opportunities for learning and self-empowerment. Participatory opera holds huge potential for the democratisation of art and the constructive bringing together of diverse communities.

My compositional practice to date (2019) is a result of professional experience

---

[1] Peter Maxwell Davies, "Will Serious Music Become Extinct?" in *Music Education in Crisis,* ed. Peter Dickinson, (Martlesham: Boydell Press, 2013), 104.

accrued since 2007, when I graduated from the University of York with a MA in Contemporary Music Studies. Composition is but part of my interdisciplinary practice that includes the disciplines of stage directing, teaching, facilitation and production, gained through several years of working as a freelance assistant stage director and workshop leader for opera houses and classical music organisations in the UK. During that time, I received continued professional development training in workshop facilitation from companies such as the Royal Opera House, Opera North, Glyndebourne, Streetwise Opera, English Touring Opera, English Pocket Opera and Pegasus Opera. Many of these companies and trainer-artists were pioneers of opera education, and the wealth of training opportunities evidenced a high standard of music educational practice held by the sector nationwide.

Before I was a professional opera creator, like most young people, opera was not something that I greatly cared for. My experience of seeing Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats* was far more exciting than my first visit to an opera house to see *The Magic Flute*. I came to appreciate opera later, as a university student with a desire to compose but a yearning to explore epic stories and their creation. I received no explicit encouragement to look to opera as a way to find what I was seeking, but I already knew of opera's existence and intuited its cultural importance, which demonstrates some of the educational/structural influences that guide aspiring musicians in higher education that I discuss later in this commentary.

My interest in the combination of composition with pedagogy came from an even more formative experience: that of composing my first song. At nine years old my primary school teacher entered our class into a song-writing contest, where the winning pair of songwriters would have their composition sung by thousands of children at a national choral festival at Wembley Conference Centre. My mother, herself a primary school teacher with natural skill as a lyricist and a knowledge of basic chord progressions on the guitar, facilitated my friend and me in writing a very catchy song in the key of C inspired by the theme tune for Star Trek. Much to our surprise, our song won. From that moment onwards I enjoyed composing songs with the sense that I knew how to do it. It took me around 20 years to realise that my mother had essentially written that song; we had a hand in the process and some agency in providing material, but the critical song-writing skills employed were hers. She had successfully empowered me with the skills and sense of confidence with which to compose music; my first example of creative empowerment.

It is finally necessary to mention my ethno-cultural heritage. I was born a British citizen in Saudi Arabia to a Scottish mother, a teacher and the first of her family to go to university, and a Bangladeshi father, a geo-physicist with a middle- to upper-class upbringing. Living amongst many international "expats" in a British-American compound until the Gulf War forced us to leave, we relocated when I was seven years old to a middle-class town of 30,000 inhabitants in Hertfordshire, close to the suburbs of London. Thus, though only speaking English, the beginning of my life was nonetheless occupied with multiple cultures, affording me many opportunities to observe, though fewer opportunities to choose, cultural-behavioural norms. The desire to bridge cultures whilst picking between them is therefore a long-standing behavioural trait that not only influences the projects I am interested in, but also the musics I express myself with, as will become evident in the analysis of my portfolio of operas for young people.

Chapter 1. An approach to opera

As a composer and pedagogue, I strive to use opera and ideas of opera to empower young people. Opera can refer to various forms of music drama – anything from Verdian grande opera in five acts with a ballet in the middle to the comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan – that lie at one end of the 'music theatre' spectrum, with musicals/musical theatre at the other end.[2] In contemporary opera education practice, the conception of opera as a musico-dramatic art-form is its primary distinction. In 2018 the jury of the international Young Audience Music Awards prize for Best Opera for Young People outlined their opinion on this matter:

> For productions in the category of Best Opera, the jury expected to hear singing put at the forefront, with stories conveyed through vocal music as well as through other production elements... [In 2018] the Jury notes with interest that performances challenge previous forms [of opera] and find new ways of doing things. The jury, therefore, judged the productions in the competition according to the audience interaction and accessibility as much as on the form of opera they presented. However, it begs the question: if a production has opera singers in it, does that alone make it an opera? We felt not. Rather, we acknowledge that these productions have explored, challenged or expanded the form of opera for the purpose of engaging young audiences, which represents the cutting edge of opera making and invention. We look to the future whilst celebrating the past.[3]

That is also what opera is for me. And yet, the same word can also refer to the musical score (e.g. Beethoven finished the opera), a performance (the opera was delayed by half an hour), a specific theatre venue (I'm going to the opera tomorrow to see an opera) or even a style of singing (the opera is full of people singing opera). All of these definitions suggest that opera is more than just an art form – it is also an idea. The

---

[2]   The one-dimensional spectrum is useful for concentrating focus on art forms intended for (or subverting the expectation of being performed on) an operatic or theatrical stage. In reality a multi-dimensional matrix exists between music, theatre, stage design, electronic arts, social context and format that could include rock/pop opera albums, multimedia events, performance art, EDM concerts through to the Olympic Games Opening Ceremonies.

[3]   The European Network of Opera, Music and Dance Education (RESEO). "RESEO/YAM Jury Statement." Presented at YAMSession 2018. Ciudade da Cultura, Santiago de Compostela. Oct 18, 2018.

operatic experience is associated with having a "grand, dramatic or romantic style or effect",[4] to the extent that it has been appropriated by other non-classical genres of music (rock operas, pop operas, hip-hoperas etc.) and even non-musical media (soap operas, space operas, even cowboy 'horse operas') to convey their work as having the same effect as an opera. Calling something an opera, as the creators of *Jerry Springer: The Opera* knew, sets up expectations about what the piece might be and how it is to be viewed – expectations that could then be subverted for comic effect.

At the same time, opera is not a musical, which is why *Jerry Springer* was so funny. Broadly speaking, musicals are seen to be entertaining whilst operas are culturally enriching. Pieces such as *Oklahoma*, *Les Misérables* and *The Book of Mormon* generally emphasise high-quality of wordplay and theatrical elements, with producers, book- and lyric-writers and even choreographers being the creative backbone of successful productions. Composers of opera have greater authority than other artists involved in opera creation: the music they write requires specially trained musicians to fulfil the sometimes virtuosic musical demands, including that singers be able to project their voices unamplified over large orchestras. In terms of musical style, contemporary opera is expected to explore new aesthetic possibilities, often now being part of the artistic *avant-garde*, whilst musical theatre relies predominantly on popular or 'commercial' musics.

Opera has, of course, been influenced by various other forms of theatre and art. Improvisational comedy has been integrated into the successful *Impropera* productions on the West End, and the production of operas in unconventional spaces is the *raison d'être* of established opera companies like Birmingham Opera and Tête-à-tête. The popularity and artistic brilliance of many musicals has set precedents for contemporary opera to compete with in terms of quality of entertainment and drama. Opera singers are now required to have better acting skills than ever before and are expected to physically look the part – obese, middle-aged Romeos and Juliets no longer cut the mustard. Musical designers, producers and choreographers have created such amazing spectacles that they have been invited to replicate the same in opera houses. In terms of opera creation, libretti must also be of better quality – a contemporary opera with bad dramatic pacing or an inconsistent storyline is not forgiven in the same way we forgive *Madama Butterfly* or *Così fan tutte*. The spectrum between opera and musical has a

---

[4] *Merriam-Webster.com*, adj. "operatic," accessed March 7, 2019, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/operatic

middle area inhabited by shows such as *West Side Story*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Porgy and Bess* and even *Jerry Springer.*

Though orbited by associations of grandeur, drama, romance, specific architecture and specific company brands, opera can be free of any of these elements if considered as simply a musico-dramatic form. This provides an opportunity for contemporary opera to experiment with or subvert its own associations, traditions and cultures to produce new forms. This may be for purely aesthetic reasons, or motivated by social, political or educational objectives. In my compositional practice, calling a new musico-dramatic work an opera has political significance that supersedes the presence or absence of a classical voice.

1.1 The current state of opera

The political paradigm of opera and the opera industry is, to concur with Bokina,[5] in a period of crisis. On the one hand, opera is well-supported by the political establishment, with opera companies in countries like Britain receiving considerable proportions of national arts budgets.[6] Opera is still perceived as representing musical "quality and excellence", with classical singing technique being respected by pop vocalists more than vice versa.[7] Classical singers have succeeded recently in releasing pop albums, 'raising' pop to classical standards, though it is more difficult for pop musicians to be similarly praised for singing covers of opera arias or for composing full-length operas.[8] Bokina suggests that "in terms of audience attendance, number of companies and performances, and dissemination through recordings, television, videos, and films, opera has never been healthier".[9] In London, New York and Canada in particular, burgeoning networks of independent opera creators are co-operating to produce *avant-garde* new forms of opera in unconventional places to engage new audiences.[10] In conservatoires around the

---

[5] John Bokina, *Opera and Politics* (New York: Yale University, 1997), 200.
[6] 62% of the entire Arts Council budget in 2018. Source: Christy Romer, "Arts Council criticised for prioritising opera in music funding," *ArtsProfessional,* Apr 13, 2018, accessed Sep 11, 2019, https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/arts-council-criticised-prioritising-opera-music-funding
[7] John Potter, *Vocal Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 187.
[8] Operas by pop musicians – all of which received critical to scathing reviews – include: *Nebuchadnezzar* (2019) by Kanye West; *Prima Donna* (2009) and *Hadrian* (2018) by Rufus Wainwright; *Monkey: Journey to the West* (2007) by Damon Albarn; and *Gaddafi: A Living Myth* (2006) by The Asian Dub Foundation.
[9] Bokina, *Opera and Politics*, 200.
[10] To name but a few: in London – Tête-à-tête Opera Festival, Grimeborn Opera Festival and the Rough for Opera showcase; in New York – Indie Opera and the New York Opera Alliance; in Canada – Indie Opera Toronto and Indie Opera West.

world young people still aspire to be (and pay handsomely to train as) opera singers.

On the other hand, now more than ever, the class implications of opera are stark: to paraphrase Miller, on a social level it appeals to wealthy elite, the globalised, the bourgeois even if musically it could appeal to a broad spectrum of the population.[11] Potter rightly notes that for the classical singer, even the choice of dress is "determined by received class norms".[12] The "current wholesale axing of public funding for music education in schools and the imposition of a tax-levy on students" exacerbates the problem 'overwhelmingly'.[13] Mainstream opera audiences tend to be in the 45-74 year old age bracket.[14] In the eyes of young people, therefore, opera can be easily seen as for not for them – a sentiment I hear echoed regularly.

Even within the circle of those who are do appreciate opera, there exists seemingly unresolvable tensions. Traditionalists seem obsessed with an "ossified" repertory that confines itself to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,[15] a period where "the bourgeoisie [had] liberated music from the confines of the aristocratic salon and the church", but in doing so imposed "the tyranny of the market".[16] Modernisers seem to still be living with the post-war compulsion to snap audiences out of their lazy romanticism with sonic results that audiences cannot (and sometimes deliberately not meant to) engage with. Audiences left bored or bemused are up against contemporary opera makers who are maligned as out of touch.

Yet the end is not nigh, and to some degree such tensions are perennial. As Žižek and Dolar reassure us:

> from its very beginning, opera was dead, a stillborn child of musical art. One of the standard complaints about opera today is that it is obsolete, no longer really alive, and furthermore (another aspect of the same reproach) that it is no longer a fully autonomous art – it always has to rely in a parasitic way on other arts

---

11. Leta Miller, "Opera as Politics: The Troubled History of San Francisco's War Memorial Opera House," *California History* 92, no. 4 (2015): 20.
12. Potter, *Vocal Authority*, 186.
13. John Stephens, "A Provocative Perspective on Music Education Today," in *Music Education in Crisis,* ed. Peter Dickinson, (Martlesham: Boydell Press, 2013), 77.
14. Sinéad O'Neill, Joshua Edelman and John Sloboda, "Opera and emotion: The cultural value of attendance for the highly engaged," *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 13, Issue 1 (May 2016): 26
15. Bokina, *Opera and Politics*, 200.
16. Simon Berhman, "From revolution to irrelevance: how classical music lost its audience," *International Socialism* 121, Jan 2, 2009, accessed Sept 8, 2019, http://isj.org.uk/from-revolution-to-irrelevance-how-classical-music-lost-its-audience/?fbclid=IwAR07yfvOzDTGw4SFF-nRuK3c77FJoqspAqV8N8oBurtA-byJ9_6u9gzRZr4

(on pure music, on theater). Instead of denying the charge, one should undermine it by radicalizing it: opera never was in accord with its time – from its very beginnings, it was perceived as something outdated, as a retroactive solution to a certain inherent crisis in music and as an impure art. To put it in Hegelese, opera is outdated in its very concept. How, then, can one not love it?[17]

---

[17]   Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar, *Opera's Second Death* (London: Routledge, 2002), viii-ix.

Chapter 2. An approach for young people

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,

For they have their own thoughts.

— Kahlil Gibran, poet (1883-1931)

In my experience of running introductory opera workshops for children around the UK, I feel confident in saying that most young people are unfamiliar with what opera is. Of those who have an impression of opera formed from watching TV shows such as *Britain's Got Talent*, opera will be seen as a musical style that their parents or grandparents might like, but they will be unaware that it is a musico-dramatic form. Knowledge of classical music training increases the likelihood of an awareness or interest in opera, particularly for young people in further education.[18] In conversation with the author in November 2015, Frasier Corfield, Artistic Director of the Australian Theatre for Young People, attributed university students' interest in opera and classical music to the fact that it is seen as "the highest, the best, the most beautiful" of the arts, thus young people are attracted to proving themselves or, by nature of their interest, setting themselves apart from their peers. (It was at university that I became interested in opera.)

Composing for any of the publics that comprise "young people" requires some knowledge of the standard practice in writing for them, if not an awareness of the specifics of the motivations, interests and cultural contexts of these audiences. Without getting into the multi-disciplinary debate surrounding the definition of "child" and "adult", my use of the term "young people" refers to people in any of the stages that chronologically precede adulthood *as well as* those in the early stages of normal adulthood,[19] around the age of 21 years old. It is consciously broad, considering people

---

[18] The National Student Opera Society was established in 2018 to support a growing network of student opera societies across the UK.

[19] A conceptual paraphrasing of Brighouse and Swift's definition of childhood in dialectic with

in the stages that precede adulthood include newborn babies, toddlers, infants, children, pre-pubescents and adolescents. Furthermore, adults' (parents, family, teachers, polity) motivations, interests and cultural contexts play a crucial role in shaping young people's operatic experiences as well.[20] Having something for everyone, therefore, would seem important, as might equipping audiences with the knowledge of how to get what *they* want from opera. In the case of opera for young people, it is safe to assume that the opera will not 'speak for itself' without preparing the audience before and/or enabling reflection after the performance. Therefore, considering the pre- and post-performance experience is as important as considering the performance.

In Bennett's theoretical model of performance reception and production, the spectator observes the performance through two frames: an outer frame containing the audience, performers and all the cultural and material elements that create and inform the event, and an inner frame containing the dramatic production in a particular performance space.[21] To this model, and in particular when working with young performers, bringing individuals' awareness to their own emotional state can help to increase their capacity to manage emotions that arise and make meaning out of the information they receive – this is often called 'bringing people into the room'. As Bennett says: "It is well known that an appreciative, knowledgeable audience can foster a 'better' performance from the actors and that a restless audience can disrupt the on-stage action, creating mistakes, lack of pace, and poor individual performances".[22] Preparing performers and audiences with knowledge of what to expect experientially as well as artistically can help prevent any breakdown in the relationship between them. This theory informs my practice as a composer and producer.

adulthood: "We simply stipulate that children are people who, because of their age, have yet to develop the capacities that characterize normal adulthood." Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift, *Family Values* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 58.

[20] Helle Strangaard Jensen, "Making children's 'classics', making past childhoods: children's 'classics' as sites for memory politics and nostalgia," in *Reinventing Childhood Nostalgia* (London: Routledge, 2017), Part 6.

[21] Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 139

[22] Ibid., 151-152.

Chapter 3. A history of opera for young people

> ...a place cannot come to life musically until the inhabitants perform their own music. Moreover, there can be no real understanding of music without creating it. Can one imagine teaching art without ever encouraging children to draw, paint and make sculptures?[23]

There exists today a repertoire of operas for young people that follow several distinct trends that developed according to the preoccupations, interests and values of the eras in which they were created. One of the most important and recurrent elements is a preoccupation with clearly articulated stories that contain more action than philosophising, but that are still of relevance to young people, imparting a cultural/moral lesson appropriate to the societies in which they are to grow up. Intelligibility of text reflects the priority of narrative clarity, though musically this is manifested through various styles. Folk music has inspired composers for centuries, with modern equivalents such as jazz and pop also added or mixed with classical forms to create variety and a degree of accessibility for young audiences. Composers tend to repeat musical themes and frequently – but not always – use their authentic, compositional language to introduce young listeners "to the tools required for processing musical information" without 'writing down' to them.[24] However, in writing for child performers, a progression can be traced through history: from opera for *young performers*, to opera *about* youth, to opera for young or family *audiences*, to opera *for* schools or youth operas, to operas *for* communities, and most recently, participatory operas *with* and *by* young people.

Operas for young *performers* can trace their lineage back to Purcell and Tate's *Dido and Aeneas* composed around 1689. In fact, it is perhaps thanks to it being commissioned by Josias Priest for the wards of his boarding school for "Young Gentlewomen" in Chelsea[25] that Purcell was able to explore his interest in the Italian

---

23 Davies, "Will Serious Music Become Extinct?" 104.
24 Leah Giselle Field, "Creative Differences: Sendak's and Knussen's intended audiences of *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Higglety Pigglety Pop!*," (doctoral thesis, University of British Colombia, 2014), 53
25 Ellen T. Harris, *Henry Purcell's Dido and Aeneas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 3.

convention of through-composed opera[26] in this way. *Dido and Aeneas* is his only opera where music sustains a dramatic text throughout; otherwise there was no taste for completely sung-through opera at that time in England. It is also interesting to observe that even in this epoch, Purcell and Tate's opera had educational objectives. Tate's adaptation of Virgil's original story reveals a desire to impart a moral education upon the young people of his day, specifically "that young girls should not accept the advances of young men no matter how ardent their wooing or how persistent their promises."[27] In the opera, Dido's one night with the non-committal Aeneas is enough for her to be doomed to die of a broken heart, whereas Virgil's characters spend an entire season "in debauchery... rapt in a trance of lust" before Dido commits the sin of suicide.[28]

Dido would seemingly be alone in the canon of operas for young performers for several hundred years, but toward the nineteenth century the rising popularity of operas and ballets on fantasy, magic and fairy tale themes sowed the seeds for future operas for young people. Rossini's *Cenerentola*, premiered in 1817, was one such opera on a fairy-tale theme, yet its length of almost two-and-a-half hours is testament to the fact that it was not meant for young audiences or young performers. In many cases operas of this era featuring young or child characters had the roles played by adult women – their marketing as operas for young audiences today is coincidental.

Some operas, however, found their home in repertoire for children more than for adults: Engelburt Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* of 1893, is now one of the most popular operas for children in the world. It was his first and most performed opera – his eight other fairy-tale themed stage works now virtually forgotten having not captured the same 'magical' effect – and written originally to accompany a play by his nieces.[29] Developing the libretto written by his sister, Adelheid Wette, the simple yet clearly articulated story was well-matched by the characterful melodies inspired by German folk tunes and children's songs that received a Wagnerian treatment in their orchestration. The economy of seven principal characters (or six if the Mother doubles as the Witch) and not adult chorus gives the opera a feeling of intimacy, wherein one can concentrate on the predicament of the two child characters. Actual children do appear in the opera at the end of each act, singing the roles of angels in a dream as well

---

[26] Martin Adams, *Henry Purcell*: The origins and development of his musical style. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 5.

[27] Harris, *Henry Purcell's Dido and Aeneas*, 17.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Charles Osborne, *The Opera Lover's Companion* (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 184-186.

as Gingerbread Children that are released from the Witch's spell – two moments which are deliberately "sweet".

We can see already the start of a trend in associating youth with nursery rhyme or folk music, something that can still be heard in contemporary operas for young people. However, it seems that it was Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* that set several long-lasting precedents not only in opera for young people but also in opera for adults *about* childhood and youth. Ravel was deeply affected both by his experiences as a soldier in the Great War and by the loss of his own mother, and his setting of Colette's libretto with "Maman" as the last word and note of the piece symbolises a quiet grief not seen in operas dealing with youth before. *L'Enfant* "opens the way to other disturbing "child" operas, such as Benjamin Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* and Oliver Knussen's *Where the Wild Things Are*."[30]

Musically, Ravel's use of eclectic musical styles and parody are part of the piece's strength, keeping the audience guessing what might come next, a feature that is now something of a constant in opera for young people. Ravel's "mélanges des styles" seems deliberate considering that he predicted that it would be severely criticised for this very reason.[31] Moreover, his desire to compose a work in the spirit of "l'opérette américaine"[32] – an aspiration towards an American or commercial style and forms such as the revue or vaudeville that anticipated the modern Musical – clearly resonated with other composers of the twentieth century. Britten's *Paul Bunyan* of 1941 and Kurt Weill's *Down in the Valley,* composed and revised between 1945-47, both strove for an American style, though Weill succeeded where Britten failed. *Down in the Valley* could be called his 'Broadway Opera' for non-professional performers, though one can almost tell that it was originally composed and structured as an opera for radio: the story's flashbacks appear at structurally unusual moments for a theatre work. *Paul Bunyan* was hampered by Auden's verbose libretto, though Britten's music still shone through in the

---

[30] Margaret Reynolds "Colette's libretto: a fantasy of childhood for Ravel's opera of enchantment," *Guardian*, Jul 27, 2012, accessed Aug 18, 2019,
https://www.theguardian.com/music/2012/jul/27/colette-lenfant-sortileges-libretto

[31] In a letter to Roland-Manuel, Ravel wrote of *L'Enfant*: "...cette ouvre, en 2 parties, se distinguera par un mélange des styles qui sera sévèrement jugé" (...this work, in 2 acts, will be distinguished by a mix of styles that will be harshly judged...). His prediction was both right and wrong, with some critics dismissing the use of pastiche and multiple musical styles as leaving the opera "vide de musique", with many others praising its musical "richesses". Source: Arbie Orenstein, "L'enfant et les sortilèges: correspondance inédite de Ravel et Colette. A la mémoire de Roland-Manuel," *Revue de Musicologie* 52, no.2 (1966): 217-220.

[32] Alexis Roland-Manuel, "Une esquisse autobiographique de Maurice Ravel," *La Revue Musicale* (December 1938), 23, quoted in Arbie Orenstein, "L'enfant et les sortilèges: correspondance inédite de Ravel et Colette. A la mémoire de Roland-Manuel," 217.

opening and closing through-composed sequences and a few numbers in between. Both are frequently performed by university students around the world, as is Shostakovich's operetta *Moscow, Cheryomushki* (1958), which Shostakovich himself claimed contained some of his most cynically composed music.[33]On first hearing, one might be tempted to agree with him that it is "boring, unimaginative, stupid",[34] but in the context of it being a satire made within the double-speak culture of Stalinist Russia, there are those who argue that it can succeed *because* of the context in which those weaknesses were made.[35]

Ravel's inclusion of jazz music set yet another precedent that is still going strong today, almost a century later. However, the meaning behind jazz music in Ravel's time was far more radical than the use of the idiom now. In the early decades of the 20th century, Jazz music was the pinnacle of contemporary popular music, its aesthetic and culture presenting an ideal of liberty and liberalisation that inspired a host of other art forms. Marked musical aspects of this included the prioritisation of rhythm, melodic improvisation, emotional expressivity that bordered on brutality or 'noise', elements of humour and also of the absurd.[36] Eclecticism and Orientalism were in part fashionable, but were also an aspiration toward the *avant-garde* beyond the limits and taboos of culture of the day. Jazz, in a sense, was rebellious and subversive. Ravel's incorporation of jazz and blues came from a desire to liberate 'serious' music and bring it closer to jazz (not, as some have implied, to make jazz more respectable[37]).

The legacy of Ravel and Humperdinck can be seen in pieces such as Montsalvatge's *El Gato Con Botas* (1948), based on the 'Puss in Boots' children's story, all the way to Jonathan Dove's *Pinnochio* (2003). Eclectic use of largely diatonic musical languages – impressionism, jazz, neo-classicism and Catalan and Spanish folk by Montsalvatge, adding to that rock, pop, minimalism and musical theatre in Dove's vocabulary – together with brilliant orchestration and music that can be both dramatic and funny, have led to success and multiple productions of both works. The difference between the two, however, lies in Dove's opera being more consciously for family audiences. Montsalvatge's focus on adult performers is similar in effect to Oliver Knussen's *Where The Wild Things Are* (1980) and *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* (1991)*,* which

---

[33]   Gerard McBurney, 'Not a Cherry Tree in Sight!,' *Tempo*, no.190 (1994): 20.

[34]   Laurel Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 231.

[35]   McBurney, 'Not a Cherry Tree in Sight!'

[36]   Carine Perret, "L'adoption du jazz par Darius Milhaud et Maurice Ravel: L'esprit plus que la lettre," *Revue de Musicologie* 89, no. 2 (2003): 321.

[37]   Ibid., 346

occupy uniquely contentious places in contemporary repertoire for being settings of Maurice Sendak's well-loved books for children with music that is technically inaccessible for a majority of children. Though not intended to be an appropriation of children's stories for adults, Leah Giselle Field posits the reason for the operas' musical complexity (including the obscuring of both text and melodic recognition) originate in Knussen's own history as a musical child prodigy, who from an early age was under pressure to *not be* childish.[38] Though the operas are as reminiscent as *L'Enfant*, it might therefore be fairer to call them operas for exceptional children.

Apart from Purcell and Tate, composers and librettists began to consciously consider creating operas *for* young people in some way in the first few decades of the twentieth century. Along with the arrival of youth movements such as the Boy Scouts and the International Socialist Youth Organisation, adult minds were increasingly seeking to influence the hearts of young people. Kurt Weill and Bertold Brecht's *Schuloper* in two acts, *Der Jasager* (lit. He who says Yes) is one of the earliest and most didactic examples of this, and is one of the few operas for young people that shuns accessible or folky musical idioms in favour of *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation/estrangement effect). The first act concerns a boy who tries to save his sick mother by obtaining medicine in neighbouring kingdom, but when he starts to tire while crossing the mountain range his travelling companions tell him he must obey the custom whereby anyone who risks holding the group back must consent to be thrown off the mountain to die. The boy says yes, and he is thrown to his death. The second act is the story of *Der Neinsager* (He who says No), following the exact same story, but at the crucial moment the boy says no and convinces his companions to change the awful custom and all go back home together in solidarity. Weill employs his *gestus* technique derived from Brecht, composing music that plays deliberately against the emotional tone of the drama: the vocal parts in a declamatory style eschew any emotional intimacy, and most of the piece is either in minor or dissonant harmonies until the boy agrees to die, when the music sweetens into a major key. Timberlake suggests that *Der Jasager* was the foundation for a whole body of successful *Lehrstücke* operas, sitting alongside other school operas based on Marxist appropriations of fairy tales, but all bent on shaping the ideal citizen in the German Democratic Republic.[39]

---

[38] Leah Giselle Field, "Creative Differences: Sendak's and Knussen's intended audiences of *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Higglety Pigglety Pop!*", 28-34.

[39] Anicia Chung Timberlake, "Brecht for Children: Shaping the Ideal GDR Citizen Through Opera

Around the 1940s, educational organisations were partnering with opera houses to instruct young people in the opera tradition, bringing young people in to see children's versions (ie. edited-down versions) of repertoire and instructing them on 'how to listen'.[40] Composers responded to this effort more creatively, none more so than Benjamin Britten. Britten and Crozier's 'Entertainment for Young People', *Let's Make an Opera!* (1949) stipulated that real children should play the children's parts.[41] *Let's Make an Opera!* is a play about a class of children, their teacher, some local amateur performers and a composer making an opera called *The Little Sweep* (which is then performed in the second half of the event). The adults (including the opera's conductor in the role of 'local organist') teach the class about the kinds of creative decisions opera-makers make, and over the course of the opera's creation the characters in the play rehearse certain sections. Three songs are even taught by the conductor to the actual audience before the opera takes place, though the switch of the audience having been sitting passively in the dark to suddenly being required to participate with the light on them is clumsy by today's standards. The songs are also musically challenging, with syncopation, unconventional rhythms and wide tessituras, meaning the audience require some considerable rehearsing in order to follow their printed scores, lyric sheets or projections of the same.

In the United States, Gian Carlo Menotti had great success in composing operas for young audiences by placing young performers centre stage, most notably in *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (1951), the performance of which is now a Christmas tradition. *Help! Help! The Gobolinks!* (1968) and *The Boy Who Grew Too Fast* (1982) likewise still have relevance even today, though Menotti's libretti (written himself) date the works in terms of their language, and his rejection of contemporary musical style lead some to feel his works are not modern enough. With hindsight, however, *Help! Help! The Gobolinks!* - with a story about a group of children combatting alien body-snatchers whose plinky-plonky electronic music is repelled by more conventional musical style – could form an interesting project specifically aimed to debate modern musical aesthetics.

A significant turning point in the development of opera for young people comes with Britten's *Noye's Fludde* (1957), which is not only the first and most popular

Education," *Representations* 132, no.1 (2015): 30-60.

[40] Luther A. Richman, 'Opera and Music Education," *Music Educators Journal* 33, no. 2 (1946): 31

[41] Benjamin Britten, composer's notes to *The Little Sweep* (London: Boosey & Hawkes Ltd., 1950)

community opera, but also the inspiration for countless other operas for young people. The opera is specifically intended for performance in non-theatre venues with a children's chorus, children's orchestra alongside an adult orchestra and with some small roles for children alongside two adult singers and an adult speaker. It uses the text directly from the medieval Miracle play Noye's Fludde with the insertion of four church hymns. Though the text of the opera being in medieval English means it is essentially in a foreign language, the structuring of the original play to be performed by several guild families lends itself to involving multiple groups of performers in a visually bold, pageant-esque style. In *Fludde*, Britten successfully marries an original compositional language with an innovative re-formatting of opera that would contribute to the entire gamut of subsequent opera made *for* and *with* young people.

The creation of community operas is different to the development of community art in this post-war era. Today, in the context of participatory art and community art having been defined in terms of theory and practice (see below), one might more accurately describe a work like *Noye's Fludde* as an opera for communities, as the community had no role in the creation of the opera. In any case, the development of what was in the past called 'community opera' resulted in a glut of new forms of opera for young people, particularly operas for schools.

Malcolm Williamson's ten cassations were a particularly effective model of opera specifically formatted for maximum accessibility. Taking the name of the eighteenth century genre of chamber music that included serenades and divertimenti intended for occasional or outdoor settings,[42] Williamson developed cassations as a form of miniature opera (between 7-20 minutes duration) intended for production in informal settings and requiring the minimum of rehearsal and technical requirements. Most of the cassations are scored for a pianist and group of participants who would learn and perform the music and staging in a couple of hours.[43] As Williamson's score notes explain: "The music and words are deliberately simple, so that they may be quickly memorised and co-ordinated into the dramatic production... they should show in miniature how an opera is prepared and performed, and impose the disciplines of music-

---

[42] Christa Brüstle, "Mozarts Cassationen, Serenaden und Divertimenti – Aspekte ihrer Terminologie, Funktion und Stilistik,"*Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 65. Jahrg., H. 2. (2008): 85.
[43] Williamson adapted this format for the cassation *The Valley and the Hill* (1977), written for the more formal occasion of the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. The choral opera was performed with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and a cast of 18,000 children.

dramatic co-ordination".[44] The cassations would have no soloists, but characters in three or four groups, with vocal parts comprising simple melodic lines, often repeated, as well as fun vocal sound effects. Since 2016, Mahogany Opera Group have commissioned 10 cassation-like operas, rebranding them as 'Snappy Operas', to deliver in primary schools in the same spirit of the cassations. The inventiveness of the operas written by some of the UK's most esteemed contemporary composers[45] combined with the satisfaction of performing an opera so quickly (or snappily) suggests this format has potential to be developed even further.

Additional to this repertoire are workshop operas such as Peter Kay's *The Snowman of Kashmir* (1975), following a similar form as the cassations but with the piano replaced entirely by a percussion orchestra played by children, and Geoffrey Winters' *Drake's Voyage* which interweaved musical score, narrative text by Robin Rook, graphic illustration by F. R. Exell and compositional and design instructions in a book meant to inspire creativity alongside performance.

Operas intended for adolescent school children are more substantial works, requiring significant resources to rehearse and including parts for school orchestra. Richard Rodney Bennett's *All the King's Men* (1968) and David Bedford's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1979) are for school performers in singing roles and in the orchestra. Both challenge young performers and listeners with an extremely eclectic range of musical styles: chromaticism, nursery-rhymes, folk music 60s pop (possibly soul/motown in the case of *All the King's Men*), pastiche renaissance lute songs and vivid, abstract orchestral soundscapes. Both pieces also exploit contemporary notational practices including being hand-written, indicating musical sequences using text instructions and arrows written over staves without barlines and indicative pitch contours using drawn lines. Both pieces are for sizeable orchestras of medium to high ability, though Bedford also scores for a kazoo choir, glass bottles, and a sound effects choir for those who cannot read music. Peter Maxwell Davies' *The Two Fiddlers* (1978) follows this format: inspired by Scottish folk-music and using similarly innovative notational writing and some complex rhythms (bars of 3/8+3/16), but also adding two singer-musicians who play the violin. In these works, it is clear that composers are also keen to introduce young people to contemporary music. Even Britten's *Children's*

---

[44]Malcolm Williamson, composer's notes to *The Moonrakers* (London: Josef Weinberger Ltd., 1967)

[45] To date: Kerry Andrew, Jamie Man, Nathan Williamson, Stephen Deazley, Philip Venables, Emily Hall, Ed Hughes, Luke Carver Goss and Gwyneth Herbert. ('The Operas' *Snappy Operas*, Mahogany Opera Company, accessed Aug 5, 2019, https://snappyoperas.co.uk/the-operas/)

Crusade, (1969) called 'a ballad for children's voices and orchestra' with a text by Bertolt Brecht, does this to an extent, following the aesthetic of his church parables. Although the music is technically challenging to learn, the piece might now be within the capacity of some youth opera companies.

In the 1980s, the demise of Western industries such as mining, steelwork and factory production and the shift instead towards financial services was mirrored by the collapse of community art as a movement and its absorption by institutions.[46] It was in this period that publicly-funded opera houses began to establish education and outreach departments, utilising the artists and participatory skills that had been used in more radical community projects. From the 1990s onwards, participatory art was being normalised across the world, but in Europe in particular. The European Network of Opera, Music and Dance Education (a.k.a. RESEO) was founded in 1996 for the purpose of supporting practice in this area. Private and national arts funders were increasingly expecting social value for money. School performances and insight events would bring young people into opera houses, and education/outreach departments would send artists into schools.

Opera outreach at this stage was partly motivated by the idea of creating the opera audience of the future. However, over time opera companies began to redefine their mission, moving away from educating people about opera and reaching *out* of the opera house, to providing broader learning and educational services and offering opportunities for people to participate in the activities of the company from within. This has led to several developments, most notably the foundation of youth opera companies within larger opera houses, the development of operas for communities and the commissioning of participatory opera projects.

Glyndebourne opera proved particularly pioneering in commissioning numerous works that put specially created youth companies on the main stage with the seriousness of other productions. Glyn Maxwell and David Bruce's *Nothing* marked the 30th anniversary of Glyndebourne Youth Opera, receiving huge acclaim. Some, like the Royal Opera House, have commissioned triptychs of short operas: Denton Chikura and John Barber's *Mighty Oaks Academy* stands out as being a particularly entertaining yet musically satisfying outcome of this process. In 2018, Timo Hietala's *Ihmepoika A* (*Wonder Boy A*), with a libretto by rapper Paleface on a theme of immigration,

---

[46] François Matarasso, *A Restless Art* (London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2019), 145.

embraced the more radical musical potential opera for young people can afford by having the performers (aged between 10-12) rap as well as sing. A youth opera company training young performers to rap shows an increasing willingness to push the boundaries of artistic disciplines (Ravel would be proud).

Community operas have proved even more popular with some commissioners, engaging as they do a wider audience, and have even been exported around the world. Howard Moody has written several such works: *Push* for the Battle Festival in 2016 about the real life story of Simon Gronowski who was pushed off a train destined for Auschwitz in 1943, *Agreed* with a fantasy story about xenophobia by Anna Moody and produced at Glyndebourne in 2019, and the innovative *Orfeo and Majnun*, uniting Greek and Arabic myths and composed in co-operation with Dick van der Harst and Moneim Adwan, with a libretto by Martina Winkel. Moody's musical influences are eclectic, referencing everything from Verdi to pop, jazz, North African and even prog-rock styles conveying the narrative drama as expressively as possible. Still, words are articulated clearly and are not obscured by music or treated as musical material on their own. The three works prove the importance of relevance in the commissioning of operas for communities today, with *Push* and *Orfeo and Majnun* in particular resonating with international audiences. The success of *Orfeo and Majnun* (seven iterations around the world to date) is particularly notable given its size. The project is in two parts: Part 1 is a public carnival-style parade in the streets with participation from local community music groups and singing, crafting and puppetry workshops run by the project artists; and Part 2 is the opera performance for which van der Harst was responsible for the overall composition, with Adwan composing vocal lines for the Arabic characters and arranging Arabic musical numbers, and Moody composing the music for the participatory choir. Dove's *The Monster in the Maze* (2015) is subtler in its exploration of theme than Moody's works, and is all the better for it, achieving a timeless quality. Maxwell Davies' 2016 opera for community *The Hogboon,* however, suffered from a lack of relevance despite having some exquisite music, thanks to a weak libretto.

Thematic relevance for specific audiences has also lead to increasingly specific commissioning briefs to target certain audiences. International symposiums like GrowOp! support operas for babies, with works such as Palmer and Glazer's eight *Musical Rumpus* productions (2011-17) and Lliam Paterson's *BambinO* (2017) building on cutting-edge research in child development. English Touring Opera has produced numerous pioneering operas for young people with special educational needs – their

2017 production of director Tim Yealland's and composer Llywelyn ap Myrddin's *Different* in particular utilising performers' musical and audience engagement skills to virtuosic effect. In 2019, Jörg Ulrich Krah's *Prinzessin LiebDieLiebe* blended a fresh, contemporary musical style with elements of pastiche to convey Susanne Felicitas Wolf's story for 8-10 year olds about the right of a princess to love men or women or both. Also in 2019, Robert Lehmeier and Cathy Milliken's *Romeo's Passion* was a powerful dramatisation of attitudes surrounding homosexuality in a thoroughly contemporary opera for teenage audiences in South Africa. In conversation with the author, producer Shirley Apthorp reported that the opera narrowly avoiding starting a riot at every performance when the two men kiss, thus the accompanying workshops and discussions for young audiences to reflect on the themes were considered essential − a practice becoming more and more common around more sensitive subjects.

Participatory opera, where professional artists create opera with non-professionals, still seems daring and new in spite of it having been around for over thirty years. In 1990, Kevin Crossley-Holland and Nicola LeFanu's two act opera *The Green Children* was written for a cast of adults and young people, with the children's choir (up to 13 yrs old) also writing and composing five small scenes interspersed in the course of the opera: a traditional singing game, a healing song, two pastoral songs and a market scene. The scenes are not crucial to the narrative, but set the scene. LeFanu makes a few compositional suggestions, such as possible modes or chords to use, but leaves it open for teachers to run creative work in schools (or artist facilitators, more likely today). Finnish National Opera and Ballet pushed participation to its limits with *Aikalisä* (*Timeout*) in 2016, engaging 14 volunteers between 12-17 years old to create the libretto, compose and orchestrate the music together, mentored by artists from *Kuule, Minä Sävellän!* and the New York Philharmonic's Very Young Composers programme.[47] The 14 compositional voices together proved to be as eclectic as one would expect for this genre, the difference being that this opera told a story of young people by young people for young people.

3.1 *Participatory* and *Community* Art

Recent research by Balslev traces a development in outreach practices in opera from the

---

[47]   John Deak, "Aikalisä, an opera, a new art form?" *FiSME*, Apr, 2016 accessed Sept 16, 2019, https://fisme.fi/kuukauden-kolumnit/komunit2016/aikalisa/

historical to the educational, and latterly, to participatory paradigms.[48] A similar transition can be seen in other institutional outreach practices: from a "one way street" where experts inform or consult outsiders, through to "show and tell presentations" where communities and institutions can collaborate, and most recently to a more "inclusive and challenging" model where the community leads.[49]

Participatory art refers to art created by in specific process, different from forms of art that use audience participation or amateur arts. Matarasso defines it as "the creation of art by professional artists and non-professional artists" in a context where "everyone involved in the artistic act is an artist" and new art is created.[50] As a result of this pooling of their "different skills, imaginations and interests", it is possible for professionals and non-professionals to create "something together that they could not have made alone".[51]

The function of participatory art is cultural democratisation, which differs also from community art, whose function is cultural democracy.[52] Matarasso defines community art as "the creation of art as a human right, by professional and non-professional artists, co-operating as equals, for purposes and to standards set together, and whose processes, products and outcomes cannot be known in advance".[53] In other words, the main objective of participatory art is for non-professionals to participate in a professional artistic practice. The objective of community art, however, is for professional and non-professional artists to participate in a community artistic practice, with professional or non-professional differences being of no importance.

3.2 Ethics in participatory opera

Participatory opera projects have three main ethical points to consider:

1. the ethics of participation in general;
2. the ethics of working with young or vulnerable people; and

---

48 Dorte Grannov Balslev, "The Danish Journey – Moving towards lasting diverse audience relations," (conference paper, Autumn Conference of RESEO, the European Network of Opera, Music and Dance Education, Royal Danish Theatre, Copenhagen, Nov 15-17, 2018).

49 Amareswar Galla, "The First Voice in Heritage Conservation," *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 03 (2008): 22.

50 Matarasso, *A Restless Art*, 48-49.

51 Ibid., 50.

52 Ibid., 47.

53 Ibid., 51.

3. the ethics of opera.

The ethics of participation concerns the appropriateness of the means (process) and ends (products, outcomes) of participation. Professional artists leading participatory projects have more power than participants; thus it is important how, when and why that power is used and shared.[54] Within the decision-making process of any project, professional artists may be entrusted to safeguard the welfare of participants. This power can be used to exploit or manipulate, but can also be used to encourage or empower others. Moreover, as Matarasso states, "whether the offer of empowerment is limited or ambitious, it must be honest, so that everyone can make an informed choice about whether to participate". It is likewise important that conflicts of interest are acknowledged.

In the process of participatory opera projects, the limitation of participation in the conception stage of the process can be problematic, with participants effectively disempowered from having any input into the project's aims or processes. Matarasso points out that "exclusion from planning and evaluation of the people who are the reason for a project's existence is inconsistent with the expressed values of participatory artists and public bodies", and recalls the slogan 'Nothing about us without us' used by the disability movement to challenge disempowerment.

However, while it is important to acknowledge the limitation, this can be reasonably justified. Participation in the activity of art-making "can be an empowering process" in its own right.[55] Secondly, in regards to exclusion of participants from the conception stage, many practitioners will know that this can be sometimes impractical or even undesired by participants. In some cases, participants may either be unavailable for the conception stage, or they may deliberately want to exclude themselves from a stage more administrative than active, more logistical than creative, entailing duties, responsibilities and exposure to failure. Thus in some cases, exclusion from the conception stage can ensure inclusion in other parts of the project, particularly co-creation. This is often the case with young people.

The ethics of working with young and vulnerable people concerns decisions made for their well-being. In working with young people, it is the professional's duty "to try to ensure that children develop the capacity to make autonomous choices about

---

54   Ibid., 103-112.
55   Ibid., 111.

how they are to live their lives".[56] Though agency is important, Brighouse and Swift highlight that complete agency is not necessarily in the interest of a young person's current well-being. The ability to "extend effective agency to a twelve-year-old or a fifteen-year-old, even though we know that her judgment is poor, in order to help train her to become a better agent" can happen within certain areas of decision making,[57] or it can be extended according to the values of the culture where the young person is developing their agency. This also leads us to recall that both the ethical questions *and* their answers will be culture specific and will differ according to the context of where and with whom the project takes place. For example, a participatory opera project with eight year olds in Britain will have different ethical questions and answers from a project with eight year olds in Bangladesh.

Finally, the ethics of opera concerns the use of that particular use of art form in its context. Opera can be seen as (and can be) elitist – its portrayal as "the highest, the best, the most beautiful" of all art forms, to repeat Corfield's description, originates from an innately imperialist perspective.[58] "Opera as a social leveller" is an oxymoron: exposure to opera does not, in itself, "stimulate intelligence, enhance character development, teach people to act in harmony with their environment, and, in the process, 'elevate' the poor, reduce crime, and create a more responsible citizenry."[59] The idea that one can use an elitist art form to empower people could therefore seem problematic. At the same time, there can be value in exploiting the 'high' art perception of opera for those at risk of social exclusion – Streetwise Opera's work with homeless adults is a successful example. The resolution of this ethical problem lies firmly in *how* opera is approached and used. Democratisation offers one solution, both in the sense where all participants are treated as equally valid agents, but also musically, where all musics are considered equally valid. Furthermore, by embracing critical examination of opera and reflecting on one's culture-specific relationship to the art form with transparency, one can avoid coercing people into consenting to their own cultural disempowerment.[60] Perhaps the most effective solution, however, is to call opera what it *is*: music that has a story where the characters express themselves through singing.

---

[56] Brighouse, Harry and Adam Swift, *Family Values,* 62.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Potter, *Vocal Authority*, 193
[59] Miller "Opera as Politics: The Troubled History of San Francisco's War Memorial Opera House," 20.
[60] Potter, *Vocal Authority*, 191.

Chapter 4. An analysis of my compositional style

As a collaborative artist, working in partnerships with non-artists frequently necessitates a commitment to non-artistic objectives. For example, working with schools requires an approach that suits learning objectives in the National Curriculum, as can be seen in several of my compositions. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) objectives – part of a methodology to develop social and emotional competency (see Appendix C) – are currently extra-curricular, but have become embedded into my approach to artistic creation for young people. Educators can and should use operas I create to explore negative emotions and social situations such as fear (in *Lizzie and the Dark*), terror (in *A Shoe Full of Stars*) and manipulation (*The Magic Lantern*) as well as positive emotional/social outcomes such as self-empowerment, dialogue, friendship and love. That there are musical or artistic learning outcomes to producing these works is a given.

My opera compositions have a focus on narrative and avoid abstraction, particularly in writing opera for young people, who may be easily bored if things are abstract or too unfamiliar. I use music to articulate character and dramatic conflict and resolution, thus the libretti I use must clearly articulate these elements. My preferred libretti are succinct, with prose in short phrases and/or lyrics in verse forms, with multi-layered yet understandable narratives, possessing a sense of musicality (rhythm or pacing) and most importantly, portraying dramatic action in the present tense as much as possible. Recounting action that occurs offstage or in the past is not as dramatically urgent as action that takes place onstage and in the present. If past action needs to be recounted then it must be for a dramatic reason in the present, such as to convince or manipulate someone, or for structural reasons, such as to ease tension. Losing the immediacy of the musical-dramatic moment risks losing the interest or attention of young people (as well as, in truth, that of adults).

The archetypal narrative arch, used to great effect in most mainstream Western culture, provides the structure most of my operas with young people. This is approximated as:

1. A character in a situation in presented
2. The character's motivation (want) is explicitly or implicitly conveyed
3. The situation changes and the character must make decisions in order to fulfil

their want

4. The character experiences their want seeming to be as far away from fulfilment as possible

5. Either the character does/does not learn something valuable and they get what they want, or the character does/does not learn something valuable and their want is unfulfilled

In order to clearly articulate the drama, words also need to be articulated when sung or spoken. When composing vocal lines, I copy natural speech patterns and phrase lengths as much as possible, and endeavour to keep melodies within tessituri that maintain verbal clarity. My use of different musical styles to articulate the drama is similar in effect to *topoi*, where known musical styles and conventions convey meaning in themselves.[61] In conjunction with this, musical material is often composed in an approach similar to Weill's use of *gestus*, where musical gestures or motifs are intended to convey specific emotional states in the body of the performers "through the physical activity of making music".[62] Unlike Weill, however, I do not use a contrasting *gestus* to subvert the drama for estrangement effect. In my approach, *gestus* refers to characters, emotions, situations or themes.

In all of my compositions, chromatic and diatonic harmony represents tense or relaxed emotional states respectively. Often a harmonic journey – for example, from chromaticism/non-functional harmony to functional harmony – reflects the narrative, for example moving from dark themes (death, rage) to lighter themes (hope, resolution). Experimenting with invented quasi-modal harmonic systems is also a current preoccupation. Frequently, vocal and instrumental writing for young performers prioritises simple, intuitive melodies and rhythms that are supported by more complex accompaniment to be realised by adult, professional performers. Some roles do require young performers with more training (especially in *The Magic Lantern*), but as seen in *A Shoe Full of Stars*, even untrained young performers are capable of rising to musical challenges if the process helps them. Otherwise, little if any of my writing is virtuosic – rather my operas strive to be as easy as possible to perform and produce.

My approach sees composing for young performers as one of the best way to engage young audiences. Although the works in accompanying portfolio are specifically

---

[61] Timberlake, "Brecht for Children," 39.
[62] Ibid., 40.

with or for young people between the ages of six and 18 years old in mainstream education, the artistic skills and approach would be broadly the same in Special Educational Needs contexts. It is only for logistical reasons that such work with young people has not been referenced in this research.

4.1 The collaborative process

The difference between composing *with* and composing *for* young people comes down to the quality (and quantity) of the working relationship with them. In refining the terminology used to describe working relationships between agents in artistic creation, Taylor has argued for greater care in how we describe 'collaborative' processes.[63] In conversation with the author, Tim Brooks, composer and Director of York Arts Education, gave anecdotal examples of cases where children and some adolescents do not feel ownership of compositions unless they perform it and receive the applause themselves. Brooks tells of instances of young people not attending concert performances of their compositions, sometimes interpreted by eminent players, due to a lack of connection to their own scores. In order to engage young people with the composition of opera, therefore, they must be involved to some significant degree in both composing the opera and performing the composition.

According to Taylor, the quality of a creative working relationship can be defined by two underlying dimensions:

1. the division of labour or separation of tasks in imaginative input, and
2. equality or hierarchy in the activity of decision-making or editing. [64]

These two dimensions interplay to create the different kinds of working relationship as shown in Table 1 (below). The relationship can change over time, shifting from one way of working to another. For any artist, knowing when and how to use these different working dynamics is crucial in determining whether artistic and non-artistic objectives will be achieved or not.

---

[63] Alan Taylor, "'Collaboration' in Contemporary Music: A Theoretical View," *Contemporary Music Review* 35.
[64] Ibid., 568.

Is there hierarchy in decision-making?			
		Yes	**No**
Is there division of labour? (separation of tasks) in imaginative input	Yes	*Hierarchical working* Tasks are divided between the participants. One or more participants decide on the contributions made.	*Co-operative working* Tasks are divided between the participants, but decisions-making is shared.
	No	*Consultative working* The participants contribute to the same task or tasks. One or more people decide on the contributions.	*Collaborative working* The participants share both the tasks themselves and the decisions on the contributions.

Table 1. An adaptation of Taylor's Forms of Working Relationship[65]

4.2 My process for creating participatory opera

There are several distinct stages in which participation can occur in a participatory process. Matarasso outlines them as:

1. Conception – development of the idea, its aim, objectives and anticipated outcomes;
2. Contracting – negotiation and agreement of mutual obligations and benefits
3. Co-creation – making and presenting artistic work; and
4. Completion – reflection, evaluation and future planning.

In creating participatory opera, I have followed the current standard practice of limiting participation to occur predominantly in Stages 2, 3 and 4. Contracting, or the entering into a contract between an artist-run project and participants, must happen

---

[65] Ibid., 570.

before any co-creation can take place. In working with young people through the mediators of schools, teachers are the first to be contracted, with this usually happening in one-to-one meetings to negotiate the project (sometimes influencing the project conception). Contracting of young participants in schools then takes place in the first workshop session, which I often call the introductory session. Although involving potentially less creative activity, it is pivotally important that the participants' first impression of the project is positive and that they consent in principle to the proposed process. This will determine their engagement or lack thereof. The introductory session is wholly dedicated to the following activities:

- an introduction of the artist and the art form to the participants;
- a proposal of the project objectives and an outline / demonstration of its methods (including quick demonstrative exercises);
- setting the emotional tone of the project sessions (relaxed/fun/serious/intense);
- an exchange of expectations or responsibilities of the artist and the participants;
- a verbal declaration of consent to begin the project.

Parental consent is also obtained around this first session. From the second session, the co-creation phase can start. My co-creational process with groups then usually proceeds along the following sequence of activities:

1. Story – the group devises a story;
2. Words – the group, or groups, devise and write lyrics/words;
3. Composition – groups compose musical material around the words;
4. Arrangement – I facilitate groups' arrangement or orchestration of their musical material;
5. Rehearsal – all of the compositions are rehearsed by all;
6. Staging – the piece is put on stage, including movement, choreography;
7. Performance – the piece is performed.

Mine is an interdisciplinary practice in the cases where I alone run the activities, or it is multidisciplinary in instances of co-operation with others artists. In any case, participatory opera's bringing together of participants with diverse skillsets and interests

is its social value, and what makes it fun!

The devising of story and words in the first two steps is often achieved through interactive drama and creative writing exercises. The objective of the composition stage is for participants to make decisions about the musical content and then to record those decisions so the music can be repeated as consistently as possible. Participants decide on the melodic, rhythmic and word setting elements of the music, usually in small groups. Recording can either be by aurally remembering their compositional decisions, by notating indicative pitch contours using "squiggly lines" over the words on a page, or rarely by conventional music notation.

Depending on the sophistication of the compositions, it is most often at the arrangement stage that I assist participants to decide on the arrangement and orchestration of their musical material. Sometimes my assistance is unnecessary, but frequently I conduct a process of dialogue, making and inviting musical suggestions,[66] collaborating with participants on the structuring and arrangement of their musical material. Participants with a high degree of musical knowledge can use musical terminology or indicate music on the piano, while those with less technical knowledge can convey musical ideas by using indicative terms, noises or emotional descriptors: eg. angry, happy, like winning the lottery or the sound of banging your head against the wall. This dialogic, collaborative process can also be implemented in the composition stage if participants lack the confidence to compose.Whether or not participants have actually played or even suggested the exact musical material, they must have as much responsibility for compositional decision making as possible.

I tend to not to include participatory collaboration in rehearsal and staging in order to save time. Instead, either myself or a director will direct the young people and lead them to attain as high a quality of performance as possible. These stages could be more collaborative, but in a time limited project decisions must be taken as to which creative activities are prioritised, dependent on the artistic objectives.

Monitoring and evaluation are integral to participatory practice, helping to increase the efficacy of any process currently being run as well as informing future planning. As well as keeping practice journals during a participatory process, I frequently endeavour to obtain feedback data from evaluation questionnaires and interviews. The final evaluation stage is similarly of great importance for both the

---

[66] See Appendix A for example composition facilitation techniques.

professional practitioner and for the participants. For the latter, evaluation provides crucial opportunities to concretise learning: by reflecting on the knowledge and skills learned on a project, participants can be made more aware of the tools now at their disposal and/or can use such reflection to impact their own future decision making. Furthermore, an evaluation session can offer closure after a project is finished and the project community is potentially ended.[67]

---

[67] Kathryn Geldard and David Geldard, *Working with children in groups* (Basingstoke: PALGRAVE, 2001), 110.

Chapter 5. Lizzie and the Dark

Description:	**A chamber opera for children (5-12 years)**
Voices:	**Soprano, Mezzo/Soprano, Children's Chorus**
Instrumentation:	**Flute, Percussion, Piano, Accordion, Violoncello**
Duration:	**25 minutes**
Participant Age:	**7-8 year olds**
Participant group:	**Year 3 class, Lord Deramore's Primary School, York**
Performance:	**9 December 2017, 2pm in the School Hall, Lord Deramore's Primary School**
Audience:	**Year 2 to Year 6 classes at Lord Deramore's, teachers, parents and invited guests**

5.1 Idea genesis

The Dark, by Lemony Snickett and illustrated by Jon Klassen, is an excellent book for children between the ages of 3 to 9 years old. Not only are the images and the text aesthetically delightful, but the subject matter is of great importance to young people's emotional development, allowing readers (young and old) to explore and reflect on the experience of fear.

I aimed to compose the bulk of the operatic story and leave gaps, what I called 'windows', for the children to fill with compositions that I would facilitate. The children would sing the co-created songs and perform as a Greek chorus of shadows, performing alongside adult performers and a small ensemble (piano, accordion, cello, percussion, oboe). The children would also draw images for the animated backdrop that would be projected onto the set. I was also interested to discover if these windows would be enough for young people to feel ownership of the opera – something I would investigate in the evaluation stage.

I hired a professional animator colleague – Nandita Jain – to run an art workshop, and I recruited undergraduate students/semi-professionals to the roles of singers, instrumentalists, music director, technical assistance and co-producer. This project had an intergenerational aspect which was rewarding for both the adult and child participants.

To the participant school, the project was pitched as a semi-collaborative 11-week project with a post-project evaluation. The sessions with the participants would happen on a weekly basis, and sessions would last around two hours with the exception of some days required for rehearsal closer to the performance, and the performance itself. The teacher was also expected to occasionally rehearse the children in school time between sessions. The teacher, in turn, specified that there were two curriculum subject areas that would benefit from this project: light and darkness in the science curriculum, and the Tudors, especially King Henry VIII. This resulted in linking the character of Lizzie to Elizabeth I (when designing images for the animation, children enjoyed imagining that Henry VIII was in the basement) as well as some of the ontological questions I chose to explore for the process of text creation, asking the children about what darkness is.

In this project, I was not only the composer of the musical score and facilitator of co-compositional elements. I also had the roles of:

- Producer – raising project money, managing the budget, organising rehearsals and logistics
- Librettist – adapting the text into libretto form and facilitating the participants to write their own words
- Stage director – devising stage direction for all performers, leading rehearsals and collaborating with the music director
- Co-designer – collaborating with the Animator on the design for the performance and co-ordinating technical aspects with technical assistants

5.2 Synopsis

Lizzie is afraid of the dark, but she and the dark live together in the same house. Sometimes the dark comes out from the basement to the other rooms of the house, like the bathroom and the hallway. Sometimes Lizzie goes to the door of the basement, and calls in. "Hi," she says, "hi dark". She thought that if she visited the dark in the dark's room, it wouldn't come to visit her in her room.

But one night, when her night-light breaks, it does come to her room, and it starts to talk to her. It beckons her through the house and down to the basement. Lizzie starts to reflect on how all of the things which look really scary in the dark are actually

very practical. When they arrive in the basement, the dark indicates that Lizzie should look in the bottom of a chest of drawers. There she finds a replacement lightbulb for her night-light. She thanks the dark, and it replies, "you're welcome".

The next morning, Lizzie goes down to the basement to say hello. It does not answer her, but the drawer looks like it is smiling in the corner. From then on, the dark stayed living with Lizzie, but it never bothered her again.

5.3 The libretto

The libretto was an adaptation of the text from Lemony Snickett's *The Dark*, with some important changes. The protagonist of the story was renamed and re-gendered from Laszlo to Lizzie, partly to counter the abundance of operas for young people that only feature boys,[68] and also as part of a determination to write more roles for female singers. Making the dark a female role felt like a bigger decision, as when reading the story I admit to hearing a male voice coming out of the dark and finding that instinctively terrifying. I felt a female voice would be less intimidating and also help to build a rapport between young people and the character, though concede that it could also prove interesting and valuable to experiment with a male in the role.

Some minor word changes were made or lines added for the purposes of emphasising musical patterns within the musical structures I was employing. For instance, Lizzie starts her opening aria with "I am afraid of the dark", so I added the lines such as "I like my house. I don't like the dark," and, "The night's alright, but I don't like the dark," at structurally important points that would both recall the opening musical material and reinforce the meaning of her aria.

Early on in the opera's composition, I realised that the libretto that I had adapted was – contrary to my normal preferences for opera libretti – all in the past tense, recalling action that had already happened and was therefore less urgent dramatically. To counter this, I removed all attributives ("I said", "said the dark" etc) from the most exciting section when the dark starts to talk to Lizzie and translated the story's exposition into the present tense.

In the original book, the design is so charming and the image of Laszlo so

---

[68] *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*, *Der Jasager*, *The Little Sweep*, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, *The Little Prince*, *Where the Wild Things Are*, *Aikalisä* (*Timeout*) and *Ihmepoika A* (Wonderboy A) all feature boys as the main character. Women may sing titular roles, such as Pinnochio and el Gato con Botas, but there are fewer titular girl characters apart from Gretel, Cinderella and Princess LiebDieLiebe.

sympathetic that one does not notice that the story is in the past – Laszlo also is not aware that he is being recounted. In contrast, in this opera Lizzie recounts her own story *to* us, and then lives part of it *with* us. To this end I felt it most appropriate to adopt techniques from forum theatre and clowning in order for the singer playing Lizzie to establish a direct rapport with the audience so they would be engaged enough to follow her on her journey, and even actively encourage her to do so.

Rather than Laszlo's purely aesthetic charm, the character of Lizzie would need to use relational skills to charm the audience using a semi-improvised script that was to be semi-sung. The script provided prompt lines and questions that the performer could improvise around, and also included cues so that the performer could control when to stop the improvisation and return action back to the composed material. In these sections, natural speech (or semi-singing) would be used to remove a boundary between performer and audience, particularly useful in this context where the performer is eliciting answers from the audience (who might otherwise feel they were also expected to sing their responses back, which might be a step too far). Pivotal to these moments is the performer's approach to the performance of these moments, embodying a spirit of encouragement and openness to the audience exemplified by simple clowning techniques, such as acknowledging the space, making eye-contact with the entire audience and 'saying yes' to every proposal an audience makes.

The improvisatory dialogue moments would also invite the audience to actively reflect on the significance of the story and the drama they have watched, and in some cases encourage them to verbalise their own conclusions. Furthermore, if the performance was at any point too scary for younger children, breaking out of the story could provide some distancing so that emotions would not be overwhelming. The idea for this came from my experience of reading the story to the participant class in our Introductory Session, when I noticed that at the moment the dark started to talk, the children stopped moving (and breathing!). With the tension so palpable, I released the tension by asking everyone how they were feeling, with many of them admitting to feeling scared. After reassuring them that that was probably what the author wanted, I asked if they wanted to continue the story – which they did. This kind of interactive interjection was translated into the opera, marking moments of transition between scenes.

The windows of collaboration featured the co-composed songs in which participants shared their own assessment of Lizzie's situation. The songs frame the

opera at the beginning and end, and also structurally divide the opera at significant points of the narrative.

Shadow Chorus song	Narrative action
1. Opening - 'Sh sh sh, shhhhh!'	
	Lizzie leads the audience through the house
2. 'It can smell like chocolate or dust'	
	Lizzie is led through the house by the dark
3. 'Listen to the dark'	
	Lizzie goes into the basement with the dark
4. 'The dark helped Lizzie. Yes!'	
	Lizzie concludes her story
5. Finale – 'It's only an opera'	

Table 2. Chorus song and scene structure of *Lizzie and the Dark*

As can be seen above, the opera could be divided into four scenes. The placement of the songs thus served a structural purpose, but also gave the opera's first and final moments to the young people, raising their profile within the performance. The performance of these songs acted as another way in which the young people could project themselves into the story – the shadow children were their peers.

5.4 Musical analysis

The harmonic structure of the piece was based on the creation of a mode-like system. Modes were created by one minor 3rd cluster 'orbiting' a major 3rd cluster – starting with the minor 3rd above the major 3rd cluster, then inverting the minor 3rd cluster below the major 3rd cluster. With each 'orbit' the minor cluster would shift closer to the major cluster, creating increasingly chromatic modes, as can be seen by comparing mode 1 to mode 8 (Example 5.1).

Example 5.1 Minor 3rd clusters orbiting a major 3rd cluster to produce modes

Lizzie's journey from light to dark and back followed a ternary structure, which was mirrored in the music by the journey from diatonicism (modes 1 to 5) to chromaticism (modes 6 to 8) and back.

Modes 1 to 5 were used in quick succession for Lizzie's opening aria, creating an unconventional, quirky but largely diatonic sound-world before returning to mode 1, the 'home' key. Mode 6 was used to transition into a long section exploring the chromaticism of mode 7, much like Lizzie exploring her house in the dark. After a quick return to mode 1 using a kind of descending variation of Lizzie's opening material, followed by a co-composed song for the shadow chorus, we finally reach mode 8 when Lizzie is in the basement. The dissonant potential of the mode is exaggerated by the piano tremolos and flute flutter-tonguing, which ultimately descend into a dense cluster played by the accordion. At this point where harmony and melody have been somewhat eviscerated, rhythm becomes the foremost musical component with the dark rapping over a bass drum that echoes or re-emphasises the rhythmic phrases of the dark's lyrics.

When the dark points out the location of the light bulb, we are brought out of the dense chromatic cluster into a less chromatic expression of mode 8 layered with a prescient echo of mode 1 twinkling in the glockenspiel. This anticipates a return to a recapitulative, shortened variation of Lizzie's opening aria material, with a coda-like section in modes 1 and 2 providing Lizzie's 'conclusion' before the Shadow Chorus Finale.

Musical content that arose from the use of this modal system was developed in two main ways: through the use of sequential patterns, additive patterns and simplified pitch rotation technique. The first technique is simply a series of pitches in a melodic phrase that moves sequentially up or down whilst keeping within the mode, such as the staccato pattern in the 'cello and flute at figure D, bar 87 (Example 5.2) The pitch

sequence remains the same, but the melodic shape is modified as a result of moving up or down the sequence. This effect can be distorted by changing the octave of certain pitches: eg. in the third bar of Example 5.2. the melodic shape dictates the A in the brackets, but the melodic shape has instead been distorted with the A an octave above.

Example 5.2 Sequential pattern in mode 4 with distortion of melodic shape

Additive patterns in *Lizzie and the Dark* occur most conspicuously in temporal organisation of the second scene, bars 227-272 (between figure J to O). This scene is divided into five sections that repeat the same material in subtle variation, but each repetition is stretched over a longer period of time (an increase of three beats per section, as shown in Table 3), as if going in slow motion. The dramatic intention was to increase the sense of tension as Lizzie nears the basement; with the sensation that the moment of fear takes an uncomfortably long time to pass.

Figure	J	K	L	M	N
Bar lengths	2 <u>444</u> 3 <u>444</u> 2	3 <u>444</u> 4 <u>444</u> 3	4 <u>444</u> 5 <u>444</u> 4	5 <u>444</u> 6 <u>444</u> 5	6 <u>444</u> 7 <u>444</u> 6
Beat addition		+1 +1 +1	+1 +1 +1	Etc.	

Table 3. Additive patterning in temporal organisation (figures J to O)

Within this same section, pitch rotation is used in conjunction with other processes in order to develop as much musical content as possible within the limitations of mode 7. In each section, an initial melodic phrase (the dark's "I want to show you something") is translated into mode 7 in various different ways over a pedal note (alternated between the accordion and the 'cello) and another three-note cluster (Example 5.3). Within these parameters, Lizzie's and the dark's melodic material is dictated by the sequence, but they start from a different position in the sequence each time.

Example 5.3 Transformation of "I want to show you something" melody (figures J to O)

5.5 The co-creative process

This project was conceived before the involvement of the school. After I had proposed the project to them, the school decided that it would participate because the project matched their educational objectives. Schools seem to prefer this method of receiving project proposals due to the limited amount of time teachers have.

The project timeline, including the co-creative process, is summarised in Table 4 below.

2016	Co-creative process	Composition / Production process
May	Participant recruitment begins	Composition begins
June	School participants confirmed	Advice on project and libretto
July	Project outline confirmed	
Sept	SESSION 1: Introductory session to the artist, the art form, the story, the objective, the process	
	SESSION 2: performance skills-building, writing lyrics by answering questions, music learning	
	SESSION 3: music learning, small group composition, recording	
Oct	SESSION 4: musical skills-building, co-composition	Technical preparation

	SESSION 5: co-composition	
Nov	SESSION 6: co-composition, music learning	Adult performers cast
	SESSION 7: music learning and rehearsing	Full score finished, Adults learn music
	SESSION 8: designing, music learning	
Dec	SESSION 9: staging and rehearsing with adult performers	
	SESSION 10: rehearsing with adult performers	Adult staging and orchestral rehearsals
	SESSION 11: Rehearsal and Performance	Rehearsal and performance

Table 4. Project timeline of *Lizzie and the Dark*

Sessions 2 to 6 were where collaboration, co-creation or facilitated composition took place. Staging the opera involved some collaboration with participants, who were able to decide on the gestures they used to animate and aid their singing and devised physical tableaux that were used in the performance. The final sessions to rehearse the whole performance were led by myself and the musical director.

The musical forms of the co-created songs arose directly as a result of the quick, facilitated composition process. Once the composition was recorded, we spent time structuring the piece using as much melodic repetition as possible. The young people engaged with this technique very quickly and enjoyed structuring material intuitively. 'Listen to the dark', which was the last song we co-composed, is a great example of them intuitively repeating melodic material (labelled A, B and C in Example 5.4).

Example 5.4 Repetition of melodic material co-composed with participants

In all cases, I spent time between workshops seeing which modes could correspond with the melodic material, or exploring if the material could be translated into a mode. The first Shadow Song (Example 5.5) fitted neatly into mode 1, with the majority of melodic contours being kept roughly intact:

Example 5.5 Melody composed by participants filtered through mode 1 to create the final melody

However, in some cases the co-composed songs used functional harmony (or perhaps a diatonic combination of two modes), such as for the second song (Example 5.6). This was in an effort to compromise between fitting into the modal system whilst also preserving as much of the melodic shape of the participants' original composition as possible.

Example 5.6 Melody composed by participants filtered through mode 4 and 5 to create the final melody

49

The co-composed songs were stylistically much more varied, resulting from the combined efforts of the young people and myself – another composer-facilitator and another participant group would bring their own palette of styles to this process. Interestingly, in the co-compositional process (Session 2) one child commented that their song did not sound very operatic. When I asked what she meant by that, she answered, in an emulation of the operatic voice, "LOOOOOOOOONG!" So we lengthened some of the note values in that composition.

In the event that *Lizzie and the Dark* were to be performed with a new participant group, it would be ideal to recompose the songs with the new participants, maintaining only a few key requirements:

1. the lyrics should be created in response to the same questions (see Appendix B for lyric facilitation questions);
2. the melodic material or songs composed should be translated to fit into the eight modes used throughout the piece;
3. the Finale song should be as fun and entertaining as possible.

5.6 Performance contextualisation

When it comes to introducing a new art form to an audience, I do not believe that any musical form can speak for itself. The context of the work must be introduced in clear and simple terms either through a programme note or a brief presentation. With this piece being intended for an audience unfamiliar with opera *as well as* being of an unconventional format to any who might be familiar with opera, establishing context is crucial. Before the performance of *Lizzie and the Dark*, therefore, I spoke briefly to introduce several key points.

I welcomed the audience as individually as possible so that everyone's presence was acknowledged. I asked the audience "what is an opera?" so that the children provided answers in their own words, and in the process established the precedent of audience interaction. I explained how the participants had contributed to the opera so that the audience could form expectations of the performance based on that context. I explicitly gave permission for the audience to interact with the performers so that they would not be inhibited. I encouraged the audience to be uninhibited in their praise of the participants with a 'practice applause' that both set the dynamic for their interaction with

the performers *and* encouraged the participant performers to feel confident in their performance.

What is clear in this approach is an intent to remove negative emotional obstacles to engaging with the operatic experience. These include feelings of confusion, exclusion, fear of the new or the unfamiliar, or disappointment because of inappropriate expectations. Audiences are free to like or dislike the content, but will hopefully be able to find value in the experience themselves.

5.7 Evaluation

Participants did not fill out the feedback questionnaire that I had designed, but gave feedback in the form of short written paragraphs summarising their experiences. This lacked more critical feedback, but still contained some generally useful information. From their paragraphs, the most commonly cited positive feedback (20 mentions) was regarding their parent/s watching their performance, with one extra commenter saying she enjoyed the project "even though mum wasn't there". 13 mentioned the performance as a highlight, with 10 of those stating that overcoming their fear of being in front of an audience was important. There were 12 positive mentions of the songs, 11 of the design of the projections, 9 of the co-creative process, 7 of the costumes and makeup. The most common negative mention was for making mistakes (3).

Children in the audience were given questionnaires which were answered in school in the weeks following the performance. The main conclusions from their feedback can be summarised as follows:

- that most (97%) children in the audience enjoyed the opera or found it at least ok,[69] with Age seeming to be the most crucial factor in how the audience felt about the opera and participation (as opposed to their Gender or their Hobbies)
- that children were likely to be as positive (45%) or more positive (34%) about

---

[69]   49% of the audience liked the opera, 29% loved it and 19% found it 'meh' (ok), 2% didn't like it and 1 child hated it. Children in Year 2 were more likely to respond that they "Loved" the opera, whereas children in other year groups were more likely to say they "Liked" the opera, with older children sometimes able to give quite sophisticated feedback. The most common reasons for 'loving' or 'liking' the opera were that it was "funny", for the musical performances ("singing", "music" and "songs") and for the high quality of the performance. The most common reason for finding it 'meh' was that it wasn't to their taste. Two boys in Year 5 responded that they didn't like the opera because they did not like sitting on the ground to watch it. Both boys did not list music/dancing/acting in their hobbies. One girl in Year 2, who did list performing arts as her hobby, hated the opera because she "didn't like the boy", which I can only assume meant one of the performers.

seeing young performers involved, with 16% feeling less positive about it; several children would have liked to have seen the participants take on more of a role within the opera,

- that there is a possibility that the scare factor of the opera could afford to be increased slightly to stimulate the older children (the dark as a male character?),

- that having seen their peers perform successfully, young people still feel a considerable amount of anxiety about the idea of performing in front of others themselves,

- and that the age relation between participant performers and audience plays an important in the audience's engagement with participative opera.

With this last statement, it seems that young people may wish see performers of the same age or slightly older than themselves; if they feel they are 'looking down' they will feel the piece is not *for* them, but may still appreciate aspects of it.

From the data it can be confidently stated that both participants and audience were engaged successfully with the opera, allowing for a couple of exceptions. For participants, the popularity of the inclusion of participatory activities in multiple art forms – design as well as music – would suggest that this would be useful to maintain and exploit further in future versions of the opera project. Overall, the co-creative process succeeded in giving participants ownership of parts of the operatic experience that they were proud of. However, audience feedback indicated that the piece could be further improved by increasing the performance roles that the young people play in the opera, perhaps even replacing the adult performer of the dark completely, with the sung lines taken up by another instrument and spoken lines taken by participants.

Chapter 6. Identity Crisis Project: A Shoe Full of Stars

Description:	**A one act chamber opera for teenagers and professional ensemble**
Voices:	**Young Voice, Young Female Voice, Soprano, Baritone, Teenage Chorus, Various speaking roles**
Instrumentation:	**Flute, Clarinet/Bass Clarinet, Percussion/Electric Drum Kit, Piano/Electric Keyboard, Violin, Violoncello**
Duration:	**53 minutes**
Participant Age:	**12-15 year olds**
Participant group:	**20 Volunteer students from North Huddersfield Trust School (NHTS), Huddersfield**
Performances:	**20 March 2018, 7pm in the School Auditorium, NHTS**
	21 March 2018, 7.30pm at the Lawrence Batley Theatre, Huddersfield
	25 March 2018, 4.30pm at the Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, University of York
Audience:	**1. Secondary school students and parents**
	2. & 3. General public

6.1 Idea genesis

Having grown up in the wake of 9/11 as a teenager with an Arabic forename, I had long wanted to explore how society talks about terrorism and felt it important to use my practice to that end. Other operas on the topic have either proved to be controversial or relatively unilluminating. Nick Drake and Tansy Davies' *Between Worlds* (2015) observed the events of 9/11 in the manner of a requiem for the loved ones tragically taken away, focusing on tragedy and not terror. Goodman and Adams' *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1991), by far the most successful work on this theme, is still viewed by some as being anti-semitic because the Palestinian characters are humanised and able to express their motivations to the audience. However, *The Death of Klinghoffer* and *Bel Canto* (2015) by Nilo Cruz and Jimmy Lopez only explore political violence, which is

different to the ideological, apolitical extremism that has caused such existential terror since 2001. *Babur in London* (2012) by Jeet Thayil and Edward Rushton does probe the motivations of those about to carry out a violent attack from their perspective, though once again it is difficult to try to empathise with those about to commit murder.

With the Paris attacks in 2015 and the debate surrounding the UK government's PREVENT policy, the issues were pertinent but not seemingly pressing. In November 2016 I watched filmmaker Deeyah Khan's documentary *Jihad*, investigating the apparent causes of violent extremism in Western Muslim communities. Khan interviewed ex-extremists and recruiters to reveal how young, socially vulnerable young men are groomed by expert manipulators into joining violent extremist cells, which they cannot then extricate themselves from. Khan has since made a documentary about the rise of 'Alt-Right' in the USA, identifying the same techniques – and even the same arguments – used equally by Neo-Nazis and 'jihadists' ("they are at war with us"; "our way of life is in peril"; "no-one understands you but us"; "our society has been emasculated by their influence"; "we can show you how to be a man/hero" etc.). The film *Four Lions* (2010) was perfectly aligned with Khan's arguments, proving to be one of the funniest and most accurate artistic creations to broach the complexity and tragedy of violent extremism.

I began to research the project at the beginning of 2017. That year, Britain would experience three Islamist terrorist attacks (Westminster, Manchester and London Bridge) followed by a fourth attack from a right-wing extremist (Finsbury Park) – all between March and June. I began the 'Identity Crisis Project' in order to create some kind of response to this crisis, seeking the assistance of experts from the Active Change Foundation, London, who had been government consultants on counter-extremism, as well as researcher Lydia Wilson from the Centre for the Resolution of Intractable Conflict at the University of Oxford.

In an effort to create a project that aimed towards some kind of cultural rapprochement, I had at first sought to engage Muslims participants from schools or mosques. I was quickly made to see that to involve Muslims in a project about terrorism was deeply problematic. It was at this point that my approach to the subject changed to looking more objectively at how we react to and talk about terrorism. This subject was of interest to an assistant head teacher at a school in Huddersfield, and I was invited to pitch the Identity Crisis project to students in a school assembly. Volunteers were invited to co-devise, co-compose, stage and perform a chamber opera on the subject of

young people's reactions to terrorism with a professional composer, writer, director, conductor, two singers and a contemporary music ensemble.

The project aims were to:

- Create a socially engaged piece of art
- Develop social and emotional learning in all participants
- Contribute to the school curriculum
- Support the school and its community
- Connect to as wide an audience as possible

The project faced numerous challenges. The 14-16 participants who volunteered (of which 12 stayed for the duration of the project) had little to no experience of performing music drama, co-devising or dialogue-led processes, as well as being largely unfamiliar with each other, the professional artists and the venues in which we would be performing. The subject to be explored was extremely sensitive and required myself and the project director to be trained by the Active Change Foundation in safeguarding procedure and PREVENT Duty. The project had a limited budget (£50,000) and time (six months). With the commitment of the professional artists and participants to achieving their shared goals (all agreeing to a project Partnership Agreement in the first workshop session), all expectations about the project would ultimately be surpassed with the creation of the opera titled *A Shoe Full of Stars*.

6.2 Synopsis

Scene 1: Hero, who is superhuman, is not in this story, so exits stage right. Instead we meet Splodge, a teenager who had never really done anything. After seeing a news broadcast on TV about a terrorist attack, Splodge is in an anxious state. His parents – a teacher and a social worker – enter talking over each other in an argument over how to deal with the threat of extremism. Splodge feels unable to talk to them, and goes off to bed. However, instead of arriving in his bedroom, he seems to have got lost in some kind of portal.

Scene 2: Splodge finds himself on the shoreline of an island, watching a girl scoop water with her shoe. Startled, the girl threatens to call the Watchmen, but quickly realises Splodge is no threat, introducing herself as Icky. They make their way back to

Icky's house, avoiding being caught by the Watchmen who would be extremely suspicious of a stranger like Splodge. Over a tannoy, the Watchmen issue the order for a curfew.

Scene 3: Back at her house, Icky tries to sneak Splodge past her cousins La-la and Ra-ra. As she hides Splodge in a cupboard, she receives a news update on her phone saying a shoe had been found by the Watchmen on the beach. Meanwhile, La-la and Ra-ra start arguing about politics and what to do about "Them" on the other side of the island. Icky begs them to stop arguing, and answer her questions about the situation honestly, but they are incapable of understanding what she is trying to ask. Instead they lock her into a chair in front of the TV, where Daniel Host assures everyone that nothing bad can happen as long as you watch TV. Eventually, he climbs out of the TV and leads Icky to bed. As Host tucks her in, Icky tries to formulate a question about the political situation and the terrorist threat, but once again, Host is incapable of understanding what she is trying to ask. He sends instead for the Minister of Mindfulness who will simplify all Icky's questions and arguments for her. Terrified, she turns off the TV, as Splodge sneaks into her room. He awkwardly tries to console her, but in her frustration she exits out of her bedroom window, determined to go back to the beach.

Scene 4: With Watchmen all around, Icky is scooping the water on the beach with her boot, looking for magic pearls that are lost somewhere around here. She tells an increasingly nervous Splodge about her father, who was tricked by a finger-pointing conman into blaming others for their community's problems, but when the conman eventually took control of the country, the finger pointed at him and he was sent to jail. The magic pearls were the key to freeing Icky and her society, but just as she finds them Watchmen suddenly appear and bundle them away.

Scene 5: In a prison cell, Splodge and Icky begin to panic, fighting with each other. Splodge is desperate to get back to his world, while Icky is furious that Splodge doesn't believe in the reality of her problems. However, the two discover that they both share the feeling that they are ignored and unheard. For the first time, in a very small way, they feel heard. Icky's magic pearls appear in her hand, and she drops one in a bucket, opening a portal back to Splodge's world. With nothing resolved, Splodge sadly says goodbye, but Icky shares her new-found confidence that if one person could hear her, like Splodge had, others could too. Splodge jumps into the portal.

Scene 6: Splodge is in his bed, as Dad walks through the door, asking if Splodge is alright. Dad apologises for arguing with Mum, adding that he is happy to listen to

whatever Splodge has to say. As Splodge remains quiet, Dad makes to leave, but just as he reaches the door Splodge speaks up, asking that both he and Mum listen to each other. "In a world where everyone wants to talk over each other, it's the listeners who have the power to change everything." As Splodge falls asleep, Mum who is also at the door, finds a magic pearl in her pocket and tucks it into Splodge's hand.

6.3 The libretto

Precisely mirroring the dialogues we had in the first workshop phase, Ed Harris' libretto explores different reactions towards terrorism and extremism as objectively as possible, without seeking to conclude that there is a definitive solution to the problem. Rather, Harris highlights that people's constant seeking to prove themselves right and others wrong can entrench conflict, whether social, political or physical. Disagreeing parties who seek to understand each other and feel heard, however, might succeed in co-existing peacefully, and even work together to find solutions.

Harris worked in consultation with the young participants, obtaining characters and situations for the opera through discussion and processing the ideas in according to his artistic practice. Although this was not the most empowering of processes to employ, we felt this method was the most likely to ensure that the devised material would be arranged with the necessary dramaturgical expertise. A poor narrative would fail to convey our intended meaning or risk being problematic in other ways: plays on the subject of terrorism that had been boycotted or forced to cancel by the authorities served as a warning to us.[70] The final libretto of *A Shoe Full of Stars* used humorous dialogue in prose to separate lyric verses for songs, yet was structured in such a way as to convey profoundly serious meaning.

6.4 The co-creative process

As with *Lizzie and the Dark*, this project was conceived before being proposed to the school and the participants. Once young participants volunteered, however, there was the standard contract phase where objectives were shared and agreed upon in the first workshop.

---

[70] *Homegrown* (2015) by Omar El-Khairy was cancelled by the National Theatre and counter-extremism police called to investigate the producers.

The production and co-creative process is summarised in Table 5 below.

2016	Co-creative process	Composition / Production process
June	Participant recruitment begins	
Sept	School partnership meeting	
		Active Change Foundation consultation and training
Oct – Nov	SESSION 1 – 5: Theme and libretto development	
Nov – Dec	SESSION 6 – 9: Performance skills-building	Libretto devised (Ed Harris)
Jan – Feb	SESSION 10 - 14: Co-composition	Libretto completed – composition begun
		Professional performers cast
Feb – Mar	SESSION 15 – 22: Staging	Score completed
		Professional rehearsals
March	4 days of joint rehearsals	
	3 performances	
May	Evaluation session	

Table 5. Project timeline of *A Shoe Full of Stars*

In sessions 1 to 9 a combination of question-led dialogues (documented and transcribed) and drama exercises explored young people's reactions and behaviours toward terrorism. For the most part, young people shared how important social media was in how they obtained information about current events, but parental influence proved to be a crucial factor in determining how young people would process information they receive. Furthermore, parental behaviours would also determine how young people would respond to events: parents' conflictual debates or responding too emotionally could lead to young peoples' anxiety or doubt about the veracity of information or opinion. Young people seemed to yearn for facts and objectivity upon which they could make up their own minds.

Once Harris had completed the libretto, co-composition of specific numbers with the participants began alongside composition of the rest of the opera. Participants' levels

of confidence in musical decision making varied from extremely low to high yet without technical musical knowledge. Using the same co-compositional techniques as with *Lizzie and the Dark*, we co-composed five numbers: the opening Chorus' number with the Narrator in scene 1, Splodge's 'One town over' aria (figure D), La-la and Ra-ra's rap (figure Q), Daniel Host's 'Nothing bad happens when you watch TV' (figure X) and Icky's History Song (figure FF). The young participants decided on the musical styles, melodies or word rhythms (for the rap), as well as occasionally re-ordering lyrics or offering alternatives to Harris'. These songs proved to be the most substantial chorus numbers, thus the participants having composed them saved considerable rehearsal time as they did not need to learn new music.

The co-composed melodies were not always translated directly to fit into the harmonic language of the whole opera, but their accompaniments were. The pop-rock accompaniment of 'Nothing bad happens when you watch TV' in particular takes advantage of the dissonance of the harmonic field to distort what should be an 'easy listening' jingle into something not quite right, full of flattened 5^{th}s and 6^{th}s (Example 6.1)

Example 6.1 Pop-rock style filtered through D1 'mode'

6.5 Formal shaping

A Shoe Full of Stars starts and ends with young people, establishing who the opera is about in terms of context and content. Adults play supporting roles though they carry a lot of the music. The young people had less challenging music, accounting both for their relative inexperience and the short amount of rehearsal time available: the equivalent of nine days spread over a month.

The piece is almost entirely through-composed, though the form of the libretto sits somewhere between a *singspiel* (a play with songs) and a musical, giving the opera a formal flexibility that puts drama and dialogue at the forefront. Instead of

unaccompanied spoken text between numbers, different forms of melodrama (instrumental music with text spoken over it) or recitative are used. As can be expected, at some points the music follows the spoken or sung text (figure A), while at other times the text follows the music (figure B). For some melodramas, I create more complex soundscapes, such as in scene 4 (figure AA), with the vibraphone providing a hypnotic background, whilst the soprano voice and piano respond to cues from the spoken text. In this section we see two ways of notating a-rhythmic layering of instrumental parts: the vibraphone notation was inspired by Britten's church parables, whilst the instruction given to the soprano follows the technique used in Berio's folksong *"Black is the colour".*

Overall, the opera follows a palindromic structure starting with the satirical Hero theme, followed by Splodge at home, journeying to Icky's island and seeing the development of the terror theme, before returning home again, where we hear the Hero theme this time indicating that it is Splodge who is the real hero after all.

The songs or 'numbers' for solo, duet or chorus follow conventional song forms: Icky's History song (figure EE to LL) and La-la and Ra-ra's grime battle (figure Q to V) both use versions of AABA song form, the former being aAABAa and the latter aAaABA. There are a few examples of songs in strophic forms, such as the end of scene 6 (figure PP to half way through QQ), as well as 'Nothing bad happens when you watch TV' (AAA form), Splodge's 'One town over' (AA form) and Icky's song (several iterations of A). Icky's strophe reappears throughout the piece according to the narrative, but do not follow a particular overall structure.

6.6 Musical analysis

The use of melodrama also reduced the starkness of the contrast between the spoken and sung voices so that they both would be perceived as being in the same sonic world, also reducing the strangeness of the operatic singing voice for teenage audiences. At the same time, the distinction between speakers and singers (and those who moved from one to the other) was significant. When a character speaks they are a 'listener' or open to dialogue, whereas those who sing are not, particularly Mum, Dad, La-la and Ra-ra. The shift from Dad singing to speaking (figure RR) represents him offering the possibility of listening to Splodge. Exceptions were made for La-la and Ra-ra's rapping (figure Q), which anyway is recognisable as combative form of performative speaking, as well as

Icky and Splodge's duets in Scene 6, where for the first time characters sing *with* and not *at* each other.

As well as writing moments of singing or speaking, I was able to experiment with some styles of vocal projection in between. When Mum and Dad enter arguing in scene 1 (figure E), their dialogue is half-sung. The operatic voices enter gradually into the sound world of the piece, once again in an effort to not alienate listeners unfamiliar with the vocal style. Another experiment was more dramatic in nature, where I attempted to give the Minister of Mindfulness (letter CC) an adult classical voice coming out of a young non-classical actor, an idea I thought was suitably disturbing for a character who is not what he seems.

For *A Shoe Full of Stars* I developed a new, cyclical modal system. I created an 8-note mode (Example 6.2) built upon a sequence of three triads (each within the interval of a major or minor 3rd) , and discovered that by changing 4 pitches in the mode, one would come to the original mode in a new key a minor 3rd above. Repeating this pattern would ultimately bring you back to the original mode in the original key, a harmonic system similar to the cycle of 5ths, only here it was a sort of cycle of 3rds (D, F, Ab, B, D). I then transposed this field up a semitone (Eb, F#, A, C, Eb) and a tone (E, G, Bb, C#)

Example 6.2 Triads used to create modes which transform into related modes

The harmonic field system allowed me to use a technique I called modal translation, where pitch content is translated into a different mode, and the result is a distorted version of the original material. For example, in scene 3 (figure CC) the offstage voice of the soprano sings a melodic line that maintains the same overall shape but changes subtly as the mode shifts from Ab1 to A1 (Example 6.3). This granted me a new way to develop material throughout the piece.

Example 6.3 Modal translation of soprano melody into new mode

Different musical styles are employed to accentuate dramatic moments. For example, Daniel Host's commercial pop-rock style, grime[71] battle between La-la and Ra-ra is introduced by a Classical-style recitative (figure P). Icky's song deliberately references Alan Menkin (aka. Disney), to be accessible, sweet, slightly nostalgic,

A significant feature of my compositional style is the use of motifs or *gestus* that are used to represent characters and themes. There is no strict approach to the use of these gestures, but two themes that are particularly prevalent in *A Shoe Full of Stars* demonstrate how gestures are transformed to articulate the drama. One of the most important themes (Example 6.4), the 'One town over' theme of Splodge's first aria, was co-composed with the participants. In a sense, it articulates the theme of terror or the obscurity of the feeling of terror throughout the piece. The motif appears first when Splodge sees reports on the news of a terrorist attack. A variation of the theme then forms a eerier background to the problematic aspects of Icky's world, specifically when she tries to talk to La-la and Ra-ra after their argument (figure V), when Host tries to convince her that TV is the answer (figure AA) and most significantly, becoming the main musical material for the Minister of Mindfulness (figure CC). The Minister, in particular, is a very pointed reference to the discussions had in the first part of the devising process, where all participants shared a sense of bitterness that politicians had a role to play in fanning the flames of extremism.

---

[71] Grime is a subgenre of electronic dance music and rap, influenced by Jamaican dance hall, UK garage and jungle that emerged from the UK in the early 2000s. Having started as an underground musical style, with lyrics reflecting the rough reality of urban or gang life, by 2019 grime has become mainstream, with grime artists headlining international music festivals and lyrics referring to positive mental health and politics. (Source: "Grime (music genre)," Wikipedia, accessed Aug 6, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grime_(music_genre)). Musically, grime is based upon loops of electronic music, often featuring heavy bass, syncopated electric percussion, synth-orchestral spikes, and a rap style that emphasises the first beat of the bar rather than the fourth, as is more characteristic of hip hop).

Example 6.4 "One town over theme" and variations

In Example 6.5 it can be seen that La-la and Ra-ra's music is a very simple variation of Mum and Dad's theme (**a**), just as the characters are variations of each other (though left-wing Mum becomes right-wing Ra-ra, whilst right-wing Dad becomes left-wing La-la). Part of that musical material (**b**) is used to articulate a theme of information – specifically when Siri pops up at the beginning of Scene 3. By implication Mum, Dad, La-la and Ra-ra would have all heard the same jingle on their portable devices when they received news of the terrorist attack.

Example 6.5 Related musical material: La-la, Ra-ra, Mum, Dad and Siri

6.7 Performance contextualisation

As with *Lizzie and the Dark*, this opera was intended for an audience who could either be unfamiliar with opera convention or who could be surprised by how this opera would subvert operatic conventions. I felt it necessary to introduce the opera with a pre-performance presentation in order to concretely establish the work's context.

I welcomed the audience as individually as possible so that everyone's presence was acknowledged and could be considered as active participation in an operatic event. I explained the objectives of the opera-creation project and how the professionals and participants had contributed to the opera, so that the audience could form expectations of the performance based on that context. I explained that the performance would be followed by a Question and Answer panel which they were all welcome to participate in (see Appendix 4 for Q&A Panel questions). Whilst in the school performance the objective of this brief presentation was to remove negative emotional obstacles to engaging with the operatic experience, in the public performances the main objective was to contextualise the performance and invite the audience to engage further in the subject matter.

6.8 Evaluation

Evaluation of the project was undertaken by obtaining base information about participants' perspectives on opera and participation at the start of the project, as well as audience and participant feedback through questionnaires given after the performance. The student participants and the teachers were further interviewed about their thoughts on the project by two external evaluators four months after the performance.

Participants showed a significant change in attitude towards opera by the end of the project, as can be seen by the keywords they had used to describe opera (see Figure 1; the size of the words reflects frequency of use) All of the participants said they would recommend professional and/or youth opera to their friends, with 11 saying they 'loved' youth opera or opera with young people in it, and 12 saying they 'loved' being part of an opera themselves – the others saying they liked it. Most participants cited the performance as being their favourite part, though in group interviews it was noted that many had said the intensity of the rehearsal process beforehand was almost overwhelming. Many also cited the positive feedback from family, friends and teachers and the local community, but particularly from national press (local and national TV news reported on the project). At the same time, four participants still felt ambivalent towards professional opera, believing that the kind of opera we had created was aesthetically more to their taste, distinguishing our product as different from traditional opera.

At project beginning: At project end:
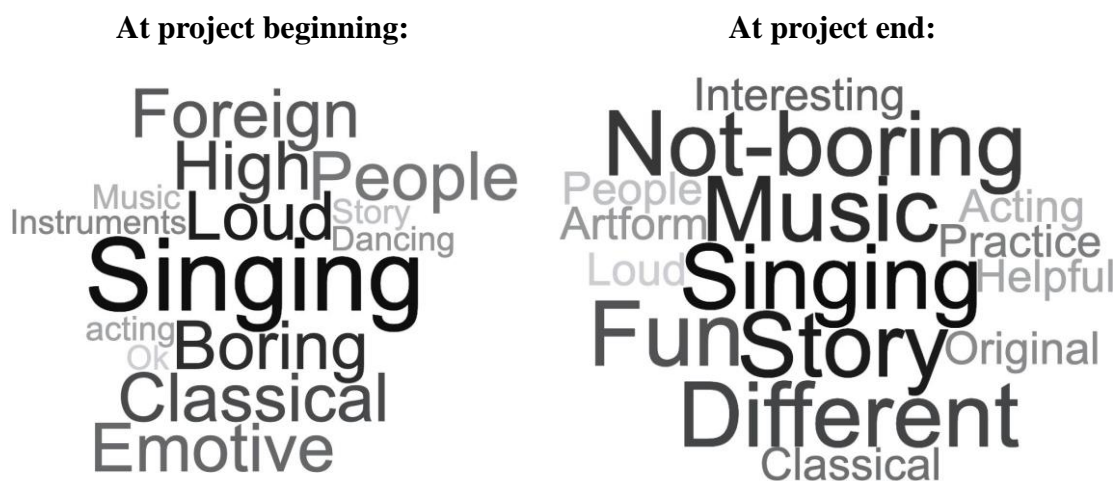
Figure1. Keywords to describe opera by participants

Valuable critical feedback came from the group interviews, with students clearly articulating the difficulty of parts of the rehearsal process and some impatience that participants felt during some of the compositional process. Both could be addressed by planning sessions differently. Several participants also felt disappointed that a song they enjoyed rapping was given to the professional singers to perform, who in their opinion did not perform it as well as they could have done.

In spite of this, working with the professionals was considered to have been one of the most positive parts of the project. The young people felt it made them excel themselves in order to match the professional quality. One participant said, "It was kinda surreal [working with the professionals], because I was thinking, 'why are you here wasting your time on a bunch of kids, you could be out there changing the world?' And then half way through the process of being with them it hit me that this project could do that; that them being here was their choice."

When asked "how much would you say the opera is yours?", participants would frequently start by saying "all of it", and then gradually qualify it to around 50%. They acknowledged that there was a lot of expert help, but their pride in identifying all of their own ideas, music and final performance was evidently more valuable to them – they were aware that without them the project could not happen.

Aside from feedback that can be used to refine future practice, the evaluation data proved one interesting outcome: adolescents introduced to opera through participation were very aware of the differences between participatory and traditional

opera, both in terms of product and process. This was actually most explicitly evidenced in the second post-performance Q&A session: an audience member asked the young participants on the panel, 'what do you think of opera now?' One participant's response: "I hate it". They made a clear separation between our opera, which was something new, relevant and exciting, and operatic tradition, which was not for them. This was a surprising response, but one that demonstrated how participants had been creatively empowered by an opera project without being culturally converted into the operatic institution. Were it the objective of a project to engage participants with traditional repertoire, it might therefore be necessary to draw more explicit links between the contemporary creation and the tradition it comes from, for example by including repertoire within the final opera composition.

Chapter 7. The Magic Lantern

Description:	**A one act opera for youth opera company and pianist**
Voices:	**Young Soprano, Young Tenor (poss 2),**
	Children's Chorus (8-12yrs), Teen Chorus (12-18yrs)
	and 'Grown Up' Chorus (12-18yrs)
Instrumentation:	**Piano, 3 Tin Whistles, Percussion and Sound**
	Effects
Duration:	**35-40 minutes**
Age group:	**8-18 year olds**

7.1 Idea genesis

The idea for this opera was inspired by a presentation by Phillip Roberts at the University of York on the subject of his PhD research into the National Media Museum's Magic Lantern collections. I was intrigued by the vivid description of the cultural and technological context which brought magic lanterns – proto-slide projectors invented in the seventeenth century comprising of a wooden box with a candle (later using lime and gas) to cast light through hand-painted glass slides – into being. Roberts' accounts of the political and philosophical discourses that were happening about and around the object re-animated colourful characters from history; and then, as if for a *coup de théâtre*, the theatrical magic of the object itself used in performance captivated me. I was stunned by how such an old piece of technology , primitive in comparison to modern entertainment hardware, could be so entertaining today.

I felt the themes of technological progress and obsolescence would be of particular interest to teenagers, especially if the object and its context could be used to reflect on our own contemporary situation.[73] In fact, it was precisely because Roberts presented the magic lantern as materialising, to some degree, the issues that individuals in history were experiencing in keeping up with technological, cultural and social

---

[73] In 2017, 83% of 12 to 15 year olds had their own smartphone, while 55% had their own tablet. 99% of them went online for almost 21 hours per week, with 74% of them having a social media profile. Smartphone ownership was also increasing for children aged between 5 to 11 years old. Source: *Ofcom, Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report* (London: Ofcom, 2017), accessed Aug 6, 2019, https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/childrens/children-parents-2017

change that this seemed to resonate so well with where we find ourselves in a materialist society today. I found myself wanting to hear more from the people who lived through that time and worked these machines in an era of such rapid change, where the familiar world was disappearing around them. Furthermore, because the object seemed rather obscure, using it to illuminate issues of relevance to young people seemed original and innovative.

Roberts agreed to act as a historical consultant on the opera's creation, while I felt it necessary to involve a librettist with the skill to turn historical facts into a compelling and poetic story. For this reason I approached Judi Sissons, whose atmospheric and emotive play *The Mad Women of England* I had seen several years previously. With Roberts' advice, Sissons reached out to the Magic Lantern Society, an international network of expert collectors and hobbyists whose collective knowledge on the subject proved invaluable. Roger Gonin's research into Savoyard lanternists was to prove particularly invaluable.

Our first plan was to create a collaborative opera project similar in process to *Lizzie and the Dark*: presenting a group of young people between 13 to 17 years old with an opera with 'windows' for co-creation, inviting them also to collaborate on the designing of magic lanterns and lantern slides in creative workshops with a lanternist from the Magic Lantern Society. This would all come together in a 45 minute performance alongside a group of professional performers, including a hurdy-gurdy player and a DJ, representing my desire to explore analogies and differences between opera and street music both then and now.

The project changed quite substantially, however, when the Royal Opera House saw potential in developing the piece for the 10th Anniversary of their Youth Opera Company (YOC) of 8 to 11 year olds, who would perform a 20 minute version of the piece along with a group of YOC alumni of 12 to 18 year olds. A draft libretto and musical sketches of the piece were requested to be composed for the YOC and alumni chorus with a piano accompaniment, that may or may not be developed further in a co-creative process with the YOC. The project was not taken further than the research and development stage due to technical issues in the theatre complicating the commissioning process, but both Sissons and I felt it worthwhile to set the 'ROH libretto' to music, which could well be of interest other youth opera companies in this format. At the same time, we were relieved to have an opportunity to expand the piece to longer than 20 minutes, as the richness of the world we were seeking to create

seemed to demand more time.

Key aspects of the project remained throughout, which included:

- examining history through focusing on an object, ie. the magic lantern
- exploring how technological, social and artistic/cultural changes were received in the past
- learning about the use of different technologies for entertainment
- researching street performance practices
- reflecting on the music/theatre of public spaces

This way of development resulted in two versions of the opera: the 'ROH libretto' which has been set to music, and the more developed 'new draft' which rests *in potentia*. The 'new draft' is longer than the ROH libretto and darker in tone, making it more suitable for performers older than 12 years old and even including characters that could be played by adults. Sissons and I feel that this may be advantageous to the opera's final use by opera houses, as they could choose between the two versions of the opera to suit their objectives.

7.2 Historical context of *The Magic Lantern*

Sissons' research into the history of magic lanterns uncovered several key moments and characters of relevance to young people: specifically, child economic migrants from Italy, Spain and Southern France who would travel to larger cities such as Paris and London around the turn of the 19th century during the winter seasons in order to earn money doing various kinds of street jobs, including begging, chimney sweeping and performing magic lantern shows.

At this time, so many children from the Mediterranean region migrated to urban centres that they became the object of fascination, consternation and inspiration, labelled collectively as "Savoyards", after the French-Italian border region of Savoy where some of them came from.

Numerous composers of the era wrote operas on these themes,[74] some of them

---

[74] *Les deux petits Savoyards*, Dalayrac (1789); *Les Savoyardes, ou la Continence de Bayard*, Propiac (1789); *L'École des parvenus, ou la Suite des Deux Petits Savoyards*, Devienne (1792). Source: Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Opéra-Comique*: *A Sourcebook* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010).

being popular successes by names still known to us now. Salieri's first *singspiel* – composed on the behest of the Emperor of Austria to augment the repertoire of German-language opera – was *The Chimney Sweep* (1781), a tri-lingual comedy about an immigrant Italian conniving a way to exploit the system in Imperial Austria (like Salieri, to a degree). Cherubini also wrote two operas with Savoyard themes, *Eliza* (1794) and *Les deux journées* (1800)*,* the latter of which influenced Beethoven's composition of the *Egmont* o*verture* and *Fidelio*.[75]

Citizens in urban centres knew of Savoyards, and they were the subject of much discussion. For one thing, the lives of these young people were full of danger, either through the risks associated with sweeping chimneys (getting stuck, falling down, or choking on soot) or through the threat of abduction, being sold into slavery or prostitution, or in one infamous case, being murdered to meet the demand for corpses used by the medical schools for their anatomical research.[76] With the growth of the middle class, acts of charity and social concern were seen as increasingly morally imperative, and there were those who felt compelled to address the Savoyard problem and/or their plight.

Of those children who worked in street entertainment, many played instruments, displayed novelty animals such as marmots or birds, or sang songs. Some even reprised operatic hits from other cities in Europe.77 For some street spectators in London, for example, their first introduction to Rossini or Bellini might have been thanks to a Savoyard street performer. On the other hand, the increase of street noise proved to be something of a nuisance for many. Some street performers with instruments were not musically trained or able to play at all, and there were many instances of performers being paid to stop playing and move away.[78] Flutes, whistles, hurdy-gurdies, organ-grinders – all instruments designed to be loud – were frequently played out of tune or with bastardised versions of songs people knew, leading some aurally fatigued denizens to claim the noise was making them neurologically ill.[79] The richness of this world informed both the writing and the composition, and the expectation is that such research would inform the stage direction and design as well.

---

[75] Rhys Jones, "Beethoven and the Sound of Revolution in Vienna, 1792-1814," *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 4 (Dec 2014): 956-958.

[76] Sarah Wise, *The Italian Boy* (London: Pimlico, 2005).

[77] Paul Simpson, "Sonic Affects and the Production of Space: 'Music by handle' and the politics of street music in Victorian London," *cultural geographies,* 24(1) (2017): 101.

[78] Ibid., 98

[79] Ibid., 102-104.

7.3 Synopsis

The year is 1793. Maxine (14) has travelled to The City to earn money with her family's magic lantern and a crate of marmots.[80] This new beginning, with responsibility, brings self-doubt. She is alone after her brother, Raimon (18), was killed along their journey. Street children welcome her with bread. Some appear drugged, most are suspicious of her. They express an appreciation of Thomas Bonegrubber (18), their protector, though all is not what it seems. Bonegrubber is actually a child trafficker. He and his gang appear and show a great interest in the magic lantern, but the children protest that they want to see a magic lantern show.

Alone, Maxine tries to prepare a magic lantern show but lacks the confidence. She hears the voice of her brother, admonishing her that lanternists are men, not girls. With the encouragement of the street children, however, she determines to try. At that point her lantern is stolen. The Grubbers appear to snatch her away as well.

Bonegrubber holds Maxine captive. Furious, Maxine at first refuses to show him what the lantern does. Yet seeing Bonegrubber haunted by voices in his head, Maxine has an idea to use the lantern to escape. She convinces Bonegrubber to watch her innocent lantern show, but phantasmagoric apparitions come alive, each suggesting a different grim method to dispatch Bonegrubber. Terrified, Bonegrubber flees. Maxine and the street children are free.

Maxine, the great magic lanternist, gives a grand show for the street children. Her marmots appear and try to tell her of what they've seen on their adventures. As comic and grotesque characters appear from the lantern to sing and dance, Raimon returns and sees Maxine fulfilling her potential.

7.4 Formal Shaping

As is so often the case with my operas for young people, my prime concern in the composition of this work was that the music be as easy as possible to learn and perform, with the music feeling almost instinctive. This would allow for more rehearsal time to be spent on the technical or dramatic aspects of working practical magic lanterns onstage. I felt that having one central theme which related to all of the music in the piece would be the most practical idea to achieve this, and I was intrigued by how one

---

[80]   The Savoyards travelled with marmots, little animals that live wild in the Alps, using them in their street performances or exhibiting them for money.

musical idea might inform the content of an entire work.

I found a textual and conceptual idea that I found to represent the entirety of the piece: Maxine's theme. The text is the refrain that Maxine shares with the Street Children when she meets them first, as well as being the last words of the opera, thus forming an opening proposition and final conclusion:

> Stories of the past
> Inspire us to be strong.
> Stories of the future
> Impel us to go on.
>
> Stories from far distant lands
> Underneath the sky
> Stories live forever,
> Stories never die.

Maxine's theme is in a musical theatre style: text is sung in phrases that slightly augment natural speech rhythms, with the melody comprising of several intervallic leaps in quick succession over a diatonic harmony in the accompaniment. Analysing the melody enabled me to deconstruct the theme into micro-ideas, which I applied (mostly) chronologically over the first half of the libretto, and then in reverse order to create a palindromic structure 'returning' to the beginning.

The melody is deconstructed into small motifs like so:

Example 7.1 Deconstruction of Maxine's theme into smaller motifs

They are then applied throughout the macro-structure, in an arrangement broadly outlined in Table 6.

Scene	Motif/Material	Character or Action
Prologue	(Cherubini)	
Scene 1	a	Maxine is alone
Scene 2	a	Street children appear
	b	Street children tell of their lives
	c	Grubbers' whistle
	d	Thomas Bonegrubber exudes his power
Scene 3	d	Maxine thinks of Bonegrubber and Raimon
Scene 4	e	Bonegrubber is in his element
	b	Maxine persuades Bonegrubber to watch the lantern show
	(P'tit Ramoneur) + e	The phantasmagoria show, Bonegrubber flees
Scene 5	variation of a	Marmots return
	d	Raimon returns
Finale	All motifs together	"Stories of the past"

Table 6. Motivic structuring in *The Magic Lantern*

The macro-structure of *The Magic Lantern* is a linear progression of motifs with a reflective conclusion at the end. A small musical idea (a) encounters several other musical ideas (b, c, d and e), ultimately amalgamating them all. Likewise, Maxine begins her journey alone, but realises her full potential as a result of her experiences, affirming her growth confidently with the final reprise of her theme.

My approach to structuring *The Magic Lantern* was to analyse the dramaturgy of the scene/text: who is the protagonist, what do they want, what is happening to them, what are the moments of change, what causes the change; plus what other characters are present and what is happening for them? The AABA structure once again proved useful as a basis for evoking the drama. Frequently it followed a pattern along the lines of that outlined in Table 7 below:

Formal section	Function	Example
A	The musical idea establishes character and/or situation	Street Children discover Maxine
A	Restate the musical idea to increase familiarity with it and develop it	Street Children investigate Maxine
B	New or modified musical idea represents a shift in the situation or new information	Maxine wakes up and repulses the Street Children
A	First idea restated or varied according to the scale/quality of the impact of the B section	The Street Children are even more curious about Maxine's lantern
End	The piece is resolved fully (a cadential sequence, like a full stop) or partially (an unresolved cadential sequence, like a comma)	Musically unresolved section leads on to Maxine trying to explain the lantern's value

Table 7. Example of formal structuring for dramatic purposes in *The Magic Lantern*

7.5 Musical analysis

As the opera explores similarities and differences between the past and today, I was very interested in recreating a version the sonic environment of the early 19th century, both in terms of sound effects and opera repertoire composed at that time. Although recordings of the era do not exist, diarists at the time documented what they could hear outside their windows, which happened to be an increasing amount of noise. With London's growth thanks to the industrial revolution, not only were there an increase of workshop noises (chains, metalworkers hammering etc.), the traffic of carriages and coal wagons, gathering crowds and fayres, the barking of dogs and market sellers, but also – crucially – street musicians, with the lowest of the low being Italian organ-grinders.[81] Aside from sound effects notated in the score, it would be very much in keeping with the

---

[81]Simpson, "Sonic Affects and the Production of Space," 102-104.

intent of the opera to use recorded soundscapes in sections of the piece, particularly in the prologue, scene 1 and in transitions between the other scenes.

The opera incorporates two musical references from the early nineteenth century, the most relevant being the traditional Savoyard folk song, "Le P'tit Ramoneur", which is adapted in the Street Children's chorus from figure J and played whole in the phantasmagoria show from figure LL. The opening song from Cherubini's *Les deux journées*, which in its original context recounts the adventures of a young Savoyard during the civil war, is adapted for the military flute melody in figure B. One aria not included in the score, but possible to include as an additional interlude before scene 3, is the aria "Ah, non lasciarmi, nò" from Salieri's *The Chimney Sweep*. Concerning a young woman who fears she will be hurt in love by a young suitor, the aria could represent Maxine's misgivings about Thomas Bonegrubber, who nevertheless has charmed her with his confidence.

In *The Magic Lantern* I continued my experimentations with a quasi-modal harmonic system. Keeping with the 8-note mode built upon a sequence of thirds (Example 7.1), I changed two different pitches to create a network of related modes.

Example 7.2 Modal harmonic system, transformed and related

However, transitions between different modes were difficult to make out audibly, as all the modes shared at least 4 notes with any other mode. Changing the tonal centre created a much more audible harmonic shift and was even more pointed if both the tonal centre *and* the mode changed together. Thus a transition from D1 to Ab1 could be made almost imperceptibly if the tonal centre remained on, say, F natural throughout, whereas if the tonal centre shifted from F to B natural *at the same time* as the mode shifting from D1 to Ab1, the change in harmony would be more audible. Harmonic changes could

therefore happen in audibly slight or audibly extreme ways, allowing me to use harmonic or tonal-centre shifts for structural and/or dramatic purposes.

The music composed for Thomas Bonegrubber used a degree of bitonality in order to portray the two-faced nature of his character. In scene 2 this occurs in the clash of major and minor keys played simultaneously (Example 7.2), while in scene 4 the dissonant chord stabs are intentionally reminiscent of those in Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*.

Example 7.3 Bitonality and Stravinsky reference

For the most part, *The Magic Lantern* is written in a style one might call contemporary light opera, using a non-traditional harmonic language but with reference to traditional musical styles such as folk, military and waltz. Where modern musical styles appear, they are intended to explicitly highlight progressive or anachronistic themes. Thus, Maxine's "Stories of the past" in a musical theatre style is somewhat ahead of its time, whilst the Marmots' grime number is a fantasy of transcendence from reality, in keeping with the often almost-surreal humour of magic lantern shows themselves.

7.6 Co-creation

The Magic Lantern has one musical co-creative window where participants must devise their own rap lyrics for the Marmots to perform over music that exists in the score. Otherwise, the piece follows the conventional format of fully commissioned opera *for young performers by a professional composer*. The lyrics for the rap must be fun, clear and engaging, utilising the musical qualities of grime (lyrical phrases, or 'bars', should emphasise the first beat of the musical bar), and in terms of content should follow the guidelines for creation in the score.

Further to this, the libretto affords an opportunity for participation and co-creation beyond devising the magic lanterns and magic lantern slides etc. Performers could also mount their own devised magic lantern shows to lead the audience out of the auditorium at the end of the opera, in much the same spirit as the audience would have been led in. This would represent Maxine's dissemination of lanterning skills to the children, who would use the skills to earn money. Collaborating on the creation of their own magic lantern shows could provide the performers a richer experience to engage with the content of the opera and its historical context. From a musical perspective, the young performers could reference and re-contextualise music from the opera, or music that the opera itself references, in a creative process that would follow what lanternists and street performers would have done in the past.

7.7 Performance framing

The performance begins outside of the auditorium with a couple of young people in character performing (singing, playing the flute or other talent) for money or begging, mingling with the audience. Whatever participation had taken place would need to be made clear to the audience before the performance. Information could be provided in programmes (sold by performers in character as street newspaper vendors, perhaps) or as a pre-performance exhibition. The Lanternist's first call to beckon everyone into the auditorium is the start of the opera.

Coda

This commentary and portfolio of compositions concretises the past and points towards a potential future. In Chapter 1 I have outlined an approach to opera as fundamentally a music-dramatic form, where music has a story within which characters express themselves through singing. From this perspective, opera has the potential to be created, performed and consumed apart from a cultural tradition controlled by institutions and the establishment elite; at the very least it is able to relate to these political subjects for the purpose of critical discourse. In Chapter 2 we begin to comprehend young people as a community of diverse audiences and/or interpreters, able to relate to opera form and tradition critically, as long as those with the authority of opera (adults broadly, but artists and institutions specifically) are transparent about what opera is whilst nurturing and empowering young people's critical faculty. Chapter 3 traces a history of the development of opera for young people, evolving broadly in chronological order from opera for young *performers* to opera *about* youth, opera for young (or family) *audiences*, opera for learning in schools (*Lehrstüke*), opera for *communities* and finally, participatory and community opera. This matches the development in outreach practices outlined by Balslev, Galla and others, from historical, to educational and finally to participatory or community-led paradigms. Musical trends that have been identified in this repertoire include the inclusion of folk and jazz musics, stylistic eclecticism, use of diatonic harmony and characterful orchestration with vocal writing that shuns technical virtuosity. Examining the power relationships involved in the creative process, Taylor and Matarasso provide us with simple, effective frameworks and vocabulary that enable us to clearly identify where power is and to what end it is used.

In Chapter 4, I outline conscious elements of my compositional style and process that attempt to synthesise all of the above concerns. Closer musical analysis of the three operas in the portfolio confirms an interest in: the musical representations of dramaturgy through structure and form; the use of eclectic musical styles and conventions to convey meaning and articulate narrative akin to Weill's use of *topoi* and *gestus*; experiments in the creation of quasi-modal harmonic systems that bridge diatonicism and non-functional harmony; as well as a ways of writing vocal music that provide technical challenge and interest to young performers without demanding unusual virtuosic skill. The evaluation data from *Lizzie and the Dark* and *A Shoe Full of Stars* reflects critically

on the participatory aspects of the operatic creation process, revealing some important learning, including:

- that young audiences enjoy looking 'up' to content that is suitable for age groups older than themselves, which suggests that subject matter can be more challenging and scary moments scarier;
- that young creators can feel global ownership of the final co-created product/performance whilst simultaneously being able to qualify and own their specific contribution(s) to a participatory production;
- that young creator-performers express a value and appreciation for their inclusion in professional opera-making processes and collaboration with professionals artists;
- that rehearsal processes require a tremendous level of motivation on the part of young performers and that being removed from a role of agency is disempowering/demotivating;
- that participants can feel as creatively empowered by drawing the set as by singing in an opera;
- that for young creator-performers, a significant amount of value comes from their feeling having been seen by their parents/family; and
- that ultimately, equipping young people with transparent information about opera whilst nurturing their critical thinking can enable them to engage, learn and enjoy the opera form in a way that raises their self-esteem without coercing them to perceive another tradition as better than their own.

It is my hope that this research can help to change the way opera is viewed and contributes positively to the opening of opera institutions towards participatory and community-led paradigms. I believe that this is both the logical solution to opera's institutional 'crisis' and a rich field of research and practice still to be fully explored. The aesthetic consequences of inclusion and inclusivity are profound and call for further musicological examination: when an untrained seven year old can perform as or more beautifully than an adult professional performer, we must re-evaluate what "good" art means and for whom the definition serves. Context is crucial, and critically examining opera as both art form and tradition must continue if we wish it to be of value to our

societies in the future.

For this author-practitioner, I envision that the seeds from this research will bear fruit in three fields. Firstly, as a composer I am interested in creating more ambitious operas on cross-cultural subjects that innovate the opera form. Secondly, as a researcher-practitioner I aim to expand my work within institutions to further open the doors of inclusivity in practice and research. Lastly, but perhaps most significantly, this work has inspired me to root myself in a long-term, local community-led opera project, which is new territory. It is not for me to predict how these three interests will intersect, but I know that they will continue with a focus on the empowerment of young people. There can be no greater purpose.

Postscript

The global crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic and forced isolation of hundreds of millions of people around the world highlights an urgent necessity to explore digital, online and virtual platforms for participatory and community artistic creation, and exposes a slowness in various art forms to exploit telecommunications technology in a useful way to this end. Theatres, concert halls and opera companies are reliant on their marketing departments but are otherwise scrambling to consider their responses. Individual artists and educators are bypassing lack of investment and training in this area by calling on peer experiences and blindly improvising their way to "onlining" their work, not only recording it digitally for online distribution or live streaming, but interacting with audiences in real time and adapting their whole working practice to teach and co-create with others online. Research and investment is clearly needed in this area, and with humanity's response to climate change soon to affect global behaviours in a similarly epoch-defining way, the future seems destined to be occupied with this subject.

With that said, social distancing also exacerbates the already growing problem of social isolation. Never has the human need for social activity and the value of communal activity been so abundantly clear. Whatever the means we use to overcome the challenges we face, I believe it is critical to reaffirm the ends. Now more than ever, community and participatory practices point out the way.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Compositional facilitation techniques

This text was developed by the author for teacher training purposes.

Techniques to co-compose a melody

This exercise can be adapted for application in:

- one group/class – writing on a flip chart or whiteboard over the lyrics
- multiple small groups – writing on large pieces of paper over the lyrics
- individual work – writing on individual pieces of paper over the lyrics

Once you have some lyrics, set yourself some musical parameters that will help you compose. Ask yourself:

- What emotions do we wish to convey in this song? Is there one emotion or a couple of conflicting emotions?
- How would you describe music that would fit those emotions? (eg. pulsing, lyrical, soft, stabbing, dark, light, twiddly, low, twisted, delicate, menacing, lumbering, bouncy etc.).
- Should the tempo be fast or slow? Should the key be major or minor?

Use your answers to guide you in creating suitable music.

Tips for melody writing:

- Indicate where the melody goes up or down using a squiggly line over the words – this is the Squiggly Line Technique
- You can edit and do whatever you want with the words until they fit the song you want to write, eg. give the words a more uniform rhythms, swap lines around etc.
- Don't compose too much without going back and rehearsing what you've already

written. This will keep it in your memories and give you inspiration with how the melody 'should' go.

- At any point you can pick out some chords on a piano/guitar to harmonically support the melody you are creating. If possible, you can try different – even unusual – chord sequences and ask the class if they approve of one sequence or another.

- Record the song at the end once it is already in your memories.

Now you can use any of these techniques to compose music with a class:

1. "HOW DOES IT GO?"

Looking at the first line of lyrics, ask the class as a whole, "Who can tell me how the melody for this line goes?" (Sometimes, someone knows!). Notate the melody using the squiggly line technique.

2. THE MOST BORING SONG IN THE WORLD

Looking at the first line of lyrics, get the class to agree on a spoken rhythm so that you can chant it together in a defined rhythmic way.

Next, chant that line all on one note. This monotonous chant is (hopefully) really boring, worthy of being called "the most boring song in the world". In order to make it less boring, decide which word should correspond to the melody going up or down. Notate the melody using the squiggly line technique.

Once you have the melody for the first line of the song, repeat the process with the next few lines.

3. ALL TOGETHER NOW

One person will be the Receiver – this will most often the facilitator, but it is possible to delegate this to anyone with good Aural skills.

Looking at a line of text, ask everyone in the room to improvise the same melody for that line all at the same time. This will sound chaotic, but when you get them to do this 3 or 4 times, a discernible melody should appear as people instinctively copy each other.

The Receiver listens for any discernible melody lines appears from the cacophony, and this becomes the melody. Notate the melody using the squiggly line

technique.

4. VERBATIM COMPOSITION

Similar to "How does it go?", ask the class for suggestions of how you would speak a particular line of text. Note the melody and rhythm of the speech using the squiggly line technique. Use that musical material to determine how the rest of the music should go (this can be made easier by harmonising the 'speech song' material).

Appendix 2. Lyric facilitation questions for *Lizzie and the Dark*

Song 1.   How would you introduce the story?

              How can we introduce ourselves?

              How can we entice the audience to listen?

              How do we feel at the beginning of the opera?

Song 2.   What is the dark? What is darkness?

              If you could hear the dark, what would it sound like?

              If you could touch the dark, what would it feel like?

              If the dark was a perfume, what would it smell like?

              Can the dark be nice? When?

              What feelings do you have about the dark?

Song 3.   What should Lizzie do?

              Why should she go back to bed? Why not?

              Why should she go to the basement? Why not?

              How would you describe this situation?

              How would you feel in this situation?

Song 4.   What did the dark do?

              Was it friendly? How else could you describe its behaviour?

              What is nice about the dark sometimes?

              How do you feel about the dark now?

Song 5.   What is the moral of the story?

              What advice would you give to the audience?

              How are we feeling at the end of the story?

Appendix 3. Social and Emotional Learning

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning describes social and emotional competence as

> the ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one's life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development. It includes self-awareness, control of impulsivity, working cooperatively, and caring about oneself and others.[82]

Competency in these areas is seen as increasingly important in the fields of education and, beyond, in the workplace and society at large.[83]Emotional and social competencies can be divided into five areas:

- Emotional self-awareness;
- Emotional management;
- Harnessing emotions productively;
- Emotional awareness in others: empathy;
- Emotional management with others: relationship management.[84]

SEL methodologies are yet to be comprehensively and explicitly applied to the majority of arts practice.

---

[82] The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators*. Alexandria: The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1997.

[83] Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ* (New York: Bantam Books, 2006).

[84] Ibid.

Appendix 4. *A Shoe Full of Stars* Q&A Panel questions

Young participants

Why did you want to take part?

How did you find the initial discussion sessions?

What did you want the message of the opera to be?

What did you think about opera when you started?

What do you think about it now?

What did you think when you read the script?

Could you see your message and the discussion in the script?

How do you think the process has changed you? In terms of your views on terrorism, your views about the world and the skills you have learned?

Counter-extremism expert

Can you share your story?

What is terrorism?

What leads someone to make those choices?

What does the ACF do?

How valuable is opera as a medium to discuss this issue?

Could this medium even be used with young people vulnerable to radicalisation?

What can anyone in this room do to help in terms of vigilance, understanding or if we suspect someone is susceptible to radicalisation?

West Yorkshire Police

What is your experience of terrorism here in Yorkshire?

What do you do about it? What can anyone in this room do to help in terms of vigilance, understanding or if we suspect someone is susceptible to radicalisation?

How valuable is opera as a medium to discuss this issue?

Bibliography

Books

Adams, Martin. *Henry Purcell*: *The origins and development of his musical style*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators*. Alexandria: The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1997;

Bennett, Susan. *Theatre Audiences: A theory of production and reception*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Bokina, John. *Opera and Politics: From Monteverdi to Henze.* New York: Yale University, 1997.

Brighouse, Harry and Adam Swift. *Family Values: The Ethics of Parent-Child Relationships.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014.

Davies, Peter Maxwell. "Will Serious Music Become Extinct?" In *Music Education in Crisis: The Bernarr Rainbow Lectures and Other Assessments,* edited by Peter Dickinson, 99-114. Martlesham: Boydell Press, 2013.

Dunlop, Fiona S. *The Late Medieval Interlude: The Drama of Youth and Aristocratic Masculinity*. Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2007.

Fay, Laurel. *Shostakovich: A Life.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Geldard, Kathryn, and David Geldard. *Working with Children in Groups: A Handbook for Counsellors, Educators and Community Workers*. Basingstoke: PALGRAVE, 2001.

Goleman, Daniel. *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*.New York: Bantam Books, 2006.

Gonin, Roger. C*es Savoyards, montreurs de lanterne magique.* Albertville: La Société des Amis du Vieux Conflans, 2016.

Harris, Ellen T., *Henry Purcell's Dido and Aeneas.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Hawley, George. *Making Sense of the Alt-Right.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.

Kaltner, John. *Islam: What Non-Muslims Should Know*. Minneapolis: Augsburg

Fortress, 2016.

Matarasso, François. *A Restless Art: How participation won, and why it matters.*
London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2019.

Sadie, Stanley, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, second edition*,
Vol 18. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 2001.

Osborne, Charles. *The Opera Lover's* Companion. London: Yale University Press,
2004.

Potter, John. *Vocal Authority: Singing Style and Ideology*. Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1998.

Qadir, Hanif. *Preventing and Countering Extremism and Terrorist Recruitment*.
Woodbridge: John Catt Publication Ltd., 2016.

Strangaard Jensen, Helle. "Making children's 'classics', making past childhoods:
children's 'classics' as sites for memory politics and nostalgia." In *Reinventing
Childhood Nostalgia: Books, Toys, and Contemporary Media Culture.* London:
Routledge, 2017.

Stephens, John. "A Provocative Perspective on Music Education Today." In *Music
Education in Crisis: The Bernarr Rainbow Lectures and Other Assessments,*
edited by Peter Dickinson, 57-77. Martlesham: Boydell Press, 2013.

Wise, Sarah. *The Italian Boy: Murder and Grave-Robbery in 1830s London.* London:
Pimlico, 2005.

Žižek, Slavoj and Mladen Dolar, *Opera's Second Death*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Articles

Arts Council England. Arts Audiences: insight. ISBN: 978-0-7287-1414-4, 2008.

Brüstle, Christa. "Mozarts Cassationen, Serenaden und Divertimenti – Aspekte ihrer
Terminologie, Funktion und Stilistik."*Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 65. Jahrg.,
H. 2. (2008): 85.

Byrne, Peter. "Anatomy of Terror: What makes normal people become extremists?"
NewScientist, Aug 19, 2017, 30-37.

Case, Robbie. "Piaget's Theory of Child Development and Its Implications." *The Phi
Delta Kappan* 55, no. 1 (Sep., 1973) 20-25.

Crenshaw, Martha. "The Causes of Terrorism." *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (1981):
379-399.

Dobbs, Teryl L. "Remembering the Singing of Silenced Voices: Brundibár and Problems of Pedagogy." *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 21, no. 2. (2013): 156-77.

Fleer, Marilyn. "A Cultural-Historical View of Child Development: Key Concepts for Going Beyond a Universal View of the Child." *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education* 9, no. 1 (Jan 2015): 19-37.

Galla, Amareswar. "The First Voice in Heritage Conservation." *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 03 (2008): 9-25.

Graber, Naomi. "Kurt Weill's The River Is Blue: "Film-Opera" and Politics in 1930s Hollywood." *Journal of the Society for American Music* 11 (2017): 313-353.

Guthrie, Tyrone. "Opera Production." *Tempo*, no. 7 (Spring 1948): 18-21.

Home Office Press Office. Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism. ISBN: 978-1-78246-796-0, 2015.

Jones, Rhys. "Beethoven and the Sound of Revolution in Vienna, 1792-1814." *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 4 (Dec 2014): 956-958.

Kotnik, Vlado. "The Adaptability of Opera: When Different Social Agents Come to Common Ground." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 44, no. 2 (2013): 303-342.

Letellier, Robert Ignatius. *Opéra-Comique*: *A Sourcebook*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010.

McBurney, Gerard. 'Not a Cherry Tree in Sight!' *Tempo*, no. 190 (Sep., 1994): 19-22.

Miller, Leta. "Opera as Politics: The Troubled History of San Francisco's War Memorial Opera House." *California History* 92, no. 4 (2015): 4-23.

O'Kane, Rosemary, Adrian Guelke, Charles Townsend, Marianne Elliott, Richard English, Bruce Hoffman and Diarmaid Ferriter. "Has terrorism ever achieved its aims?" *BBC World Histories* (July 2017) 24-31.

O'Neill, Sinéad, Joshua Edelman and John Sloboda. "Opera and emotion: The cultural value of attendance for the highly engaged." *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 13, Issue 1 (May 2016): 24-50.

Orenstein, Arbie. "L'enfant et les sortilèges: correspondance inédite de Ravel et Colette. À la mémoire de Roland-Manuel." *Revue de Musicologie* 52, no.2 (1966): 215-220.

Perret, Carine. "L'adoption du jazz par Darius Milhaud et Maurice Ravel: L'esprit plus que la lettre." *Revue de Musicologie* 89, no. 2 (2003): 311-347.

Pratt, Scott L. "Opera as Experience." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 43, no. 4
     (Winter 2009): 74-97.

Richman, Luther A. 'Opera and Music Education." *Music Educators Journal* 33, no. 2
     (1946): 31.

Simpson, Paul. "Sonic Affects and the Production of Space: 'Music by handle' and the
     politics of street music in Victorian London." *cultural geographies* 24(1),
     (2017): 89-109.

Stohl, Michael, Richard Burchill and Scott Englund. *Constructions of Terrorism: An
     Interdisciplinary Approach to Research and Policy*. Oakland: University of
     California Press, 2017.

Taylor, Alan. "'Collaboration' in Contemporary Music: A Theoretical View,"
     Contemporary Music Review (2016): 562-578.

Timberlake, Anicia Chung. 'Brecht for Children: Shaping the Ideal GDR Citizen
     Through Opera Education.' *Representations* 132, no.1 (2015): 30-60.

Wilson, Alexandra. "Killing Time: Contemporary Representations of Opera in British
     Culture." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 19, no. 3 (2007): 249-270.

Online Sources

Attwood, Karen. "Deeyah Khan interview: The award-winning filmmaker on
     chronicling British jihadism." *Independent.* June 13, 2015. Accessed on Aug 30,
     2017. http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/deey...rd-
     winning-filmmaker-on-chronicling-british-jihadism-10318164.html

Berhman, Simon. "From revolution to irrelevance: how classical music lost its
     audience. *International Socialism* 121. Jan 2, 2009. Accessed Sept 8, 2019.
     http://isj.org.uk/from-revolution-to-irrelevance-how-classical-music-lost-its-
     audience/?fbclid=IwAR07yfvOzDTGw4SFF-
     nRuK3c77FJoqspAqV8N8oBurtA-byJ9_6u9gzRZr4

Deak, John. "Aikalisä, an opera, a new art form?" *FiSME.* Apr 2016. Accessed Sept 16,
     2019. https://fisme.fi/kuukauden-kolumnit/komunit2016/aikalisa/

Deen, Sanjana and Catrin Nye. "East London teenagers tackle terrorism in play." *BBC
     News.* May 12, 2013. Accessed Aug 30, 2017. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-
     england-london-22492535

Ellis-Peterson, Hannah. "Immersive play in east London school to explore motives of

radicalised youth." *Guardian.* June 2, 2015. Accessed Aug 30, 2017.
https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/jun/02/east-london-school-play-
radicalised-youth-homegrown

——. "Radicalisation play cancelled by theatre after concerns about 'extremist agenda.'
Guardian. Sep 4, 2015. Accessed Aug 30, 2017.
https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/sep/04/islamism-play-withdrawn-by-
national-youth-theatre

Gardner, Lynne. "Shut down but not silenced: isis play Homegrown demands to be
staged." *Guardian.* March 8, 2017. Accessed Aug 30, 2017.
https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2017/mar/08/isis-play-
homegrown-national-youth-theatre

Home Office. "Revised Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales." GOV.UK
updated April 10 2019. Accessed Mar 30, 2020.
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/revised-
prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales

Khan, Deeyah. "Jihad Masculinity." *HuffPost UK*. July 10, 2015. Accessed Aug 30,
2017. http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/deeyah-khan/jihad-deeyah-
khan_b_7770578.html

Mahogany Opera Company. "The Operas." *Snappy Operas.* Mahogany Opera
Company. Accessed Aug 5, 2019. https://snappyoperas.co.uk/the-operas/

Merriam-Webster.com, adj. "operatic." Accessed March 7, 2019. https://www.merriam-
webster.com/dictionary/operatic

Ofcom, Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report (London: Ofcom, 2017).
Accessed Aug 6, 2019. https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/media-
literacy-research/childrens/children-parents-2017

Reynolds, Margaret. "Colette's libretto: a fantasy of childhood for Ravel's opera of
enchantment." *Guardian.* Jul 27, 2012. Accessed Aug 18, 2019.
https://www.theguardian.com/music/2012/jul/27/colette-lenfant-sortileges-
libretto

Romer, Christy. "Arts Council criticised for prioritising opera in music funding."
ArtsProfessional. Apr 13, 2018. Accessed Sep 11, 2019.
https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/arts-council-criticised-prioritising-
opera-music-funding

Wikipedia. "Grime (music genre)." Wikipedia. 2019. Accessed, Aug 6, 2019.
  https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grime_(music_genre)

Theses

Field, Leah Giselle. "Creative Differences: Sendak's and Knussen's intended audiences
  of *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Higglety Pigglety Pop!*" Doctoral thesis.
  University of British Colombia, 2014.

Peat, Richard. "Representing Children in Opera." Doctoral thesis. City University,
  2007.

Conference Papers

Balslev, Dorte Grannov. "The Danish Journey – Moving towards lasting diverse
  audience relations." (Paper presented at Autumn Conference of RESEO, the
  European Network of Opera, Music and Dance Education. Royal Danish
  Theatre, Copenhagen. November 15-17, 2018.

The European Network of Opera, Music and Dance Education (RESEO).
  "RESEO/YAM Jury Statement." Presented at YAMSession 2018. Ciudade da
  Cultura, Santiago de Compostela. Oct 18, 2018.

Scores

Bedford, David. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. London: Universal Edition, 1979.

Bennett, Richard Rodney. *All the King's Men.* London: Universal Edition, 1968.

Britten, Benjamin. *Paul Bunyan.*

—. *The Little Sweep.* London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1950.

—. *Curlew River.* London: Faber Music Ltd., 1964.

—. *The Burning Fiery Furnace.* London: Faber Music Ltd., 1966.

—. *The Prodigal Son.* London: Faber Music Ltd., 1968.

—. *Children's Crusade*. London: Faber Music Ltd., 1972.

—. *The Golden Vanity.* London: Faber Music Ltd., 1967.

Davies, Peter Maxwell. *The Two Fiddlers*. London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1978.

Joubert, John. *The Quarry.* London: Novello Publishing Ltd., 1967

Kay, Peter. *The Snowman of Kashmir*. London: Universal Edition, 1975.

LeFanu, Nicola. *The Green Children*. London: Novello Publishing Ltd., 1997.

Menotti, Gian Carlo. *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

Weill, Kurt. *Down in the Valley*. New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1948.

——. *He Who Says Yes*. Vienna: Universal Edition, 1930.

Williamson, Malcolm. *Julius Caesar Jones*. London: Josef Weinberger Ltd., 1966.

——. *The Moonrakers.* London: Josef Weinberger Ltd., 1967.

Winters, Geoffrey. *Drake's Voyage.*

Sound Recordings

Montsalvatge, Xavier. *El Gato con Botas*. Columna Musica, 2003. CD.

Live performances and videos of live performances

Agreed. By Howard Moody. Produced by Glyndebourne. Glyndebourne, Lewes.
    Archival video. March 1, 2019.

Aikalisä. By Finnish National Opera and Ballet. Embdedd video, 52:47. Posted by
    Finnish National Opera and Ballet. Oct 20, 2017. Accessed Nov 2, 2017.
    https://oopperabaletti.fi/stage24/kuule-mina-savellan-ooppera-aikalisa/

Different. By Llywelyn ap Myrddin. Produced by English Touring Opera. Archival
    video. Spring 2017.

Ihmepoika A. By Timo Hietala. Produced by Finnish National Opera and Ballet.
    Embedded video, 46:28. Posted by Finnish National Opera and Ballet. June 1,
    2017. Accessed Jul 6, 2017. https://oopperabaletti.fi/stage24/ihmepoika-a/

L'Enfant et les sortilèges. By Maurice Ravel. Produced by L'Opéra de Lyon. Opéra
    National de Lyon, Lyon. 1999. Youtube video, 43:36. Posted by "classic-into
    net." Mar 5, 2016. Accessed Sep 12, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?
    v=JbqySviU4YQ&t=2s

*Paradise Moscow (Cheryomushki). B*y Dmitri Shostakovich. Produced by the
    University of York Music Department. Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, York. Nov
    6, 2015.

Prinzessin LiebDieLiebe. By Jörg Ulrich Krah. Produced by Jeunesse Austria. Archival
    video. Brick-5, Vienna. Dec 5, 2018.

Push. By Howard Moody. Produced by Battle Festival. De La Warr Pavillion, Battle. Oct 1, 2016. Vimeo video, 1:03:15. Posted by "Nichola Bruce". 2017. https://vimeo.com/199353255

Romeo's Passion. By Cathy Milliken. Produced by Umculo. Archival video. Hillbrow Theatre, Johannesburg. Sep 12, 2018.

The Boy Who Grew Too Fast. By Gian Carlo Menotti. Produced by Dutch National Opera & Ballet. Archival video. Dutch National Opera & Ballet, Amsterdam. May 4, 2019.

The Monster in the Maze. By Jonathan Dove. Produced by Festival d'Aix-en-Provence. Youtube video, 1:08:57. Posted by "Edition Peters." Apr 28, 2016. Accessed Sep 9, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84cCrIDu6BQ&fbclid=IwAR2nAqgeqUM OKgWZgZr6J4ESPje5mPlk7Bk05oxDlVTu6r3A-vk0x4gXPX4