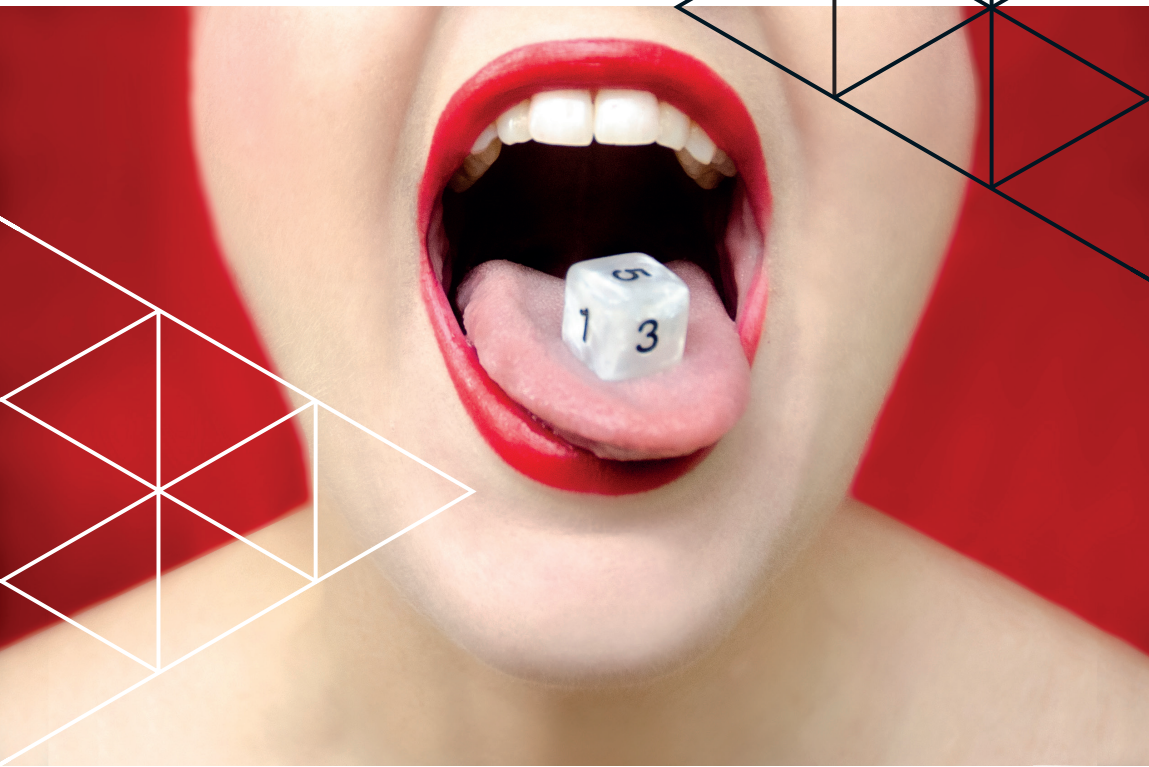*An Operatic*
GAME-CHANGER

**THE OPERA MAKER
AS GAME DESIGNER
AND THE POTENTIALS
OF LUDO-IMMERSIVE OPERA**

Hedvig Jalhed

UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

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Abstract

How can live-performed chamber operas be conceptualized as immersive games with interactive features? This artistic study has resulted in a system model through which degrees of immersion may be generated and analyzed from physical, social, and psychical stimuli. A differentiation of immersive modes has been made possible by the framing of opera-making as game design. The findings indicate that so-called ludo-immersive opera could be developed into operatic chamber opera play for self-reliant participants, constituting an intimate and alternate practice in which dynamic game-masters may replace supervising directors. However, this practice is entangled with the question of future training for operatic practitioners outside the mainstream opera format, and beyond both Wagnerian and Brechtian spectatorship. The shift from the traditional audience/performer relationship to a novel form of immersive interaction requires a new mind-set and preparation for opera practitioners, to encourage autonomy and active participation by individual visitors.

Theoretically, the study connects recent innovations in opera to the aesthetic principles of the Apollonian and the Dionysian and positions ludo-immersive opera in relation the these. The principles bridge immersion, opera, and game-playing, articulated by a reinterpretation of Roger Caillois' taxonomy of play. The issue of immersion as an artistic aim in opera is highlighted. Moreover, artists' and visitors' reciprocal participation in ludo-immersive opera is discussed in regard to its historical context of operatic event-making and forms of presentation.

The project explores the detailed consequences of perception and performance in chamber opera with ludic and immersive features, primarily inspired by live-action role playing. The main objective has been to investigate how operatic events can be presented as immersive adventures rather than spectacles, and consequences that the integration of playing visitors in professional opera implies for artistic practice.

In four operas created during the period 2016–2020, interventions and encounters between artists and visitors in musically driven situations framed by fictional settings have been staged and studied. The artistic researcher has iteratively been engaged in action as opera singer, librettist, dramaturge, and director. Data from the research cycles include field recordings from the productions and reports from the participants in the form of interviews and surveys.

"I feel uneasy."
That proves you needed
to have some fun.

from "Le Water-Shut"
in *Sports et Divertissements*
by Erik Satie

Acknowledgements

Output Formats and Structure

This research project has resulted in both this text and in operatic artworks and events, all built around the idea and research about ludo-immersive opera. The researcher is also an artist and the *output* is two-fold:

1. Dissertation (text)

2. Exposition (multi-media)

The dissertation is available as both a printed volume and a digital file (PDF). In two of the operas included in the project, the researcher has also contributed with libretti. These are found in the appendices. In three of the operas, the researcher has appeared as opera singer, and, in addition has functioned as dramaturge in one opera and director in another. Excerpts from field recordings of the live-performances in which the researcher's executive work is manifest are published as supplementary examples online in the Research Catalogue exposition *Arcade: A Guide to the Operas in the Doctoral Project An Operatic Game Changer.*

Research Catalogue is an online publishing platform for artistic research provided by the Society for Artistic Research. By accessing the dissertation and the material in Research Catalogue, the reader is provided with work exploring both scholarly and artistic dimensions of the project. Furthermore, research material in the form of reports from other participants in the operatic productions and events appears in the form of interviews and surveys; the survey designs are available in the appendices. In the public defence event, information, excerpts from the operas and other items are exhibited live. Those who attend this artistic presentation of the research project also have the opportunity to experience and explore some of the features of the proposed system for future artistic practice that is presented in the study.

The online exposition Arcade on www.researchcatalogue.net can be directly accessed via this link:

https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1172051/1172052

The structure of the dissertation unfolds in six chapters:

1.   Introduction

2.   Methods

3.   Operas

4.   System

5.   Review

6.   Discussion

First, the researcher's artistic background, the original motivation for the project, and a contextualization of the research subject are accounted for (Introduction), followed by an exploration of methodological issues (Methods). Then, illustrated overviews of the opera works and performances describe the artistic ideas, contents, postulates, processes, and outcomes that the dissertation revolves around (Operas). From this point on, the researcher presents a system model for ludo-immersive opera (System), and its application to the operas within the study (Review). The dissertation ends with a discussion on the research questions and the three main themes of the investigation: 1) ludic participation in opera, 2) operatic prerequisites for immersion and, 3) the expansion of opera artists' skills and forms of presentation (Discussion).

Abbreviations and acronyms are used with some caution in the text and are as a general rule avoided. However, in graphical content they appear in interest of spatial concision. Besides the standard abbreviations found in the literature on role-playing, LIMMO is used occasionally as an acronym for *Ludo-Immersive Opera*.

Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter 1:

INTRODUCTION

CAN PLAYERS SING?

In 2011, I started working on the idea of operatic role-playing together with my artistic colleagues and friends through a number of experimental chamber operas. In 2016, ludo-immersive opera became the topic of my artistic doctoral project. In our operas, self-governing players engage with the work in a most tangible sense. Our guests become embedded parts of the fantasy situation that makes up a live opera. The issues of my investigation are basically twofold: How can we make room for visitors within the art work? And how are we artists affected by visitor interaction?

Ludo-immersive opera is immersive in a very particular way. In this kind of opera, the participants are integrated not only into certain sensory experiences, but also participate in an altered sociality, in which fantasy role-playing enables acting within the operatic context. These ludic opera games requires that we artists direct our attention to the visitors, in order to respond to their actions while singing.

Methodologically, two concepts have been especially important for my research and my efforts to combine opera-making with game design: sociologist Roger Caillois' "diagonal science" and philosopher of science Karl Popper's "critical imagination." In diagonal science, established and seemingly unrelated phenomena are bridged through common denominators. In critical imagination, the bounds of existing realms are broken down through clashes between cultures, dogma, and theories.

Immersion means to merge into something, to sink in. Operas that claim to be immersive cannot be hard, reflective, and self-contained, but must be permeable, absorbent, and retain plasticity, providing a space for movement and transformation. Our task as artists in this kind of work is to make and maintain such a space. I'm trying to lay bare how spaces in the story, in the sound, in the site, and in the social context of an operatic fiction can be forged and filled up by playing. In this work I iteratively track the creation of space and, in some cases, the *lack* of space in the operas presented within the study.

Opera, play, and immersion are also all related to aesthetics – understood as the knowledge of taste for certain kinds of information. More precisely, the

notion of the aesthetic principles of the Apollonian and the Dionysian are obviously found in discussions of all three fields of study. Based on the application of these terms in the work of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, and art historian Camille Paglia, among others, I use these guiding principles as metaphors for perception and performance. Both are at the core of art as well as of games.

Through this dissertation, artists and visitors within the practice of ludo-immersive opera can be heard. In this study, a generative-analytic system for future practice is being mapped, and proposed as a model for both notation and randomization.

Ludo-immersive opera is a blend of *opera* and *play* with the intended goal to achieve a state of *immersion*. The invention of opera is in itself a synthetization of poetry, music, and theatre. Operatic singing merges verbal, aural, and visual information in one autonomous projection. Opera attendants in general are required to parse and decode this stylized synthetization. But can their response also include voicing and action? To paraphrase Alan Turing: *Can players sing?*

AN OPERATIC TAKEOVER

The audience is seated and the orchestra is ready to play. When the opera begins, I am on stage. Then suddenly I throw off my 18th century wig and gown and stand there in the bright spotlight, with a gun in my hand. I point it wildly at my co-actors on stage and at the audience members in their seats. I have two companions who do the same. We are terrorists, taking over the theatre. The other singers, the audience, and the orchestra have become our hostages. And the show must go on. With a gun to his head, the conductor is compelled to start the music. He obeys. He plays along. And we all sing.

The scene above is from the opera *The Network* (original Swedish title: *Nätverket*) from 2009 by Claes Fellbom & Sven-David Sandström. This opera was commissioned for the graduating class at the University College of Opera in Stockholm. Today I would classify it as an example of ludo-immersive opera, and it was this work that incited my desire to explore this as yet unnamed concept. According to the plot, the audience was invited to enjoy the opera *Jeppe* by the same authors, but this opera

was to be interrupted by a hostile takeover by terrorists (of whom I played one working undercover as an opera singer). While the terrorists were waiting for their demands to be met, the opera *Jeppe* could be played piece by piece under threat. When a mysterious spiritual guru interfered, the terrorist network fell apart. And all this was set to music.

Intermission. The audience is forced out into the entrance hall by my colleague, pointing at them with a machine gun, where they get refreshments. On the walls hang posters for tonight's opera – but they are advertising "The Network," not "Jeppe"! And here, the scene's integrity collapses a little and there is a crack in the concept. Some of the meta-information about the event has leaked into the play. As participants in our fictional roles, we cannot be aware that there is such a thing as an opera called "The Network," since we are all pretending that we are supposed to present the opera "Jeppe." It does not matter that we sing our threats and are armed with silly props. To be convincingly naturalistic is not important – the important thing is that the outside world must be temporarily forgotten and actively ignored. So while doing our best to suppress our cognitive dissonance, we act as if the illogical posters with their bright colours are simply not there! And we continue to hold the theatre until the police come with sirens and smoke.

In this opera, the visitor group was not an audience – it was supposed to *play* an audience. The visitors were turned from observers into active participants, *playing* observers. As such, they were playing themselves in a fictional story. The visitors' implicit task was to go along as if in the plot, not outside it, and behave accordingly; and, the plot included the auditorium. Since this technically required no more from them than to exhibit ordinary audience behaviour (and preferably look more scared than amused), the role-playing part was easy to perform and called for a minimum of activity. There was one planted audience member, cast to sing her part from the auditorium, but the collective, silent role of the audience in the occupied theatre did not demand any creative or extroverted actions or initiatives. In fact, there was no room for spontaneous or strategic interaction at all from the unscripted visitors. What if there had been at some point? Could the opera had unfolded in other, alternate ways? Could we have played and sang along with a more flexible score? And would that have been more exciting, more uncertain and less comfortable? What if the opera had been, not perhaps less of a spectacle, but more of a challenge for the visitors – an imaginative problem to deal with? Could a visitor become a character, a protagonist or antagonist? These questions took over and from this point, my artistic practice began to change. In a professional world obsessed with control, I had started longing for some playful destabilization.

Figure 1: Hedvig Jalhed as Jefa/Britt in *The Network* at The University College of Opera in Stockholm 2009. Photo by Jimmy Svensson.

FROM ARTIST TO ARTISTIC RESEARCHER

I will start with a brief autobiographical account in order to track my professional practice as opera singer and opera maker. I grew up in a non-academic, non-operatic environment – I am, from the start, a double outsider in relation to my current environment, so to speak. Basically, I owe my discovery of opera and higher education in the arts to public television – broadcasts of artistic performances – and to my first singing teacher at the public music school in Halmstad, Ing-Mari Ek, who coached me for my first auditions. At the age of 19, I was accepted at the musical performance programme in classical singing at Malmö Academy of Music for Britta Johansson, and my career as a soprano begun to take shape. Before that, I had never even been to an opera house – I only loved the idea of opera as a *multi-disciplinary* art practice. This multi-disciplinary approach has also made me combine my vocation in music and opera with studies in languages and design.

After graduating from the University College of Opera in Stockholm in 2009, I worked as a soloist in the institutional field of opera house opera and concert singing. I was classically trained and this was the sole thing I worked on and specialized in for during my artistic-academic education. However, I soon realized that my passion for opera did not lie with promoting and mediating the existing repertory of opera house opera – even though I appreciate it very much – but exploring the potentials of opera more in terms of form, and contributing to new works. I developed an interest in how we *frame* opera and broke loose from the institutional[1] world in establishing my own small, independent opera company Operation Opera. Since then, the ensemble's main focus has been experimental chamber operas with ludic features and immersive settings. My roots in traditional opera together with my private interest in games as a source of both aesthetic fascination and cognitive distraction has been my transdisciplinary driving force.

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[1] I basically refer to institutions as formal constructs with governing mechanisms in a social context, prevailing over generations and independent of certain individuals. While innovation – the making of the new – can become embedded into existing institutions, invention – historical changes in modes of perception– can turn into an institution itself, says artistic researcher and performer Esa Kirkkopelto (2015).

The initial idea for a concept we came to call "role-play opera" or "LARP[2] opera" grew out of conversations with my brother, who shares with me an interest in music as well as in game-play. My experiences in my home environment, in which ludic activities has been a reoccurring source of excitement and recreation, and with *The Network* – as described initially in this chapter, (see picture from performance in **Figure 1**) – formed the basis for my new professional direction. With this turn, I began to dig deeper into game design and event organizing. Starting as an opera singer and a producer, I later expanded my practice to also include dramaturgy, libretto writing, and directing in the context of ludo-immersive opera, which in 2016 became the topic for my doctoral project. Before that, I had made and appeared in three "role-play operas" and one life-sized "board-game opera" together with Operation Opera. The experiences from these had led me to a point where I needed to deepen my understanding of the mechanisms at work. So, in this study, I explore, both as executive and author of operas, how *discipline* and *playfulness* can be balanced in new operatic works with sincere appreciation of opera's unique limitations and potentialities.

To me, going from independent experimental artist to academic artistic researcher means becoming able to present a conscious rationale for my work model that can be disseminated, critically examined, and even re-applied and tested by others. As a researcher, I seek not to interpret and promote my own artistry and artistic outcomes, but to explain the reasoning and driving forces behind the choices both I and others must engage in, when working in the framework of this particular art practice.

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[2] LARP is short for live-action role playing and larping is the verb form relating to this activity.

AN OPERATIC MIX-UP

– Hi, Hedvig! How are you?
– Hedvig, who is that? I am Margreth, you know. You must have mistaken me for someone else.

It is 2012 and the person who greets me is a former neighbour from my childhood whom I have not seen in years. Now she has come to participate in the opera "Welcome back to Anfasia" and we are in the midst of the performance among a crowd of about 80 people, surrounded by beeping ambient music. She is supposed to behave as an Anfasian citizen, and my job is to act as the character Margreth. So far, all of us have followed the logic of the fictional world that we are inhabiting at the moment. But now, she contra-fictionally breaks the spell, as she reminds me of our real-life relationship by referring to my actual name instead of my pseudo-identity. Because what is altered in play is our relations – through play, our status changes momentarily and superficially, and then changes back as soon as play is overridden by the facts grounding us in real life. By dissociating myself from the name that functions as the location of my personal identity, an alternative web of relationships can emerge around the location Margreth. But these webs cannot be maintained simultaneously. Taboos are implicit proofs of participation in fantasies where real-life relations must be ignored and suppressed.

There and then I discovered in practice, how exacting and demanding lying and pretending is, and how automatically our reflex of basic knowledge works when not actively suppressed. Fraud is an art and a skill.

I lose contact with the woman who addressed me and prepare to sing as the scene changes to another musical theme. I pass by a large flag on the wall. The group splits and goes off into different rooms. Some prepare for a game of bingo, and others go off to consume the mysterious drug that all Anfasian citizens must take. The bingo players line up in front of a projector, while in the medicine room a visitor throws himself to the floor to the beat of the music. He praises the drug and the image of the dynast.

SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

The research project in performance practices[3] has been integrated with my own artistic practice for four years and during this period, four operas have been conceived under the influence of this study. Through my contributions to these operas and collaborations with both artists and visitors, I have gathered observations of how ludic enacted scenarios can be applied in operatic settings.

The initiation of a research project in opera naturally stems from the fundamental question: What kind of (artistic) research can be done in opera that cannot be done in other (artistic) domains? In order to sort that out, yet another question needs to be answered: What is the special feature of opera in regard to neighboring fields such as 1) other forms of music theatre and 2) related performance practices (such as dramatic writing, musical performance, dramatic acting, dance, and so on)? Without defining that, there is no point in designating what one does as "research in opera."

From my point of view, operatic research is defined by questions and methods related to a self-reliant, raw, and synthetic human performance. Opera concerns question about

- memorization (an opera-singer performs by heart),
- vocalization (an opera singer centers the voice, not only as a medium for language, but also for musical timbre and sound), and
- figuration (an opera singer's performance is embodying and mobile)

in a world-building program that is

- verbalized (it is literature and code),
- musicalized (it is sound and time), and
- localized (it is matter and room).

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[3] At the Academy of Music and Drama at the University of Gothenburg, the doctoral subject Performance Practices comprises *dramatic* performance practices and should not be confused with Performance Practices in musicology.

Opera opens questions about artistic multitasking, bodily economy and the limits of human action, and of transmedial exchange and synthetization. Moreover, it is hard to separate the art of opera from a humanist discourse, especially with regards to origin and history of opera, but also due to the centrality of the human body and human faculties and senses. As art in the Renaissance – when opera first came about – began exploring the relations between humanity and the world through a new relational and dialectical order that abandoned divine designs, great importance was attached to the physical situation of the human being in this world, according to curator and art critic Nicholas Bourriaud. He continues concerning contemporary arts: "After the area of relations between Humankind and deity, and then between Humankind and the object, artistic practice is now focused upon the sphere of inter-human relations, as illustrated by artistic activities that have been in progress since the early 1990s." (2002, p. 28) With opera, I would say there is also a focus on intrahuman tensions, that is, within the multitasking body.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My explorative study started from an urge to go beyond my initial comfort zone, rooted in traditional opera and classical music, and to gather new experiences from a broader realm that had recently opened up for me. Ludo-immersive opera constitutes a small side-track to mainstream opera. With me, I carry my knowledge of operatic practices, but the crucial point is that I have tried to make space for other concepts to be brought in to fertilize my operatic practice and add some new ideas and insights to the field of opera. The research is done by means of a sort of pinching manoeuvre, grasping the issues at hand from both the *design* of ludic sets and the *action* which I take as a professional artist. First, my fundamental research questions are:

1. How can new opera works be conceptualized to enhance ludic participation?
2. How can operatic immersion include both game-staging artists and game-playing visitors?

These two first questions have made me seek concrete definitions and criteria for both ludic play and for immersion, so that these concepts can be applied both in theory and in practice. An overarching question remains:

3. If I manage to incite and contribute to works that are ludic as well as immersive and yet still operatic, what can this proposed ludo-immersive opera make people do and how might that affect my future artistic practice?

In search for answers to these questions, I have also come to outline three themes running through my investigation: 1) ludic participation in opera, 2) operatic prerequisites for immersion and, 3) the expansion of opera artists' skills and forms of presentation.

RESEARCH CONTEXT, DRIVING FORCES, AND AIMS

Opera per se is an interdisciplinary hybrid art form. From this, it is natural that researching practitioners in opera are quite diverse when it comes to their various professional specialities and practices; artistic researchers in opera have different vocations and disciplinary entries – some are opera singers, others are composers, librettists, and so on. Still, there is little research from operatic facilitators and producers, unlike similar work being done in curatorial research in fine arts. There are also fields that go beyond the discipline of opera; some research projects in for example vocal studies, composition, and set design, touch upon opera without focusing primarily or exclusively on opera.

All researching opera singers I have come across, including myself, have their background in conservatories and academies that train "classical" opera singers. These institutions educate students for the dominant (international) market of the opera and concert industry – the opera houses and concert halls. Our encounters, as professional opera singers, with alternative and experimental expressions, techniques, styles, and work structures, generally occur only when we meet and collaborate with people *outside* the operatic community. Both artistic and educational opera institutions are today dominated by a somewhat conservative and protectionist way of doing things, due to both economics and tradition.

On the other hand, we are also often encountering other artists whose idea of revolutionizing opera consists of trying to free the art form from "opera singing" (simplistically conflated with classical singing). In this way of thinking, the practice of opera singing makes opera *sound* antiquated, and so the obvious solution would be to change the vocal idiom. This is in my opinion a

superficial approach. Artistically, there are of course many practices and means of sound productions dating back to the 19th century that still are employed in new, experimental kinds of music. But instruments seem less burdened by their association with, say, the symphony orchestra, than the projected voice is by its association with the philharmonic opera house. A conflict however appears in that opera singers often pride themselves on being (more or less) technologically independent when it comes to vocalization, but, thereby, are shut out from the kind of contemporary opera that is concerned with new, often electronically modified sounds.

We still need a term for the kind of music theatre that focuses on the self-reliant and technologically independent human voice in the emancipatory and risky way that opera does. Therefore, I consistently advocate the use of the term "opera." As I will argue, a narrow and simplistic view on the historical development of opera that considers the sound as the primary problem with operatic conservatism is a trap; we cannot just stop at the surface and grapple with this most conspicuous operatic feature. With my vantage point in opera as *practice*, I define and defend opera singing as a core feature of opera. With my own artistic work, I demonstrate how opera singing and classically trained singers can be integrated into verbo-musico-theatrical settings quite far from the symphonic opera house opera. My driving force is to create room for the operatic practitioner in contemporary music theatre beyond both the 20th century avant-garde's prejudices against classical singing and the opera singing community's affiliation with classical venues and traditional soundscapes. My aim is to *artistically* explore the possibilities for operatic works and performances on the level of the *event*, that is, in its artistic occurrence in a social and environmental context, expanding operatic experimentation from earlier preoccupations with sonic aspects (musical composition) and literary aspects (plot and wordings). With the introduction of the opera maker as game designer, the production and presentation of operatic works are viewed from a new angle.

NORDIC RESEARCH IN CONTEMPORARY AND NON-INSTITUTIONAL OPERA

In the Nordic context, recent artist-driven third cycle projects and dissertations in contemporary and non-institutional opera show how practitioners may creatively deal with the general conditions and expectations in operatic art, while expanding the opportunities for 21ˢᵗ century opera. Some projects are curiously playful and others are explicitly problem-driven. Some look to new technology while others revive and reconnect with the sometimes more permissive work roles of the past.

Hans Gefors (2011) at the Malmö Academy of Music, Lund University, maps out the composition of an opera especially written and produced for car radio. A critical stance can be found in Trond Reinholdtsen's (2013) *Den Norske Opra* [sic.] at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo, which might be described as a meta-commenting anti-opera. Carl Unander-Scharin (2014) at the Univeristy College of Opera in Stockholm and KTH Royal Institute of Technology aims at re-empowering opera singers and extending their control over accompaniment and vocal expressivity with technological means. Jaakko Nousiainen (2015) at the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi examines the mobile medium as a new platform for operatic presentation in his experimental opera *Omnivore*. And Sara Wilén (2017) at the Malmö Academy of Music, Lund University, uses the concept of classical and contemporary vocal improvisation as a creative artistic tool for singers in critical dialogue with classical vocal performance tradition. These are a few examples of doctoral projects in the Nordic context of artistic research in contemporary and non-institutional opera (outside the opera house tradition) that have been disseminated in the 2010s. And even if opera is today just a minor field in artistic research – ambivalently positioned across both academic and artistic territories – there is a growing base of literature and expositions describing the artistic findings of operatic practitioners, some radically innovative and others more historically oriented. Much operatic research has been located in music departments, even if there are examples of operatic researchers affiliated with operatic education, and, as in my case, performance practices in general.

LUDIC ART IN ARTISTIC RESEARCH

Furthermore, also the issue of game design and ludology as a basis for artistic creation and performance is today yet a small strand in artistic research. In music, Per Anders Nilsson's thesis (2011) at the University of Gothenburg revolves around how game design can inform the design and play of digital musical instruments and Else Olsen Storesund's (2016) project at the Grieg Academy in Bergen on open form[4] did emanate in the chance-based game *Lotto S.E.L.* for musical performers. Arne Kjell Vikhagen (2017) at the University of Gothenburg explores the ability of Game Art to combine a state of play with the agency of the art work. The many parallels and overlapping interests of game studies and art has convinced me that more transdisciplinary research in this area is needed, in order to understand what roles the artistic and the ludic may have in relation to each other.

MY ENTRY

As a researcher, my primary interest does not lie with operatic *repertory* or the *craft* of classical opera singing, but with opera as public event. As a researcher in the *practice* of opera, the important question for me is not how the canonical works are being presented, edited, conceptualized, and framed today. Instead, I am interested in what ways contemporary operatic practice can be developed further, more generally – and more broadly defined than by the historical standard repertory. It is actually hard to think of any example of an art form or an artistic research field that is so entangled and preoccupied with its past, also when it comes to contemporary practice. A driving force for my artistic research project is the vision of a contemporary operatic practice that does not merely define itself through its histrionic and rebellious opposition to the canonical opera repertoire and its standardized formats of presentation. I hope to find mechanisms and methods that can allow us to make new and innovative opera works, without necessarily discarding existing working principles and qualities of the traditional opera, nor getting stuck in the shadows of history.

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[4] Open form, "opera aperta" (Eco, 1989), and "non-linearity" are topics closely related to game design as well as to discussions of linearity in general. With the exception of *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black*, the operas within my study can neither be considered totally "open" nor "mono-linear," but rather "multi-linear."

Ludo-immersive opera has come into being alongside with the international immersive theatre trend that has grown strong in the early 21st century. At the same time, the emerging contemporary acknowledgement of games as aesthetic and artistic sites has inspired an emphasis on *action-based* perception. The term "ludo-immersive opera" connects to three topics: *opera*, *play*, and *immersion*. All three could be regarded as human *practices* and, from my practitioner's position, I ask myself *how* we make opera, *how* we make something playful, and *how* we immerse someone. Supported by examples of practice and by literature, I map out how the three practices are theoretically compatible.

MY EXIT

As I first approached ludo-immersive opera as a field for research, I was convinced that the impact of this practice on visitor behaviour should be of foremost importance. As I dug into design issues and interactive cruxes, I expected to find keys to making visitors empathize with and act within our settings and stories in functional ways. That perspective certainly runs through the ways I've structured the interviews and surveys submitted within the project.

But then, as I left the performer role completely in the final opera within the project, I begun to see things from another angle. As I reviewed the empirical material, both the generated documentation and my own recollections, I realized that besides articulating the displacement of the habitual visitor's role, the study also revealed *how performing artists are affected by visitor encounters.* When I stopped focusing on the image of myself, stopped evaluated my own artistic achievements, new insights hit me. Due to our own historical ignorance and lack of training, we opera artists have become more and more alienated from our guests. With this *artist alienation* – the opposite of Brechtian visitor alienation – I realized that we have become over-sensitized to any "noise" and distraction that may occur as an effect of a live crowd of non-artists attending our performances. Ludo-immersive opera presents a situation in which opera artists must actively respond to alien visitors with the ability to interfere, instead of being ignoring or being unaffected by their activity. And this is not always comfortable.

I had earlier been engaged in debates about how the formality and reverential listening surrounding classical music could be construed as counter-produc-

tive if the intentions are to attract new, untrained, and younger audiences. In 2011, I argued that we have a problem with mixed messages if public event organizing comes with an educating attitude rather than an invitational and a more laid-back approach to the performance itself, and "that a paradox emerges if a genre suddenly claims to be both contact-seeking and at the same time remaining austere" (Jalhed, 2011, p. 71, my translation from Swedish). My point in that case was that we must accept that parallel and alternative concert formats that are more socially relaxed might evolve and develop alongside with the mainstream type of more formal events.

Performers are also perceivers and our performances progress with every contact we have with uncontrolled elements, such as visitors with the permission to act. But opera artists have been deprived of perceptions, guarded by the fourth wall and domesticated audiences. I discovered that I was not primarily researching how to immerse the visitors in fiction, but foremost how to keep artists immersed while confronted by outsiders, coming from the non-fictional realm. In our efforts to shield the stage from incoming information that may disturb and "pollute" the performance, our robustness and versatility has been suffering. The key risk factor for artistic failure or success in ludo-immersive opera is spelled *audience display*, that is, how artists perceive visitors while performing and affirm the spatial, musical, and verbal involvement of the visitors. The common figure of how immersive events make *spectators into performers*[5] was completely turned on its head when I realized that this type of art just as much turns *performers into spectators*. The term "spectactor" – originally attributed to Agosto Boal and today sometimes occurring in the discourse of immersive theatre – could actually denote actors turning into spectators as much as spectators turning into actors. While I at first thought that I followed in the tradition of exploring and researching *the visitor's relationship to the performance*, be it with the twist of contemporary opera, I realized that I was primarily researching *the artist's management of reciprocal interaction*.

"In every social situation we can find a sense in which one participant will be an observer with something to gain from assessing expressions, and another will be the subject with something to gain from manipulating this process," says anthropologist and sociologist Erving Goffman (1969, p. 81). These roles are not necessarily asymmetrically and statically tied to official artist and per-

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[5] Ethical concerns about visitor exploitation in participatory events has been raised and for instance Adam Alston (2016) has extensively discussed neo-liberal values in immersive theatre.

sonal non-artist, respectively, but can be balanced and interchangeable so that the artist can observe the non-artist and the non-artist can manipulate the process; the game goes two ways and everyone is both a performer and a perceiver simultaneously. This is a simple fact and Goffman reminds us that a "crucial communication condition of face-to-face interaction [is that] not only are the receiving and conveying of the naked and embodied kind, but each giver is himself a receiver, and each receiver is a giver" (1963, pp. 15–16). This means that we can see that we are seen (or heard) and that "to use our naked senses is to use them nakedly and to be made naked by their use" (ibid., p. 16). Our poor preparedness for direct contact with the reactions, impulses, and input from non-artists does not mean that we should avoid such interaction, in fiction and social life – we should begin training for it. Theatre scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte (2016) argues that a performance by definition requires on-looking. I disagree with this blunt conflation of spectacle and performance. Instead, I propose, it is time to distinguish spectacular performances (for others) from more arbitrary (without goal) or subjectifying performances (for self). Indeed there are performances that are secretive and even exclusively known only to the performers themselves; that is, self-experienced performances based on self-awareness and thereby presence.

In his classical text *Musica Practica*, literary theorist Roland Barthes (1977) noted the difference between the musical amateur, not, as might often be assumed, to be defined by technical imperfection, but by his desire to make music as a manual and sensual activity, and the professional specialist, performing for the sake of being heard. This is the tension between play and display, performance and perception. Scholar and theatre director Richard Schechner argues further that "[t]he situation of the 'professional performer' – a person who reflexively masters the techniques of performance (whether or not s/he gets paid for it) – is very different from the 'Goffman performer' who is likely to be unaware of her/his performance" (2003, p. 300). This does not mean that professional performers cannot interact with non-professional performers, even in fiction, as we blend theatrical acting with role-playing. However, these encounters have been poorly studied from the artist's point of view. Schechner argues that "[v]ery little hard work has been done researching the behavior of audiences and the possible *exchange of roles* between audience and performers. Unlike the performers, the spectators attend theatre unrehearsed; they bring to the theatre a decorum that has been learned elsewhere but which is nevertheless scrupulously applied here" (ibid., p. 44, my emphasis). Even

though my study enrolls visitors in action, the same principle is valid. The visitors attend unrehearsed and come to the event with a set of expectations and habits they have learned elsewhere. Not only that, I must add, but what differs artists from visitors is the habitus itself, to which the artists belong, so that the artists are at home and known to each other, while the visitors appear without prior preparation. Schechner continues that audiences must be evaluated with regards to "the nature of the performance" and that "[t]he 'best' audience is one in which harmonic evocations are present up to, but not beyond, the point where the performers become distracted. The traditional theatre barely explores a part of the full range of audience-performer interaction" (ibid., p. 45). When finishing the project, I have narrowed it down to some aspects that normally tend to go unnoticed:

- the professional performers reactions to the non-professional performers,
- the issue of visitor roles in the particular field of opera (which tends to be neglected as a specific area in research about spectacles in studies about theatre, music, and sports), and
- the person-specific visitorship in which the incoming individual participants are acting on their own, face-to-face with the professional performers (by which I question whether the general focus of performance practices on broadcasting towards the mass could not be positively influenced by the focus of game studies on the individual).

Furthermore, while immersion in literature, music, theatre, and games is persistently discussed in each research community, operatic immersion is an under-explored field. In game studies, many studies on immersion have focused on digital games rather than embodied play, and for example, the need for interdisciplinary studies has been highlighted by clinical psychologist and game designer Lauri Lukka (2014). With my exploration of how immersion can be practically achieved through the schema that is characteristic of opera, I hope to contribute with findings that are valuable across disciplines. Also, while live-action role-playing today is becoming institutionalized and even professionalized through education and training, the question has been raised how larpers might cooperate with existing institutions in order to be regarded as part of mainstream modern culture (Fedoseev, 2014). In a similar manner, it is possible to ask how de-institutionalized opera might cooperate with existing institutions supporting contemporary game-playing, instead of seeking a "gentrifying" validation from the operatic establishment.

CLARIFICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Although dealing with an interdisciplinary artform which could have been studied from many perspectives, I stress that this research project in opera has its focal point in dramatic *performance practices*. In short, I regard opera as something we (humans) do (a practice) and operas as works engaging and articulating practicing opera artists. My focus is on human-to-human interaction within operatic events, in which information is communicated live without proxies and with sender and receiver present to each other in the same place, in the same time, and in the same system. My collection of data is limited to recordings and recollections of actions and strategies, and has not included mappings of emotional responses from the participants.

Poetic, musical, and theatrical elements in the operas are only discussed in relation to each other as they function in opera, not as independent entities practiced separately or detachable from the operatic context. My personal experience of composing music is very limited and I do not appear as a musical composer in this context. Aspects of musical composition and performance are touched upon in accounts by co-authoring artists, but are not elaborated from my point of view; the research study centers on how we perform and express ourselves through operatic means and in operatic contexts, in contrast to merely musical means and musical contexts.

Furthermore, improvisational artistic features are not our emphasis, and Operation Opera does not employ the concept of opera improvisation as an integral part of the works, but focuses on scripted and pre-planned material. The study is limited to chamber opera and does not involve symphonic opera or large-scale mass scenes. The focus is on live events and live, in-person meetings in shared spaces, and any possibilities emerging with digital technology (online gaming, virtual reality, telepresence etc.) in relation to ludo-immersive opera are not explored in this study. Nor does it deal with adaptations of existing plots or works – such as already existing operas or games – into new hybrid formats, but concerns original works only.

INTRODUCING LIVE-ACTION OPERA

In order to contextualize my current practice and the aim of the research project, I here expand on the background and intentions of the company Operation Opera. I also give a concise explanation of what kind of ludo-immersive opera Operation Opera has made before and what ludo-immersive opera might denote in general.

OPERATION OPERA

I founded Operation Opera in 2010 and I am artistic director of the company. Since then, the ensemble has involved a number of classically trained opera singers, as well as other singers, actors, and instrumentalists from different traditions, together with different creative teams of librettists, composers, directors, set designers, and light designers in at least one production per year in Halmstad. Many of the operas made by Operation Opera also have been touring. Among the reoccurring performers and creators have been, besides myself, Agnes Wästfelt, John Kinell, David Hornwall, Rickard Stierna, Mattias Petersson, Mattias Rylander, and Kristofer Langerbeck. We define our genre broadly as "new opera[6]," which includes immersive opera and opera with ludic features, but also other types of boundary-defying experiments.

Operation Opera does not copy the structure or organization of an opera house in miniature and, as a rule, we reject audition-based castings, formalized

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[6] In Swedish, the term "nyopera" translates into new opera or opéra nouveau, in line with new circus and cirque nouveau. Besides Operation Opera, also New Opera CO in Gothenburg has applied the label nyopera to their work, however with a somewhat different description; Operation Opera stresses the performance space and New Opera CO stresses the sound. Operation Opera defines new opera as "opera with a fictional plot driven by autonomous live-singing in combination with contemporary technology in non-institutional milieus where the drama is placed among people rather than on podiums" (*Operation Opera: Begreppet Nyopera*, n.d.). New Opera CO defines new opera as "a kind of sung theatre that sounds neither as opera nor as musical theatre [...] in which the audience forgets that the dialogue is actually sung [...] and the text is very easy to hear" (*New Opera CO: Om Nyopera*, n.d.). New Opera CO also takes a stance different than Operation Opera in stating that new opera revolves around modern drama with stories from everyday life and is sung with a non-operatic technique that is closer to ordinary speech (*New Opera CO: Nyoperamanifestet*, n.d.).

production-chains, and standardized venues. Our operas are most often orig-inal works and we do not normally do reductive "pocket opera" or revisions and deconstructions in the manner of "director's theatre." Instead, the group gathers around specific ideas which are developed through the expertise, me-dia, and sites at hand. These ideas are discussed and workshopped collectively before the works are commissioned and they often revolve around colliding and merged genres and styles, distorted messages, world-building, surreal fan-tasy and fairy-tale settings, and location theatre. We believe that in order to infuse new elements of form into a genre both weighed down by cultural heri-tage and sometimes seemingly desperate to adapt the repertory in presentistic[7] ways, the working context itself must be dynamic, displaced, dissolved and de-stabilized. In order to achieve this, each of our productions must include either a new venue or a new team member – preferably both. That means that we seldom work with the exact same musical arrangements from one production to another, but with new mixes of musicians, voice types, and instruments; the ever-changing keeps us evolving. However, even if a range of styles and tech-niques has been part of our productions, our works have often been dominat-ed by the combination of classically trained voices and live-electronics[8]. (See further discussion on the operatic voice in the **Conceptual Framework** in this chapter.) This has proved to be a both mobile and technically reliable variant with noticeable immersive qualities, more or less regardless of the properties of the venue at hand. Many of our works have been presented in urbex[9] venues in order to spark a sense of adventure and exploration, and detach both ourselves and our visitors from too much comfort and etiquette through a conscious disassociation from institutional concert and theatre milieus and etiquette. Ludic and immersive features are most often a prominent part of our produc-tions, even though the experiences of and interest in game-playing in general vary within the ensemble.

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[7] Presentism, here understood as the propensity to interpret and censor the past in terms of the present and its favoured taboos, is in opera notable in revisionary and idealist tendencies and fluctuations.

[8] Historically, the invention of musical instruments has always been connected to technologi-cal advancements. Electronic and digital instruments reflect our time, even though we still sing with the same kinds of bodies we have had for hundred of thousands of years. And just as ear-lier generations learned to sing with the instruments of their time, we learn to sing with ours.

[9] Urbex is short for urban exploring, the hobby sometimes known as roof-and-tunnel hacking that revolves around the exploration of abandoned, man-made sites.

THE ANFASIA CHRONICLE

Operation Opera's most acclaimed and long-term work has been a series of operas called the *Anfasia Chronicle* (see picture from performance in **Figure 2**). The basic idea behind these operas has been to use role-playing as an artistic method in the preparations of the material and invite visitors not as a passive audience, but as role-playing participants. This idea has been negotiated within the ensemble and tested in different ways. The *Anfasia Chronicle* has been coproduced and conceived in collaboration with the electric guitar collective KROCK[10].

ANFASIA – WELCOME INTO THE WARMTH

The first of the Anfasia operas, initiated by me, was *Anfasia – Welcome into the Warmth* (original Swedish title: *Anfasia – Välkommen in i värmen*) from 2011, with libretto by Helena Röhr and music by Mattias Petersson. In this opera, the fictional nation Anfasia was introduced. The visitors were given coordinates to a place where they were met by the character The Guide, who took them to Anfasia, established as a secret "safe space" to shelter its citizens from the ugliness and uncertainty of the outside world. The opera was premiered in a World War II bunker below Galgberget in the city of Halmstad and later played in other abandoned institutional and industrial venues in Varberg and Halmstad. The scenario in this opera was mono-linear and while the visitors were addressed as part of the setting, the opera did not include any opportunities for visitor interaction that could affect the plot or artistic performance in any significant way.

WELCOME BACK TO ANFASIA

The second opera in the *Anfasia Chronicle* was *Welcome Back to Anfasia* (original Swedish title: *Välkommen åter till Anfasia*) from 2012, with libretto by me and Helena Röhr, and music by Mattias Petersson. This opera included par-

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[10] KROCK has since 2005 strived to promote chamber music for electric guitar quartet and electric guitar orchestra, and has commissioned a number of works by contemporary composers. Besides this, the group also explicitly questions the conventional concert format and aims to expand it in new directions.

allel events and the ensemble split in multiple venues, simultaneously singing different text and melodies to the same live accompaniment played in various rooms that showed different scenes. It ended with a situation in which the citizens, embodied by the visitors, got to vote and chose which one of two of the main characters who was to be sentenced to destruction. This opera was played in an abandon industrial venue in Halmstad, but also in reduced short versions in a garage in Halmstad City Library and at Huset Under Bron in Stockholm. It was preceded by role-playing activities with parts of the ensemble in order to establish character habits.

ANFASIAN ENTERTAINMENT

In 2013, we made the third Anfasia opera, *Anfasian Entertainment* (original Swedish title: *Anfasisk underhållning*) with libretto by the ensemble collectively and music by Mattias Petersson. This opera was specially modified for presentation in a black box, and included a preparatory workshop for testing and training of the visitors in their roles as Anfasian citizens. *Anfasian Entertainment* played at Kulturparadiset in Halmstad, on tour as RANK's[11] Artist in Motion Project at Inter Arts Center in Malmö (hosted by C-Y Contemporary), at Fylkingen in Stockholm, and at Kapellsbergs Folkhögskola in Härnösand (hosted by Nymus).

THE ARCHITECT

The Architect (original Swedish title: *Den tilltalade*), with libretto by John Kinell and music by Mattias Petersson, became the fourth Anfasia opera in 2017. The scenario contained forked paths with alternative endings, which could be influenced by any of the citizen-visitors who dared break loose from the visitor group and act individually, engaging in the fictional conflict. The performances were presented in an abandoned building at the hospital area in Halmstad. Later, also a black box version took place at Artisten in Gothenburg. Further, in this production, we expanded role-playing as an artistic method in the preparations and rehearsals, with full group larping and role-playing of a

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[11] RANK is short for Riksförbundet Arrangörer av Nutida Konstmusik.

background story to the opera. This opera was the first opera I followed as a researcher and as it is included in this study, it is thoroughly described and analysed in **Chapter 3**.

Figure 2: Scene from *Welcome Back to Anfasia* in Halmstad 2012. Photo by Thomas Klenze.

AN OPERATIC MISAPPREHENSION

People are gathering in the foyer for some preparations that will turn them from private visitors into fictional citizens in the nation Anfasia. Men in pink shirts hand out personality tests. Monitors are showing instructional videos to explain the different personality types and customs that exist in Anfasia. The tests are obviously arbitrary, but so is everything here. (Later, we will run a beauty pageant where every voter's ballot is shredded into pieces before their eyes when the result is presented.) The visitors are handed props and horoscopic explanations according to their revealed – or, rather, arbitrarily assigned – personality type. Suddenly, there is a discreet quarrel between one of the men in pink and a visitor, who turns out to be a theatrical reviewer. The reviewer refuses to take part in the activities – he will not play. Instead, he insists on standing to the side or following the other visitors around, taking notes and studying them as they try to loosen up, in all the silly exercises they are asked to take part in. This position clearly bothers the other visitors, who become stiff and self-conscious. The man in the pink shirt does not succeed in convincing the reviewer that the whole point is to participate in the event as a fictional character in action, and not appearing as oneself. As the opera proceeds, we all continue with the reviewer experiencing the performance from the wrong position – a contra-fictional and illogical position that does not make any sense to anyone.

This incident occurred in a performance of *Anfasian Entertainment* in 2013, the third immersive role-play opera taking place in Anfasia. This touring opera included a cross-fading workshop and, even if there were no alternative ways for this opera to unfold, the visitors were given clear tasks that occupied them during the event, in order to encourage their active engagement. The reviewer's failure to understand the immersive and playful aspects of the opera, and his insistence in regarding it from a non-invested outsider's position troubled us; he was not considering how much his uninvolved stance was interfering with the working of the event. He did not at any point forget his professional role, which certainly kept him from becoming immersed in the process. At the same time, the other visitors maintained their roles as Anfasian citizens and many came back to us, telling us about what an eerie and overwhelming effect the opera had on them. And of course there was little we could do about visitors who wouldn't play along without breaking the spell ourselves. Is damage control in-fiction possible at all without adding to the disturbance? What mind-set must the visitors come with and how can that be encouraged? What is a review worth if the reviewer has not experienced the performance from the position that we requested our guests to take?

FEATURES OF THE GENRE

Action is conscious movement that is not automatic, but preceded by a perceived possibility to make a choice to move or not. The word action in "live-action opera" or "LARP opera" refers to deliberate deeds and interferences with the intention of affecting and changing the ongoing plot away from or towards a certain goal. In many of our operas, the artists offer scenarios which in many cases can be triggered by the visitors' actions.

My aim during recent years has been to investigate how operatic live-action role-playing can constitute an alternative to operatic spectacles as we know them from opera houses and other stages. Live-action role-playing is a participatory experience to which everyone contributes hands-on and in the flesh. This means that my experimentation is on the level of the social event itself. Live-action role-playing is defined by three criteria, according to game studies scholar J. Tuomas Harviainen in his doctoral dissertation about LARP's as information systems:

> 1. It has to be role-playing in which a character, not just a social role, is played. 2. The activity has to take place in a fictional reality shared with others, and breaking that fictional reality is seen as a breach in the play itself. 3. The physical presence of at least some of the players as their characters is necessary, or the activity becomes some other type of role-playing. Role-playing consists of the intentional evocation of artificial experiences through the use of fictional characters as masks, identities or personas. In larp, it is done physically. (2012, p. 3)

With ludo-immersive opera in general and LARP opera in particular, the historical tendency towards a more and more silent, invisible, immobile, and spatially separated opera audience (see my remarks on Wagner and Brecht in the **Conceptual Framework** in this chapter) and, with it, an undisturbed delivery of the work, are hereby radically reversed. Historically and outside the genre of opera, this idea is not a novelty. Theatrical experiments that blended artists and visitors were carried out by for instance Jerzy Grotowski, and as I will address later, environmental theatre with roaming visitors is far from new.

However, LARP opera is a hybrid, *inspired* by live action role-playing – but it is not larping as larpers are exactly used to know it. While all of Harviainen's

criteria above can be met in LARP opera, participants in this type of event cannot act without adjusting to the stylistic constraints of the work. The music in LARP opera sets a certain pace and turn-taking. As I will argue, the practice of live opera organizes human modalities of sensation (what we can manage physiologically) and participation (what we can manage sociologically), which is what distinguishes LARP opera from more conventional larping. The module-based[12], musically driven drama is not intended to be realistically enacted. This artistic stylization may either soothe or stress players who expect scenarios to unfold in real-time and real-speech. The complexity of the operatic organization – even in small-scale chamber opera – also reduces the number of options available for participatory influence on the plot. In short, LARP operas are not as organic or flexible as regular LARP events. And, as Aleksey Fedoseev, applying LARP in the field of education and art, notes when it comes to larping, "[d]eep immersion into the diegesis by no means always comes together with full freedom of characters' actions" (2014, p. 109).

Over the years, we have faced both classical opera lovers who refuse to accept the sound of our operas as a way to do opera, and larpers who refuse to accept opera's aestheticized and synthetic interaction mode as an artistic way to do LARP. We are doing it "wrong" from both perspectives. In Operation Opera our primary observation after ten years as an ensemble is that our visitors are generally neither classical opera fans nor inveterate larpers, but open-minded and curious people of all ages, many quite young, who look for playful and non-predictable multi-modal art experiences.

Ludo-immersive opera is a term coined by me in order to denote a peripheral sub-genre of contemporary opera built on ludic participation and sensory stimulation. Role-play is of course not the only possible ludic approach that can be applied to ludo-immersive opera. Besides Operation Opera's operas, the adaptations and works from the 2010s by Dutch artist Arlon Luijten, Danish artist Niels Rønsholdt's experiments with the ensemble Scenatet, and the conceptual operas by Lithuanian-Swedish group the Spatial Opera Company might be mentioned as examples of what I regard as ludo-immersive opera,

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[12] In musical performance, module-based strategies and compositions are found both in concert programming and within works. Modules can form a catalogue of actions, allowing for both railroading and more arbitrary and surprising happenings without pre-arranged sequences. In theatrical performance, modular thinking is not part of the common terminology. In role-playing, however, pre-made adventure modules are at the core of the game-composition.

engaging with both participatory and sensory aspects, while usually emphasizing one or the other.

At the core of both my artistic practice and this research project lies an interest in meeting with previously unknown and uninitiated others in the context of opera. Such meetings can be both exciting and annoying. In ludo-immersive opera, this is about inciting more than reducing risk and uncertainty. A closely related field are ludic works where professional artists play by themselves or interact artistically with other artists in more or less ludic ways in front of a non-performing audience. Such is the case in the open form improvisation opera *I, Norton* by Gino Robair[13]. Another closely related field is meta-operatic games about opera or opera making, such as the online game *Operaquest* by Peder Barratt-Due, launched by Bergen National Opera. And the interest of my doctoral project lies primarily with ludic *formats*, more than thematically ludic *narratives* (reconstructions and tales about games). While ludic connotations can be present as a depicted theme in an opera – as for instance in many well-known operas such as Tchaikovsky & Tchaikovsky's *Pique Dame* (card play) (see picture of me singing the role of Chloë at the Royal Opera in Stockholm in **Figure 3**), Kind & Weber's *Der Freischütz* (shooting contest), Adami, Simoni & Puccini's *Turandot* (riddles), da Ponte & Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (role-play), Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (song contest), Barbier, Carré & Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffman* (doll play), and Menotti & Barber's *A Hand of Bridge* (once again, card play*)* – few operatic works also immerse the visitors into ludic schemes and fictional worlds.

WE ARE THE GAME, YOU ARE THE PLAYER

Role-playing as we know it today became popular and commercial in the 1970-80s. Although there is a range of free form and border-line cases, analog role-playing games (RPG's) can be roughly divided into table-top (also known as pen-and-paper) role-playing games (TRPG's[14]) and live-action role-playing

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[13] Robair's work is following in the tradition of musical "game pieces," in which sounding events unfold according to certain rules and restrictions on improvisation within systems of control. Prominent artists within this genre have been for instance Christian Wolff, Iannis Xenakis, John Zorn, and Mathius Shadow-Sky, building their own music gaming systems for musicians. See also discussions on ludomusicality in general in Roger Moseley's *Keys to Play* (2016).

[14] The abbreviation TRPG is most often used for table-top role-playing games, but also for *tactical role-playing game* (a marginal video game genre not discussed here).

Figure 3: Hedvig Jalhed as Chloë in *Pique Dame* at the Royal Opera in Stockholm 2009.
Photo by Alexander Kenney.

games (LARP's). There is nowadays also a growing interest in blackbox and art larping. Digital role-playing games is another business. But re-enactments and interactive social games are of course older than these modern formalizations. And the world's oldest (and still ongoing) offline massive multi-player role-playing game would be *Schlaraffia* (Dittmar, 2018). Since its start in Prague in 1859, "knights of Schlaraffia" (including artists such as Franz Lehár and Emmerich Kálmán) have met regularly and this game, promising friendship, art, and humour, has become an institution. Mock-courtly rituals and even Schlaraffic theatre plays and operas has been staged within the game. Today, over 10,000 active participants worldwide are still actively engaged in playing *Schlaraffia*. Role-playing as private and popular amusement is perhaps secretive and peculiar, but not necessarily "on the fringe."

With live-action opera, unrehearsed and more or less uninformed visitors, without obligation to prepare or contribute artistically, are immersed in operatic settings and situations, where we, the artists, act as the interface to the game in which they are the players. That makes LARP opera a form of *player-vs.-environment game* (PVE) rather than *player-versus-player game* (PVP), where the artists become *game masters* (GM's) and *non-player characters* (NPC's). In **Table 1**, the modes of table-top role-playing and live-action role-playing are compared. The liveliness of the play arises in the moment in which both artist and visitor are present in the same shared place at the same time, and live-action generates opportunities for corporeal action. That is different than in tabletop role-playing games, in which the diegetic action is *verbalized* and *described* rather than *enacted*. This can allow for time to think and to argue, while the immediacy of live-action role-playing calls for sensory attention and alertness. On the other hand, while live-action role-playing is constrained by material factors with economical or moral implications, table-top role-playing allow for fantasising beyond the restrictions of matter and society; in table-top role-playing games, the players share information but usually not any elaborate aural or visual concretizations of events and milieux, which instead are imagined by each participant personally. That gives table-top role-playing more creative potential, enhancing world building.

In many cases, Operation Opera's ludo-immersive operas come with forked paths, alternative endings and parallel venues, allowing the visitors to affect the plot with tangible consequences. Such complexities require a considerable number of optional scenes, which of course come with more costs and rehearsals in the case of commissioned compositions. Other practitioners have

Mode:	TRPG	LARP
Mediation:	Cerebral (mind-to-mind without figuration)	Carnal (figure-to-mind)
Manifestation:	Discrete (individual)	Concrete (communal)
Resources:	Assumed (unlimited details and options)	Consumed (limited details and options)
Genre:	Poetry (verbally triggered imagination)	Theatre (visually triggered imagination)

Table 1: Comparative table of analog RPG modes.

presented participatory opera in ways which have avoided such optional outcomes and responses in operatic plots:

> Any attempt to use the audience's interactions to modify the story potentially runs into the problem of combinatorics. If a choice of two outcomes is introduced, then two stories need to be constructed. If a second choice of two outcomes is introduced, at another point of the story, then four versions of the story need to be determined. For a third decision point, we are now at eight versions of the story, and so on. This quickly becomes unmanageable. Therefore a "management strategy" needs to be developed to allow variation without leading to such combinatory effects. For example, audiences could be given the ability to modify aspects of the staging that concern appearance (i.e., esthetics) but which do not substantially influence the plot itself. (Edwards et al., 2019, p. 11)

However, this "problem of combinatorics" is artistically intriguing and Operation Opera has chosen to embrace such multi-version work. Even if multiple scenarios are more complicated and often less organic in opera than in non-musical theatre or non-theatrical music, we still cherish the rare but existing possibilities for non-artistic participant to impact the course of events as a core feature in Operation Opera's LARP operas. We give our guests the opportunity to become heroes in an operatic fairy tale. The musical composition presses the participant to act in the present and the visitors' participation and actions contribute to the unfolding of the plot in one way or another. The complexity of LARP operas requires that the ensemble has access to and has prepared a bank of material that can potentially be triggered by the players. We do not normally improvise very much[15], but instead, the operas are struc-

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[15] Improvisation is not central to our practice and not a part of our foundational ideas, even if individual ensemble members with improvisational skills sometimes single-handedly make use of these skills in our performances, and like to develop more improvisatorial modules in our works.

tured with rehearsed, multi-linear webs of modules that are triggered by the players' behaviour. The hosting ensemble is game-mastering the scenario for the players, and this is done poetically, musically, and theatrically. Here the format of the chamber ensemble or the "band" is key; combinatorics could probably not be managed in in larger symphonic settings, even if it would be interesting to try.

Sound and music can also be part of non-operatic role-playing. Today, customized ambiences are also produced[16] and offered to tabletop players, for example at sites such as www.tabletopaudio.com. However, the special features in role-play opera are that characters representing the game *sing*, and that if the story line includes optional paths, different musical tracks may instantly be triggered by the player *actions* themselves.

FANTASY AND FICTION

In fantasy role-playing, games do not include direct instructions for player action and story. It provides the prerequisites for action but not decisive action itself. The players are in charge of their destiny themselves and produce a co-created story based on the fictional circumstances generated by the game masters. This step-wise construction runs opposite to the classical work order in opera. In role-playing games, the environment is elaborated and introduced first; the progression depends on the players, and the story is the final product of the adventure as it could be retold by the participants after the fantasy act. In traditional opera making, the story comes first with the libretto, the pace of action comes second with the music, and the setting comes last with the theatrical decor. In the first example – let's call it the quest model – environment delimits action and action produces story. In the second example – let's call that the fate model – story produces action and action delimits environment. (See a further discussion of this in the **Conceptual Framework** section of this chapter, where my nested doll model of opera explains how this could be conceptualized and applied in ludo-immersive opera.)

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[16] For example, one of the TRPG's which includes ambient tracks consisting of commissioned and professionally composed music been has been *Heart: The City Beneath* by Grant Howitt & Christopher Taylor.

Our cerebral "actor-scene" network, enables the conscious recombination of memories for future planning, speculation and "day-dreaming," suggests literature scholar Brian Boyd (2018). From this, we create fantasy scenarios. Edward S. Casey (1976), who specialized in philosophical psychology and the philosophy of space and place, distinguishes fantasy from its "sibling acts" memory, imagination, and hallucination – which all have perception as their common progenitor – by five characteristics. According to him, fantasies exhibit

1. a narrative character (fantasies have a tendency to tell stories),
2. a sense of participation (fantasies always involves the fantasists themselves),
3. waywardness (unlike hallucinations, fantasies can be consciously controlled, but, unlike imaginings, they can be left consciously uncontrolled by the fantasist),
4. wish fulfilment (fantasies are satisfying), and
5. belief (fantasies establish a sense of inner reality that the fantasist comes to believe exists apart from empirical reality).

The logic of this inner or psychological reality can be said to establish "fictional truths" (see Stock, 2017), in which the author informs us of facts within a fiction, with the intention to make the audience imagine the very same facts.[17] Literary scholar Marie-Laure Ryan, well-known for her work on immersion and interaction in literature and games, proposes a model of plural worlds, in which there is one that has an autonomous existence – the real one – and others that are imaginative creations. Fact and fiction then becomes a matter of reference, since "nonfiction makes truth claims about the actual world, while fiction makes truth claim about an alternate possible world" (2013, p. 130). With this reasoning, fiction can be regarded as the production of facts that are limited to fantasy and thereby distinctly different from empirical facts. Fiction relies on symbolic action that directs thought and sparks imagination by means of projection, hinting at associative states.

When I speak of "counter-fictional" situations, I mean symbolic action that falsifies the fantasy by relating to empirical facts. Such falsification is taboo, because fantasies are fragile figments. Our ability to engage in fantasy seems in fact to be equivalent to being empirically grounded: "Indeed, the more

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[17] In verbal and written fiction, analytic philosopher Kathleen Stock is a proponent of the idea of "extreme intentionalism," in which fictional content is defined as equivalent to that which the author intends the reader to imagine.

attuned and open to fantasy we are, the more we rely upon a sure sense of the difference between what we experience in fantasy and what we experience in hallucination or in ordinary perception." (Casey, 1976, p. 24) And, "because make-believe involves an opposition between pretended and actual belief and an awareness of this opposition," says Ryan, "it turns illusion from a state of being deceived into a *lucid aesthetic experience*" (2013, p. 140, original emphasis). Reality always overrules fantasy and only by hindering perception – by blocking and deception – can fantasy thrive.

Just as fictional writing is symbolic, fictional enactment is too. The end point of fiction is the triggered imagination of what is *not* perceived. "In imagining, there is no competition of any sort with perceiving. For one thing, we can imagine and perceive *concurrently* — so long as we are not attempting to imagine and perceive the same thing in the same respect." (Casey, 1976, p. 13, original emphasis) That means that imagination presupposes a softness and lack of information so that actual knowledge of real, hard relationships does not override the guessing crucial to the production of fantasy.

A vital aspect of productive story-imagining, story-telling, and story-acting, linking them to the ludic, is yet to be underscored, here in the words of Boyd:

> Narrative, especially fiction, also serves to allay anxiety about uncertainty. Like play, in which animals throw themselves off balance in order to learn how to extend their range of control, stories traditionally plunge audiences into turmoil and suspense in order to bring them to a resolution that tames uncertainty and reasserts control. (Boyd, 2018, p. 11)

Just as the dreamer awakens with the insight that "it was all just a dream," the fantasist returns to reality which, through the act of fantasy, becomes even more convincing. In Caillois' perhaps most famous text, *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia*[18], he states that "the fundamental question proves to be that of *distinction*: distinctions between what is real and imaginary, between wakefulness and sleep, between ignorance and knowledge," and that "no distinction is more pronounced than the one demarcating an organism from its environment" (Caillois, 2003b, p. 91, original emphasis). By allowing ourselves to blend the actual with the fantastical and the surreal, I would say that

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[18] Psychoanalysts Jacques Lacan notably evoked Caillois' concept of mimicry with referral to this text in *The Mirror-Stage*.

we can return to a stronger sense of self and reality afterwards. In immersive art, I believe, we don't lose ourselves and *become* something else and dissolve into the surroundings, but become *part* of something else for a while, in order to strengthen our sense of demarcation when we return.

FROM SPECTACLE TO ADVENTURE

Spectacles and adventures offer two diverse ways to follow a course of events – one more passive and one more active. The *spectacle* concerns the non-interfering witnessing of destiny, in accordance with the fate model. The *adventure* is un-destined – without destination – in line with the quest model. The sense of uncertainty that produces hanging moments of decision (by personal judgement or through blind choice from dice, etc.), is a hallmark of role-playing games. In my research project, the focus is on individual visitor experiences and individual visitor action. The trope of the audience as collective is strong in theatrical genres, but with immersive events, the format of the spectacle is challenged by the format of the adventure, and, with that arises the possibility to break loose and follow one's own path, for better or worse, in "braided plots" (Ryan, 2001).

However, in the first ludo-immersive operas we produced in 2011–2013, the visitors were treated more or less only as collective. That meant that they could only change the story line together, as a group, for example through voting as citizens in the fictional nation that was the setting of the dystopian and retrotopian *Anfasia Chronicle*. Decisive actions represented the group as one; all decisive action had to be the outcome of a group process, and no individual action was decisive for the unfolding of events. In musical theatre, this relates for example to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* by Rupert Holmes (1986), based on the unfinished Dickens novel. In this work, the audience is given the opportunity to decide by voting what will happen to the characters in the end. However, here the audience is not participating in the plot – the plot only stops momentarily to let the observing crowd decide, just as a gladiatorial contest may have stopped to wait for the emperor's decision.

DIRECTORS AND ACTORS

In opera improvisation, which does not integrate visitors into the scenes either, the audience may be engaged in a kind of "rhetorical" or communicative situations described by artistic researcher Sara Wilén (2017). Here, intermittent (primarily verbal) input from the viewers drives the plot or situation forward. Stressing the immersive components, my study does not concern visitor interaction in which the guests function as an external directing force, as in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* or in opera improvisation. Rather, the visitors affect the plot or mood etc. through actual direct *actions* – not through *instructions* or *suggestions* given from onlooking directors or dramaturges to proxies.

That makes ludo-immersive opera more of a parallel to Ayn Rand's innovative theatre play *Night of January 16th* from 1934, also known as *Woman on Trial*. In this play she let selected audience members come on stage and deliver the verdict as jurors in a court room. In her note to the producer, Rand says: "We heighten the public's interest by leaving the decision in its own hands and add to the suspense by the fact that no audience, at any performance of the play, can be sure of its outcome." (2005, p. 16) The trope of alternative endings was also further employed by Dario Fo in *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* from 1970. In that play, the audience is presented with two alternative endings which both were performed one after the other. In the final scene, before leaving the stage, the main character drops the line: "Oh *Dio*! Whichever way it goes, you see, you've got to decide. Goodnight." (1987, p. 75) In contrast to Rand's play, this is a mere rhetorical gesture. But, as I will argue throughout this dissertation, the issue of personal participation and individual decision-making is at the core of ludo-immersive opera.

HOSTS AND GUESTS

With this research project, focus is on actively playing visitors, given opportunities for individual rather than collective action. This replaces the limitation of regarding the visitors only as a group rather than as individuals. A shift from broadcasting to direct meetings can bridge the gap between spectacles and game-playing. The transformation of the visitor from an entertained observer into a role-playing actor is a core feature of the kind of ludo-immersive opera

that this study addresses. This is why we primarily speak of *visitors* rather than spectators or auditors – we are *hosts* and the visitors are our *guests*.

Other practitioners have come to the same conclusion. For instance, Persis Jade Maravala & Jorge Lopes Ramos, from the independent theatre and digital arts company ZU-UK, tell how they in immersive and participatory theatrical events have "redefined the terms [they] use to describe actor (host) and audience (guest) to describe those who perform, and those who are invited to attend [their] events" (2016). They also call for additional training for actors in immersive performances, as they identify among the actors a lack of skill in hosting while acting:

> Professional actors are not trained to manage audience participation. They are trained to act. And regardless of how good they are at doing it, their skills are specific to a form of theatre which does not include intimate relationships with audience members. Therefore, when confronted with individual audience responses, actors may not possess the skills required to handle unexpected and nuanced reactions. […] Other issues we encountered in early iterations of our work resulted from actors that were too keen to get audiences involved. Less experienced members of the cast, whilst performing fictional roles, at times tried to coerce audiences to join in, creating the opposite effect for audiences. (Jade Maravala & Lopes Ramos, 2016, n.p.)

This is certainly true for participatory opera as well. The mixing of hosts and guests can indeed generate positive, visceral and communal experiences as well as chaos and discomfort. As video game designer and theatre scholar Brenda Laurel notes:

> The problem with the audience-as-active-participant idea is that it adds to the clutter, both psychological and physical. The transformation needs to be subtractive rather than additive. People who are participating in the representation aren't audience members any more. It's not that the audience joins the actors on the stage; it's that they become actors – the notion of observers goes away. (Laurel, 2014, p. 27)

Returning to the issue of spectacle and adventures, I regard both spectacles and role-play adventures as theatrical formats. All theatrical events concern a combination of perception and performance, that is, they play upon the notion of *display*, of witnessed action. However, I will maintain that the fundamental dif-

ference between spectacles and role-playing is not a professional or artistic one, but that it can be found in the division of labour and the interactional design of the event. Hosting and guesting mark a different level of access to information, with the hosts knowing more than the guests. That makes hosts *disclosers* and guests *discoverers*. Disclosing is about active openness, deliberately not hiding but showing what you have. Discovering is about passive openness, taking in what the circumstances accidentally gives you. In formalized spectacles with a duplex layout, the hosts are externalizing performers and the visitors are internalizing perceivers; through dreamlike stillness, silence, and darkness, the perceivers' concentration is moved from their own bodies and their company, to take in the projected movements from across the proscenium "portal" in front of them. And the performers on stage are not there to take notice and draw conclusions, but to keep moving no matter what happens around them – the show must go on. Game masters, on the other hand, represent the environment and disclose information in chunks that are motivated by the players' actions; without action, there will be no information given.

It would be negligent not to point out how ludo-immersive opera reconnects to the staged audience during the reign of Louis XIV in late 17th and early 18th century. This phenomenon included the collective of visitors in fiction in French court spectacles: "Through a sophisticated system of intertextual allusion, these works alternately characterized audiences as the collective victim of an absolutist, militaristic regime or the liberated beneficiaries of the pleasures and freedoms of the Parisian metropolis." (Cowart, 2015, p. 676) This concept did in its turn reconnect to the religious drama in Medieval times. In this kind of spectacle, the audience had to invest in the presumed truth of the staged event that took place right among them (Cepek, 2014). The so called fourth wall only appeared first in the 16th century and with it came a new distinction of fictive enactment rather than miraculous display in par with the doctrine of transubstantiation,[19] with a new focus on the performer instead of the performance, paving the way for celebrity culture (ibid.). The later ideal of the self-controlled spectator as we know it today, according to performance scholar Susan Bennett, "trained to be passive in their demonstrated behavior during a theatrical performance, but to be active in their decoding of sign systems" (Bennett, 1997, p. 206) is based on skeptical disbelief and critical attitude rather than belief and loyalty. This attitude, I will argue, is kept as a central quality when we participate ludically in fiction.

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[19] In the Catholic church, transubstantiation is the idea that the substance of bread and wine in the communion become the substance of Christ's body and blood.

A RITE AT THE OPERA

I am tranquilized and placed, with a painted smile on my face, inside a glass-sided cell pulsing with stroboscope light – a punishment for questioning the Anfasian dogma of sedative medication – as the music culminates and the opera ends. In this "dollified" state, I am supposed to remain still until the visitors have been ushered out. But they are lingering and it takes time to get them out. My limbs begin to ache with lactic acid. When the last one finally is gone, I take off my wig and, together with my colleagues, I go out into the autumn sun to get some light and air after so many hours in the old, stuffy industrial building. And there they are, almost all of the 80 visitors, waiting to applaud us. Even though we have tried to communicate that this opera is not a spectacle and not a commodified experience to consume, but rather a game to be played, there still seems to be a need for closing it with a token of appreciation. And, of course, if we collect tickets before opening the doors, why shouldn't there be applause in the end?

With *Welcome Back to Anfasia* in 2012, we presented our first truly interactive opera, but still had a lot to learn about meeting and catering to the visitors. At this point, we had not begun trying to invoke from our visitors decisive individual action, with the capacity to cause concrete effect on the story line, but relied on collective decision-making in a democratic style. Even though visitor experiences were somewhat individualized, impact on the story-line was only possible arrived at en masse with majority-based resolutions. Interestingly, the urge to applaud after a participatory performance seems to come with increased group size – small groups do not exhibit any strong drive to applaud, and lone individual visitors certainly do not. It does indeed feel a bit awkward to gather and bow to those whom we regard as participants and players themselves, after a ludo-immersive opera in which they have had direct influence on the turn of events. In our earliest operas, we even wrote in the preliminary information given to visitors that this was something other than a spectacle and therefore, applause and other forms of theatrical etiquette were not encouraged. But still, now and then, the visitors have insisted on applauding, and currently we acknowledge the need for both the visitors to have the "last word" – applause being the easiest way for members of a group to produce equal sound together – as well as the collective's need to calm down as a group after a thrilling quest. Our compromise solution: after they have applauded us, we applaud them. And then we mingle together, comparing our different points of view on the event, where none of us have had the exact same experience. This kind of post-performance

socialization is in fact a common occurence in immersive event-making. So how does group-size affect immersion? Does the sense of personal influence make an event more engaging and immediate? And how can we learn from the observation that large groups bound together by their performance experience, are not so keen to disband until they have had their cathartic applause? The applause, and the move into daylight, are like thunder and lightning – the tension among the visitors won't go away until they have cleared the stage.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

My conceptual framework is transdisciplinary and traces five main topics in academic literature and artistic works, and connects them to different fields of study as well as to art. This review along with my experiments support my arguments for the system I draw up in **Chapter 4**. The five concepts that I will expand on in the following paragraphs are in sum these:

- **Systemism** articulates relations rather than individuals and wholes. The system that I present as a result of this research project is a mapping of relationships and patterns that apply to opera and play as well as to immersion.
- **Opera** and operatic development are given the most dominant place in my conceptual framework, since it is operatic practice that is in focus for transformation in my project. My vantage point is that opera is an information system, based on the human body's capacity to convey and synthetize information verbally, aurally, and visually in a self-reliant manner.
- **Play** is discussed as the triggering of movement with an organizing function through which players get to know themselves and each other. When it comes to perception and performance in play, the monitoring spectator role is taken to be part of the ludic event in relation to the categorizations of play and games.
- **Immersion** occurs when we are embedded in an attention-craving environment that blocks out everyday life. I reckon that this can be done by physical stimuli that makes the guest a part of the setting, as well as social integration which makes the guest a part of the group, and psychical awareness, in which the guest is given opportunities for decisive action. Therefore, I suggest that immersion can be *sensory* (studied as physiological phenomenon), *participatory* (studied as sociological phenomenon), and *anticipatory* (studied as psychological phenomenon).
- **Aesthetics** is understood as the knowledge about taste and disgust, that is, our preference for and aversion towards certain kinds of information. In particular, I dwell on the tension between the Apollonian and the Dionysian principles, which is a recurring figure in discussions about opera, games, and immersion.
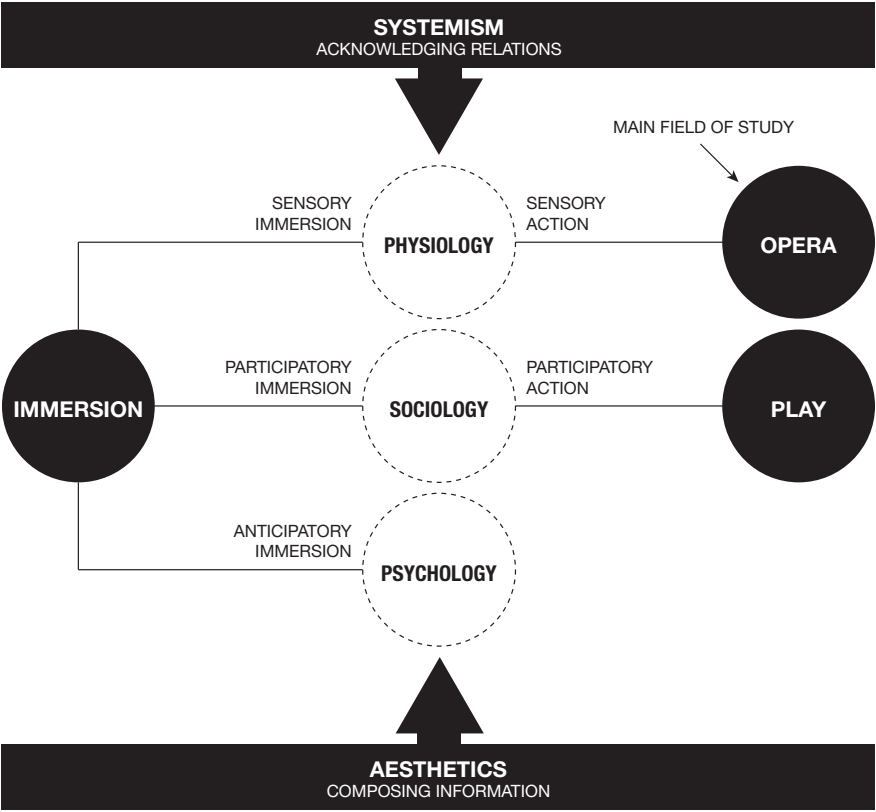
Figure 4: Overview of the transdisciplinary conceptual framework.
Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

SYSTEMISM

Thinking in systems can connect game design with artistic practice. Games can be regarded as systems per se and role-playing systems form the basis for such adventures, which I will come back to in **Chapter 4**. Moreover, cybernetics and communication systems has been a growing field of study since the 1940s. "In contrast to traditional western scientific approaches to knowledge, [systems theory] shifts attention from the absolute qualities of individual parts, and addresses the organisation of the whole in more relativistic terms, as dynamic process of interaction of constituent elements," says art historian Edward S. Shanken (2015, p. 13). "Systemics" (the study of systems and the modelling of systems of all sorts), emerged in the 1970s as a research paradigm interested in "systems theory" and "systems science." But although commonly highlighted as a critical counter-movement against *atomism*, "systemism"[20] is not *holism*. Philosopher and physicist Mario Bunge (one of the coiners of the term systemics) argues that systemism offers a viable alternative to both individualism (internalist focus on the composition of systems) and holism (externalist focus on the structure[21] of systems). According to him, systemism "in social policy-design is quite different from both libertarianism and totalitarianism: it attempts to involve the interested parties in the planning process, and designs social systems and processes likely to improve individual well-being, revising the plans as often as required by the changing circumstances" (2000, p. 153). From another angle, systems are spaces to go through and by which a certain systematic processing of input-output is carried out. We are systems, we are a part of systems, and we pass through systems.

THE ENACTIVIST PROPOSITION

Biophysicist Donella H. Meadows (2015) claims that systems cannot be predicted but that they can be designed and redesigned. And modification – responsivity to the environment – is part of all evolutionary processes, including cultural ones. This responsivity leads us to some debated issues within system-

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[20] Caillois' taxonomy has also earlier been applied in literature studies (see Ryan, 2001).
[21] "Structure" is often incorrectly used as a synonym for "system," notes Bunge, and stresses that while structure is a property of things (for instance a system), systems are things in themselves.

ics. Two classes of systems are notably discussed by biologists Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana (1974): Firstly, systems with "autopoietic" organization are autonomous and invariable, and the realization of their organization is the product of their own operations. Secondly, systems with "allopoietic" organization are, in contrast to this, unable to produce the components and processes which realize them, and their product is different from themselves. Varela & Maturana ascribes autopoiesis to biological, living systems such as the cell. It has over the years been disputed whether the concept of autopoiesis holds up and whether it applies to social systems (see for instance a critique in Zolo, 1990). Together with Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch, Varela later elaborated the idea of "enactivism" in the book *The Embodied Mind* (1993). Enactivism is the constructivist view that cognition is embodied action through structural couplings between organism and environment working in a self-referential and holistic way. It is "also the study of the manner in which a subject of perception creatively matches its actions to the requirements of its situation" (Protevi, 2006, p. 169).

The notion of autopoiesis is employed in artistic research by for example Palle Dahlstedt and Per Anders Nilsson in their research on systemic improvisation in music. However, the self-referral in autopoetic and enactivist systems theories by which reality is held to be produced rather than discovered is not wholly compatible with the idea of immersive fantasy play that provides general prerequisites (environment) for particular attempts (organisms). In this kind of activity, exchange between the parties is not balanced but asymmetric in that the organism is ancillary in relation to the environment. Furthermore, immersion requires that the immersing device is forgotten, just as the book and the language is forgotten when reading an immersive story that transports the reader's imagination into a different world; "[t]he experience [of immersion] requires a transparency of the medium that makes it incompatible with self-reflectivity, one of the favorite effects of postmodernism," says Ryan (2001, p. 175). An immersive world is porous and not reflective so that the immersed can be merged into it rather than producing it. It offers space for integration and change from within instead of affirming mirroring and superficial adjustment.

I would say that immersion can imply enactivism from the immersing parties as long as their interest is to keep stasis and alignment. However, it is rather the inability or even refusal to adopt and play along in an enactivist way that

in the first place brings about new immersive fantasy worlds, as well as dramatic change and articulates the issue of eccentric non-conformism so prominent in role-playing. This takes us back to Calliois' postulate aforementioned in **Features of the Genre** in **Chapter 1**: the importance of the distinction between organism and environment and knowing that the environment is not the self and that cognition is not psychotic self-production. Immersive play tests our ability to make such distinction, and, as noted, proneness to reality-opposing fantasy tends to be connected to a stronger sense of distinction. Play seems to work by destabilizing in order to stabilize, weakening in order to strengthen, scaring in order to comfort. Immersion demands active ignorance of reality for a while in order to permit rediscovery of its relative stability in comparison to futile fantasy.

While many systems that we are part of also prevail and restore without us, we are obliged to affirm our roles as systems within systems. It is dangerous to ignore how we as individuals are positioned within systems, as if we were independent and atomic entities. It is also obviously foolish to claim to have a complete overview of system complexities when operating within multiplex systems. However, what we can do is to systemically affirm the direct relationships that involve us as individuals, and interact in a way that is not necessarily good for the whole, but good for those around us. In chamber opera, those relationships are limited to a very manageable number. In the model I propose, such relationships become distinct.

SYSTEMS IN PERFORMANCE PRACTICES

The word "system" has indeed a wide use and adheres to many fields. The most well-known system for practical application by performance practitioners is probably *Stanislavki's System*, based on his *Method of Physical Action*, in which he proposed physically grounded preparations for actors systematically engaged in the art of experiencing. A famous, hand-drawn diagram displays this system with the inner and outer aspects of a role united in a supertask. This visualization supports the formalization of the actor's systematic process to produce a role and facilitates discussions of this processing. Other systematic approaches in use are for example *The Laban-Malmgren System* and Schechner's *Rasaboxes*. Common for all these is how relationships between activities and

psychological states are drawn up and concretized through diagrams, tables, and grids that in some cases also have a notational (see for example *Labanotation*) function or at least a potential for such use. The system I draw up in **Chapter 4** follow in this tradition.

OPERA

Opera is multi-disciplinary sense-making that activates the self-reliant human body as both multitasking sender and sensor. That makes opera a matter of intra-human as well as inter-human communication. However, the importance of clarifying "the sender and addressee relationships" in operatic performance has often been ignored, says multi-disciplinary performer and pioneer of integrative performance Experience Robinson Bryon (1998). This is precisely what I am concerned with. Opera, presented as live-events, comes with a sensory and motoric load that makes it different from both non-operatic acting and non-operatic "musicking"[22] and this has implications for both artists and visitors engaging in the artform.

I have been trying to avoid depending upon sociological theories that over-stress societal integration and makes us imagining the human being as what sociologist Dennis H. Wrong called a "disembodied, conscious-driven, status-seeking phantom" (1961, p. 192). And, to continue with his still topical claim, we must start with the recognition that "*in the beginning there is the body*" (ibid., p. 191, originl emphasis). This stance is in line with the critique of so called "strong constructivism" within the field of literary theory and for example Nancy Easterlin's vouching for "bioepistemology" – a category of evolutionary epistemology – in humanist and social sciences. This idea of knowledge production aims to resolve contradictions between theory and practice through physiological theories convergent with biological evolutionary theory and natural selection. Easterlin claims that "[t]o be meaningful, discussion of the artifacts of human culture must be framed by our knowledge of human beings, not by artificial or

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[22] Musician and musicologist Christopher Small has suggested that music should be regarded foremost as *process* and *action* and that *to music* can be a useful verb, with the following proposed definition of music: "To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing." (1998, p. 9)

incomplete notions of our world and our social experience" (Easterlin, 1999, p. 136). Bioepistemology acknowledges adaptive, biogenetical *forms of thought* rather than specific *content of thought* and thereby accepting a panhuman psyche with the ability for plasticity. Or, in other words, the existence of typical instructions for organizing information that becomes detectable through scientific insight. It appears as a materially grounded alternative to neo-Platonist views and what linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson (1980) highlight as an orthodox and unreasonable either/or choice between radical objectivism and radical subjectivism without a third option. With bioepistemology, we can discuss generic, cross-cultural traits and properties – what we have in common – in relation to the exchange of specific information at hand.

From my perspective as a trained opera singer, opera is primarily a bodily practice and our own materiality and anatomy are prototypical for our actions. Without the human body, there can be no opera; opera is just as much athleticism as artistry. I will argue that opera is based on a combination of skills that *only* humans have. Culture is indeed, in my view, *a part* of – not *apart* from – nature, and culture is produced from knowledge of natural phenomena.[23] Therefore, I think, knowledge of what the body naturally can do defines our options for how it can be cultivated and disciplined for the sake of, for example, opera. The tripartition of the human body (consisting of mind, voice, and figure) gives the tripartition of opera singing (projecting words, tones, and posture), of the opera character (revealed by thought, speech, and action), and finally the tripartition of operatic attendance (looking, listening, and learning).

TRIPARTITION

In order to blend and connect with something, we must first know the entities that are supposed to go together – that is, the fundament for merging is the separation of entities and the creation of space. Operas are tripartite compositions, intended for live opera singers and with three layers of information: the libretto, the score, and the stage. These form the basis for the operatic performance as they frame the opera singer's task, which is to channel all three (text, music, action) into

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[23] For example, the culture producing the castrati is an extreme example of how human knowledge of nature allowed for medical formation and manipulation of male bodies in order to achieve ideal singers.

one movement that gives life to a vibrant opera character – an operatic persona. Grammatically, the word opera carries within itself an intriguing contradiction in its singular-plural form. Literally, "opera" is the plural form of the latin word "opus," meaning "work" in both the sense of "labour" and of "result". Hence, an opera can be interpreted as many-works-as-one, in both senses – multi-labor or multi-opus. But "opera" is also a Latin singular noun contrasting opus, meaning *mechanical work*, with its alternative meaning of *work based on free will*. Operas are works that requires work and action (understood as *wilful* movement). And just like an operatic composition joins together three underlying compositions – one poetical, one musical, and one theatrical – the opera singer delivers a triadic performance of verbal, tonal, and visual information, in which all must follow the logic of the libretto, the timing of the score, and the location of the stage. This stylized practice of synchronized posing, described by Konstantin Stanislavski as "dramatic, rhythmic action while singing" (1980, p. 559), has sometimes more in common with dance than with non-rhythmic speech and acting. Moreover, operatic perception requires a likewise tripartite activation, in that the operatic participant must look, listen, and learn in order to find and put together meanings. Operatic perception mirrors operatic performance.

Composer Hans Gefors draws up "the opera triangle" – "a figure made to facilitate the understanding of the composite staged art form opera" (2011, p. 77, my translation from Swedish). According to Gefors, the three fundamental parts forming the corners of the triangle are *action* (and text), *song* (and music), and *spectacle* (and direction). Gefors argues that the secret of opera lies within the centre of the triangle, and that "[t]he opera drama is *the combination* of all the triangle's parts executed as one course of events in time" (ibid., p. 78, my translation from Swedish, original emphasis). My reasoning has much in common with Gefors' conceptualization of opera, but I visualize opera as layered, like a nested doll in which the traits are added and remain to be embellished layer by layer (see **Figure 5**). The layers fit with the traditional, diachronic work order in institutional opera, beginning with the libretto (the verbal composition, designed to be read), followed by the score (the tonal composition, designed to be synced), and finally the set design (the visual composition, designed to be animated). Then the realization of the operatic work can activate all three strata together. But they can also build the doll outside-in or bottom-up in other work-models: see for example our process with *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black*. What
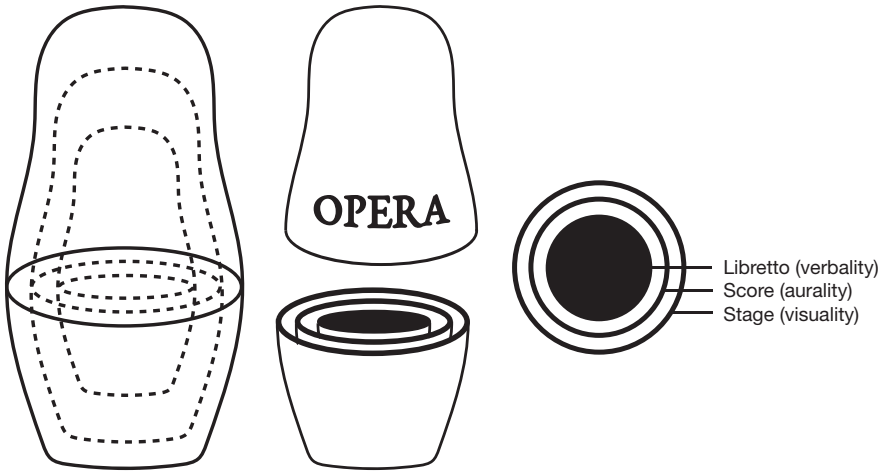
Figure 5: The layers of the operatic work as a horizontally divided nested doll.
Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

makes an opera different from other multi-sensory art forms is that operas are *synaesthetic*[24] (aesthetically joint) and not simply *polyaesthetic* (aesthetically juxtaposed).

PROJECTION

Although it is common to refer to "operatic singing" and "operatic voices" as a type of sound – usually the supported and vibrato-based tone of opera house singers in the bel canto tradition of Italianate classical singing – I object to this habit and do not use the term in this way, at least not in an academic and scholarly context. The reason for this is threefold. Firstly, the type of vocalization connected with opera house opera is not the only vocal technique employed

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[24] Synaesthesia is a genetic and neurological condition of coupled perceptions and cross-sensory experiences, "in which a triggering stimulus evokes the automatic, involuntary, affect-laden, and conscious perception of a sensory or conceptual property that differs from that of the trigger" (Cytowik, 2018, p. 3). Synaesthetic composition, however, could be viewed as an artistic strategy of joining and coupling interrelated sensory information in order to provoke cross-sensory enforcement.

in opera historically.[25] Secondly, the type of vocalization connected with opera house opera since the 19th century is also common in non-operatic repertory, such as art songs in recitals, in oratories and cantatas, and has also been a standard in theatrical acting before the possibility of vocal intimacy came around with electronic amplification and idealization of cinematic expressions. Thirdly, we need a term that simply denotes the synthetic act of singing in action[26] – that is, controlling and projecting text and music through the voice in tandem with the simultaneously acting and externally moving body. Operatic singing hence becomes the term for this practice, not for any sound popularly associated with the discipline, the tradition, or the institutions.

Singers differs from instrumentalists in that they are materially unattached and able to communicate human-to-human directly without anything but the air that we all breathe. Vocal music is derived from a monistic source (the singing body) while instrumental music is dualistic (me and my instrument). Even if instrumentalists strive to feel figuratively as one with the instrument, singers never get rid of their non-instrumental sound source and can never take a break from it (accounts of singers' self-concept are found in O'Bryan, 2015). The voice is by definition exclusively individual and inseparable from the body from which its sounding movement originates – "[a]n instrument can be borrowed; a voice cannot be used by anyone else" (Potter & Sorrell, 2012, p. 27). We act on the world and ourselves through information conveyed by *movement*, including the movement of our vocal tract and the brain's stimulation of glands (Jackendoff, 1994). The corpo-

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[25] Regarding the fluctuation of ideals in operatic sound, Eric Salzman & Thomas Desi write: "Amplification was long a major problem in the theater. It was strictly disallowed in the opera house where it is still vigorously opposed and where, as a result, alternate and "natural voice" singing styles have been largely excluded. Non-vibrato singing styles (so-called white-voice styles) have only recently penetrated the opera world as a result of the new interest in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century repertoire. Whether this is truly a return to baroque and classical style (parallel to the so-called original instrument movement in early music performance) is a matter of debate but the advent of countertenors and Mozart sopranos on the opera stage certainly represents a change in taste. A cleaner, whiter sound can also be heard in many modern and contemporary works. These changes represent a small window through which various kinds of singing have become part of new music theater and may yet slip onto the operatic stage." (2008, p. 22) Here, it can be noted too that the faiblesse for so called whiter sound also is discussed today as a problematic ideal in for example choir singing, where the adult female soprano historically has replaced the prepubescent male soprano and is required to sound like a young boy with injuries and medical problems as result (see for instance Valverde, 2016).

[26] The expression "singing in action" is also found in the title of Wilén's (2017) dissertation on opera improvisation.

real ability to, without technological tools or processing media, address a crowd through sonic *projection* is an evolutionary feature of human physiology, with the unique vocal apparatus developing in archaic humans through changes in the nervous system, breathing capacity, larynx, and ear canals. While direct social grooming through touch (requiring one-on-one action) took time and delimited social groups, time could be used more effectively with so called "vocal grooming," according to anthropologist and evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar (2017), specialized in the bonding processes in mammals. According to him, both *laughter* – understood as wordless, amusical chorusing which only in humans can consist of an uninterrupted series of exhalations – and later *non-verbal singing* has been suggested to precede language. By triggering the same endorphin mechanism as ordinary grooming and laughter, singing contributes to the same bonding process – but without limitations of group size. Furthermore, Dunbar points out that with firelight, processes of social bonding could be shifted into the evening time, with story-telling as the next community building feature. Voicing, artificial light, and stories are simply ancient factors in the development of human culture – opera is all three in one. But our bodies, needs, and abilities are more or less the same as our ancestors'.

It can be argued that the discipline of opera is based on the human capacity to wilfully project information *internally* (through mental processes), *liminally* (through vocal processes), and *externally* (through figural processes). In opera, this focuses our attention on what is verbal, aural, and visual. Projection allows for broadcasting models of communication one-to-many and communication from a far. From this, the human body can be said to project directly (human-to-human without tools or media except for the air we breathe and light that guide us), moving as *mind* (internal projections that are experienced inside the body, by yourself), *voice* (liminal projections that are experienced both inside and outside the body, by both yourself and others), and *figure* (external projections that are experienced outside the body, by others).

Human brains, throats, and hands are evolutionarily exceptional. Upright and bipedal posture allowed for free arms and controlled breath, and "vocal communication frees a speaker's hands, can occur in darkness, and does not require looking at the individuals who are signalling" (Lieberman, 2007, p. 44). *Our bodies did evolve for multitasking.* In opera, the singer is performing from mem-

ory[27] (a mental task of internalizing and projecting a seen or heard segment) while gesturing and looking unboundedly. Reading binds the mediator to an external device. The opera singer is not bound, but disciplined. Opera comes with *memorization*, *vocalization*, and *figuration*. Other animals do not communicate content that does not relate to themselves, here and now. While they are tied up by myopic subjectivity and monotasking (thinking, communicating, and doing the same), we can share information about the non-present other, the past and the future. We are aware of why we are where we are and what alternatives we have to continue our history, because *humans make stories.* I will argue that the human body itself underpins the idea of opera and that our ability to perform multitasking is to be recognized as an advanced and thus taxing skill and not a flaw to be relieved from. *Opera trains humans in what only humans can do.*

THE TRIALIST ILLUSION

Though we indeed are whole entities, human embodiment comes with the ability to split *behaviourally* and thereby generate cognitive consonance or dissonance *within* our own bodies. The Cartesian *dualist* problem of handling the *inside* and the *outside*[28] is a common theme in discussions of theatrical practice (see for instance Kemp, 2012). Questions of aligning inside and outside – or protecting the inside through shielding counter-action by the outside – keeps us all occupied. But opera singing takes it one step further and expands on a *trialist*[29] illusion. We can think one thing and say and/or do another. We can say one thing and think and/or do another. And we can do one thing and think and/or say another.

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[27] Poetry and music with their metrical composition have historically had explicitly mnemonic functions (see for example oral-formulaic theories), allowing speakers to remember and repeat, and performers to recount or recall instructions for action in song and/or rhythmic-melodic patterns. It has furthermore been pointed out that instrumentalists and singers (producing both words and tones) memorize and remember differently, and singers perform a dual task (see for instance the experiments by Racette & Peretz, 2007).

[28] Please note that I avoid the common term "body-mind," as it implies that the mind is not part or product of the body and can be related to more or less superstitious and mystifying concepts such as "soul" and "spirit" that are believed to transcend the body.

[29] In philosophy, the idea of trialism introduced a third substance – sensation – to the two substances of mind and body in Cartesian dualism.

Our ability to both multitask and contradict ourselves is found in this tripartition and it has been argued that "the emergence of language did more to enhance the human capacity for deception than it did to enhance the human capacity for honest communication" (Dor, 2017). The awareness of our own tripartite means of projections (mind, voice, figure) through one and the same body, and our ability to both perceive and perform projections at all three levels is fundamental to the understanding of opera as practice. In opera, revelation comes through the composition of all three, resulting in the complete transparency of nakedly honest characters. This distinguishes opera from for example naturalistic theatre with sub-text. Sub-text does not apply in opera, where thoughts are explicit from the start – main characters express what they think (they have *monologues*, directed towards themselves), assistant characters express what they say (they have *dialogues*, directed towards each other), and environmental characters express what they do (they have *multilogues*, directed towards outside witnesses). The three operatic layers are manifest both in the work of the *opera singer* (who embody a part mentally, vocally, and figuratively) and the *opera character* (that is expressing what they think, say, and do). Opera characters can sing what they think out loud without communicating with the other characters (played by artists who act as if they do not hear). In opera, the internal, liminal, and external levels of artistic information in the tripartite bodily performance-perception corresponds to *poetry*, *music*, and *theatre* – conceived as the *libretto*, *score*, and *set design*, which are all composed designs to be used by the performing artists who delivers the work.

Without our split-within-a-whole, no deception and pretence would be possible. It has been argued that the coevolution of language, narrative, and play fed each other and resulted in our special ability to produce fictive stories (Boyd, 2018) through our verbal faculty. This core feature separates humans from other species whose communication is episodic and depends upon common experience. For Popper, the decisive step that made language "truly human" was the invention of lies and storytelling, which he suggests led to "the critical scrutiny of reports and descriptions, and thus to science; to imaginative fiction and […] art" (1986, p. 190). This makes language and art not into "magical" and "performative" devices, but into *technological* devices. As Boyd (2018) points out, narrative can be mimetic as well as verbal, but it gives us access to the non-present, the non-actual, and the secret. With mental capacities seen as parts and effects of our bodily constitution and not a "ghost" that can be separated from our physiology and biology, a so called "(syn)aesthetic" (with

parenthesis, as proposed by performance scholar Josephine Machon) approach grounds opera in the human condition: "A crucial feature of the (syn)aesthetic style is the (re)claiming of the word, the act of writing and verbal delivery, as an embodied event and a sensual act." (Machon, 2018)

MAKING SENSE

In the mid 20th century, philosopher of theatre André Veinstein (1949, p. 355) already claimed that an irrational fear of science's invasion of all fields of knowledge has for long been expressed by the artistic community, including art that has been seen to stand in opposition to science. But a "science of art is not that of a substitute for art, but a substitute for superstition in reflecting upon art" (ibid., p. 364). While the practitioner learns *how*, the scientist learns *what*. Indeed, it is possible to learn *both* how and what. According to theatre scholar Rhonda Blair (2013), cognitive sciences have become a necessary part of how we understand artistic performance, since it provides us with a materially grounded perspective on human operations. This includes artists creating art informed by arguments from these scientific fields. And certainly, our cognitive evolution can hardly be separated from our social predicaments informing the very same. When it comes to opera, we have to break down the art form to its verbal, aural, and visual layers in order to know how these can complete each other. And opera conveys information in an *artistically* communicated way. The arguments for my theoretical orientation in relation to this domain are basically two:

- Human communication seems to works in modes of thought, speech, and action in analogy to the trialist division of the human body (and opera).
- Artistic communication is proposed to be opposite to linguistic communication, which is a crucial insight when it comes to artistic (including operatic) parsing.

We are used to conflating communication (the act of sharing and making knowledge commonly available) with language itself. And this, as linguist Noam Chomsky calls it, "modern dogma" (2016, p. 15) might lead us to the fallacies that 1) language cannot be more than communication and 2) communication cannot be more than language. However, it has also been argued that language is a *special* form of communication, in which the *instruction of*

imagination rather than *sharing experience* is the central function; "[i]t allows speakers to intentionally and systematically instruct their interlocutors in the process of imagining the intended experience – *instead* of directly experiencing it" (Dor, 2015, p. 2, original emphasis). That means that language is connected to thinking in general and, more specifically, to thinking alike. This together with our species-unique ability to engage in make-believe play would be what separates us from other animals. Working mind-to-mind, a thought can produce a mirroring approximation if expressed through a common language. Art, on the other hand, may be seen as more about sharing (artificial) experiences with optional and subjective meaning. While propaganda conveys clear contrasts and sharp messages, opera hides and diffuse information – it requires work as it demands us to make conjectures, deal with ambiguities, and actively fill in the blanks in subjective ways.

There are obviously some similarities between language and art as means of communication, meaning the act of *sharing* information. Language is *modality-independent*. So is art. Human language is perceived and performed by sight (figuratively) and even touch (tangibly), by sound (orally), and by thought (cerebrally). Furthermore, it can be discussed as E-language (external language) and I-language (internal, individual, and intentional language) (Chomsky, 1986, 2016). The same goes for art that can be intellectually, aurally, or visually stimulating. We can conclude that both language and art operate more or less by the same modes. But while language is used to keep information as intact as possible from sender to recipient, art allows sender and recipient to have different meanings. Philosopher and editor of Lewis Carroll's *Symbolic Logic* William Warren Bartley III puts it like this: "A work of art may express certain subjective states of mind or intentions on the part of the artist; those who receive or respond to the work of art may or may not decode it as it was intended by its original sender." (1984, p. 144) That is, both sending and sensing is subjective in art.

The presumed analogy between music and language is debated, and to me, their different and complementary functions and features are greater than their supposed likeness. If they are both language, they could not be synthesized into song. Relating text to tone in a systemic manner could not be done if both had the same function.

Even though there are other views about the issue, linguist Ray Jackendoff (1994) states that music is definitively not a language in a technical sense.

And while superficial analogies between music and language are common, there are clear differences between language and music in that "there are no musical phenomena comparable to sense and reference in language, or to such semantic judgements as synonymy, analyticity, and entailment," he continues together with professor of musical composition Fred Lerdahl (1983, p. 5). And music scholar Lawrence Zbikowski asserts that "one would not want to mistake the kind of communication that is engendered through the linguistic description of sequences of musical events for the kind of communication that is engendered through the performance or mental simulation of sequences of musical events" (2018, p. 13). Instead, with regards to his operatic example *Dido's Lament*, he argues that the relationship between these two communicative media could be studied through exploring how concepts specific to each can be combined to create a rich world for the imagination. Both language and music have syntax with rules organizing basic elements into hierarchical structures, but language pairs sound with meaning and can have truth value, which is not applicable to music, notes scholar Diana Deutsch (2019), a specialist in the psychology of music. A similar argument about the relationship between language and visual art can be made (see Forrest, 1984).

In language – which is referential in that it makes claims "about a systematic relation between an external manifest and an internal symbolic order" according to communication scholar Francis Steen (2011) – meaning precedes expression. Rather than talking of "sounds with meaning," we should speak of "meanings with sounds" (Chomsky, 2016, p. 14). Psychologically, the perception of music parallels the perception of language (Jackendoff, 1992), but we recognize music as structural arrangement of sound with *no* or *optional* meaning. "[N]ot all sound is music, and an account of how humans process sound is not the same thing as an account of how they understand music." (Zbikowski, 2011) Linguistic communication can fail and be misunderstood – artistic communication cannot. "Ambiguity arises when one encounters apparently incompatible data or constraints but discovers a way either to integrate them into a coherent whole or to toggle transparently between interpretations," says researcher in communication and cognition Marc De Mey (2011). And ambiguity without solvability could be seen as a determinant for aesthetic appreciation in art (Muth et al., 2015). Thereby, linguistically communicated information comes with the capacity of generalized meaning, while artistically communicated information comes with the capacity of individualized meaning. The artist's task then becomes to provide expressive/impressive

content without imposed or overtly articulated meaning, or linguistic features and expectations.

Moreover, in speech and text, we understand one statement a time. But in music, multiple lines are spun and perceived simultaneously. Stories move serially (mono-linearity), but sounds can also be parallel (multi-linearity), and sites can in addition be punctual (cross-linearity). It has been suggested that music is "a technology of engagement," synchronizing embodied experiences and socially mandated emotional states through anticipation and continuation (Shilton et al., 2020). And it is crucial that we understand the *different* functions of the poetical, musical, and theatrical content in opera, and how these three layers interact to constitute a total operatic grid for action. The artistic work's capacity to engage the opera perceiver in individual interpretation of its triadic rendering produces what Popper described as an intense mental state that is not self-conscious, with the intriguing contradiction between being in "an intensely active mental state" and being "completely forgetful of ourselves" (1986, p. 191).

SYNTHETIZATION

Opera synthesizes the human body's communicative abilities. The basic artistic practices of *poetry* (verbal communication that is non-instructive in that it is not rhetorical), *music* (aural communication that is non-instructive in that it is not idiomatical), and *theatre* (visual communication that is non-instructive in that it is not semaphorical) can be synthesized into *song* (verbality + aurality) and *dance* (aurality + visuality). *Opera* (verbality + aurality + visuality) is simply the ultimate synthesis of self-reliant and non-instrumental artistic perception-performance in humans (see **Figure 6**). And syntheses always come with costs and compromises. Information is distorted when words are merged with music and gestures. That means that in opera (performed by heart), verbality is (more or less) compressed into structures of key sentences, aurality is (more or less) compressed into structures of key tunes, and visuality is (more or less) compressed into structures of key poses. As soon as we try to de-synthesize opera in order to escape the stylistic profile and have it less synthetically (and more naturalistically) performed, the trademark of operatic syntheticality is lost.

POETRY
VERBALITY

MUSIC
AURALITY

THEATRE
VISUALITY

SONG
VERBALITY + AURALITY

DANCE
TONALITY + VISUALITY

OPERA
VERBALITY + AURALITY + VISUALITY
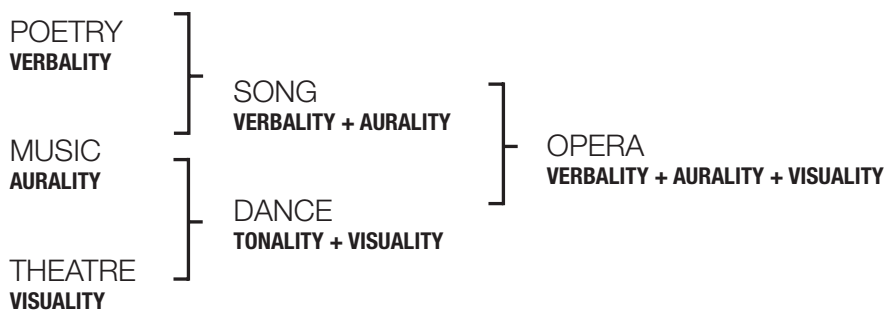
Figure 6: Artistic syntheses. Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

Just like a game to be played – here understood as a designed set of rules – the operatic work *specifies* a challenge and *narrows* down the choices available to the performers by delimiting the event in terms of poetical, musical, and theatrical content. As artistic researcher and musician Per Anders Nilsson notes: "[…] it is all about play regardless of the degree of detail in the instructions: for the improvising musician the task is to, on the spot, make decisions about continuation, while a classical performer is aware of, and can prepare for future actions." (2011, p. 32) This is done additively in classical operas through the libretto (defining obligate/suggested poetical content), the score (defining obligate/suggested musical content, added to the verbal), and the stage (defining obligate/suggested theatrical content, added to the verbal and the musical). Opera singers share poetical content with other speakers, musical content with other musicians, and theatrical content with other players. *But only the opera singer transcends and connects the three layers of operatic performance synaesthetically.* If this extraordinary feature of the sensory transcendent artist is ignored in works called "operas," there would be nothing to distinguish opera from other multi-medial genres that are simply polyaesthetic, juxtaposing instead of blending.

An example of this problem is performance artist Marina Abramovic's "opera project" *7 Deaths of Maria Callas* at Bayerische Staatsoper in 2020. In a series of scenes staged as a serial collage, the deaths of famous opera heroines portrayed by historical opera singer Maria Callas were displayed, including the mythic death of Callas herself. The operatic tasks and output were divided between

- Abramovic appearing live but silent on stage,
- seven singers performing concert versions of the arias accompanied by the orchestra,
- a video screen showing dramatic and spectacular video projections of Abramovic acting as the dying Callas, in ways corresponding to the arias, and
- Abramovic's pre-recorded speaking voice sounding between the scenes.

Even if the music was fetched *from operas* and the project was performed *in an opera house* partly *by trained opera singers*, *operatic practice* – the discipline of opera singing – was totally obsolete since no singer sung while acting. However, Swedish Radio (SR) described the work as "Abramovic's first opera" and the performance as "Abramovic's opera debut" ('Marina Abramović gör operadebut som Maria Callas', 2020), and The Art Newspaper (Brown, 2020) wrote about it in a similarly confused manner. This "concept creep"[30] is problematic, since it is important to acknowledge this kind of work – with possible qualities of its own – as something other than opera. Otherwise, operatic practice cannot be recognized and appreciated as a discipline distinct from concert singing or mixed media display in general.

In both academic and cultural organizations, opera is sometimes categorized as a subcategory of music (a style of sounding connected to acting) or a subcategory of theatre (a style of acting connected to singing). A common problem for opera singers is the prevalence of training by and meetings with primarily non-operatic instructors who hold non-operatic ideals. The dearth of opera-specific musicking, acting techniques, and theories is sometimes acute. In her critical-creative attempt to formulate a new, integral theory of drama and interpretation which takes operatic cooperation as its vantage point, Bryon states that "all training for the singer that lies outside the field of actual vocalising is commonly perceived as an addition to the primary technique. Movement and acting is [sic.] positioned to enhance or compensate for the voice. It is not yet an integral part of traditional pedagogy" (1998, p. 79). However, this practice requires an in-depth understanding of opera as an inherently synthetic art form. Certainly, as musicologist Julian Rushton claims, "it is a mistake to expect realism in opera" and the stylized acting that is the result of operatic

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[30] "Concept creep" is originally an academic term within the field of psychology, describing the semantic shift based on the tendency to expand concepts of harm and pathology so that definitions such as abuse, bullying, trauma, and prejudice are applied to less severe actions and events, as problematized by psychologist Nick Haslam (2016).

self-projection is not a defect but "a quality that distinguishes it from other dramatic forms – though less markedly from poetic than from realistic drama" (2015, p. 341). With ludo-immersive opera, we try to affirm and adjust to the operatic synthesis instead of correcting it, even if it is idiosyncratic.

The visitor in ludo-immersive opera can also become tangibly co-creative within the fiction through responses that can be aural and visual. Such responses make the relationship between visitor and host into a question of division of labour rather than a producer-consumer relationship.

LATE AND CONTEMPORARY OPERA

Listening to a spoken foreign language has a musical rather than an informative quality for a listener who does not have linguistic understanding of the sounds. Singing combines verbal information with music in a wonderfully artistic way. The synthetic vocal ideal that is prevalent in opera was until the 20th century a general ideal of vocal projection also on non-operatic theatre stages, and, as composer and scholar Eric Salzman along with composer-director Thomas Desi writes, it is important to note that

> [u]ntil quite recently, the typical projection of an actor's voice in a public space would probably seem to us more like opera singing than our contemporary notions of acting, which are based on performing for the camera rather than the upper balconies of a large theater. The "realism" of amplification and cinematography (close-up acting for the camera and the microphone) has provoked the disappearance of the traditional actor's style of projected vocalization, leaving operatic projection and ballet dancing *en pointe* as the last remaining exemplars of romantic performing style. (2008, p. 15, original emphasis)

Not only did the new style deprive singing of a certain poetical quality, but technological advancements in the 20th century gave rise to the domination of a new *less* self-reliant and *more* dependent singing style, allowing for the exploitation of delicate vocal sounds, rejuvenescent diminution (especially of female voices), and enhanced articulation in public space. The introduction of microphones and amplification has heavily impacted the singing ideal and reduced vocal expressions to narrower and lower ranges, thus reducing both the

musical options and bodily work load. Today, the art of ASMR[31] takes this to new extremes, but the new possibilities did also affect stage performances. The new genre "musical theatre," which foregrounds the verbal content of the play, developed alongside the use of microphone singing. Another assistive feature emerging with new technology is the use of super-text in opera, depriving the audience of some of the challenge of inscrutability – we are nowadays fed rather than led. We live in a time favouring language over art, and words are often given literal rather than poetical meaning. And if singers are expected to first and foremost communicate words and their meanings, then displays of seemingly pointless vocal virtuosity are not to be cherished (Potter & Sorrell, 2012, p. 77).

OPERA OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

As mentioned above, the 20th century came with the possibility of lowering the barriers to comprehension and relieve the audience of its co-creative work load, by separating the operatic elements in order to distinguish them instead of blending them. After the demise of what philosopher and cultural theorist Mladen Dolar (2002) regards as the "last" opera composers, such as Giacomo Puccini and Richard Strauss, an important shift in the craft of opera composition took place. The musical composers behind most of the standard repertory were specialists in opera composition. However, the next generation composed a number of operas among a rich array of other musical (non-operatic) works, and the opera composer writing opera after opera became a rare species. Literary scholar Herbert Lindenberger notes that "[u]nlike their nineteenth-century predecessors, the modernist composers of opera were not primarily 'opera composers.'" (2010, p. 174) However, opera composition still comes with a lot of prestige and "[t]he relative lack of opera-fan enthusiasm for modernist opera has by no means deterred the composition of new operas. Most twentieth century composers of stature have produced at least one opera …" (ibid., p. 194) This coincided with the rise of the recording industry, making people *listening* more to opera instead of *going* to the opera, with a gain in access and concentration, but a loss in synaesthetic effect.

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[31] ASMR is short for autonomous sensory meridian response, which can be explained as a pleasant form of paraesthesia produced from auditory stimuli that often is derived from close-up recordings of micro-movements and whispering. ASMR has been hugely popularized and commercialized in the early 2000s for example on platforms such as Youtube.

There is also a dilating rift between operas written for opera houses, and operas written for other locations. Lindenberger asks: "[I]s the opera house, like the symphony hall, destined to become largely a museum for premodernist and perhaps also classical modernist works, with the more controversial operas relegated to special performance places, like those museums devoted to contemporary art?" (2010, p. 195) What we see today is avant-garde opera parting ways with the opera house and the symphonic accompaniment, but also with the craft of operatic singing in action, even if the classical *sound* of traditional opera singers may form one of several components in the presentation. As Dolar states:

> If the opera is to achieve its objective, it may neither be "a concert in costumes" nor a theatre play with musical accompaniment; rather, it must stage the power of music itself, and the music must form the inner principle and motive of its revelation. (2002, p. 10)

PRIMO LA MUSICA

One critique concerns the opera authors' perceived inability to combine musical experimentation with dramaturgical experimentation. Regarding late operatic works, Nicholas Till, theorist and practitioner in opera, music theatre, and cross-disciplinary arts, has argued that "[e]ven composers whose musical language may be radical invariably fall back upon a reified model of nineteenth-century dramaturgy, and nineteenth century models of plot, character, subjectivity, vocal expressivity, etc." (2010, p. 17). And Gefors reflects upon a related issue, the tendency to neglect drama in staged works that even so are still called operas. He does not deny that it is perfectly possible to create staged works without a dramatic story, but points to the fact that so many modernist composers seem to be obsessed by the desire to have the music eliminate the action and the story. "But why then call it an opera?", he asks (2011, p. 18, my translation from Swedish). Composer Miika Hyytiäinen confirms this in his observation that "[…] calling something an opera is sometimes used as a counterreaction [against the tradition]. In particular it seems creatives who come from backgrounds that are not traditionally related to opera want to reclaim the term boldly and be polemic with it." (Nousiainen, 2015, p. 80) Yet another critique concerns how musical presentation can overshadow the-

atrical presentation. Lindenberger notes: "An anti-theatrical opera would seem to be a contradiction in terms. […] Yet many of the operas we see as central to the twentieth-century canon display an anti-theatricality […]." (2010, p. 196) However, Lindenberger also questions whether what we see today is, perhaps, in fact "a new mode of theatricality quite different from the nineteenth-century form against which it originally defined itself" (2010, p. 218). I agree with these critical voices, and my own practice is partly a counterreaction to the regressive tendencies of de-synthesizing and de-synaesthetizising opera.

META-OPERA

Lindenberger also remarks that "much modernist opera is obsessed with the operatic past and, in fact, with the musical past in general. For modernist opera displays a historical consciousness rarely to be found in earlier opera." (2010, p. 177) Here we find yet another critiqued feature: a weakness for meta-opera. Till again:

> To argue that existing operatic practice is not self-critical may seem to be perverse. Opera is insistently, even narcissistically, self-reflexive. Just consider how many operas are actually about singers or musicians. Few twentieth-century opera composers have been able to avoid meta-operatic reflection, parody or pastiche (not even John Cage), but we would argue that although the self-reflexivity of opera is a symptom of an almost neurotic anxiety about its validity as an art-form, self-reflexivity does not necessarily involve self-criticism. (Till, 2010, p. 17)

John Cage's *Europeras* is indeed the most blatant meta-critical opera work series, but meta-opera is certainly a phenomenon also present in classical opera house opera, but which however tends to serve most often as promotional or in-group entertainment (see for example *Der Schauspeildirektor* by Gottlieb Stephanie & Mozart, *Ariadne auf Naxos* by Hofmannsthal & Strauss and *Capriccio* by Krauss & Strauss).

POSTOPERA

Jelena Novak (2016), scholar within the fields of musicology and opera studies, has further advocated the term *postopera*, denoting works that are both postmodern and postdramatic, but still centered upon vocality and theatricality. Postopera also tend to affirm and widen the "gap" between voice and body, detaching the control of vocal sound production and projection from the opera singer who thereby becomes disempowered. In postopera, the voice-body relationship is re-imagined through technological means, processing, transferring and dis-embodying vocal sounds using theatrical devices such as ventriloquism, prosthetics and de-synchronization.

DIRECTOR'S OPERA

The 20ᵗʰ century also introduced the opera director and the "director's opera" or "Regieoper." This type of opera "advocates scenographic autonomy" (Kara, 2017, p. 565). Director's opera demonstrates the now-living director's (often a theatre director rather than specialized opera director) revisionist power. In *The Oxford Handbook of Opera*, literature scholar Ulrich Müller explains that there is an important difference between practical editing and director's theatre:

> Composers have also been known to alter the work of their colleagues, past and present. […] But those adaptations, which have been made mostly (but not always) for "technical" reasons, are not what is meant today when people discuss modern Regietheater; rather, they refer to re-interpretations, de-constructions, and stagings of subtexts by directors of the last few decades. (Müller, 2015, p. 13)

Director's theatre has sometimes been described as iconoclastic, but one could also say that it instead has contributed to further enforcement of the *musical* canon in opera; director's theatre turns against the libretto, not the score based on the original libretto, but with logical inconsistencies as a consequence. This results in what Lindenberger calls the combination of "theatrical outrageousness with meticulous musical authenticity" (2010, p. 86). And "there is a paradox in the contemporary staging of operas, namely a fundamental disparity between what is shown on stage by directors of *Regietheater* and what can be

heard from the orchestra and the opera singers" (Müller, 2015, p. 590, original emphasis). Let me take an example: In act 1 of *La Bohème*, the Parisian poet Rodolfo burns his manuscript of a play he has written in order to keep warm in the chilly room on a Christmas eve in the middle of the 19th century. But in a director's opera version staged recently at Malmö Opera, he writes his play not on paper, but on a laptop and, accordingly, the action diverges from the sung text – putting a laptop into the fireplace is not advisable.

Müller points out that "Werktreue" is the strongest antithesis to "Regietheater" in discussions of contemporary stagings. Here, it must be pointed out that there is a critical difference between deliberately subtracting and replacing information in an existing work, and filling in what is missing and left out while adding layers and embellishments to the work; approximation, compromises, completion, and interpretation must be distinguished from revisional editing and remixing. Nonetheless, director's opera dominates at least the European opera houses and can be regarded as an established and mainstream style of producing operas today.

Werktreue and Regietheater are indeed problematic extremes of impossible and romanticized historicism on one hand, and narcissistic and pedagogical presentism on the other. Werktreue naïvely worships a mythic past and Regietheater insolently hijacks historical works for present-day purposes. We cannot ever revive a work as it originally was thought to be performed and perceived, but that does not mean that we should seek to ignore what we do know about it in order to push our own agendas rather than displaying the curiosities and outrages of earlier generations. Even if Regietheater often tries to provoke and shock through stagings of political and erotic themes grounded in present-day news, just as often there are moralistic efforts to please and influence self-righteous crowds. With ludo-immersive opera, the focus is shifted from both musical and theatrical experimentation, to poetical experimentation with musical and theatrical implications.

OPERATIC PERSONAE

It has been argued that characterization is the primary feature of opera, as pointed out by both musicologists Joseph Kerman (1988) and Rushton

(2015). The important artistic results of opera are the human beings, the operatic characters who emerge and are transformed through the events depicted. An operatic character is portrayed when an opera singer manages to embody them verbally, aurally, and visually, and to express what the character thinks, says, and does. If opera works on all three levels – poetically, musically, and theatrically – it becomes a Rosetta-stone for the human personage. Moreover, an operatic character stems from a more or less generic and time-less persona due to the fact that it is developed in steps and collaboratively over time with the contemporary audience member last in line as "characterization may be received as the product of multiple creative voices – composer, librettist, singer – that emanate from an act of performance" (Rushton, 2015, p. 334).

OPERA VS. MUSICAL THEATRE

Soprano Rebecca Caine points to the difference between opera and musicals: "I believe musicals are text-led. Opera is an art form where the sheer vocal quality is all-important. Musical theatre is where the character-filled narrative predominates through the text. The words come first." (in the podcast *Key Change*, n.d., episode 11) I agree with her and would say that if musicals (technologically associated with the introduction of electronic amplification through floor microphones, which dates back to the 1930s) are *text-led* in that they emphasize articulation of the textual. Operas, on the other hand, are better seen as *text-based* in that they rely on a textual structure without foregrounding it, but filtering it. I prefer to treat the text in any opera as embedded and covered by music, not highlighted or carried by music – the operatic text is the murky and shadowy foundation for the musical cipher and manifest embodiment, not the other way around. If the textual *narrative* is the issue of musical theatre, as Caine proposes above, operatic outcomes are always animate human beings – *operatic personae* – becoming known, heard, and seen as complete *bodies*. Bringing these portraits to life over and over again is what is at stake.

CASTING VS. PLAYER-CHARACTER UNITY

In composed opera (contrasted with improvised opera), the opera singer's task is to incarnate the live-character from the instructions from the poetical composer (the librettist, outlining the character by describing its story), the musical composer ("the setter of tones,"[32] outlining the character by describing its sound), and the theatrical composer (the set designer, outlining the character by describing its site). In large operatic organizations, the dramaturge, the conductor, and the director serve as middlemen in order to coordinate the ensemble.

In ludo-immersive opera, each character is most often personally modelled or chosen by the artist or visitor embodying it, making it more like fantasy role-playing than standard opera productions; in role-playing, the player precedes the character, and in theatre, the character precedes the player (who is cast as a character). Just like in role-playing, the players in ludo-immersive opera can keep their personal characters over time and the characters can keep their memories (what they have learnt) from the last performance and return in several campaigns while becoming more experienced and multifaceted from what the adventure puts them through – they are not supposed to be remain static and repeat the opera's events exactly. In role-playing games, this is the "player-character unity" (Mochocki, 2018) which is not found in theatre, where the character may be portrayed by more or less anyone. By embodying our fictive characters in opera after opera, we get to know them better – they can grow or be damaged. On the other hand, character creation in dramatic staging and role-play tends to be the opposite. In role-play, character-making precedes the adventure – the character's prerequisites and preferences are known before it is put in a situation and the event takes place. They are therefore determinant of how the story unfolds and which settings are activated, since the plot is person-centred and serves certain characters. In authored dramatic works, the character is made from what is known from the plot and emerges as a result of the circumstances and imaginative work of the performing artist, that is, the other way around compared to role play since the characters serve a particular plot.

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[32] In Swedish, I prefer the term "tonsättare," literally meaning "setter of tones," over the synonym "kompositör" (composer), as the latter is imprecise about what is being composed – much more than music can be composed.

OPERATIC VS. REALISTIC SINGING

An opera character is by definition synthetically artificial and not naturalistic. I would even argue that the more synthetic it can be, the more operatic it is. It is crucial to acknowledge this synthetic nature as a *quality* and not a *defect* that needs to be corrected to resemble other genres. The most obvious difference between a regular spoken/acted character and an opera character is obviously that the opera character sings most of its lines instead of speaking them. Composer and theoretician Edward T. Cone asserts that even if realistic song occurs in opera – as when Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro* presents a song he has written himself – "[u]nlike incidental song, which occurs in situations calling for realistic singing, true operatic song replaces what in a more naturalistic medium would be ordinary speech" (1989, p. 126).

As already touched upon, operatic characters are transparent creatures that display their consciousness, spelling out what is on their minds and spilling out their hearts in passages that put the story-line on hold. In film, the "interior monologue" presents a similar state:

> In the interior monologue [...] the voice and the body are represented simultaneously, but the voice, far from being an extension of that body, manifests its inner lining. The voice displays what is inaccessible to the image, what exceeds the visible: the "inner life" of the character. The voice is here the privileged mark of interiority, turning the body "inside-out". (Doane, 1985, p. 168)

Both arias (operatic solo numbers) and ensembles often display direct speech as song. However, the typical "time-stopper," which makes the setting fall under a spell of silence and stillness, describes the thoughts of the character, what it thinks that it feels and experiences, what it wants and plans. This results in a poetic rendering of an interior monologue – what we in Operation Opera commonly call a "lyric bubble," or what scholar in philosophy and the social history of music Richard A. Carlton (2000) describes as the depiction of sentiment rather than of the situation. In ludo-immersive opera, these surreal breaks slow down both artists' and visitors' action. This very non-naturalistic way of articulating and externalizing the inner life of the characters has little to do with any intention to present the world as it normally appears to be. Rather, opera makes individual thoughts and feelings audible and visible. The emotional drive of the music, moving the characters from mindful contempla-

tion to deliberate actions and back again, provides concrete opportunities for operatic characters to relate to the space which surrounds them.

OPERATIC MUSIC VS. CONCERT MUSIC

According to Kerman (1988), the music of an opera bears the ultimate responsibility for articulating drama and he proposes three principal means by which the music works: "[by] defining character, generating action, and establishing atmosphere." Another way of describing the functions of operatic music is to say that it is simultaneously *descriptive* (it illustrates the mood in which the opera singers find themselves) and *prescriptive* (it tells the opera singers what to do). A composers of operatic music must write just as much for mnemonic purposes as for atmospheric. Unlike instrumental musicians, the vocal musician transmits both verbal and musical information. And unlike concert singers, the opera singer is transforming with the tableaux – in contrast to the concert stage, there is no visual default mode or arbitrariness in operatic scenery. Furthermore, concerts can be sung from the score and while reading notes, but operas *must* be memorized and sung by heart, since the opera singer has to be free of technical encumbrances and have internalized all instructions in order to be free to move. Therefore, memorization is at the core of opera singing, and the number of instructions and "rules" that must be learnt and remembered is surely dependent on the acquisition of an athletic skill. A metrical structure of the libretto, score, and set design all help the opera singer to remember. In ludo-immersive opera, we memorize a catalogue of modules that can be triggered by the visitors' action, whose impact depends on a complex set of alternate story-lines. When combining opera singing with live-electronics, we allow for some live-processing and spatialization of our voices, outside the opera singers' personal control. We find this to have additional artistic value, as it adds to the synthetization of the whole, but it does not deprive the singers of projective control – they are still in charge of their full range and reach.

THE REGULATION OF OPERA

It has been speculated that both canonization and dogmatic restrictions can establish a framework against which "inventive freedom without chaos" can be

made possible, as in the case with the introduction of polyphonic music (Popper, 1986, p. 58). Hence, regulation becomes a postulate for variation within limits. Operatic communication between artists and visitors has not always been as strictly regulated as it is today and must not necessarily continue to be so. In the case of theatrical audience behaviour in general, scholar in drama and performing arts Caroline Heim makes it clear that "[t]heater audiences have a rich, colourful history of expressive performance," but, compared to the histrionic and vivacious performance and antics of Western audience up until around the mid 19th century, "audience performance for much of the twentieth century appears lifeless, dull and restrained" (2016, p. 43). Heim asks why audience performance changed from heterogeneity to homogeneity and lists a number of hypotheses:

- sacralisation of the arts,
- changes in lightning and theatre architecture,
- the shift towards Realism in plays and acting styles, and
- the rise of a bourgeois audience and commodity culture.

Here we see how both deliberate sensory changes and participatory ideals are connected to altered cultural behaviour, in some way or other. Bennett points to the influence of architectural design on audience behaviour:

> The predominant architectural design of theatres – a foyer which encourages observing and observation in the small familiar groups in which we attend the theatre, and an auditorium which assures anonymity (and thus reassurance) in the larger collective – has thus been received and translated by theatre audiences into psychological need. (Bennett, 1997, p. 133)

Furthermore, the assumed relationship between strict rituality of audience participation and bourgeoise culture is supported by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu:

> The most radical difference between popular entertainments – from Punch and Judy shows, wrestling and circuses, or even the old neighbourhood cinema, to soccer matches – and bourgeois entertainments is found in audience participation. In one case it is constant, manifest (boos, whistles), sometimes direct (pitch or playing-fields, invasions); in the other it is intermittent, distant, highly ritualized, with obligatory applause, and even shouts of enthusiasm, at the end, or even perfectly silent (concerts in churches).

> Jazz, a bourgeois entertainment which mimics popular entertainment, is
> only an apparent exception: the signs of participation (hand-clapping or
> foot-tapping) are limited to a silent sketch of the gesture (at least in free
> jazz). (Bourdieu, 2010, p. 490)

The social, vibrant, extraverted and overtly engaged audience behaviour that
historically was found in Western theatres is now present only in sport arenas
and rock concerts (Lindenberger, 2010). The solemn and contemplative at-
tending of elevated and ritualized performance in theatres and art concerts of
today, is a sign of the sacralisation that Heim points towards:

> Almost any good opera can serve the contemporary spectator as a mode of
> religious experience. The length of performance is comparable to that of
> religious services. Like a church, the opera house works to isolate those who
> attend from the everyday world that they have temporarily left behind. And
> like a rite, opera employs both visual and auditory resources to draw its spec-
> tators into the new world it has created. (Lindenberger, 2010, p. 61)

Turning the attendees into a hive with a common focus is in line with how
Richard Wagner's "understanding of Greek theatre informed his ideas about
audience as a 'conscience community' and its role as a 'chorus', acoustics and
communal architecture realised in the Greek amphitheatre" (Robinson Bryon,
1998, p. 60). With his realization of the Bayreuth Festspielhaus, he was the
first to introduce the concept of the darkened and silent auditorium – a radi-
cal novelty at this time, since visitor display, mobility, and commentary were
given parts of the operatic event. Sacralization spread to other fora. Audience
etiquette now became an issue. In Vienna, Gustav Mahler "codified the eti-
quette of the modern concert experience, with its worshipful, pseudo-religious
character" (Ross, 2012, p. 21). Soon, the Wagnerian presentation mode be-
came the norm, not only for musical but also for theatrical performance: "By
the 1920s, darkness settled over all theatre auditoriums" and "[t]he darkening
of theatres combined with the enforcement of theatre etiquette strictures anes-
thetised demonstrative audience performance." (Heim, 2016, p. 76)

This ossified state of tranquil stillness, silence, and invisibility would then be-
come standard also in the cinematic theatre, replacing the operatic theatre in
the 1920s as locus for the total work (now understood as the movie). Later,
television and later home computers once more freed and triggered human

movement and display through the use of multi-media and relief from so-cial pressure for conformity. However, instead of increasing the visitors' in-volvement with the operatic art work *even more*, the dominating effort in the 20th century was instead to actively distance the audience as a reaction to the Wagnerian entrapment. The next historical experiment with the artist-visitor relation came with Bertolt Brecht, who like Wagner saw theatre's and opera's potentials as socially unifying devices. If Wagner's goal was to spell-bind the audience through enchantment, Brecht's goal was to awaken them in order to engage them in societal and moral concerns. With his application of epic the-atre (opposed to dramatic theatre) on opera with the intention to alienate the audience and de-synthesized the parts, he openly opposed Wagner:

> As long as the term Gesamtkunstwerk means that the whole lot can be dealt with in one go, in other words as long as art forms are supposed to be 'fused together', then the individual elements must all be degraded to the same degree, so that each one can only be a cue for the other. The smelting pro-cess takes hold of the spectator, who is also melted down and represents a passive (suffering) part of the Gesamtkunswerk, This sort of magic must be contested. Everything that aims to induce hypnosis, or is bound to produce undignified intoxication, or makes people befuddled, must be abandoned. (Brecht, 2015, p. 66, original emphasis)

I do not support the proposition that the only path to activation goes through alienation *from* the depicted action. Instead, my hypothesis has been that acti-vation can be triggered by a form of integration that goes against both Wagner's sedative ritualization and Brecht's separatist aesthetics. In my artistic practice, I contend that opera cannot be determined by nothing else than by sensory synthetization without collapsing into other (single- or multi-disciplinary) art forms, and that the whole point of operatic experientiality is, in the conven-tional case *to observe operatic personae*, and, in the extreme case, for all partici-pants *to make sense as an operatic persona themselves*. Opera is – in the ideal case – certainly (syn)aesthetic, referring to art that consists "of a variety of artistic principles, forms and techniques, manipulated in such a way so as to fuse the somatic and the semantic in order to produce a visceral response in the audi-ence" (Machon, 2011, p. 14). Both the mode of performance and the mode of perception can be (syn)aesthetic and Machon (2018) lists three key strategies that are characteristic of this approach, namely

- a special manipulation of the Gesamtkunstwerk with a symbiotic relation-
  ship between the performance elements producing a (syn)aesthetic response
- a predominance of the actual body in performance, and
- an unusual rendering of the writerly speech text to establish a visceral-
  verbal *play*-text.

Ludo-immersive opera does not discriminate between perceivers and perform-
ers as separate social roles – everyone in a role-play opera is both a perceiver
and a performer. Instead, it requires the visitors to become *discoverers* – in line
with the idea of "homo explorens" that is suggested by interaction designer
Mads Hobye (2014) – and the artists to become *disclosers*, as they function
more like game-masters with a catalogue of game-modules; it is a matter of
sharing information piece by piece in order to enliven the event together. In
comparison to Brecht's comprehension of Wagner's dramatic theatre, and his
vision of his own epic theatre, ludo-immersive opera form something else –
a super-synthetic event, synthesizing not only the sensory stimuli itself, but
also the participants, who all become stimulators in order to get stimulated
from both their own and others' fantasy actions. Our intention is to turn
participants into complete, operatic perceiver-performers and not half-way
participants, that is, *only* perceivers or *only* performers. One could also regard
ludo-immersive opera as a synthesis of Wagnerian captivation and Brechtian
activation; one goal of my exploration of the format is to try to find working
tools and methods for a synthetic third way. In **Table 2** and **3**, ludo-immersive
opera is added to Brecht's comparative lists of differences between his epic
theatre/opera and Wagner's dramatic theatre/opera.

DRAMATIC THEATRE ACCORDING TO BRECHT*	EPIC THEATRE ACCORDING TO BRECHT*	LIMMO AS SUGGESTED BY JALHED
action	narration	action
involves spectators in events on stage	turns spectators into observers, but	involves visitors in action
consumes their activity	awakens their activity	consumes the activity it awakens
enables them to have feelings	forces them to make decisions	enables them to have feelings and forces them to make decisions in action
experience	world-picture	strategy
the spectators are immersed in something	they are put in opposition to it	the visitors are immersed in what they are put in opposition to
suggestibility	argument	stress
emotions are preserved	are turned into insights	emotions are acknowledged
the spectator stands right in the middle	the spectator stands on the opposite side	the visitor is an accomplice
shares in the experience	studies	shares in the experience in order to study himself
human nature presumed to be common knowledge	human nature is object of investigation	human nature is object of investigation
humankind unchangeable	humankind changeable and able to change things	humankind unchangeable but able to change things
tension at the outcome	tension as you go	tension dependent upon visitor action
one scene for the next	each scene for itself	modularity
growth	montage	contextualization
structure of events linear	in curves	labyrinthic
evolutionary inevitability	jumps	evolutionary curiosity and fascination
human nature as fixed	human nature as process	human nature as fixed but still surprising and partly unexplored
thought determines being	social being determines thought	potentiality determines being
feeling	rationality	sensibility

* Brecht's original tables comparing his operatic vision with Wagner's works are found in the text *Notes on the Opera The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny.*

Table 2: Extended version of Brecht's comparative table of dramatic and epic theatre with inclusion of ludo-immersive opera.

DRAMATIC THEATRE ACCORDING TO BRECHT*	EPIC THEATRE ACCORDING TO BRECHT*	LIMMO AS SUGGESTED BY JALHED
action	narration	action
music serves up	music communicates	music triggers and responds
music intensyfying the libretto	music interpreting the libretto	music enriching the libretto
music reinforcing the libretto	taking the libretto as read	music reinforcing the libretto
music illustrating	taking up a position	specifying temporality of sensations
music painting the psychological situation	presenting behaviour	music corresponding to movement

* Brecht's original tables comparing his operatic vision with Wagner's works are found in the text *Notes on the Opera The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny.*

Table 3: Extended version of Brecht's comparative table of operatic music in dramatic and epic opera with inclusion of ludo-immersive opera.

PLAY

The "ludic" is associated with both *play* and *games*. To play is to make something move – whether it be the child's yoyo, the cat's mouse, or the driver's racing car – which can then be stopped. Not all games however are playful, and games are formalized schemata that are *either* playful or serious (see game theory, which concerns survivalist and economic games). Just as a score presents instructions and prerequisites for playing music – a track to follow or a board to navigate – a game can be the setup for play in a more general sense. According to video game designer Jesse Schell, "[t]he game enables the experience, but it *is not the experience*." (2008, p. 10, original emphasis) Moreover, taking cultural historian Johan Huizinga's (2016) famous statement from 1938 that *play precedes society* at face value, I start from the idea that play is not a product of culture, but that culture and civilization are products of play. As a culturizing activity, play can be understood as a social disciplining process for preserving and controlling behavioral variations within groups. Anthropologist and cyberneticist Gregory Bateson (2000) argues that play has the capacity for what he called "meta-communication," symbolic action *signaling* that "this is play" and thereby decoupling actions from their consequences. The "play bite," for example, instructs our imagination even though it just marks a potential wound. It also is an act of self-control; only the one who is potentially dangerous but still chooses not to do harm can be regarded as friendly. Play is non-destructive and resettable – you can always start over. Furthermore, if hobbies offer voluntary and uncompelled occupation, play offers voluntary and uncompelled roles. Play is *illusory* and *elusive* (words etymologically related to the ludic), but the primary illusion of play is not an *alternate reality* (which is a cognitive issue), but an *alternate sociality* in parasocial style. We engage in momentary and restricted roles; it is the social relations that are changed through play. These fictional relationships and role-reversals are observable in role-play (partners act dominant and submissive in alternate hierarchical orderings), adversary sports (friends act like enemies), miniature arrangements (the inferior acts superior in a god-like manner) and so on. This applies to animals as well as humans, children as well as adults, and includes the single-player who refutes the compulsory sociality of everyday life in order to create fantasy relationships and worlds on their own and apart from regular social circumstances. In ludo-immersive opera, the notion of momentarily changed social statuses through play affects both *visitor-visitor* and *artist-visitor* relations. I would also say that *artist-artist* relations are changed in that the dynamics of the artist group must make micro-adjustments in response to the incoming outsider.

ORGANIZATION

I base my view of play on the premise that playfulness is a social competency with an *organizing* function within parties of likes, by which it is possible to individuate group-members without loss or casualties in order to make a distinction between *similarity* (which makes us relate to each other) and *sameness* (which makes us exchangeable).

Play theorist Brian Sutton-Smith (2001) comes to the conclusion that play may model a process of "cultural natural selection," based on the Darwinian notion of the organism's remaking of itself by variation and novelty that expresses the degrees of freedom possible in a particular organization. Sutton-Smith's theory holds that play imitates "the evolutionary process itself, in which the organism models its own biological character" (ibid.). Through play, we model and renew social characters and a playful game is a social site. Moreover, across species it appears that there is a correlation between amount of social play and egalitarian lifestyle, says Peter Gray (2014), a psychologist famous for his research into the relationship between learning and play from an evolutionary perspective. In play, deliberate self-handicap of the stronger and attentiveness to the other(s) needs gives rise to a new kind of relationship between individuals, "one that is based not on power assertion but on power restraint" (Gray, 2009, p. 516). That, of course, requires the acknowledgement of power distribution and differences in the first place. Even if play can include competitive and adversarial activities, successful play aims to keep the population intact so that play can continue, and social awareness be trimmed. But play can also be harshly selective. Play thereby can function as a simulated casting system for alternate social roles beyond the present ones – through play, we get to know ourselves and our peers before things get rough. Both being accepted into a group and deviating from one highlight the *relation* between socio-culture and the social organism. With ludo-immersive opera, we highlight the importance of play even in art.

Play groups demand that the participants acquire what philosopher Bernard Suits calls a "lusory attitude," simply explained as "the acceptance of constitutive rules just so the activity made possible by such acceptance can occur" (1978, p. 40). Suits argues that "[…] games are goal-directed activities in which inefficient means are intentionally chosen. For example, with an example from Suits, in racing games one voluntarily goes all round the track in an

effort to arrive at the finish line instead of "sensibly" cutting straight across the infield. Play could be regarded as a way of training for collective sensemaking (agreeing upon meaning and "common sense") through playful games – defined as voluntary attempts to overcome unnecessary obstacles (ibid.) – and organizing like-minded groups. The term "the magic circle" (Huizinga, 2016) can denote the space that play happens in, and is concretely exemplified by the chess board, the football stadium, the theatre stage etc. But it is important to note that these spaces are always socially designated spots of increased risk and challenge, and that rules in play are always working within both existing juridical and natural laws. Game scholar Jaakko Stenros concludes that "[t]he idea of a magic circle of play is that as playing begins, a special space with a porous boundary is created though [sic.] social negotiation" and according to Stenros, the basis of the magic circle could be found in "the social contract" (2014, p. 176). This social contract is tested through playful activities and alternate world-building, sorting out roles and potentials between participants. In opera, the social meta-contract includes both artists and visitors and the magic circle of ludo-immersive opera comes with a different social contract than that of regular opera house opera.

In a famous study of pre-school children's participation in play, conducted in the years before Huizinga's publication, sociologist Mildred Parten noted that "[i]nvestigators of social behavior have overlooked the period when adjustment to the group is first acquired and practiced. In so doing, they have ignored a source that ought to contribute not only to the explanation of child behavior, but to the understanding of adult group habits which persist from childhood" (1932, p. 243). Parten suggests two aspects of social participation: "extensity" (the number of social contacts made by an individual) and "intensity" (the group's character and the role of the individual within the group, for example in terms of leadership and influence) (ibid., p. 248). She also outlines six stages of play, through which children seem to go from play limited to the child's own body and the following and observation of others playing, to fully organized play together with other children, sharing a common interest or goal. One might argue that in order to avoid contra-fictional behaviour in immersive events, the participants need to engage in what Parten calls *associative* and *cooperative* play, which, according to her, constitute the two most advanced stages that human children develop into. The analogy to the formalized constitution of adult play is evident, with participation ranging from spectatorship to joint ventures.

Furthermore, play is not conditioned by external reward or punishment; playful activities can never be forced, only suggested, or they will become only gestural and mimetic ritualizations of play. It is a common claim that all play is voluntary and can be abandoned at any point. *Play is for players, that is, it has intrinsic rather than extrinsic value.* Neither is play unreflected routine and habit in an anaesthetic manner – that is, it is *action* rather than activity. Play must be come with attentiveness and the ability to wilfully submit to surprise and challenge. Artistic researcher Arne Kjell Vikhagen notes upon this:

> When play becomes routine it detaches from the attitude of play, even though an inexperienced player would have a completely different experience if she were in the same situation. The experienced player has lost the attitude of play, and is in fact only left with the activity of play. It might look like play to an external observer, but the player is not in a state of play – she is only performing the activity of play. (2017, p. 109)

DEFAULT MODE

Play has been described "autotelic," that is, "we play for the sake of playing," as play scholar Miguel Sicart (2017, p. 26) puts it. It is clear that play's intrinsic value makes us treat play as the goal of our efforts with leisure as the endpoint of labour and the reward of suffering. Another view is that play is never innocent and should be regarded as the recurring threat towards current sociality which therefore must be controlled – through play, society is in constant movement, generation by generation, and the meaning of play would thereby by to keep moving. Schechner asks whether play may be *autonomous*, "that is, will it 'just happen' if nothing else blocks, cancels, or represses it?" (1988, p. 18) From this, one can speculate whether play reveals a default mode – our personal "will," drive, or sense of direction – which is only enabled when excluded from the pressure of the outside world and relieved of external compulsion, comparisons, and musts. That would make it a retreat from existing social constructions, implying an *easing* of normal social pressure and feedback rather than an intensification and submission to conformity and inter-human expectations. Through play, the social contract can be re-negotiated and re-fined – disassembled and re-constructed. The notion of play as a relief from ordinary sociality is key in our further discussions of ludo-immersive opera.

ANTISTRUCTURE AND THE PROFANE

In play, momentary fantasy worlds, changing the surface conditions to differ from the underlying structure, are installed with the capacity to test the players' susceptibility to alternate sociality and their ability to ignore what otherwise is the normal condition of things. This could be viewed as a tuning process, allowing us to acknowledge cognitive consonance as well as cognitive dissonance. It is impossible to play something you already are and we always play what we are *not* in relation to our ordinarwy social context – loud, aggressive, crazy, calm, beautiful, disgusting, brave, spontaneous, grown-up, infantile, etc.; what cannot be feigned cannot be played. Instruments and masks distort sound and looks[33]. Illusions intercepts everyday life as they trick us to look away.

Schechner wonders if playing actually might be categorically *antistructural*, "that is, does it always take the opposite position or role to whatever is happening at the time it erupts or is invited?" (1988, p. 18) The evident drive in fantasy role-playing games towards what sociologist Gary Alan Fine (2002) calls "social nonconformism" (to be as strange as possible in relation to one's default mode) supports this. We never play who we are outside play, but stretch our abilities to host and display different and more or less extreme personae and behavioral facets. If culture is antistructural in relation to the surrounding nature – a momentary ludic ignorance that gives us an illusory break – play is antistructural in relation also to the current culture.

Moreover, dimensions and challenges in play are always adjusted to the players' bodies – players are always in charge (at the very least, they are always free to stop playing) and toys are controllable items with intrinsic value (opposed to tools that are controllable items with extrinsic value). Play as a model of "everyday existentialism", with organisms' attempts to "secure themselves from angst by controlling their circumstances" (Sutton-Smith, 2001, p. 228), may serve a group-psychological purpose. I think it is wise to acknowledge such needs, but if play is antistructural, it can also invoke greater risk than in the

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[33] The mask worn by Greek and Roman theatre actors was interestingly called "persona," which etymologically can be traced to "per-sonare" (meaning to sound through). The mask was not only a visual device, but also worked as a megaphone or instrument, altering the perception of the voice. Paglia (1992) discusses this in relation to the broadening of the term into social role and public function. The metaphorical term "person," denoting a human with certain status that can be heard, stems from this.

normal state. After all, liberty is not only the freedom to be sheltered from risks, but the freedom to take our own risks by choice.

SECURITY AND THE LONGING FOR THRILL

"In my sense," says sociologist and play scholar Roger Caillois, "the joy, abandon, and ease observed in play activity are derived from security. One knows that here things have only the importance that one has assigned to them." (2001a, p. 158) If the thrill of play is antistructurally invoked by safety, there is also an opposite situation in which "unsafety" antistructurally invokes security; according to author Greg Lukianoff and social psychologist Jonathan Haidt, "safetyism" is "an obsession with eliminating threats (both real and imagined) to the point at which people become unwilling to make reasonable trade-offs demanded by other practical and moral concerns" (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018, p. 32). Safetyism is not playfulness in any sense, but a safe-guarding seriousness. Caillois notes how the opposite of play seems to be present in what we regard as the sacred (broadly defined) and argues that "[t]he sacred and play resemble each other to the degree that they are both opposed to the practical life, but they occupy symmetrical situations with regard to it." (Caillois, 2001a) He continues:

> I do not believe that the various forms of play and of religion, because they are separated with equal care in daily life, occupy equivalent situations with respect to each other, nor that for this reason they are identical in content. […] Through the sacred, the source of omnipotence, the worshipper is fulfilled. Confronted by the sacred, he is defenseless [sic.] and completely at its mercy. In play, the opposite is the case. All is human, invented by man the creator. For this reason, play rests, relaxes, distracts, and causes the dangers, cares, and travails of life to be forgotten. The sacred, on the contrary, is the domain of internal tension, from which it is precisely profane existence that relaxes, rests, and distracts. The situation is reversed. (Caillois, 2001a, pp. 157–158)

BELITTLING

Philosopher and professor in aesthetics Giorgio Agamben comes to a similar conclusion, in that he states that "[t]he passage from the sacred to the profane can, in fact, also come about by means of an entirely inappropriate use (or rather, reuse) of the sacred: namely, play. It is well known that the spheres of play and the sacred are closely connected." (2015, p. 75) While sacralization enlarges, dignifies, and conserves, profanation belittles and diminishes by ways of reduction and ridicule in order to promote progress through infraction. Play makes things manageable, "[a]nd if 'to consecrate' (*sacrare*) was the term that indicated the removal of things from the sphere of human law, 'to profane' meant, conversely, to return them to the free use of men." (ibid., p. 73) In short, if the sacred denotes what is out of reach and must be accepted, the profane denotes what is within reach and could be affected. With ludo-immersive opera, we move away from the sacralised forms of opera, towards a more playful and profane type of interaction.

THE SPECTATOR GAME

If theatre as ludic activity is a profane counterpart to the religious rite, I believe that spectatorship have different purposes in play and religion; the two illusionist acts have different aims. While the (non-ludic) sacred act bolsters faith and acceptance, the theatre is a test of gullibility. I regard the theatre as a site for enjoying disbelief and putting it to the test. The theatrical spectator's task is to *tolerate* what is displayed on the premise that it is only a game, that is, apparently permanent and definite actions are actually resettable and restorable. The spectator loses the spectator game as soon as it is taken seriously and mixed up with reality. The more convincing, the harder the task is, and if a performer actually is not playing, it is certainly not theatre, but a non-ludic performance. If spectatorship is the first stage of ludic participation, it is cleared when the participant has proven able to recognize play by resisting provocation from seemingly outrageous actions. Thereby, theatrical spectatorship is in my view about integrity and distance, of knowing the difference between symbolic and real action. It is a test of the spectator's judgement.

RULES AND SPECTATORSHIP

Play is animalistic, and not exclusively human. What is key to playful behaviour seems to be cooperation and mobility. "Social species play more than solitary species, hunting species more than prey species" (Boyd, 2018, p. 9); unlike prey, predators have moving targets, which make things more complex and high-risk. However, it is vital to note that *all* animals do not play *all* types of games and humans probably play *most* – and for the longest time, with our prolonged childhood and extensive adult play. Play must be defined generally, cross-culturally, and cross-nature. Sutton-Smith (2001) remarks, for example, that any definition of play must be broad rather than narrow and include passive and vicarious types of play, as well as active participation. He also notes that play should be viewed as a system for communication, which in itself is neither good or bad. With this in mind, it is logical to view the spectator as playing a ludic role and as part of the ludic event. My starting point is that if opera is a *sensory* system for communication, based on physiological factors, play is a *participatory* system for communication, based on sociological factors. Both physiology and sociality control movement, which are both matters for investigation in ludo-immersive opera. Spectators have a controlling function as adjunct monitors. The act of humans witnessing of other humans' achievements often boils down to the concept of excellence and superb performances that, in the words of philosopher and metaphysician Paul Weiss, "reveals to us the magnitude of what then can be done" (Weiss, 1969, p. 3), but also the possibilities for extreme human behaviour and tricks in general. The performer holds the perceiver captivated and still, and it becomes a matter of resisting if one wishes to interfere or leave. Just as Parten includes the on-looker in the act of play, I treat spectatorship as first-grade participation. That means that the spectator in ordinary operatic spectacles is also part of the play, however restricted they may be to a limited role.

Interestingly, games suited for the public tend to be more rule-based (restricting movement), and games intended for private pleasure only tend to be less rule-based (allowing movement). As demonstrated in Suits' example above, game rules are always social, making them logical but not necessarily rational – since they are always about what *should* and not what *could* be done. There is undeniably a connection between observation and rules, between the social nature of the game and the amount of liberty the players enjoy. Of course, clearly expressed rules that are comprehensible also to the by-stander

makes the game more interesting also from a distal position, and by monitoring a game with rules, the spectator plays a role in guarding the maintenance of the rule-system. Alter-egos, avatars, and anonymity (when only you know what you are doing), allow for the most trespassing and risk-taking. Masks are employed in both immersive theatre (see for instance Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More* from 2003) and experimental game shows (see for instance psychological illusionist Derren Brown's *Remote Control* from 2011) in order to disconnect action from identity through deindividuation and thereby stimulate potentially extreme, eccentric, and anti-social behaviour. The social gradings of various kinds of participation is a matter of conscience and the propensity to please, as the quote attributed to H. L. Mencken reminds us: "Conscience is the inner voice that warns us somebody may be looking." When appearing as a fictional character, we are partly excused for deviating from our usual social persona, which we try to make use of in ludo-immersive opera. Furthermore, when observation is reciprocal, social adjustments are a matter of negotiation.

CAILLOIS' TAXONOMY

It is indeed hard to detect common traits in all games – some have rules (sports, board-games etc.), other are almost unregulated (dare-devilling, practical-jokes, rough-and-tumble play etc.), some are played in designated spaces with consistent design and dedicated props that prevails between performances (chess, football, theatres, doll-houses etc.), others are constructed on the go with things at hand (sticks-as-swords, tree cabins etc.). And so on. Instead of speaking about games as a nebulous assembly, a taxonomy of game-playing with related categories and styles can indeed be useful. A classic and often referred to example of this is Caillois' analysis of games and play.

In Caillois' taxonomy (2001b), he proposes two main styles of play: *ludus* (orderly play) and *paidia* (turbulent play). These notions of *order* (in which things are found to be assigned a proper place) and *chaos* (in which things are caught drifting) are, according to Caillois, "not categories of play but ways of playing" (ibid., p. 53). In ludus, additional rules add complexity and intricacy – in this kind of game, the player has to submit to *more rules* and apparently *less latitude* than outside play. In paidia, on the other hand, *loosening and dissolution of rules* adds thrill – in this kind of game, the player is relieved of normal

restrictions (code of conduct, etiquette, conventions) in order to enjoy greater freedom. (One way to think of the two is obviously that ludus is organized game and paidia is free play.) Besides the two styles of play, there is also four categories of play, according to Caillois (2001b): *agôn* (competition), *alea* (chance), *mimicry* (make-believe) and *ilinx* (vertigo). Caillois traces these four through different human cultures, from children's intuitive play to grown-up's formal games. In line with my methodological model of experimental revision of theory through *critical imagination* (see **Chapter 2**), I have tested how Caillois' taxonomy works out in practice and how it could be re-formulated in order to fit the empirical findings of the study.

With ludus, we do what we *must*; with paidia, we do what we *can*. A composition of obligations and opportunities form the design of an identifiable game without a predetermined result. However, few games are either based in pure force or pure freedom – either formality or turbulence dominates every game, and it is the exact balance between the two that defines it. Ludus tends to be spectator games and paidia tends to be mystery making and hush-hush. The relationship of ludus and paidia is the same as between perception and performance, but specifically in relation to the social, I believe. Moreover, while alea and ilinx are perceptive ways of playing (alea has to do with insight and ilinx has to do with balance), mimicry and agôn are performative (based on conscious achievement and effort). Caillois (2001b) connects agôn and alea to *regulation* (that is associated to ludus) and mimicry and ilinx to *improvisation* (that is associated with paidia).

ARTISTIC PLAY

Game theoretician Karl Sigmund asserts that play is movement, that through play we are moved, and that "games of motion became art forms." (2017, p. 213) He recalls "the concept of *play* used for mechanical parts as 'limited mobility'" (ibid., p. 210, original emphasis). Movement requires latitude (in Swedish: *handlingsutrymme* or *spelrum* = *game space*), that is, designated room for freedom of action and surprise, and all games contain rules circumscribing the latitude so that we can detect it. The magic circle is such a space. This freedom can comprise a *repertory* of defined and temperate options (as in a game of chess, a piano keyboard, or a ballot), or a *range* of fluid possibilities (as in a game of hide-and-seek,

a violin string, or a swing). The human in human game-playing is the disciplining and ordering of movement *as if*[34] there was a purpose, says philosopher and hermeneutician Hans-Georg Gadamer (2013). Moreover, in her integrated theory of practice for opera, Bryon draws a causal line, saying that without obstacles, there is no drama (defined as conflict), and consequently, no reason for action. According to her, obstacles "can be seen as a driving force not only in acting practices but also in music" (Robinson Bryon, 1998, p. 192).

MOVED BY ART

Poetry, music, and theatre can all be discussed in terms of play and movement. As sensory activities, poetry could based on this shift in perspective be viewed as *verbal* movement, music is *aural* movement, and theatre is *visual* movement. As social activities, on the other hand, they become media for social integration or rejection. An ensemble results from rehearsals, as Stanislavskij (1980) tells us, and just like text can make us think alike, tones and light can align, synchronize, and assemble us. In artistic play, we set up artistic obstacles for ourselves or each other so that we can perceive and perform together when relating to the same thing. And the live-factor is important in play. Play is in retrospect perhaps interesting as a narrative of adventures, of achievements, and of failures. But, the fascination of non-predictability in live-play depends on being in the moment, on something being at stake. That means that in an opera that is performed live, the drama on stage is not the important drama, but rather it is the *ludic meta-drama*, induced by the obstacle defined by the work at hand and tackled by the performer-perceivers. It is not how the opera *La Bohème* unfolds that is interesting, but how the artists manage to move according to the definition of the game *La Bohème*. Will Paris occur before our eyes? Will a high C be sung? Will there be sobbing?

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PLAY

Sometimes, there are claims such as "[f]antasy games are similar to the theatre, but with the difference that the games are improvisational" (Fine, 2002,

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[34] The notion "as if" is also a central concept in Stanislavski's classical acting method.

p. 205). This is obviously false, since theatre very well can be improvised. Rather, what makes me define acting as role-play instead of theatre is the issue of privacy and of obligatory performance by all perceivers. In fantasy role-playing *everyone* appears as a fictional character and the characters precede the story. In the case of live-action role-playing, game and media scholar David Simkins notes that it is a distinctly private activity. He explains that "[t]he first, unwritten, rule of LARP is we do not talk about LARP" and "[w]atching someone else LARP is peculiar, even to those of us who participate in LARP regularly" (2015, pp. 4–5). Theatre is just role-playing with the additional opportunity to perceive without performing, and "[a]cting is so close to the role-play games of children that one is led to suppose that performers came first and their public much later" (Sigmund, 2017, p. 213). According to performance scholar Daniel Mackay (2001), role-play is *ergodic*[35] rather than narrative, since a narrative always is a *recapitulation*, not an *actualization*. The ludic meta-drama in role-play opera is the ergodic experience of decisive action in the now, for *both* artists and visitors – the recapitulated narratives of those meta-dramas are what I collect in the interviews and surveys within this study. The ergodic, opposed to the narrative, can be plausible, but never settled – we have to work it out. Operatic instructions and framings are always ergodic for the artists – in role-play opera, they are communicated to the visitor-players via facilitators.

While there is sometimes a reluctance to acknowledge games as art and the co-existence of artistic and ludic qualities in user-oriented and interactive works and designs (see the ludology vs. narratology debates in for example Aarseth, 2012), there has at the same time been a prominent movement of participatory art in the last century. With this movement, many art works have engaged the visitors through explicitly ludic participation. Gadamer (2013) points out that in almost any form of modern experimentation with art, the motive of turning the distanced spectator into affected coplayer is present. And Bourriaud notes that "[s]pectator 'participation', theorised by Fluxus happenings and performances, has become a constant feature of artistic practice." (2002, p. 25) This is the opposite direction than that implied by the formalization of operatic attendance during the last century, where we have gone from lighted auditoria and social gatherings to invisible and silent worshippers. However, there is no real conflict between the systematicity of games and

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[35] "Ergodic" a term based on the Greek words for "work" and "path" and the concept of ergodic literature is attributed to Espen E. Aarseth, scholar within the fields of game studies and electronic literature.

an assumed anti-systematicity of art. But there might be a possible solution: "If we develop a method of criticism that analyses the systematicity of ludic participation, then we might correct the largely unquestioned critical identification of indeterminacy and anti-systematicity as a laudable quality for a work of art to possess," says Tim Stott (2015, p. 4), historian of contemporary art, design, and visual culture.

Formal spectatorship has for long been known as the common denominator in art and games, such as sports. With the recent trends of participatory art, it is not far-fetched to continue the theorization and broaden the study of spectatorship into studies of artistic-athletic participation and *visitorship*, proposedly with a transdisciplinary system in mind. In fine arts, "relational aesthetics" (Bourriaud, 2002) has offered an approach to contemporary art-works with interactive features. In operatic arts, there is an urgent need to catch up with these ideas and form a genre-specific understanding of how operatic participation can be understood and applied.

IMMERSION

Recent discussions of immersion come from two directions; while research in the arts often focus on the visitors collectively – as a faceless crowd – research in game studies most often centers the individual. Furthermore, there are reasons to discriminate between sensory immersion through physiological means and participatory immersion through sociological means. Further, I suggest, anticipatory immersion – the sense of being able to predict a potential outcome that motivates action – can be added as yet another kind of immersion.

ATTENTION, MOTIVATION, DISTRACTION, AND LURE

The immersed can be distinguished by their concentrated or inward preoccupation and lack of interest in external stimuli. To be immersed means shutting off external environmental disturbances for a favoured or vexing activity, shrinking consciousness and engaging in a world that is simpler and more coherent, but also more intense and manageable. Following a number

of experimental case-studies of video-gaming, technology and game scholar Charlene Jennett (2010) suggests that immersion is a result of self-motivated attention which is enhanced through feedback from the game environment. Its motivation could be understood as the turning of fantasies into formalized and stable objectives and target images or scenarios. The suspended sense and anticipation of success have, according to Jennett's study, objective effects on the awareness of auditory and visual distractors. However, auditory distractors that are personal (for instance using the immersee's personal name) do get through the attenuation filter and must be consciously ignored (ibid.), that is, contra-fictional information relating to factual relations that refers to the immersed itself seem to break the "spell." In order to know how to maintain the state of immersion, we must know what disturbs it; immersion requires work and effort to consciously block the familiar and maintain the aestheticized.

Immersion is sometimes referred to as a sense of "being there," of undisturbed *presence*. Ryan, however, argues that while immersion and presence are interrelated, they are not the same thing:

> As for the terms immersion and presence, they capture two different but ultimately inseparable aspects of the total effect: immersion insists on being inside a mass substance, presence on being in front of a well-delineated entity. Immersion thus describes the world as a living space and sustaining environment for the embodied subject while presence confronts the perceiving subject with individual objects. But we could not feel immersed in a world without a sense of the presence of the objects that furnish it, and objects could not be present to us if we weren't part of the same space as our bodies. This approach means that the factors that determine a system's degree of interactivity also contribute to its performance as immersive system. (Ryan, 2001, pp. 67–68, original emphasis)

In immersive stories, she notes, there are a number of established techniques that work to integrate and embed the recipient psychologically in the events – for instance using the present tense, and addressing the recipient in second person.

LUDIC IMMERSION

I regard ludic immersion as related to psycho-social effects of game-playing by ways of escaping one social context and plunge into an alternate one. In the context of virtual environments and digital games, scholar and game designer Gordon Calleja has argued that the metaphor of immersion should be replaced with "incorporation," denoting "[…] the subjective experience of inhabiting a virtual environment facilitated by the potential to act meaningfully within it while being present to others." (2007, pp. 89–90) But incorporation is rather the *method* of immersing someone, and incorporation does not per definition evoke a certain psychological state, which immersion is considered to be. *The Player Involvement Model* by Calleja (2011) stratifies player integration into two temporal phases (offline and moment-to-moment involvement) and six dimensions (kinesthetic, spatial, shared, narrative, affective, and ludic), but do not discriminate between sensory and participatory integration.

Immersion can be traced to a momentary act of wilful oblivion and changed perception; the immersed is *dissociated* from its regular context and behaviour and *associated* with alternate circumstances. In LARP studies, Harviainen (2012) points out that immersion, however not the exactly same, is closely related to concepts such as engrossment, flow, and arousal. But, when it comes to the similarities with the concept of "flow," Lukka notes that "[w]hereas flow can occur in many encapturing fields of life such as hobbies or work, immersion appears in more limited environments and includes dissociation, an experience of being someone else, unlike flow" (2014, p. 89). Therefore, the social non-conformity of appearing as someone else or in a new role within an alternate context can be assumed to be immersive. This is in line with what has been called *the batman effect*, when the creation of an alter-ego allows for bolder action, focus, and perseverance – this kind of self-distancing and channelled immersion through an impersonated character has in children shown a positive effect on work capacity in comparison to thinking of one's self in first or third person, according to a study by psychologist Rachel E. White and colleagues (2017). Moreover, Lukka stresses that in LARP, "[a]cting reinforces both the player's own and others' immersion and also has a communicative function in the game" (2014, p. 88). He advocates a view on immersion as a continuum, in which the strength of immersion correlates with the dissociation from the everyday personality. Through ludic immersion, new personae can emerge. And by creating a fictional character, as one does in role-playing

before beginning to play, one also creates a "mask" and an alter ego, which can work to distort perceptions and dissociate one from their regular set of habits and everyday personae.

Ludic immersion differs from delusional superstition and confusion in that play never is a matter of belief, but of a conscious pretence which the player is in charge of aborting at will. Caillois points out how disguises risk immersing actors into forgetting themselves and that both the dimensions of the stage and applauses mark the end of illusion and play – how "sharp limits of play prevent alienation" (2001b, p. 49) from one's self. Mask play fascinates in both ways.

ARTISTIC IMMERSION

In computer games, players' lost sense of passing time when immersed has been studied and music has been noted to be an important factor in altering time perception (Sanders & Cairns, 2010). I regard artistic immersion as related to physiological capacities to engage in alternate sensations. In the field of the arts, "immersive theatre," "immersive music," and "immersive literature" (notably lyric poems and fiction, that is, poetic literature in the classical sense) are well-known concepts. All three are relevant factors in the discussion of immersive opera encompassing intellectual, audial, and visual stimuli.

Immersive texts subsume the reader in an imaginary world in which the reader's own fantasy play a crucial part in making sense of what one may call the "polysemantic" (Machon, 2018). The poetic composition itself provides the essential means to give curiosity-evoking clues to a presumed but not explicit meaning behind the words, and "[r]eaders prone to such infatuations […] are likely to be drawn to idiosyncratic, edgy, even flamboyant examples of language use" (Felski, 2008, p. 63). In a similar way, immersive music occupies the listener fully by cutting off the outside world and demanding work on recognizing patterns and decoding potential meaning.

Today, even though immersive opera is still rare, immersive theatre is a recognized genre that in the 2000s has gained more and more currency. Alston describes the concept of immersive theatre in this way:

> Immersive theatre centers on the production of thrilling, enchanting or chal-
> lenging experiences, which feature as an important part of immersive theatre
> 'artwork' that audiences co-produce by doing more than watching, or by
> augmenting the productivity of watching as a prospectively participating
> spectator. Audiences may roam freely through spaces, interact and/or dia-
> logue with performers and/or other audience members, or physically engage
> with a performance environment that surrounds them completely. They are
> expected to be alert, engaged, involved and prepared for invigoration. And
> they are expected to put their psychological and physiological capabilities to
> work, either through some form of physical exertion, or through an intimate
> involvement in performance that enlivens the affective possibilities of an un-
> certain future. (Alston, 2016, p. 3)

According to Machon, immersive theatre arose "from the fusion of installation
art and physical and visual theatres of the 1980s and owes its sensual aesthetic
primarily to a mix of ingredients involving landscape, architecture, scenog-
raphy, sound and direct, human contact" (2013, p. xv). Etymologically, the
compound joins the latin words *in* and *mergere* (meaning to dip or to plunge).
To immerse is to merge into, and immersion is the antonym of emersion or
emergence. While the emersed appears and stands out, the immersed disap-
pears, is engulfed, absorbed, and blends in – not only psychologically, as some
argue, but also aesthetically by means of adding to and blending with the set-
ting (in the wild, see camouflage, duplication, and trompe-l'oeil effects). And
merge implies distortion and altered appearance.

Immersive theatre may be apprehended as a contemporary fringe movement,
but it continues a long tradition of environmental staging, dating back to
medieval times and still present in, for instance, amusement parks. Theatre
scholar Arnold Aronson explains:

> Frontal staging, however, is so dominant in the Western tradition that even
> after nearly a century of environmental alternatives, many people still have
> some difficulty in accepting non-frontal scenography. The majority of the-
> atre historians still tend to dismiss environmental performances as little more
> than eccentric contemporary experiments. It is, therefore, important to real-
> ize that non-frontal uses of space have been common throughout the histo-
> ry of theatre and actually dominate much non-Western theatre and certain
> forms of folk performance. (1977, pp. 32–33)

Architect and performance scholar Beth Weinstein (2017) further propos-
es that the multitude of architectural layouts in theatrical spaces habitually
known as "proscenium," "central," "peripheral," "thrust," and "open," could
be exchanged for a more theatrical-neutral language by using the terms "split,"
"surrounding," "surrounded," "projecting," and "interspersed." The ideal of
frontal staging was radically contested already by the early 1900s, that is, a
century before what we today know as immersive theatre grew to popularity.
The roaming visitor is a key feature. Immersive art events with roaming visi-
tors, free to make their own way through the performance by ways of the quest
model I described earlier, relies on *equal opportunity*, but not *equal outcome*.

Immersion and defamiliarization, understood as directing attention to ar-
tificial constructions, are often held as opposing phenomena (Anderson &
Iversen, 2018). Appreciation of immersion runs contrary to fashionable alien-
ation, as Ryan notes:

> It takes deprivation for the reader to come to realize the importance of im-
> mersion. The many-worlds texts of postmodernism offer glimpses of what
> it means to settle down in a world, but as soon as the reader develops a
> sense of belonging, they break the illusion or transport her to another world.
> By shuttling the reader back and forth between worlds, by constantly shift-
> ing perspectives, by proposing multiple realities that relativize each other,
> by constructing and voiding worlds—as it exposes their language-made na-
> ture—the postmodern text keeps the reader in a state of permanent jet lag.
> (Ryan, 2001, p. 199)

In my practice, in which the relation between guest and host is the most cen-
tral aspect, I have come to view immersion foremost as a motion in the di-
rection of assimilation. Hence, immersion is more of a process than a fixed
state. The idea of immersion as assimilation is also compatible with Brecht's
"Verfremdung" (alienation), which he puts in opposition to immersion[36] in
his discussion of operatic renewal (2015). The experience of *alienation* and
its opposite, *assimilation* – movement going either outward or inward – is
itself artistically interesting. A similar approach is found in artistic researcher
Magali Ljungar-Chapelon's (2008) thesis on immersive virtual environments,
in which she describes the *tightening* and *widening* of the distance between

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[36] In the original German transcript, Brecht uses the word "hineinversetzt."

the audience and the performers as a fascinating and creative tool for further experimentation. The alienated stands out, while the assimilated blends in. The opposition of immersion to alienation is a vital aspect when discussing ludo-immersive opera in relation to operatic history.

AESTHETICS

"At the cognitive roots of art is a subjective phenomenology of aesthetic enjoyment that differs qualitatively from desire," argues Steen (2011, n.p.), and continues that "the aesthetic impulse is an appetite for certain types of information." The conscious use of aesthetic knowledge and transmittance of aesthetic and artistic rather than linguistic information for the sake of subjective and perhaps surprising reactions would thus be the experimental artist's task.

Another way to understand aesthetics is as the opposite of *anaesthetics*, which can be defined as "familiarity, a sedative of ordinariness, which dulls the senses and hides the wonder of existence" (Dawkins, 1998, p. 6). The aesthetic is instead the attention-grabbing and memorable, that which strikes us as the extraordinary, the strange, the outstanding, the bizarre, and the overwhelming.

The aesthetic principles of the Apollonian and the Dionysian is a recurring figure in discussions of opera, play, and immersion. In short, the dialectics seem to boil down to a matter of minimization/maximization; on one side, Apollonian lightness, on the other, Dionysian heaviness – split and merge, classification and syntax. Apollo chisels and Dionysus swells. Apollo stands for entities and Dionysus stand for unities, the particular and the complex. I will use the Apollonian as shorthand for distance and perception, and the Dionysian as shorthand for appearance and performance.

My argument for using this figure is that the Apollonian/Dionysian duality works as a metaphor *both* for operatic connectivity and ludic connectivity within a common principal system. The classic idea of two complementary impulses permeates Nietzsche's writings on the principles of two "art worlds" (1967), in which the topic of opera and music drama is at the centre of his discussion. Gefors affirms this by stating that "Dionysos and Apollo are united in the opera." (2011, p. 117, my translation from Swedish) However, "even before Nietzsche, the two

gods were frequently invoked, either explicitly or implicitly, in debates about the nature of opera." (Hutcheon & Hutcheon, 2000, p. 2) Even if she does not turn specifically to opera in her seminal work[37], art historian Camille Paglia's theory is that "[a]rt reflects on and resolves the eternal human dilemma of order versus energy," stemming from the problem of our own split brains, bodies and so on (1991, p. 96). The cliodynamic turn-taking motion of aesthetic shifts seems to oscillate throughout art history, as Paglia demonstrates, and we can indeed become aware of what direction we are moving at any given moment. Balancing the Apollonian and the Dionysian is the challenge of creating a whole in which the parts are still distinguishable – specialized and profiled, but connected and interdependent. This is relevant and handy for the discussion of ludo-immersive opera in a broader context, since the challenge with this artform is to generate events that are sensorily congruent but participatorily stratified. The Apollonian/ Dionysian metaphor makes it possible to relate and contrast ludo-immersive opera with other forms of opera, both historical and contemporary. It also connects ludo-immersive opera – though a contemporary operatic format – with the idea of Ancient Hellenism.

IN DISCUSSIONS OF ART, OPERA, PLAY, AND IMMERSION

In sum, the two principles of the Apollonian and the Dionysian have, in the case of art in general and opera in particular, been described in terms of for instance the dialectics between

- dreams/intoxication, measure/excess, naivety/primality, symbolism/originality, knowledge /action, illusion/experience, individual/mass (Nietzsche, 1967, about Greek culture in relation to operatic art),
- imagination/incarnation, art/waste, sky/earth, linearity/centrality, conceptualization/fertility, maleness/femaleness, projection/mystery, stability/flux, formalism/naturalism (Paglia, 1991, about art's sexual roots), and
- essence/body, control/energy, intellect/corporeality, civilization/passion, order/chaos (Hutcheon & Hutcheon, 2000, about opera's physical dimensions with regards to singers, spectators, and characters within the art form).

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[37] Paglia is an art historian, but in her more popular writings on feminism she has paid some interest to opera, see the essay *Gipsy Tigress: Carmen* (1994).

Caillois (2001b) associated paidia and mimicry with the Dionysian. It is not hard to read Apollo and Dionysus into the two styles of play: "Apollo is a tyrant, Dionysus a vandal." (Paglia, 1991, p. 97) The tyrant is a ruler, guarding and watching over the other from a distance. The vandal is among the other, causing trouble, surprise and fun. "Playfulness and criminality are first cousins, flouting the norm," says Paglia (ibid.) and Sicart states that "[p]layers of a game are playful when they consciously manipulate the relative rigidity of the system" (2017, p. 23). In short, Apollo represents the restrictions and Dionysus represents the exceptions. With ludus, we do what we *must*; with paidia, we do what we *can*. Based on Caillois' own descriptions, I sort my reinterpretations of his concepts in social terms into Apollonian and Dionysian scales.

In her work on (syn)aesthetics, preceding her investigation of immersive theatre, Machon points out that in order to understand the viscerality of these kinds of works, it is crucial to understand Nietzsche and his arguments for the Dionysian, since "[t]he Dionysian impulse directly connects an individual with primordial, instinctive processes of perception and analysis" (2011, p. 35). Through the intention to emphasize and extend rather than reject synchronization, ludo-immersive opera can be said to strive for a neo-Dionysian turn; or, at least, a balancing counter-movement, in contrast with the current Apollonian trend of desynchronization and anti-humanist disembodiment. With ludo-immersive opera, also the relationship between perception and performance – viewing and doing – is brought into the discussion of the Dionsyian-Apollonian turn-taking and compromise. With corporeal participation, perception is altered from the wide Apollonian bird's perspective of structural pattern-seeking, to the close Dionysian frog's perspective of individual recognition. This movement however, can just be seen as a return to the roots of the idea of opera, as in Ancient Greece, "[d]rama, a Dionysian mode, turned against Dionysus in making the passage from ritual to mimesis, that is, from action to representation." (Paglia, 1991, p. 6) The overview and the first-hand adventure are only two different approaches to and perspectives on the same event.

Even if both ludic and theatrical immersion have gained momentum in the 20th century, it is safe to say that opera since the late 19th century have gone in an Apollonian direction with splitting after splitting as follows:

- Artists split from visitors and visitors from visitors (Wagner)
- Sound split from acting (recording technology and distribution)
- Observer split from action (Brecht)
- Staging split from text (director's opera)
- Voice split from body (postopera)

This is problematic, if we – like I do – regard syntheses as essential to operatic practice.

THE NEW TOTAL WORK

Wagner's idea and realization of opera as holistic and seamless super-performance is in fact an extreme exception in operatic history; operas have often come to balance parts and whole. However, we can definitely see a tendency towards greater separation of elements as a reaction to Wagnerian captivation. A notable example is the detachability of song numbers. In the late 19th century, the royalty system and the market for sheet music restrained composers from taking "the song seriously as an aesthetic rather than a commercial medium. The need for an operatic aria to be detachable and convertible into a drawing-room song put severe constrains on operatic plots." (Potter, 1998, p. 76) Later, in musical theatre hit-making, the show-stoppers continued this development. But Gefors (2011) argues that for example an aria, detached from its dramatic context where it fills a dramatic purpose, loses its operatic-dramatic qualities. According to this reasoning, the detachment of elements is anti-operatic – it promotes showmanship and merchantry rather than dramatic function, context, relational meaning, and consistency.

Furthermore, opera's decline as popular entertainment coincided with the introduction of cinema. With film technology – in comparison to live performance – comes the possibility to combine disparate elements into new wholes and create the "fantasmatic body" (Doane, 1985). While opera presents a *total performance*, film presents a *total medium*. Audiences drawn to aesthetically holistic events in general rather than specifically musico-theatrical live performances (with their athletic and corporeal qualities), thereby got a compelling alternative. Hutcheon & Hutcheon remarks upon how screened and non-live formats, compared to live-performed opera, tilt toward the Apollonian:

In television and film, for instance, the body loses its brute corporeality; nevertheless, the close-up can allow the camera to give an illusion of intimate contact unavailable in a live theatrical experience. Of course, film, especially on a large screen, can provide impressive spectacle through special effects, on-location shooting, and other technological resources that live performed opera in theatre cannot hope to offer. But the impact of the spectacle on the audience's physical experience of it is different from a live performance. While the impact may be profound, the source is always distanced and under someone else's visual and aural control: the director directs our eyes and ears. It is, in this sense, a less immediate experience, also because of our knowledge that a film is utterly Apollonian: that is, controlled, complete, "perfected" (at least to the producer's or director's liking). (2000, p. 12)

OPERA'S AESTHETIC POTENTIALS

Artistically, I agree with Gefors in that Apollonian division and Dionysian extension could and should be combined in opera. Through synthetization, Apollonian particularity can be mixed with Dionysian resolution. I believe that opera's synthetic distortion of the underlying sensory elements is a quality, not a flaw, and that this wry, colossal, and brutal blending of poetry, music, and theatre loses its point if we try to make it more like naturalistic and articulated presentations – opera should not compete with cinematic acting and other Apollonian-leaning styles en vogue. In ludo-immersive opera, our hope is that the participants are physically and socially synthesized in that artists and visitors blend and communicate reciprocally with each other, but still have different obligations and possibilities, according to their statuses as hosts (non-player characters) and guests (players). The visitors are not united as one crowd in that there are opportunities to interfere and change the course of events. And the artists have person-dependent tasks – we are, when it works out, not only a group, but a group of individuals. So, when does ludo-immersive opera work as intended? That is what is at stake in this inquiry, with its systemistic and aesthetic framework.

Chapter 2:
METHODS

METHODOLOGICAL VANTAGE POINTS

This study starts from the assumption that operatic research comes with certain features and possibilities that are distinct from those of other art forms and artistic practices, and that its multi-disciplinarity and synthetic nature make it especially useful for investigations of transmedia and (syn)aesthetics. I work from Unander-Scharin's notion of "research-through-the-art-form-opera." Based on Frayling's (1993) categorization "research into/through/for art and design[38]," Unander-Scharin suggests the need to narrow the common division even further, and holds "that this research is carried out *through* opera by probing its environment in utilizing its own artistic toolbox" (2014, p. 49). However, the environment and toolbox of opera could of course be extended through even finer measurements, innovations, and new discoveries, evolving from its own principles.

My practice-led project in opera is positioned within the field of artistic research, in which, "[a]s a rule, an original contribution […] will result in an original work of art, as the relevance of the artistic outcome is one test of the adequacy of the research." (Borgdorff, 2011, p. 55) The demystifying nature of artistic research has been stressed by Kirkkopelto:

> By explicating hidden skill, artistic research aims at democratising the making and experiencing of art. Artistic research does not try to prove that there is one domain of knowledge where others than artists have no access and which others can only admire from the outside. It is fundamentally against any mystification of art and the making of art. […] In artistic research, the practice of art creates new theory and challenges existing theories. (Kirkkopelto, 2008, n.p.)

A related concept is *Practice as Research* (PaR), as it "involves a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry and where, in respect of the arts, a practice [...] is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry." (Nelson, 2013, pp. 8–9) The outcome of my practice-led study relies on documentation and annotation of our developing practice, and it is presented through exposed samples and this written thesis (what Nelson calls "complementary writings"). Hence, the artistic practice submitted as evidence for my

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[38] Frayling's categorization has later been adjusted by Henk Borgdorff (2012) into "research on/for/in the arts."

conclusions is obtainable both as record and recipe. In *practice-based* research, the creative artifact is the basis of the contribution of knowledge, while in *practice-led* research, the goal to find new understandings about practice foregrounds the inquiry (Candy & Edmonds, 2018).

Moreover, I subscribe to the view that while artistic research and artistic practice are connected activities, they are still different and must not be confused – therefore, the terms are not used interchangeably, as this would risk leading to misunderstandings about both. Research is a process and artistic research turns artistic practice into methods and means for inquiry. But artistic practice can indeed have other functions as well.

Artistic research is a methodologically heterogenous field of inquiry. My perspective is situated in my dual practice as artist and researcher and, as such, I emphasize my first-person view of my own and others' contributions to artistic events. A purely auto-ethnographic approach would however not have sufficed in the investigation of the collaborative and co-operative aspects of the exploration; the operas are joint ventures, and I have not only sought to understand my own work(s), but to understand my practice in relation to others' work. An artistic researcher has indeed the advantage of insider knowledge when working within a domain, but runs the risk of missing a bigger picture if they become too myopic and "home-blind" (as we in Swedish call people who are ignorant of what obviously surrounds them). As Lukka notes: "When making assessments about ourselves, there is a tendency to overestimate the introspective information we receive from ourselves, and dismiss our behavior as secondary to that. The observers, on the other hand, underestimate the significance of inner processes, and stress the significance of behavior." (2014, pp. 82–83) Therefore, to maintain a sober balance and ongoing comparison between the two modes of running a research project, it helps to look at the results from different angles and distill the conclusions.

At certain points, elements from *Action Research* (AR) have been applied in the project, in which the professional chamber opera ensemble forms a "community of interest" with the potential ability to change a practice or tradition from within. Even though I am the researcher bearing the responsibility to systematically and ethically undertake experiments and disseminate any findings publicly, I have interacted with both visitors to public events and with other artists. For that reason, my recollections are not only based on my own perceptions from my contributions to and participation in the opera productions, but also on field

recordings of preparations, performances, qualitative interviews, as well as surveys among artists and visitors. My conclusions are therefore drawn from my own experiential and experimental practice, put in relation and comparison to the empirical material documented to evidence the research inquiry.

My overarching methodological aims have been to find ways to be transparent about 1) how my conceptual framework, systematization and modelling have emerged around and through my research, and 2) how this framework has been compatible with the application of my ideas in full-scale collaborations that have the specific purpose of enriching artists' professional tool box. Two ideas have been particularly influential and inspirational to my methodological position and choices: Caillois' diagonal science and Popper's critical imagination, both advocating rare combinations and the generation of boundary-breaking culture clashes for the purpose of producing material for investigation[39]. This is done through "bisociative" thinking, finding points that are linked to more than one associative context, in line with Arthur Koestler's (1964) idea of a "double minded" creative state, replacing the single-minded routine state of mere association. Please note that I use the word "critical" in the sense of "with decisive importance" and "in a transitional state between states," as in the natural sciences. A critical approach is therefore about testing whether something really holds true by submitting it to pressure and testing.

CAILLOIS' DIAGONAL SCIENCE

Caillois' theories are currently most often applied in the field of game studies. However, I find his late ideas about what he calls diagonal science a valuable methodological approach, stretching beyond the established and traditional categories of research. With diagonal science, Caillois urges us to go outside our areas of expertise and work in an inter- and transdisciplinary way to find "polyvalent knowledge" through "imaginary boldness" (1960, p. 18, my translation from French). Caillois argues that a world where scientific knowledge has become fragmented suffers from myopia, like working with an immense puzzle where "everybody is acquainted with a single piece" (2003a, p. 344). He makes a plea for unfamiliar combinations of fields and methods in the search for new knowledge and ideas:

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[39] Caillois expressed appreciation for Popper's ideas, and he shared with him an antipathy for totalitarian thought and "para-scientific" constructs (Frank, 2003).

> [Diagonal sciences] bridge the older disciplines and force them to engage in dialogue. They seek to make out the single legislation uniting scattered and seemingly unrelated phenomena. Slicing obliquely through our common world, they decipher latent complicities and reveal neglected correlations. They wish for and seek to further a form of knowledge that would first involve the workings of a bold imagination and be followed, then, by strict controls, all the more necessary insofar as such audacity tries to establish ever riskier transversal paths. Such a network of shortcuts seems ever more indispensable today among the many, isolated outposts spread out along the periphery, without internal lines of communication – which is the site of fruitful research. (ibid., p. 347)

In the light of these ideas, I suggest that an artistic researcher could be seen as a *diagonal researcher* – imagining, finding, and testing shortcuts between apparently unrelated phenomena[40]. I humbly admit that I am no more an historian or natural scientist than the many historians and natural scientists discussing art-making are artists. But I do believe that researching artists, in the best cases, are able to provide examples of relations and concepts that can go unnoticed or be taken for granted by others. In artistic research, the idea of "theory imbricated with practice" (Nelson, 2013) is quite popular at the moment. But, in my view, to prioritize interdisciplinary and cross-fertilizing research in a diagonal manner is even more pressing – and inspiring. More than filling in the blanks of a brick wall and aligning practice side by side with theory, the diagonal is both a sharp corner-to-corner clash between modes, and a way of bridging the length between axes in the shortest and most effective way.

POPPER'S CRITICAL IMAGINATION

Experimentation can be understood as empirical testing of assumptions, which can also be denoted in Popperian[41] terms as "myths" or "theories"

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[40] A similar, though not exactly corresponding approach for artistic processes in a research context can be found for example in Åsa Stjerna's dissertation. She explores how artistic transformation is established through "transversality" – "the creation of affective, immanent relations between components in mutual continuous processes of becoming." (2018, p. 26)

[41] Even if there has been a resurgent interest in Karl Popper's theories in the field of artistic research, the trend has been to reduce his methodological points to his early writings and disregard his later reasoning about creative production (Naraniecki, 2016).

(Popper, 1963). Experimental testing is in short attempted falsification of held beliefs through "application of myth" in which new observations could potentially help us reject, eliminate, and criticize theories and "challenge us to produce new myths, new theories which may stand up to these observational tests" (ibid., p. 171–172). Although a common strawman argument, there is not necessarily any antagonism between science and art – on the contrary, in Popper's reasoning, they take turns and feed each other in self-correcting feedback-loops. However, this conception requires us to divide them into two interacting modes, in which I propose condensed theoretical propositions to function as gates to be opened between elaborate *fantasy* (as defined in **Chapter 1**) and practical *reality*. An hourglass-shaped process of compression and decompression takes form from two decompressive but linked states (fantasy and reality) and compressed key ideas that bridge the critical passage between them. In **Figure 7**, my methodological diagram shows how theories are complicated and applied when continually moved between the realms of fantasy and reality. From fantasy, ideas pass in to reality in order to be tested. And from reality, memories of past events pass on to fantasy in order to be suggested as motivation for further action. This would be the case no matter whether the artist (managing fantasy) and the scientist (managing reality) are different persons or one and the same.

Criticality is opposed to dogma: "The critical phase consists in giving up the dogmatic theory under the pressure of disappointed expectations or refutations, and in trying out other dogmas." (Popper, 1986, p. 45) Popper, with his background in musicology and a skeptical attitude towards historicism, compared the trial and errors of the musician with the work of the scientist and underscored the "constant give-and-take between the artist and his work" (ibid., p. 64) and that "[t]o see the musician as struggling to solve musical problems is of course very different from seeing him engaged in expressing his emotions (which, trivially, nobody can avoid doing)" (ibid., p. 68). Popper's objectivist theory of art "does not deny self-expression but stresses its utter triviality" and suggest that the really interesting function of the creative artist's emotions is not the mere expression of them, but instead as responses to assess the art work's impact on the artist himself as a "test body" (ibid., p. 67). For me as an artistic researcher, the idea of myself and others as such test bodies is very applicable when it comes to understanding the impact of the art works that we present. Do we hold up to the pressure of the art work? Seen through the lens
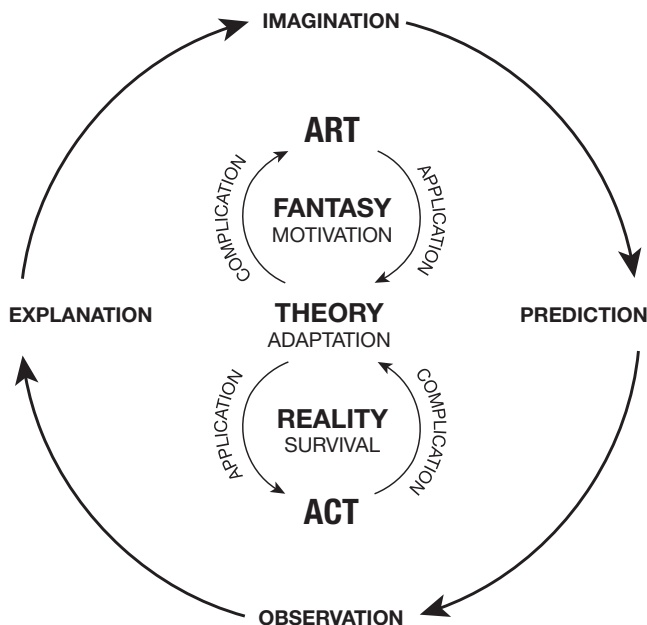
Figure 7: Methodological diagram of creative work in a critical rationalist manner of problem solving and variation. Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

of Popperian *critical rationalism*[42], artistic research becomes an opportunity for the kind of change in attitude described by philosophers Joseph Agassi and Ian Jarvie (both students of Popper) as "a change that may result in acts of creative art that are influenced by rational argument" (2008, p. 161).

Relating art to evolutionary epistemology and a theory of objective knowledge is in line with what Popper presented as his *World 3 Thesis*[43] (Naraniecki, 2016) and highlights what Popper himself called "critical imagination," breaking the bounds of existing realms[44]:

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[42] Discursively, critical rationalism diverges from both traditional objectivism (including classical rationalism and logical positivism) and post-modern relativism in that Popper's demarcation criterion of falsifiability is held as the central principle.

[43] Popper's classification into three "worlds" which are not separate universes sorts physical states and processes into World 1, mental states and processes into World 2, and "products of thought" including both scientific speculations and art works into World 3.

[44] A similar approach is found in Margaret Boden's (2004) notion of transformational creativity, contrasted with combinatory and exploratory creativity.

> What characterizes creative thinking, apart from the intensity of the interest in the problem, seems to me often the ability to break through the limits of the range – or to vary the range – from which a less creative thinker selects his trials. This ability, which clearly is a critical ability, may be described as critical imagination. It is often the result of culture clash, that is, a clash between ideas, or frameworks of ideas. Such a clash may help us to break through the ordinary bounds of our imagination. (Popper, 1986, p. 47, original emphasis)

Hence, according to this view, the first task of the artistic researcher is to imagine and make a clash of ideas or frameworks of ideas. Polymath scholar Douglas R. Hofstadter notes that the topic of variations on a theme is the crux of creativity, and that the secret to generating such variations is in telling the variable from the constant. The trick of finding relevant variables rests upon the act of "*seeing one thing as something else*. Once an abstract connection is set up via some sort of *analogy* or *reminding-incident*, then the gate opens wide for ideas to slosh back and forth between the two concepts." (1985, original emphasis) The constant defines the limiting space (in this case the operatic space) while the variable is the movement possible within this space. At this point, trial-and-error begins.

In my case, the give-and-take between imagination and observation has been done through an iterative process in multiple steps, during which concepts from game design have been applied in operatic productions, making it all a venture based on mixed-methods.

SYSTEMS THINKING

To graphically map spatial systems delineating relationships in art and performance is not uncommon. Classic examples can be found for instance in Wagner's circular-triangular diagram of human fantasy (1852, in Translator's Note, originally published in Letters to Uhlig), and Stanislavski's diagram of his acting system. According to art historian Timothy Stott's definition, "a system is a set of dynamic, formalized relations between elements that form an integrated whole." (2015, p. 6) Systems oppose the arbitrary and its chaotic confusion; they provide defining limits for dynamic content. A system can be

defined by the limitations it imposes on what can be done inside it. Once a possible motion series within a system is known, it can be repeated systematically.

Systems thinking goes together well with action research, as "… the capacity to practice both systemically and systematically[45] gives rise to more choices if one is able to act with awareness." This also can be referred to as "the 'as if' attitude, e.g. the choice can be made to act 'as if' it were possible to be 'objective' or to see 'systems' as real. Such awareness allows questions like: What will I learn about this situation if I regard it as a system to do X or Y?" (Ison, 2008, p. 154) If we can regard the artistic event as being based on a potential system with the ability to render a plurality of outcomes, this system can function generatively.

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[45] Systems scholar Ray Ison (2008) distincts the systemic from the systematic in that the systemic attends to the interconnections that make up a system, and the systematic goes through a system in an orderly manner.

RESEARCH MATERIAL AND ETHICS

The doctoral project has followed four opera productions by Operation Opera during the period 2016–2020. All four manifest immersive intentions. Three of them could be described as fully ludo-immersive with opportunities for the visitors to actively impact the course of events through their participation. One (*In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black*) focused more on sensory aspects and sound than on productive contingency. The first opera work (*The Architect*) was already commissioned when the research study started. The last opera work (*Chrono's Bank of Memories*) was not performed in full, as the production was shut down by the covid-19 pandemic in 2020. But, as this opera was a sort of puzzle in which fragments were performed act by act on different occasions, some parts of the opera were presented and documented before the production was interrupted.

DATA

As an opera artist with multiple functions, I have conducted the research as dramaturge (in *The Architect*), librettist (in *Reich of Rán* and *Chronos' Bank of Memories*), director (in *Chronos' Bank of Memories*), and opera singer (in *The Architect*, *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* and *Reich of Rán*). The data collected is a mix of my own observations and others' accounts.

The artistic researcher has both to articulate the knowledge of the artist and base the practice upon verified records, whether they may be witnessed events, assertions, or reflections by other artists or by other (academic) researchers. Practice-led research comes with the ability to present the insider's perspective *in relation* to the outside world.

All data comes from first-hand sources and encounters. In summary, the research material consists of the following artefacts:

- *The Architect* (libretto and score, recordings of live-performances, recordings of conversation with the ensemble, recordings and transcriptions of interviews with visitors, visitor surveys, artist questionnaire)

- *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* (libretto and score, recordings of live-performances, visitor survey)
- *Reich of Rán* (libretto and score, recordings of live-performances)
- *Chronos Bank of Memories* (libretto and score, printed fairy tale, video prologue, recordings of live-performances of Act 2, recordings and transcriptions of artist interviews)

THE COMMUNITY OF INTEREST

As mentioned, it has been important to calibrate my own observations and conclusion with reports from the other participants engaging in ludo-immersive opera, both artists and visitors. However, the visitor group is not a stable community, since it is assembling for the single event only and more or less without deeper relations and common goals. With regards to the research, the community of interest (see **Figure 8**) is primarily the artistic hosts of the events – primarily the performing artists, who hopefully will benefit from the development of knowledge and practice emerging from this research project. The research questions arise out of our discussions within the ensemble, and the conclusions I come up with are drawn from the practitioner's perspective. The group that makes up the community of interest is quite stable and remain in contact between productions, but it is not totally static, since partial changes of membership from production to production renews it dynamically. This means that between productions, some members remain while others do not, and a leaving member may return later in another production. Verbal accounts (surveys and interviews) dominate the first iterations of the study, in order to give a picture of the issues arising in the early phase. Documentation of live-events (primarily films) catch the development during the entire process. The last iteration ends with interviews with two ensemble members, representing the different perspectives of a constant ensemble member (Mattias Petersson) and a newly arrived ensemble member (Anna Thunström). The artists in each production have had the opportunity to follow the results at each iteration, as they have been presented publicly at my doctoral percentage seminars (25 %, 50 %, 80 %, and endseminar) at the Academy of Music and Drama in Gothenburg, and the draft texts for these seminars have been available and distributed to the invited ensemble members on request.

MOMENTARY ASSEMBLY
ASSEMBLES FOR
THE SINGLE EVENT ONLY
WITH MIXED
KNOWLEDGE OF
EACH OTHER
AND THE OPERATION

HOST GROUP
ASSEMBLES REGULARLY
OVER TIME
WITH EXTENSIVE
KNOWLEDGE OF
EACH OTHER
AND THE
OPERATION

VISITOR GROUP
ASSEMBLES FOR
THE SINGLE EVENT ONLY
WITHOUT PRIOR
KNOWLEDGE OF
EACH OTHER
OR THE
OPERATION

**ARTISTIC
COMMUNITY
OF INTEREST**
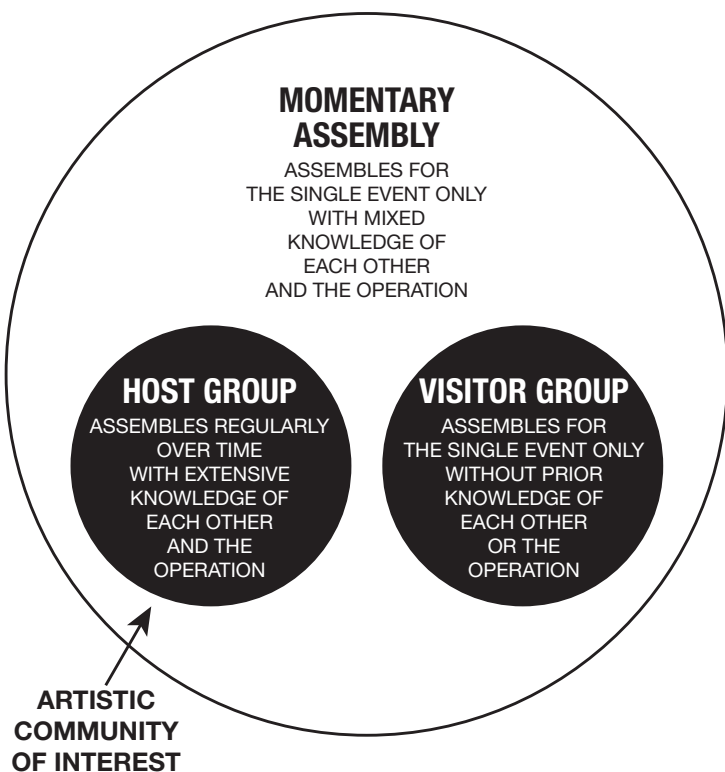
Figure 8: The community of interest in relation to the other participants.
Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

Even though I am the single formal and responsible researcher in the project, my fellow artists have actively taken part in implementing changes to our practice. The other artists who share the developing practice with me are certainly a community of interest who could be affected by the results of the study, but they are not to be regarded as co-researchers or participant researchers with any obligation to act with the researcher's responsibilities for ethics, structure, and stability. Please note that I do not base my study on *Participatory Action Research* (PAR), that expect every participant to be used as a co-researcher to some extent. That is why I write in first person singular (I, me, my) when it

comes to any research claims, and first person plural (we, us, our) when it comes to the artistic practice emerging in tandem with the knowledge acquired in the study. The artists who actively have contributed to the art works are mentioned by name in this publication, while the playing visitor informants' anonymity is preserved as far as possible.

It is also important to note that within the ensemble, all artists have a professional function of their own and no one performs exactly the same artistic task. That means that everyone speaks from a unique point of view when discussing the same object or problem of investigation. Everyone is equipped in a sense with a "flashlight," and describes what they see from where they are standing in a manner similar to Popper's "search light theory," through which comparison of different observations of the same source of information makes it possible to come up with testable theories, when the observations are collected and serve as clues to a phenomenon. The collecting researcher validates both earlier research and current individual reports before compiling them all into an overview, thereby arriving at a new hypotheses that matches both the current state of affairs and previous observations.

While surveys allow for frank opinions, outspoken honesty, and straightforward critique in the shelter of anonymity, interviews serve another (psychological) purpose of recording the respondents' reasoning and responding to them. "With personal interviews, the interviewees are noted and acknowledged as a factor leading to further change" and "[t]he interview process not only provides a record of participants' views and perspectives but also symbolically recognizes the legitimacy of their experience." (Stringer, 2007, p. 69) With interviews also comes the opportunities for supplementary questions. The interviews in this study are not highly structured but contain a number of reoccurring questions to the respondents. They have primarily been carried out in relaxed settings chosen by the interviewee – in casual public places like cafés, or on the telephone.

DOCUMENTATION

Interviews have been recorded and transcribed. For the sake of legibility in the dissertation, quoted comments from interviews, surveys, and questionnaires are not always strictly verbatim and most have not only been translated, but

also been slightly edited for clarity, removing for instance typos and incomplete sentences. However, all transcriptions and original documents – most in Swedish – are kept intact and archived at the University of Gothenburg.

There are some striking similarities between artistic research and game studies, which similarities have become apparent to me while conducting this transdisciplinary study. Emma Leigh Waldron, for example, brings live-action role-playing into a discussion about how to document ephemeral events. She argues:

> If we document our larps out of the desire to preserve a unique, ephemeral event that can never be recreated (that is, that resists scientific reproducibility), then we must not forget that the very thing that gives larp such power is that it persists not in written documents, but in the imaginations of its players, the very place from whence the larp itself was created. (Waldron, 2014, n.p.)

I have combined recordings from static positions with recordings of individual participants movements. Through action cameras, I have collected examples from the point of view of moving participants. Also, IR-cameras have been used to capture otherwise unnoticeable movement in darkness.

ETHICAL ASPECTS

All identifiable persons appearing within the study materials and results are adults, have been informed of the basic purpose of the research project, and have given their written consent to be part of the study. The visitor surveys have been carried out anonymously and any explicit reference to personal information has been deleted.

A disclaimer of an ethical as well as a scientific nature has to be made about the two first visitor surveys within the study. During the course of the project, I have been made aware about how the formulation of the question about the respondent's sex is mistakenly combined with options relating to gender identity (not sex), making the questions and their results both ambiguous and conflating. It is currently recommended (see for example Sullivan, 2020), that sex and gender (identity) should be asked about separately and in paral-

lel in order to recognize both as separate statistical parameters. Therefore, no assumptions or conclusions should be made about either sex or gender based on these surveys.

As a rule, the professional artists' names are mentioned when referred to, while the names of the private visitors – for example in interviews – are kept concealed. The few visitors appearing as identifiable role-players with solo actions in the video examples in Research Catalogue have explicitly agreed to the publication. Even if the research has established the conceptual framework of the operas in their professional and public contexts outside the academy, participating in surveys and in interviews has been voluntary and without additional conditions for all. Indeed, not every co-worker in Operation Opera has chosen to serve as a source, or to share reflections in questionnaires and interviews. Furthermore, no commercial exploitation or monetization of private and non-professional role-playing participants' actions have taken place.

THE OPERA MAKER QUA GAME DESIGNER

When crossing opera with the ludic, I have applied some concepts from the field of game design in the research, acknowledging this type of creative work as "second-order design" (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004) by which the experience is designed indirectly. Björk & Zagal (2018) explains second-order design as the relationship between *game designer*, controlling the artifact, and resulting *game play*, stemming from the player's behavior when stimulated by the artifact (the game). By this analogy, the operatic author is equivalent to the game designer, the operatic performer represents the game, and the operatic visitor parallels the player. Through the operas, the visitors' propensity to submit to "game mechanics" (Fullerton, 2008; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Schell, 2008) has been explored.

GAME AESTHETICS

Game design can also be viewed in terms of aesthetics, as suggested by Lundgren et. al., who asserts that "[t]o suggest a game to someone else is simply the act of matching one's understanding of the game's gameplay with one's perception of another person's aesthetical ideals." (2009, p. 7) Hence, another aspect of the common game design traits of the operas within the study is the concepts' general focus on the aesthetic ideal of player adaptability. "This approach emphasizes being able to use emergent features of the game mechanics to one's advantage, as well as being able to detect important but subtle changes in the game state." (ibid., p. 6)

INTERACTION

Ryan (2001, p. 205) suggests that types of interactivity can be distinguished based on user freedom and user intentionality and discusses three grades of interaction that can be summarized and listed in this way:

1. **Responsive interaction:** The user's involvement provokes a sensation so that a coupling is created.

2. **Selective interaction:** The user's involvement unfolds potentials for different outcomes at first exploratively by random and later in a more deliberate manner.
3. **Decisive interaction:** The user's involvement changes the course of events by adding objects or history.

All operas within the study except *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* have offered interactive opportunities between visitor and game environment. While responsive and selective interaction were available in all three interactive operas, support of decisive interaction for visitors was much rarer. A separate question is the set of possibilities available from the artists' perspective: That is, can the *artists* provoke responses from, explore variations between, and finally make lasting effects on the *visitors*?

For the mapping of the more or less interactive story-paths in each opera, I have worked out an "action tree" for each of them, corresponding to a "decision tree" (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004) which reduces a game to its strategic decisions. A model for this is found in **Figure 9**. However, my action trees cover not only *decisions*, but all *actions* in the operas. While the visitors follow a route of personal options (symbolized in the diagrams as squares), the artists follow a route of prepared action (symbolized in the diagrams by circles) through the "interactive narrative" (ibid., p. 389) that is interwoven with the
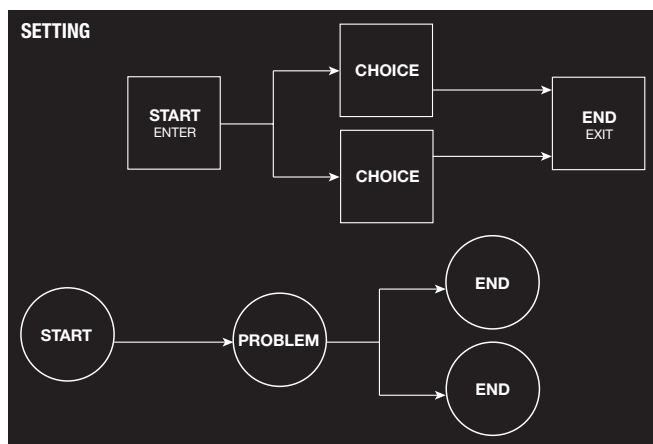
Figure 9: Basic action tree model with squares symbolizing visitor action and circles symbolizing artist action. Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

visitors' movements. These dramaturgical action trees for the ludo-immersive operas bridges opera making and game design. What I analyze in each opera from a design perspective is how modules of continuous (inter)action co-exist with moments of decisive (inter)action, and how this is balanced. "Information flows in a loop from player to game to player to game" and "[t]he information that is returned to the player by the game dramatically affects what the player will do next," notes game designer Jesse Schell (2008, p. 228). About the experience of story in games and the game/story duality, Schell proposes the metaphor of a linear "string of pearls" consisting of railroading "rivers" and flowing "lakes." The continual change and turn-taking between linear "cutscene" (river) and decisive "game scene" (lake) in for example video games becomes, in our operas, sung numbers describing ongoing thoughts, utterings, and deeds directly, and knots of looping/ambient modules. After waiting and taking in information from cutscenes, playing visitors can either try to get more information, or chose to give and share information of their own in order to enrich or even change what is about to happen in the next step. Moreover, with the action trees, the differences between the operas in terms of variation for both visitors and artists become clear.

PLAY TESTING

Another game design method I particularly applied in the first opera, *The Architect*, is iterative playtesting *within* the opera production, as we left some features of the designed experience revisable throughout the performance period. This allowed us to adjust the setting and the performing artists' behavior according to the effect they seemed to have on visitor's abilities to engage in play. Playtesting with the final target group is aimed at setting formal details and refinements, while playtesting on one's own and with confidants instead concerns foundations and structure (Fullerton, 2008). However, in the last opera, I also applied self-testing as a method for theatrical directing, and, from the start, we rehearsed the scenes in *Chronos' Bank of Memories* with the *director as visitor*. Thereafter, we went on to rehearse and playtest with confidants, before launching the opera. As *The Architect* was based on the visitors' participation in relation to other visitors and *Chronos' Bank of Memories* advocated visitors' participation independently from other visitors, playtesting of *The Architect* was not meaningful without full-crowd performances.

Chapter 3:

OPERAS

THE ARCHITECT

VISITOR TASK:

Playing insiders

PREMIERE:

25 March 2017 in Halmstad

PERFORMANCE PERIOD:

25 March 2017 – 19 January 2018

DURATA:

90 minutes + prologue

LANGUAGE:

Swedish

VENUE:

Sitespecific performance at an unused and derelict part of a building at the hospital area in Halmstad + adjusted version for Lindgrensalen at Artisten in Gothenburg

CREDITS:

Concept and dramaturgy by Hedvig Jalhed

Libretto by John Kinell

Music by Mattias Petersson

Directions by David Hornwall

Set design by Mattias Rylander

Light design by Kristofer Langerbeck

Performed by Agnes Wästfelt, Hedvig Jalhed, John Kinell, David Hornwall, Pascal Jardry, Mattias Petersson, and Rickard Stierna

Produced by Operation Opera and KROCK

FINANCIAL SUPPORT:

Swedish Arts Council

Region Halland

Halmstads Kommun

Helge Ax:son Johnsons Stiftelse

INSTRUMENTATION:

Four opera singers (2 sopranos and 2 baritones)

One actor

One electric guitar

Live-electronics

CHARACTERS:

Johan Hallberg-Lütz, a plumber (baritone)

Margreth Hallberg-Lütz, his wife (soprano)

The Nurse / The Mother (soprano)

The Receptionist / The Therapist (baritone)

The Guide / The Minister (actor)

Sixten, a neighbour (electric guitarist)

Mikael Astro, a paramedic (live-electronic musician)

Helpers of the Force (visitors)

Friends and relatives of Johan Hallberg-Lütz (visitors)

SETTING:

A court of law in the nation Anfasia, a self-governed mental prison in the mind of Johan Hallberg-Lütz, and a dystopic fantasy world.

SYNOPSIS:

The nation Anfasia has summoned its citizens as jurors ("Dömare") in the trial of the accused Margreth. Everyone is greeted by Johan, who is happy to see them. A music box begins to play. The tune turns to a beeping ECG. As it stops abruptly, Johan rattles a scaffold, thus waking up the man-sized children's soft toys sitting on it. They praise the nation and the Dynast. A distant memory of The Nurse / The Mother is heard, reminding Johan of her appreciation of his drawing skills. Then, The Nurse asks Johan if he is prepared to prove his loyalty to Anfasia in order to be promoted to a permanent Anfasian resident. Johan accepts this challenge enthusiastically.

The accused is introduced. When Johan sees that it is his wife, Margreth, he is at first shocked. She, on the other hand, is insolent while confirming that she is guilty. A distant memory of the Receptionist / The Therapist is heard, reminding Johan of his therapy sessions. The visitors are offered seats and what appears to be a mock trial begins.

The Receptionist, functioning as prosecutor, is asked to present the evidence. The Guide, functioning as the prosecutor's assistant, tries to make Johan bear witness to Margreth's deeds. When Johan finds it hard to recall his memories, he is covered with an old table cloth and a recorded reconstruction is played. The assembly hears Johan and Margreth quarrel as their baby daughter Ambrosia plays with a marble. While the spouses fight more and more, Ambrosia puts the marble in her mouth and chokes.

Johan is unveiled and The Nurse ask him to blame and accuse Margreth. But Johan begins to play with some toy bricks on the floor, losing himself in happy memories of himself and Margreth as young and newlywed. Margreth tries to interrupt and urges Johan to wake up and talk to her, but he won't listen. Finally, The Nurse silences Margreth before she has gone too far according to the Anfasian standards. As Johan won't accuse her, the visitors have to accuse her instead and notes they have written on their way to the trial are handed to Margreth, whose despair is growing. The Nurse stuffs ambrosia cake into Margreth's mouth until she almost chokes. A distant memory of The Guide / The Minister is heard, reminding Johan of the concerns of the congregation he and Margreth used to be a part of.

Suddenly, The Guide announces that it is time for some entertainment and The Receptionist appears as a seeress, reading the palms of the visitors and the teeth of Johan. Everyone is invited to dance with their arms around each other.

The trial continues and The Nurse, The Receptionist, and The Guide, functioning as judges, confer. They condemn Margreth to Correction through Dollyfication ("Korrektion" and "Dockifiering" are concepts that were introduced in the second Anfasia opera *Welcome Back to Anfasia*, from 2012). In Anfasia, that means to be reduced to their appearance and to lose one's range of personality, driving force, full voice, memory, and traces of history. If the citizens have not found and delivered a secret message – a memory in the form of a photo of Ambrosia – and opened a window letting in fresh air, Johan helps to punish Margreth, tying her up on a threadmill known as The Punishment Machine. He then becomes The Architect. If the citizens have found and delivered the message to him and opened the window, he stops the trial, frees Margreth and escapes from Anfasia.

WORK PROCESS:

In 2016, the opera company Operation Opera commissioned the opera *The Architect* (original Swedish title: *Den tilltalade*) to be written by John Kinell and Mattias Petersson. Ensemble members of Operation Opera have since 2011 developed personal fictional characters in role-playing style, connected to the idea of Anfasia. These characters have been created as a gallery before libretti and musical compositions have been conceived. The characters Johan, Margreth, The Nurse, The Receptionist, and The Guide appeared already in the earlier Anfasia operas. *The Architect* was written by Kinell, based on his prior experience of playing Johan. After the original libretto was delivered, the rest of the ensemble held workshops to process the text at Kulturhuset in Halmstad in the autumn 2016. During these workshops, the group came up with an enriched background story. All participants were interviewed in character in order to describe their relationship to Johan and their memories of the tragic death of Ambrosia. Eventually, a larped funeral for Ambrosia was carried out at a pet cemetery. After this, Hedvig Jalhed revised the story line and the dramaturgy, editing the libretto together with David Hornwall, and the music was composed by Mattias Petersson. Hornwall created a directional system for tasks and physical movements (called "games") and added "rules" to guide the characters how to behave in different

scenes. In this way, the artists were free to role-play their characters to some extent without detailed directions, but still subordinate to an aesthetical whole. The opera was rehearsed on location in Halmstad and played there three times. Also, a black box version of *The Architect* later took place at Artisten in Gothenburg.

CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW:

The Architect was designed as a communitarian "role-play opera" for up to 40 visitors at a time. It was originally performed in 2017 as location theatre with role-play features in the hospital area in Halmstad. In 2018, *The Architect* was also performed as stylized and reduced black box version at Artisten in Gothenburg. It was conceived as the fourth opera in the *Anfasia Chronicle* by Operation Opera in collaboration with the electric guitar collective KROCK.

When purchasing tickets, the visitors were directed to the web site www.anfasia.se where they could get information about the nation Anfasia and the main characters, and fill out a personal character sheet. They had also to choose between two options – to be a regular Anfasian citizen or to be a helper of The Force. The helpers of The Force were instructed to show up half an hour before the opera started to get costumes (a shirt and a mask), and directions (to obstruct any deviant behaviour from regular citizens). For the visitors who were supposed to play regular citizens, the venue was not announced. Instead, they got coordinates to a gathering point in the woods and instructions to show up approximately half an hour before the opera started. A crew member waited at the gathering point to give the visitors a brochure with further instructions, a map, and a quiz sheet. Attached to the brochure was a metal key. In this way, the event begun with a prologue where individual visitors or small groups of visitors completed a quiz walk through the woods to prove their eligibility as citizens of Anfasia, thus transforming them through crossfading activities from private "civilians" to fictional characters in the play. They could also write messages on post cards to the main character Johan, who they were presumed to support, and put them in his mailbox which was placed in the forest. The walk ended at an open garage in the hospital area. In the garage, the roaming visitors could search for clues, listen to a taped recording, write charges to the accused Margreth, and try their keys on locked boxes.

At the starting time for the opera, Johan showed up outside the garage, welcoming the visitors as friends and relatives, and opening a door next to a lit sign. The opera then unfolded as a trial scene, with the visitors/citizens as trial attendants. The visitors/citizens where free to sneak around to try to open more boxes and find hidden messages as well as more keys, with the risk of being caught and corrected. The opera was constructed with two alternative endings. If no one succeeded as a "whistle blower" and found the message (the "memory" in form of a photo of baby Ambrosia), delivered it to Johan, found the key to the window, and opened it, the opera continued without alteration until Margreth was punished to death and the rejoicing Johan was caught forever in Anfasia while transitioning into the new character The Architect. At the point of no return in the score, the instrumentalists' characters had to be given a cue from

Johan that he was on his way to breaking free, if they were supposed to change "path" in the score. If one or more visitors instead managed to find all necessary things and carry out the rescuing of Johan, he would stop the trial and bring Margreth with him out of Anfasia.

The artists were instructed to resist and obstruct to different degrees the visitors' attempts to go against the kernel characters' will, in order to playtest the dynamics of the concept. Both alternative endings of the opera were displayed in the public performances, in accordance with the visitors' varying abilities and efforts to interfere. In order to train the artists to dynamically change their responses, the difficulty level was experimentally adjusted between the performances and depended on the availability of the message to be delivered by the visitors, the accessibility of the directions of how to use the message, the number of working visitors' keys, the display of the window key to help the main characters to escape, and the amount of obstruction from the artists and extras.

Photos from *The Architect* by Joakim Jalhed.

RESEARCHER'S NOTES FROM THE FIRST ITERATION

The opera *The Architect* informed the first iteration of my research project. These notes summarize the results and findings made during the production and presentation of the opera, starting with the ensemble work shop in the autumn 2016, and finishing with the last public performance in January 2018.

INTENTIONS

With *The Architect*, an opportunity arose to investigate how individual visitors might break loose from the visitor group in order to play an active role in the music drama and change the course of events. The stated purposes of the production from the performing artists' side were both introspective (understanding ourselves and our art) and extrospective (understanding the larger context of our art-making). The following statements exemplify the artists' intentions:

- To provide answers for both the ensemble and the visitors of what Anfasia is and to complete the characters (David Hornwall in the artist questionnaire)
- To continue the exploration of role-play opera as a genre with a less ironic and more serious story, and generate a more intense atmosphere that gives the visitors' actions stronger influence than in our earlier operas (Pascal Jardry in the artist questionnaire)
- To give explanations as to what has been going on in earlier Anfasia operas, add more depth to the dramaturgy and the music, and politically display contemporary opera as something other than the traditional opera of mainstream institutions (Mattias Petersson in the artist questionnaire).
- To probe into the existence of Anfasia and make a story about the consequences of loss in a relationship (Agnes Wästfelt in the artist questionnaire)
- To try to make the visitors question their dreams and life-choices, and what they are striving for (interview with John Kinell)

The "whistle blower" mechanism in Kinell's libretto, with its forked paths (see **Figure 10**) coincided with my intention as a researcher: to highlight the

groups within the group, that is, the hosts and the visitors, and the possibility for individual interaction in relation to these groups. Furthermore, one aim with my research activities within this iteration was to study how the music could affect visitor action in an interactive opera and find ways to separate the participatory from the sensory in our artistic toolbox and vocabulary regarding ludo-immersive opera. By trying different obstacles and challenges through a playtesting protocol, I hoped that, at some point, visitors would be turned from witnesses into doers with concrete reactions from the artists. Furthermore, the accounts from artists and visitors told how well our intentions matched the visitors' experiences. For me, this first iteration gave me the opportunity to explore what expectations artist and visitors, respectively, have about role-play opera.
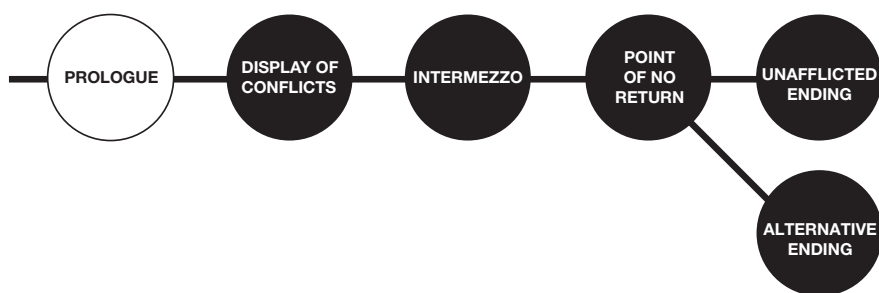
Figure 10: Dramaturgical structure of *The Architect* with forked paths.
Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

The subtitle of the opera (*Anfasia Retrotopia*) (see information for visitors in the Research Catalogue exposition **Arcade**) refers to Bauman's (2017) dissection of the concept "retrotopia," pointing to the infatuation with an undead past and the rising age of nostalgia. This urge for a retreat into a back-to-the-womb-state where the anaesthetics through which "[f]amiliarity consoles and tranquillizes" (ibid., p. 151) was in this Anfasia opera staged as a middle-aged and divorced working-class man's dream of a worn-down golden age. However, it could likewise refer to a "victimhood culture" (see for example Campbell & Manning, 2018) that argue for (mental) "safe spaces" and

"trigger warnings" with adults claiming a child-like status, or those "comfort zones" that Bauman identifies in the communities forming in the virtual world online where we "spend more time with people who think like us and less with people who are different" (a statement that Bauman attributes to Jonathan Haidt). The mechanisms installed in *The Architect* were intended to split up the group and turn at least some visitors into wreckers and challengers of the secure, dogmatic, and authoritarian body that the majority of visitors would form.'

POSSIBLE ACTION

Within the plot, the default option for the playing participants was to accept the unfolding of the mock trial and thereby support the totalitarian government of Anfasia as loyal citizens. With their given keys, they could explore hidden stashes in order to find messages and memory artefacts that could potentially awaken Johan from his mind-trap Anfasia. Those visitors who happened to find something valuable had to make a conscious choice to engage in action, to decide whether they should leave the crowd and hand the "trigger" to Johan, or if they should keep the item hidden in order to continue the support for the "nation" (see action tree in **Figure 11**).

As artists, our task was to present 1) a setting that was enclosed enough for the visitors to start thinking-in-fiction and 2) a course of action, organized into a musical structure, that was apparently unjust and appalling enough to trigger their conscience and sense of responsibility. Our actions were primarily taken to *provoke* reactions from our visitors by enforcing an uncomfortable situation of group-think and silent consent, and to lure the visitors to invest in the blaming of Margreth beforehand. The visitors' friendly care for Johan could either be expressed as support of his vengeful accusation of Margreth in order to deny his own failure, or helping him face the past and get over both his and Margreth's sad shortcomings. In order to free Johan, someone had to choose to awaken him and a barred window had to be unlocked *before* the point in the music called "The Decision."

There were no direct, verbal instructions of how to succeed – each participant had to discover the intention of their character during the process. Hence, the
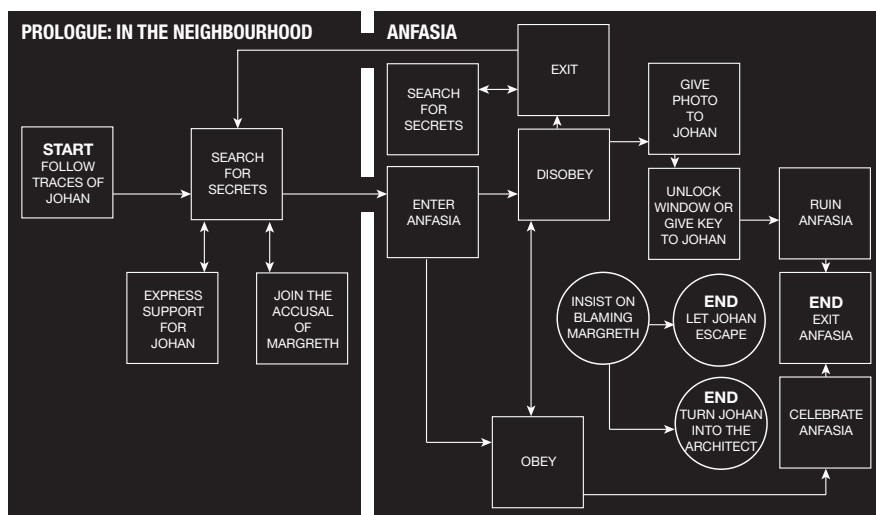
Figure 11: Action tree for *The Architect*. Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

visitors had to figure out how to use what they found themselves. If one or more playing participants chose to engage in action and managed to complete the mission, the alternative ending was triggered by John playing Johan, discretely signalling visually to the instrumentalists to skip to the alternate path of the forked score. Then the alternative ending could be played (see excerpts from the score in **Figure 12** and **13**).

In the Gothenburg black box version, there were no keys given to the visitors. Instead, their possible action was instead to lead Johan, with the help of luring flashlights and a hummed tune (see sheet music in **Figure 14**), to a zone marked on the floor where he could start remembering (see auditory introduction from black box version in the Research Catalogue exposition **Arcade**).

Figure 12: Excerpt from the score of *The Architect* with Johan becoming The Architect.
Lyrics by John Kinell and music by Mattias Petersson.

*Johan bryter förtrollningen och lösgör sig från Anfasias regelsystem.
Nu kan han röra sig fritt i rummet.*

Figure 13: Excerpt from the score of *The Architect* with Johan being liberated.
Lyrics by John Kinell and music by Mattias Petersson.

Figure 14: Ambrosia's tune from *The Architect*. Music by Mattias Petersson.

DATA COLLECTED

Besides my own recollections, I gathered both direct documentation of the live-events, and accounts from both artists and visitors who participated in the operas. The documentation covers examples of informal ensemble discussions during rehearsals and preparation as well as the live-performances of the opera. It shows both how the artists handle and negotiate artistic and practical aspects during the staging of the work and how the participants behave when put into a setting that includes strangers. After the production in Halmstad, the non-anonymous performing artists of the ensemble could choose to either fill out a questionnaire (see Appendix I) or share their views with me by interview. All but one chose the questionnaire format. The visitors were asked to share their experiences through anonymous surveys (see Appendices II and III) in which their answers could remain confidential. After the performances, I also interviewed five visitors who gave a fuller picture of their visits to *The Architect*. These visitors were demographically diverse individuals in terms of age, sex, and earlier experience of Operation Opera's operas, as well as in knowledge of stage craft and game-playing in general.

DOCUMENTED ACTION

The films from the performances in Halmstad show how visitors enter into the opera as part of the setting; i.e., as Anfasian citizens. Some had dressed up for the occasion, even if most had not and came in private clothing. There was much effort among the visitors to both search for items and to help liberating Johan. In the performance from 1 April 2017, several visitors who were un-known to each other teamed up to help Johan (see video with compilations of scenes in the Research Catalogue exposition **Arcade**). Involvement (searching the room, striking up conversations, contacting the main character Johan) was mainly limited to passages in between instrumental music and vocal music /

soloist performances. Listening to verbal content seemed to generally suppress viewer action, but also, if the singer's body was directed toward the recipient it could potentially "freeze" a listener's position relative to the human sound source. In the performance in Gothenburg, there was one example of a visitor intervening verbally, improvising as a fictional character that she called Kalevala and who was presented as Johan's neighbour (see video with verbally intervening visitor in the Research Catalogue exposition **Arcade**).

OTHERS' ACCOUNTS

Here, I summarize the most relevant interesting findings in the accounts from the other artists and the visitors participating in *The Architect*, concerning my topic and research questions. The statistical data in the surveys are not used for any quantitative measurements or comparisons, since the number of respondents is limited, but indicate to some extent the range of different backgrounds, attitudes, and behaviours. I stress the qualitative aspects of the material by highlighting the comments of the individual respondents; the demographics of the respondent are only mentioned here in order to give a picture of the groups at large. Moreover, I only focus here on the questions that have produced valuable accounts concerning the final scope of the research project, and omit the rest. The survey design in total is however displayed in Appendices II and III.

Some main topics emerged from the accounts from the participants:

- the music's effect on action and immersion,
- artists' and visitors' different views on ludic action in relation to the operatic tempo and style,
- visitors' problems with other visitors' behaviour,
- visitors' expectations and reliance on verbal content, and
- visitors' abilities to regard themselves as part of the operatic fiction.

THE PARTICIPANT-INFORMANTS

Among the performing artists, the questionnaire was filled out by 4 persons: Agnes Wästfelt (opera singer), Pascal Jardry (electric guitarist), Mattias Petersson (composer and live-electronic musician), and David Hornwall (director and opera singer). The interview with John Kinell (librettist and opera singer) was carried out two months after the last performance in Halmstad.

The visitor survey following upon the performances in Halmstad 2017 (see Appendix II) was answered by 22 anonymous respondents online. The average age of the respondents was 45. Of the respondents, 8 had been to earlier Anfasia operas and 14 had not. All but 5 had studied some sort of artistic practice at any level and 7 out of 22 were professional artists of some kind. All but 2 had experienced opera in some form. Everyone had been to theatre, and 13 of 22 had tried role-playing in some form or another. Before coming to the performance, 20 out of 22 had visited Anfasia's web site online to prepare for their visit, but only 3 of them used the character sheet there to create a personal character of their own. During the performance, 15 out of 22 spoke to another visitor and 11 out of 22 was addressed in person by an artist. When it came to props, 20 out of 22 took juror notes in the booklet, on a paper, or a post card, and 17 out of 22 tried to use their given key. Only 1 of the respondents managed to unlock something and only 2 contacted any of the artists during the performance in order to hand them a message or an item. Among the respondents, 17 reported that they explored the venue by moving around, but none left the room. Of the 22, 9 said they wanted to affect the course of events and 13 said they did not. When asked, 10 told that they felt especially engaged in the destiny of a certain character (Johan and/or Margreth according to their comments). When it came to the communication of rules, 10 out of 22 found the rules clear for what behaviour and actions that were possible.

The visitor survey from the black box version in Gothenburg 2018 (see Appendix III) was answered on paper by 15 anonymous respondents on location. The average age of the respondents was 35 years. Of the respondents, 5 had been to earlier Operation Opera operas or similar concepts and 10 had not, 14 felt prepared for the ludic character of the event and 1 was not, and 7 of the 15 did actively try to affect the ongoing story line.

The five visitors that I interviewed after the performances in Halmstad have all been anonymized. They can be described in the following ways:

- **Visitor A:** female, 24 years old, had been to earlier Anfasia operas
- **Visitor B:** female, 51 years old, no prior experience of ludo-immersive opera
- **Visitor C:** female, 46 years old, had been to earlier Anfasia operas
- **Visitor D:** female, 37 years old, had been to earlier Anfasia operas
- **Visitor E:** male, 27 years old, no prior experience of ludo-immersive opera

ARTISTS' VIEWS

How did the performing artist experience the performances, the concept, and the sufficiency of the preparations leading up to them? Through the artist questionnaire (see Appendix I) and interviews, my hope was to explore what different and coinciding views there was on the ensemble's purposes, what ludo-immersive opera can be for artists, what *The Architect* was about for the professional insiders, and how physical and social factors affected our performances.

The performing artists generally agreed, more or less, on what the visitor action contributed with to the concept:

> Concretely, they [the visitors] have determined how the performance has ended. They also contribute with enthusiasm and make us feel uncertain in a good way. (Mattias Petersson in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

> They [the ludic elements] makes it more alive. Since we may expect anything to happen, there is more vigor, an increased liveliness in the ensemble. (Pascal Jardry in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

> The visitors have contributed to the completion of the plot, as actors in the performance with a decisive role in determining which of the alternate endings is played. (Agnes Wästfelt in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

The artists believed that the structure of *The Architect* communicated rules and aims more clearly than earlier Anfasia opera and provided a stronger sense of influence from the visitors:

The concept, I would say, has been more imperative than before. The concept with the guided walk, and the room urging them to find clues has enabled an identity shift within a larger number of the visitors, from merely being a visitor to becoming an active participant/player. (Agnes Wästfelt in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

The rules were expressed more clearly [than in earlier Anfasia operas], which I suppose led to that they [the visitors] were more active in playing the game. (Pascal Jardry in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

[In comparison to earlier Anfasia operas], it has been more clear what they [the visitors] can do this time. Before they enter into the venue, most understood that it is about Johan and a lost child, and that he flees into Anfasia, and that it is not actually a good place for him to be, and that they have the opportunity to free/help him in some way. In our earlier productions, the visitors have probably felt confused and overwhelmed. It has not been totally clear what interaction possibilities exist. I think that we succeeded better this time, even if some visitors apparently thought that it also was possible to change the framework itself. That has never been our intention, and it would probably not have been a very good performance either. (Mattias Petersson in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

Moreover, it was viewed as a positive trait that the visitors behaved in different ways:

The form of The Architect does succeed in intriguing different types of visitors … (Agnes Wästfelt in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

The performing artist's experiences of the visitors and their transformation from anonymous group members to individuals were highlighted:

The distinguishing of individual visitors within the crowd was successful, and there were occasions where one, as an actor, can see that the visitors have become separate individuals. (Agnes Wästfelt in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

Jardry reflected on how the story mirrored the interactive structure of stressful decision-making in situations where perspectives differ:

Johan is on the brink of totally losing the ability to distinguish between illusion and actual truths. On a symbolic level, this parallels the audience's individual experience of the performance. It is not wholly clear what is real in the performance and the audience must navigate amidst a mixture of Johan's figments of imagination and real memories. Different persons experience different things, and the individual experience of the truth, in combination with being put in an ethical dilemma, creates a situation where the moral gravitation itself is out of balance and reality floats freely. There is no time for reason. Necessary information is lacking in order to make wise decisions. Still, decision points come closer and the stress is obvious – something must happen. In that way, the performance is ultimately about how hard it is to remain distanced from reality as one perceive it. (Pascal Jardry in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

In his view, this is also in line with Operation Opera's overarching mission:

Operation Opera is constantly exploring the borders that divide the audience with regards to how they participate and perceive the performance. Operation Opera challenges its audience by forcing them to make active choices, where, for example, if the choice is to be passive, there are real consequences for the outcome. (Pascal Jardry in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

And Petersson added a further aspect of Operation Opera's work in relation to society:

Politically, it is also important to show that contemporary opera can and should be something other than whatever is going in the large institutions. For the survival of the art form, it is necessary to wash away the fancy shimmer that traditionally surrounds it. (Mattias Petersson in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

Jardry argued that the role of individual visitors is a central part of the role-play opera genre per se, and that the ensemble's task is to amplify the consequences of choices made by visitors:

> Role-play opera creates situations where particular individuals in the audience are invited into the performance in a way that has consequences for both the performance and the different individuals' experience of the same. It may be through sound or physical action: interacting with gazes, one's voice, how one moves in the room in relation to the rest of the audience, etc. And the ensemble's role is to show a sensitivity towards these choices that the audience must make, to see that the audience's small gestures and impulses are amplified by the ensemble, leading to an outcome where the course of the performance is thereby obviously affected by audience actions. Role-play opera is an operatic form that gives different people totally different experiences of the same performance. (Pascal Jardry in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

He suggested that the visitors in future productions potentially could also be put more in charge of real-time musical "triggers" on an even finer level:

> [In future productions], I would like parts of the ensemble to interact with the audience within the framework of the musical material, by means of musical improvisation where the audience-participants govern the musical course of events in real-time; a form of plastic chamber-play with the audience. (Pascal Jardry in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

However, one of the main concerns of composer-musician Petersson was to reduce uncertainty for the singers through encouraging the emergence of predictable structures within a setting with inherent unpredictability:

> The venue was not well designed for music drama, which forced new solutions for scenography, sound, and dramaturgy. The set of musical instruments used, consisting of a Buchla synthesizer and an electric guitar, was in effect itself experimental, since the Buchla inherently functions with a rather large amount of unpredictability. Therefore it was crucial to find strategies to create more predictable structures for the singers to cling to. (Mattias Petersson in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

In some artists' commentary, the issue of being able to respond to and take care of visitor initiatives in an artistic manner was touched upon. Both Jardry and Petersson mused about this:

They [the visitors] might have done anything. The question arises of which of their initiatives were we in the ensemble able to manage and respond to in an interesting way. (Pascal Jardry in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

One could have constructed the music and the text as modules whose presence would be strongly dependent upon on the audience's action, clarifying the force the interaction is having on the performance. However, it is important to find a balance between the musical form, the dramaturgy, and the possibility for interaction. Even if on paper it sounds like a good idea to have a lot of interaction, it would probably be uninterestingly if the performance can lead to too many unexpected possibilities. (Mattias Petersson in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

For the artists, the differences between regular opera, role-play opera, and role-playing games seem to lie with one's own professional role. Hence, opera singer Wästfelt underscored how creating a personal, fictional character and the act of formalized mediation through song were the most important aspects for her, and composer-musician Petersson suggested that musical rules must set the dramaturgical framework in role-play opera:

All participating actors, musicians and audience, are given the opportunity to create "their" character. So even as an acting opera singer, I get to create my character and as a singer, I have the possibility to decide what my character may do or not; in contrast with an opera with conventional audience relations, where a director has constructed the character's inner life from a libretto and thereby they owns the right to control the character's relationship to the plot of the performance. The difference is fine but decisive. (Agnes Wästfelt in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

[What distinguishes a role-play opera from a "conventional" opera is] both the visitors' role and their relationship to their character. Each visitor has the opportunity to create their own character, but as important is the fact that the ensemble have made their own characters and have the power over these, and have the power to play their own character with veto power about any external influence regarding directions, costume and more. This is completely different from the "conventional" opera. (Agnes Wästfelt in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

We are negotiating the ongoing story in song, which makes some elements more limited and rehearsed in advance in relation to a more traditional role-play game. Even though you are role-players, it is still the case that we play opera. (Agnes Wästfelt in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

I have no personal experience of playing role-play games, but I would think that the big difference is that a role-play opera also has a musical set of rules that steers the dramaturgy, as well as providing an outer framework for the role-playing itself. (Mattias Petersson in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish)

COMMENTS FROM THE HALMSTAD SURVEY

The comments in the survey following upon the performances in Halmstad offers different views.

Some of the respondents in the Halmstad survey reported disappointment that there are not more interactive opportunities in *The Architect*:

I found the performance was much less interactive than earlier Anfasia performances. What happened at the beginning, from the gathering place and on, was promising, but as soon as the singing began one's own contribution did not matter. The introduction promised that we as participants would decide what happened, but that did not happen. (anonymous comment from the visitor survey in Halmstad, my translation from Swedish)

No one really understood what we were supposed to do, and all had high expectations from the start. Unfortunately these expectations were not met, and the excitement that had built up disappeared, when one entered into the venue and it became a regular performance where the audience sits, and we found that what had happened earlier ultimately had no meaning to at all. (anonymous comment from the visitor survey in Halmstad, my translation from Swedish)

I would have liked to interact more. As it turned out, I sat down and listened in a traditional manner. (anonymous comment from the visitor survey in Halmstad, my translation from Swedish)

On the other hand, the immersive effect was commented on in a positive way:

> Very good performance, singers/actors were much more professional and better
> than expected. [It was] stimulating with so much to discover, like nothing else
> I have experienced before. Very immersive, it felt like stepping into [another]
> world. (anonymous comment from the visitor survey in Halmstad, my transla-
> tion from Swedish)

Another respondent had hoped for more concrete make-believe acts from the
other visitors:

> Except the fact that we as an audience might have signalled our engagement,
> for instance by clothing, and been more inviting and interacting more, the
> performance was amazing! (anonymous comment from the visitor survey in
> Halmstad, my translation from Swedish)

COMMENTS FROM THE VISITOR INTERVIEWS IN HALMSTAD

The five visitor interviews after the performances in Halmstad gave me more
elaborate – although also more polite and perhaps less direct – answers about
how *The Architect* was received.

Visitors A and C told how they became emotionally touched by the story:

> But [even though I was playing a Helper of the Force], what happened was
> that I was touched by your story and wanted it to end well. […] I, as a per-
> son, yes. […] and then I sort of started to renegotiate what my character was
> capable of, in some way. More precisely, when I took items from the ones
> who tried to give them to Johan, then I felt a bad conscience. So, I … So,
> then I decided anyway that I would stand and hold a key and drop it when
> there was a rearrangement in the room. It took quite a long time before there
> was a rearrangement, but then I did drop it. So … […] It was my conscience
> that arose then, and I thought that we should have a happy ending. (inter-
> view with Visitor A, my translation from Swedish)

What could happen, when I think the outcome is a bit unpleasant or some-thing, when it becomes like "oh, poor her" or, you know … Then it is pos-sible to just look at the musicians and sink into the just the music at such times. I like that that that gives one a way out, so to speak. (interview with Visitor C, my translation from Swedish)

Both Visitors B and D had prepared for the event by creating a fictional char-acter of their own. Visitor D thought of herself as Margreth's mother and, just as Visitor A described how she acted in response to a fictional event, Visitor D decided to step into action:

I read about it before, but I thought that maybe I should have prepared more. But I did read some and looked and dressed up a little bit and had thought about a name. But then I wondered if anyone noticed or cared. (interview with Visitor B, my translation from Swedish)

I had sort of an idea that now, mummy must step in here, because now it has become disastrous for Margreth and Johan, who probably has screwed up. So even though they are married, now mummy has to step in and help clean up the mess. (interview with Visitor D, my translation from Swedish)

This idea of making a character in advance was pretty important to me, since this concept that you have is so special, in that it is based on the participants contribution in a way. So, for me, it was very exciting to get the chance to do it and participate in it. (interview with Visitor D, my translation from Swedish)

Both Visitors D and E intervened in plain sight and helped to change the ongoing story line in order to liberate Johan. Visitor E told about his process during the event:

I had sort of an idea about … I was a rather anonymous citizen, but I had a little idea that what I … From the material one got to look at beforehand, I created some sort of idea about who I was. Before coming there. And I played a little theatre when I was there too. (interview with Visitor E, my translation from Swedish)

No, I had not decided anything beforehand [about interfering tangibly or verbally], but there I had been a little … My character was a bit shy and I was somewhat a little like I: "Ok, I do really dare?" I tried to help a little, but then, since it seemed a bit pointless … But then, my character and I also got a strong reaction from the cultish dance, or whatever it was, that emerged when everyone stood and sang and swinged, sort of, that was very unpleasant. And then I could not resist interfering. (interview with Visitor E, my translation from Swedish)

Visitors D and E reflected upon how the audience and player modes seemingly competed with each other during the event:

[I was] somewhere in between [an actor and a player], I think. That's, a … Yes, perhaps a co-player that also was an onlooker to all this. In this world, in some way. (interview with Visitor D, my translation from Swedish)

And I perceived myself probably most as an actor, but I was occasionally quite passive and viewed myself a little as if at a concert … The two modes competed with each other, that I was at the same time at a concert that one did not really want to interrupt, but primarily [I was] an actor. (interview with Visitor E, my translation from Swedish)

Visitor A and E both commented upon the music:

I do enjoy very much when music is perhaps not, not … That's, when it constitutes an atmosphere, a room rather than a piece… […] And I thought that it was like that. So, I appreciated that very much. (interview with Visitor A, my translation from Swedish)

When there is music, it becomes safer to move, and especially if it is music that does not drive the plot forward. If any of you have … If you have a duet or if a person sings, it does not feel as natural to move around in the staged venue. But when you … When you moved simultaneously a little among us whilst singing, then I thought that the other in the audience also could move around and feel that … And it was quite an awesome experience yesterday, to stand next to, a little bit behind the one who is singing. (interview with Visitor A, my translation from Swedish)

I think that it [the sound level] was good and that there was a dynamic differ-
ence. […] That when it was very loud and also when people moved around
a lot, it felt like there was not much in focus, while when it is fading, one
feels as if even if one cannot do very much, that it has quite large impact … I
do not remember if I thought that it was too loud at any time or an opinion
like: "it should have been like this." But I thought it was … It was nice that
it also faded so that it became very calm, giving an opportunity for stronger
interaction … a possibility to get heard very clearly. (interview with Visitor
E, my translation from Swedish)

Visitor C and E had opinions about the difficulties perceiving the lyrics:

If you compare it to an opera, a regular opera, I think that you have the same
problem: that it is hard to hear the lyrics. And I have been thinking that
… Especially after this last one: "Oh, I would have liked …" I do not need
them [the printed lyrics] at the event, because the feeling and the emotion
one has there and then, but I would have liked to read them afterwards. I
would like to read what it was you were singing about. All the words. I miss
them, even though I hear them, if you understand. So that, I would have
liked to have. I don't think it's good to have them at the occasion, because if
I had, then I would have sat and looked at them, and then it would have not
gotten under my skin and been so engaging. But I would like to have them
later on, when I get home. I then I would read afterwards. […] And then you
can get an extra dimension besides than feeling and emotion one gets [at the
performance]. In certain operas, you have these supertitles and such … I do
not know if it is good or bad, but I do not believe that you should have it in
that way, to sit and read them at the same time. (interview with Visitor C,
my translation from Swedish)

It was sometimes a bit hard to get a grip of what was happening exactly …
Especially when it was very high registered singing. It was hard to hear the
lyrics. But, at the same time it was very nice that some parts of the songs were
so repetitive that you could understand and experience things and extract
what it was about, and reflect upon that. It was not progressing too fast,
you know, you did have time to think and act. (interview with Visitor E, my
translation from Swedish)

Visitor B, C, and E all had quite a lot of issues with the other visitors:

> But then I thought, now I have made an effort and it will be exciting. But then … But it is also about that interplay between us audience members. There I became so uncertain, or, not uncertain, but, what shall I say, conscious that we as an audience had different approaches. [...] It was also, I experienced, as sort of a test: a testing of us … a little bit double … An opportunity to go into something and at the same time having a certain insecurity, like: Can you? And should you? And then also, what do you call it, the contact with others. Because, I think, that if it had been that all had been used to this format … One had entered as, so to speak, a rookie, then … One adjusts to … So, there was something interesting. […] this doubleness, that … A hesitation from those unused to this new format, that is. How do the other viewers behave? How do I behave? So, there was kind of a question … How much interaction? I had apprehended that, but at the same time, one feels … I mean, if I had wanted to, am I then doing something I should not do? May I? Or what happens then? (interview with Visitor B, my translation from Swedish)

> Well, but I would say that I perceived it as if it was we the audience who were a bit stiff. That's, at the same time it was also that thing with … It was that, that if one goes into a, goes all in, as I saw that you exhorted us to, that that's a behavior you seek and expect, it also implies … one becomes an actor for the ones in the audience that do nothing. So, there is kind of a problematic relationship. And I thought … It felt more, that relation … That doubtful relation rather felt like … it was more stressing than it would have been to potentially act, interact with … At the same time, there was a certain hesitation, in that here, no one else is doing something, sort of … Then maybe I am the one who has misinterpreted the situation, that I should not [act] … (interview with Visitor B, my translation from Swedish)

> I think it is very exciting to watch, because then everyone goes and they did not really know and "ah, where should we look now," and one does not really talk and people are tense and they look at each other and they circle around a little. And you do not want to be wimpish and not trying the key, but should in the same time be a little like that … (interview with Visitor C, my translation from Swedish)

It was not as if I went all into my character, but I was aware as myself also. And I thought of it like … I thought it was interesting that the two things flew into each other. So, it was both the onlooked role and a bit of the real sitting-at-a-concert feeling that emerged or appeared and then, that feeling was opposed to one of going with the group. Then, when you are at a concert, it is very much peer pressure not to stand up and yell something, but when in a cult, I believe that it is also like that, when all act in a weird way, you tag along. And that feeling was probably the most intense there. (interview with Visitor E, my translation from Swedish)

I thought it switched between [a performance and a game], or that it was both at the same time, and I thought that the most interesting stuff was exactly that this conflict between the two emerged, at least for me. I think that for the ones who just appeared [without preparation], there was probably not any difference to just going to a concert and be part of that community, but for me who took a contrarian position it also came with the fact that I interrupted the concert. And, therefore, it became very clear to me, I had to confront the fact that I ruined the concert, if you saw it like that. (interview with Visitor E, my translation from Swedish)

One is used to, or, I am used to, the fact that in a concert, there are tacit rules for how to behave. But you had very clearly invited us to … upset these, but I think they are very, very strong with people in general. And I felt such a strong [reaction], like: "This is not the way you behave!" (interview with Visitor E, my translation from Swedish)

What felt most unpleasant was that some of them who was playing sheep or mass looked very [annoyed]… They looked at you as if you were stupid or weird [to participate]. And that is perhaps understandable. But I would have had more understanding if people who just tagged along, did just tag along and not care that much. But when they in fact acted and in fact, sort of, looked down on [those who participated] … And I don't know, perhaps it was just because they thought that one ruined the concert, but I don't know … (interview with Visitor E, my translation from Swedish)

Visitor C gave her view of what she sees as the whole point with role-play opera:

For me, it's good to not understand everything, that one in a way opens up when one experiences something weird and unpleasant, I would say. (interview with Visitor C, my translation from Swedish)

If I am going to a regular theatre, or say a concert, then I expect that I will go there and sit comfortably, lay back, imbibe something, and then I will perhaps become calm or warm or feel happiness, or something like that, you know … But here I felt more like I was going into [doing] something more active. (interview with Visitor C, my translation from Swedish)

It [role-play opera] is much more intrusive. One does not escape. When sitting in a theatre, in a theatre or a hall, what do you call it, an auditorium, you can do that. And you can crawl back and, you know, go inward, and sit there thinking about your work … But you cannot do it here, because it gets extremely intrusive. (interview with Visitor C, my translation from Swedish)

When asked about if she communicated with anyone during the performance, she continued:

I did not speak to anyone else and I do not think I spoke to even my husband. (interview with Visitor C, my translation from Swedish)

I can say it like this, that I did absolutely not feel that I was forbidden to speak. Not like that, like you might think when you are sitting at other staged art performances, that "Whoops, now I started to cough so that the whole auditorium got angry with me!" It was nothing like that at all, more just like that I did not want to, because I wanted to be there in my little bubble. (interview with Visitor C, my translation from Swedish)

COMMENTS FROM THE GOTHENBURG SURVEY

One respondent expressed how the situation triggered feelings of emotional stress and urgency to win the game:

> I experienced several things: pressure about the consequence of my actions, because the two possible endings are so loaded. I felt very "pressed" to liberate Johan, or I was very keen that he should not be left behind, because then it had felt like we lost the game. Simultaneously, I felt the need to sit passively in the end in order not to evaluate the outcome of the performance. But it is very interesting that I was so affected by winning and losing. I still felt private, despite of my [self-]assigned role (which I used to get in contact with Johan), and I felt a little frustrated that I was not part of the performance on the same premises as the actors. For me, it really felt more like playing a game. The opera was not gone or lost, but it really becomes a different focus – like I was not as focused on what was sung because I wanted to stop Johan from being brought back, at the same time as I listened for chances to perhaps find and lure Johan to the liberation zone. I wonder how the more passive ones in the audience experienced this. I was thinking, while on stage, if I blocked the view of the sitting audience. I felt that I needed to relate to them. (anonymous comment from the visitor survey in Gothenburg, my translation from Swedish)

Some reported feeling confused and would have liked to be assigned tasks or roles in advance:

> I thought that those who participated were prepared in advance and that the rest of us were not supposed to participate, that we just were supposed to be pleased by thinking that we should/could participate. (anonymous comment from the visitor survey in Gothenburg, my translation from Swedish)

> I had wished to more clearly have been assigned a task or a "role." (anonymous comment from the visitor survey in Gothenburg, my translation from Swedish)

> I would have been up for more active participation if I had known that there were prepared characters and more clear "game elements", but it was an experience nonetheless. (anonymous comment from the visitor survey in Gothenburg, my translation from Swedish)

The possibility to wear costumes in accordance with the style of the opera was not necessarily helping ludic participation:

> Personally, I would probably rather not wear anything special in order to play, it had been easier to be spontaneous without it. (anonymous comment from the visitor survey in Gothenburg, my translation from Swedish)

A couple of respondents were annoyed by the amplified voices, since it disoriented them:

> It was somewhat hard to identify who was singing, from the microphone + speaker. (anonymous comment from the visitor survey in Gothenburg, my translation from Swedish)

> The microphone amplification was not helpful. It was most hard to hear when several were singing. (anonymous comment from the visitor survey in Gothenburg, my translation from Swedish)

MY REFLECTIONS

As an opera singer, I got to try Hornwall's rule-based directions of movements first hand. He describes his system as a "development method for the stage" with improvisatory "games" aimed at facilitating interaction and the actor's deepening of their characters, and to give the audience an impression of the actor's unity of character, weight and direction (David Hornwall in the artist questionnaire, my translation from Swedish). The rules were supposed to work generatively, so that the motion (or sound) that the performers elaborated on was picked up from whatever was going on at the moment. In *The Architect*, a rule always applied to all non-instrumental artists at the same time in order to create a notion of a unified superorganism. These directions were schematically put into the score and as a result the rules of "slow-motion," "stop-motion," and repeating "loops" became a shared operatic flux. Their function was, in short, to balance the confined space of the venue with the prolonged time of operatic music (see video with ensemble conversation in the Research Catalogue exposition **Arcade**). At the same time, Hornwall's system gave the artists the opportunity to "autonomously form their character in accordance with the

given text and rule" (Kinell & Petersson, 2017, p. 2, the ensemble's preface, my translation from Swedish). Furthermore, the rules also served symbolically as an image of the catatonic state in the nation Anfasia, of which the character Johan could either be further integrated with, or liberated from. From the position of the opera singer, I perceived the rules as valuable tools for being flexible yet consistent as a character – tools that were rather rudimentary in their basic form, but definitely artistically interesting, and possible to develop further.

From the recollections and documentation of *The Architect*, visitor interaction seems to vary in relation to the character of the music. This is in line with the visitor comments that describes how the music reportedly affected them through atmospheric sounds, vocal-instrumental modalities, and dynamics. This aspect should be studied and explored further in future ludo-immersive operas.

Artists' views are very much compatible with each other, but when contrasted with visitor comments, some interesting disparities emerge. When comparing the results of the artist questionnaire with the comments from the visitors, it becomes evident that some of the visitors had different expectations on how much flexibility and interaction is possible within an opera like *The Architect*. Within the visitor group, there are various approaches and wishes – some wanted to have more obvious and structured opportunities to interfere, while some wanted to be left alone, and others acted despite the operatic tempo of the plot. The discrepancy between our artistic intentions to present an operatic event with *some* more opportunities for interaction than a regular opera has, and some visitor's hope to be *constantly* active as players, might stem from the difference between our vantage point in opera as stylistic spectacle, and their model of role-playing as spontaneously paced, or even sped-up action.

The most recurring comment from the visitors was that other visitors' passivity and spectatorial behaviour disturbed their own immersion and ludic interaction. While the differentiation of visitor roles (obedient followers and dissident obstructors) was highlighted as a positive element of optionality in the artist survey, it seems that for some of the visitors themselves, it became an irritating and confusing distraction. On the other hand, the dilemma theme of *The Architect* was about going out from the "comfort zone" and against peers and consensus.

The setting and the operatic singing in *The Architect* were reported to have some immersive effects on the visitors, but the confusion about what was sung by

whom due to both singing technique, composition, and technological devices might have affected the visitor's comprehension of the story and abilities to act.

Finally, comments from the artist survey hints on the importance of how performing artists may perceive their visitors – as individual participants and as fictional characters. The situations with the verbally interfering visitor in Gothenburg and the visitors that teamed up to cooperate in Halmstad provide concrete and useful examples of how successful visitor interaction and contact between an artist character and a visitor character in ludo-immersive opera can work.

QUESTIONS SPARKED

From the production and performances of *The Architect*, the following questions were sparked:

- How can we categorize different musical modalities in ludo-immersive opera in order to map their abilities to stimulate action dynamically and perhaps more frequently?
- How can these musical modalities be combined with participatory modalities of live-action?
- How can exposure of visitors to other visitors be eliminated in order to favour and intensify immersive participation from the individual?
- How can we play with lyrics as an artistic – not only a linguistic – element in ludo-immersive opera?

IN THE DARKNESS, EVERYTHING WENT ALL BLACK

VISITOR TASK:

Playing captives

PREMIERE:

6 July 2018 in Halmstad

PERFORMANCE PERIOD:

6 July 2018 – 7 February 2019

DURATION:

60 minutes

LANGUAGE:

English

VENUE:

Default blackbox or equivalent (Festsalen at Halmstad Theatre, Nordic House in Reykjavik, Atalante in Gothenburg, Black Room at Inter Arts Center in Malmö, Lindgrensalen at Artisten in Gothenburg)

CREDITS:

Concept by Hedvig Jalhed, Mattias Rylander, Jörgen Dahlqvist, Kent Olofsson, and Agnes Wästfelt

Libretto by Jörgen Dahlqvist

Music by Kent Olofsson

Set design by Mattias Rylander

Performed by Hedvig Jalhed, Agnes Wästfelt, and Kent Olofsson

Produced by Operation Opera and Teatr Weimar

FINANCIAL SUPPORT:

Region Halland

Halmstads Kommun

Nordic Culture Point

Swedish Arts Council

Malmö Stad

Stiftelsen Scenkonstens Historia i Göteborg

INSTRUMENTATION:

Two opera singers (2 sopranos)

Live-electronics

CHARACTERS:

First Voice (soprano)

Second Voice (soprano)

The Trapped (visitors)

SETTING:

An unspecified, hidden space with dwelling persons and memories

SYNOPSIS:

After entering a darkened room only guided by minimal light chains in pathways over the floor, a single light bulb is left flickering faintly in a corner. When it goes out, the visitors find themselves sitting in pitch black darkness. They hear a distant, distorted vintage recording of a German Lied for voice and piano, followed by recorded applauses and cheers, ending abruptly. Fragmented tic-tocs from a clock are heard, interspersed with silence. After a while, two fragile, cautious voices are heard from behind the visitors' backs. The voices argue about whether to tell the trapped visitors why they are there.

As the clock begins to tick once more, the voices break free from the centre of the room and the characters begin to roam around with canes. They move closely among the seated visitors, sweeping by them and touching their chairs and backs. Suddenly, a crash is heard, and the characters return to the centre, hiding again, stricken with fear. As they calm down, they try to comfort themselves with old memories.

But the threatening toc-tocs return, and the characters transform as they repeat the sound of the clock in a large crescendo. A flash light goes off, revealing a person standing in each side of the room. Then it is dark again, and a multitude of voices swirl around until the old piano is heard again. The German Lied begins anew, this time live-sung and interwoven with comments in English. As the final chords rings, a bright light shines through haze filling up the room, and two silhouettes are seen exiting the space together, as a sacrifice. The door shuts behind them and the room is silent. Discrete lights lead the visitors out the same way they got in.

WORK PROCESS:

The idea of an opera where total darkness was the default mode, came up in discussions with set designer Mattias Rylander in 2017. This thought of reversing the performance visually and thereby playing with both the senses and the expectations of the visitors became the vantage point for the collaboration between Operation Opera and Teatr Weimar. This was not to be an interactive opera, from the visitors' perspective. Furthermore, the darkened mode also helped to de-socialize the event and relieve visitors from the pressure from each other, and a more introverted and contemplative mode of being in fiction could be induced as a contrast to *The Architect*.

In early 2018, the team began to workshop and experiment with how to arrange the setting spatially, how to temporally introduce sound in relation to the lack of visual stimuli, and how to achieve confusion about the identities and positions of the voices through vocal mimicry in order to spark imagination. The ensemble worked in Halmstad and Malmö during several occasions, putting the concept together bit by bit. The libretto and the musical composition were repeated in sections from May until the end of June 2018, when a dress rehearsal was carried out with visitors. *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* was premiered 6 July at Halland Opera & Vocal Festival, in Festsalen at Halmstad Theatre. It was performed after this in late 2018: twice at Óperudagar in Reykjavik, twice at Atalante in Gothenburg, and twice

at Transistorfestivalen in Malmö. It was also performed at Artisten in Gothenburg in early 2019. The characters' appearances and backdrops changed during the tour, as they were meant to be somewhat arbitrary and elusive, letting the singers create a new, personal, imaginative character for each performance.

CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW:

The visitors were not to present as distinct fictional characters, but they were addressed as part of the fiction. In this way, they played along without disturbing the story. *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* became an immersive opera without decisive visitor interaction. The totally dark venue was the primary setting for the concept together with immersive sound equipment. IR-cameras and IR-binoculars made it possible for the performers to orientate themselves, to move around and to record the opera in video sequences from different positions. The arcane text and the fragmented information were deliberately left open to the visitors' personal associations and abilities to elicit mental images of their own. Long-spun parts without any visual stimulus at all were sustained to achieve a sense of loss of track of time and space.

Photos from *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* by Mattias Rylander.

RESEARCHER'S NOTES FROM THE SECOND ITERATION

The opera *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* informed the second iteration of my research project. These notes summarize the results and findings made during the production and presentation of the opera, starting with the ensemble work shop in early 2018, and finishing with the last public performance in February 2019.

INTENTIONS

Based on the findings connected to *The Architect*, this next Operation Opera opera offered opportunities to explore both the issue of reduced visitor exposure to other visitors and the operatic lyrics as playful element. With *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black*, the artistic ensemble wished to pursue a more experimental path with regards to purely sensory aspects. Agnes Wästfelt expressed ideas on how the mediation of movement and matter without visibility could become a fruitful challenge for an opera singer, performing in the dark. Mattias Rylander wanted to explore the possibilities of triggering imagination by omitting information and distorting the usual operatic work process, so that the space's prerequisites guided the whole operatic composition (Jalhed & Rylander, 2021) (see Appendix V). The collaboration with Teatr Weimar arose from a joint interest in finding new starting points for operatic works – in this case, the invisible venue – and a curiosity about re-imagining the operatic form through the influence of both conceptual design and composed performance. For my research project, this opera offered an opportunity to study the practice of sensory immersion of visitors apart from social disturbances and the lyrics' role for the visitors' imaginative co-creation apart from action. With its straightforward progression and immovable visitor placement, this opera was more of a simulator ride than an adventurous quest, and hence, the possibilities for ludic participation did not entail interactional moments and reoccurring choice-making. This enabled a more thorough study of immersion, rather than any explicitly ludic features. Literature as for example José Saramago's *Blindness* and H. P. Lovecraft's *The Case of Charles*

Dexter Ward inspired individual team members during the production. The conceptual theme of reversal (Jalhed & Rylander, 2021) (see Appendix V) took the room itself as vantage point for the creative process – an approach that had been used by Olofsson and Dahlqvist before (Olofsson, 2018). The convex layout of seats in the darkened venue resulted from the idea of inversion (see **Figure 15**).

UP TO APPROX. 50 CHAIRS IN ROWS
FACING OUTWARDS FROM THE TENT

TENT
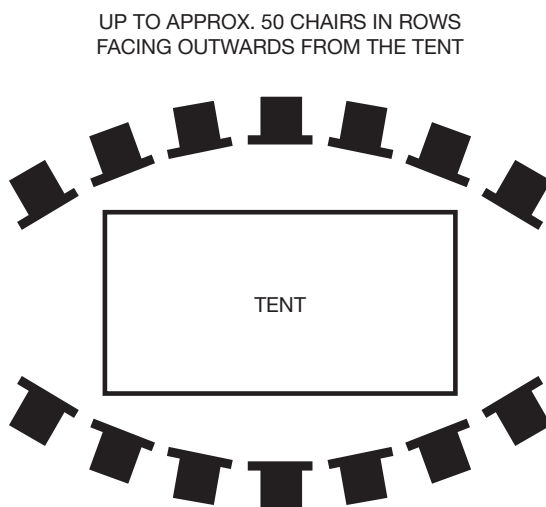
Figure 15: Layout map for *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black*.
Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

POSSIBLE ACTION

All central actions in this opera were exclusively carried out by us opera singers and since all overarching action was pre-programmed, no fictional action was decisive and no alternative course of events existed within the operatic work (see action tree in **Figure 16**). Thus, what I studied through the performances of *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* was rather how artists' sense of play was affected by extended visitor display and lesser artist display, with the artists (equipped with IR-binoculars) seeing more than the visitors and the visitors being seen more than the artists. Hence, my own experience of being immersed as part of the play was in focus during the performances.
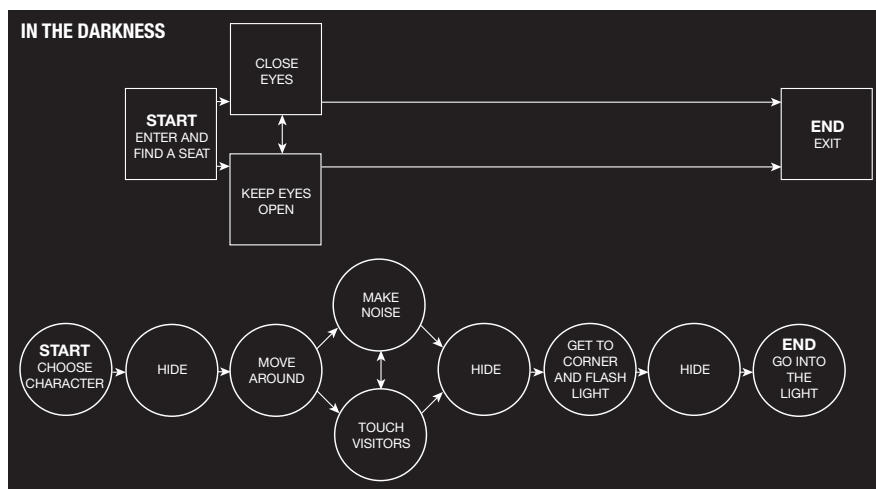
Figure 16: Action tree for *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black*.
Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

DATA COLLECTED

The live performances were documented through IR-cameras, both static and carried by the singers (see video compilation with artists' view in Research Catalogue exposition **Arcade**). Thus, the visitors appear as heat-registered silhouettes in the films, even if the performance spatially takes place right among and in direct contact with them. The video recordings show the movements of the singers, approaching the visitors in various ways with different effects in the dark room in relation to the text, the sounds, the music, and the light effects.

DOCUMENTED ACTION

The videos from the performances of *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* show how the opera singers move among and around the visitors unseen. The audio clips reveal artists' performance only.

OTHERS' ACCOUNTS

Here, I summarize the most relevant findings in the accounts from the responding visitors in *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black*, in relation to my topic and research questions. Like the case with the surveys in connection to *The Architect*, I focus on the written comments from the respondents in order to probe on how the immersive qualities of *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* were experienced.

RESULTS OF THE VISITOR SURVEY

To investigate how *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* was perceived by the visitors, I conducted a digital survey online (see Appendix IV). After seven performances in Halmstad, Reykjavik, Gothenburg, and Malmö 2018, 23 persons had answered the survey anonymously. The respondents' average age was 49. Of the respondents, 19 said that they often go to theatre, opera, musicals, and/or concerts, 7 had been to Operation Opera's performances or similar concepts earlier, and 7 were or had been professionally active in stage art or closely related fields. However, I do not make any statistical claims from this material and continue to stress the qualitative aspects of the survey – the demographics of the respondent group are only summarized to provide an image of the variation of backgrounds among the participants.

The survey consisted of ten statements (1–10) which the respondents could agree with to different degrees (Not at all – Some – Pretty much – Much – No opinion). The answers to these give a hint of to what extent the opera produced immersive sensations and effects (1–4), to what extent it triggered imaginative responses in the visitors (5–6), to what extent it freed the visitors from social pressure (7–9), and to what extent the static and silent visitor role gave associations to conventional auditoria (10). The results of this initial probing were as follows:

- Visitors who felt included in the performance (pretty much / much): 13
- Visitors who felt immersed in the situation (pretty much / much): 16
- Visitors who experienced that they were in the centre of a fictional story (pretty much / much): 15

- Visitors who experienced that the singers sang to them as if they were a part of the story (pretty much / much): 13
- Visitors who experienced that they embodied a fictional character connected to the story line (pretty much / much): 7
- Visitors who got sensations associated to certain locations, persons etc. through the sounds they heard (pretty much / much): 14
- Visitors who felt like being watched (pretty much / much): 9
- Visitors who felt unsecure of how to behave (pretty much / much): 1
- Visitors who felt exposed (pretty much / much): 2
- Visitors who felt like going to an ordinary, conventional concert or opera performance (pretty much / much): 2

The survey also included six questions (1–6), requiring text answers. The comments from these final questions presented here are selected by their bearing on the scope of the project.

In the text answers, it is evident that some visitors did not imagine to be anywhere else than in the exact location (a theatre / concert venue), in the exact situation (an opera performance), together with the actual persons who were there (opera singers and other visitors). Whereas a majority did imagine a fictive location, it was obviously rarer for them to imagine also the persons who were singing – and even more rare to imagining themselves – as fictional characters. Some comments from the survey describes the experience quite literally, without any imaginative additions or associations:

> I did not have any mental images "outside" the darkness, but rather, the fiction took place in a dark place. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

> I experienced that I was in a spatial space surrounded by loudspeakers and singers that were very close. I experienced them as either singing quietly and close to the microphone, or that I heard them walking around me in the room. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

> [I was] in Halmstad. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

[I was in] Nordic House in Reykjavik, Iceland. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Icelandic)

I experienced the characters mostly as a function of the format itself, the form. "Now, I am close, but where are you, or is it me, who sings, moving myself around you." (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

There were mostly some opera singers, music teachers and others that I did not recognize [sic.]. (anonymous comment from visitor survey)

[The persons/characters who were there were] somewhat diffuse. I experienced that someone stood just behind me sometimes. It felt thrilling. The voices [were] clearer than the gestalts. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

Behind me were some ladies who I felt and who walked around. I did not see them, but I noticed them. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

I did not notice that there were "persons" in the room. I experienced the actors as sound, as meant to represent illusions/fantasies about presence, but not as real presence. They only became physical for me at the end, on the way out. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

I sat in the darkness and listened. I tuned in and let the mind wander a bit. I did not sense any particular scenario/plot/situation. (comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

The intense experience became a filter on the narrative, which became secondary to me, so I mostly floated along with the experience, without any reflection about what was happening. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

I was no other than myself, that is, a listener in the dark. The fantasy scenario took, so to speak, place around that reality, a blind audience. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

The imaginative visions among the rest of the visitors deviated somewhat from each other, but common themes seem to be classic horror locations and a sense of being captured. The respondents in the survey described the location as for instance:

- Inside a boat
- In a German garden café
- Inside a ship wreck
- In an attic
- Underground
- In a basement
- In a cemetery
- Between life and death
- In an abandoned asylum
- In a bomb shelter
- In a cave
- In a vacuum

The respondents in the survey described the persons in the room (mainly understood as the two singers) as for instance:

- A mother and a daughter
- Two goddesses
- Just one person talking to her self
- Ghosts
- Spirits
- Nurses

The situation seems to have been the hardest box to fill with imaginary content, and many described the situation as "worrying" or "as something was about to happen." A few describes the situation as for instance:

- Being trapped
- Being a living person who has trespassed into the realms of the dead

Moreover, most of the respondents was not imagining themselves as fictional characters. Just few got visions of who they embodied if not themselves. They described their own character as for instance:

- A blind refugee
- A bystander with momentary psychic abilities
- A scared child

A small sample of the visitors perceived something concrete (a person, an image, or the layout of the furnishing) when the flash went off. However, there seems to be no connection between what they saw and what they remembered to have imagined during the performance as a whole, indicating that a late image revelation did not influence the ongoing fantasies.

A few of the respondents told how they, even if not socializing with the other visitors, still felt as a part of a collective situation and a couple speak of "we" or "they" more than "I." Some assigned fictional characteristics also to their fellow visitors:

> We sat together on the mattresses with blankets around us: mostly adults, mostly women, different ages, different social classes. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

> [We were] an assembly of silent/passive consciousnesses, perhaps in some kind of daze, and two persons who had been in the underworld for a long time. There seemed also to be some kind of monster there. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

> [It was] a slightly worrying situation, a feeling that we, and the singing voices, stood in front something that was about to happen. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

> I just felt that I was bathing in the safe arms of synthesizers, sounds and voices. I was really just a recipient. But the situation, that we in the audience were sitting there together and completely trusted the form and what the actors were doing, was nevertheless very social. We were a group. Together. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

The visitors knew from the start that the opera would be one hour long. A number of comments touch upon the issue of time perception:

> I appreciated the sound of the clock. A part of me thought that there was an ordinary clock in the venue – "for real" – despite the fact that I realized that

such a clock would not have been left there by chance in a performance of this kind. And when the music then began to process the sound more actively, it became an exciting playing with the perception of time in the dark. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

It was the longest hour in my life. The performance was longer than the opera Saint Franciscus of Assisi by Messiaen. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

I felt an acute need to check my watch. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

I thought that it was an exciting experience, where I lost the perception of time. When it was over, I believed that 30 minutes had passed. I thought it was an "interesting confusion" that tells something about the world one succeeds creating in the room. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

I use to listen to music in the dark, with closed eyes, in order to be able to concentrate and focus on the experience of the music. This habit could possibly have caused me to experience the performance differently than others did. But, anyway, I experienced it as totally fantastic, the best I have taken part of in a cultural context for a very long time. The relatively long time of being completely sunken down into darkness, and the intense experience of the sound, made it kind of a shock coming out of the venue after the performance and back to reality. Reality felt unreal. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

One respondent told about an urge to participate vocally in the opera:

I was the listener to a course of events close to me, but yet far away. For a short moment, the presence increased a lot and I even got an impulse to suddenly open my mouth and sing along / sound along … to be a part of it. It was very exciting to experience. And then, my senses were heightened and I felt that through the darkness normal limitations really could be dissolved … but that I would not dare to do at all. […] I really felt that it was exciting to get an impulse to suddenly go in and add my voice. And then I thought that it was very exciting, from time to time, when the singers started to express

themselves vocally with sounds and sort of stretch the song … I liked those contrasts and would have liked to hear more of that. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

One respondent imagined the two voices and multiple vocal sounds swirling around as coming from one source-person, which is particularly interesting in relation to our idea about vocal mimicry as synthetization of multiple singing:

Maybe [there was] only one person who talked with themself. […] I was eavesdropping on an inner conversation. (anonymous comment from visitor survey, my translation from Swedish)

MY REFLECTIONS

My first reflections from *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* concern the effect of human vocal production on immersion. As I performed this opera, the confusion of what was a *voice* (a soundly projection of a body) and just a *vocal sound* (a captured figment of former action) entrapped me.[46] Actively working to forget and confound what was my voice, my singing partner's voice, and the controlled echoes of our earlier soundings contributed to my dissociative sense of immersion as I actively worked to blend my output with my surroundings.

The results from the visitor survey confirms that *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* managed to immerse the majority of the visitors, since they reportedly felt integrated into and addressed as part of the fictional setting. A bunch of respondents got sensations associated with certain locations and persons, but just a few imagined themselves as a fictional character within the setting they fantasized about. Some of the respondents were unable to visualize anything other than the persons and equipment that was actually there and were hence not imaginatively stimulated by the sounds and movements

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[46] In her dissertation, vocal artist Anna Einarsson also brings up this issue, which certainly makes up a complex territory: "Now the voice is an interesting exception in relation to using any other instrument for sound control. Many singers give accounts of an interesting ambiguity of both being and having their singing voice […]. However I don't want to call the voice an interface, since I then would be introducing a homunculus in the system, i.e. giving way to the question "who is playing the voice?". Also this would go against my holistic conception of singing." (2017, p. 27)

in the room. Based on the result of this survey, immersion could be thought of as open-mindedness, or even (momentary) un-criticality and propensity to suggestion and imaginative co-creation. Responding to efforts to invoke immersion might stem from a person's ability to 1) forget the outside world, 2) accept how they are addressed and the situation they are put into no matter the evidence or completeness, and 3) add missing pieces in order to make functioning whole. Thus, imaginative blending of outside information and in-dividual references generated subjective variants of one and the same art work.

The presence of other visitors and being part of a group clearly affected some of the respondents' visions about where and who they were – the knowledge of the collective circumstances was tangible. How would it have been if the visitors had been led in one by one, without knowledge of each other? And did the sole visitor who felt an urge to sing along with the music not dare to do so due to the presence of others, or out of respect for the art work?

That some mentioned the sense of losing track of time was for me one of the most striking discoveries in the survey results. We know that musical experi-ences in general toy with time perception, but how does this relate to temporal immersion, that is, forgetting measures of time and becoming part of an alter-native time span? When we close off *both* place and time (sensed as a stream of change, as in music), could that increase the effect of immersion?

QUESTIONS SPARKED

From the production and performances of *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black*, the following questions were sparked:

- How can we take into account the impact of artist immersion on their own performance and experience?
- How can artistic steps toward greater immersion be taken to work with the visitors' suggestability and abilities to participate?
- How can communal settings be used as a positive factor in the context of ludo-immersive opera?
- How can operatic music be consciously employed to affect time percep-tion in order to enforce temporal immersion?

REICH OF RÁN

VISITOR TASK:

Playing worshippers

PREMIERE:

29 September 2018 in Halmstad

PERFORMANCE PERIOD:

29 September 2018 – 30 September 2018

DURATION:

1–3 minutes + prologue

LANGUAGE:

Collage language / Mulitilingual / Parodic Germanic-Norse Esperatoish

VENUE:

Indoor tent placed in empty shop store (at Victoriagatan 10 in Halmstad)

CREDITS:

Concept and Libretto by Hedvig Jalhed

Music by Mattias Petersson

Video projections by Marko T. Wramén and Anna W. Thorbjörnsson

Costumes by Petra Hjortsberg

Performed by Hedvig Jalhed, Agnes Wästfelt, and Mattias Petersson

Produced by Operation Opera

INSTRUMENTATION:

One opera singer (soprano)

One actor

Live-electronics

CHARACTERS:

Rán, goddess of the sea (soprano)

Frau Doris Leise (actor)

The Captain (live-electronic musician)

Fishermen (visitors)

SETTING:

At the beach and in the water

SYNOPSIS:

Brave fishermen find Frau Doris Leise sitting on the beach with her cats. She welcomes them and ask them to sit down. She has a mission for them: she needs them to go to the goddess of the sea to get her and her cats some fish. The haywire goddess is crossed with Doris and now they all are starving. Each fisherman gets a random paper bag with a couple of items in it. These items can be traded for fish. While Frau Leise ushes them through the door leading to the goddess residing in her underwater world, she tells the remaining fishermen moral fairy tales of how the world works.

On entering into the underwater realms, each fisherman passes by The Captain and is then greeted by the sea goddess Rán. She asks the fisherman who he is and demands his name. If he does not answer, she repeats the question in a new way. If

he still does not respond, she turns away and he must leave. However, if she hears a name, she repeats it incorrectly but enthusiastically and tells the visitor of all her powers and assets. Then she asks for a gift as a tribute. If the fisherman does not hand her anything, she repeats her demand in a new way. If he still does not react, she turns away and he must leave. But if she gets a gift, she reacts according to the type of item that she receives. If she gets a sock, she is pleased and reward the fisherman with a fish, and warns him of the approaching storm. If she gets a metal item, she is offended and drives the fisherman away empty-handed. And if she is given candy, she becomes intrusive and sleazy and gives the fisherman the biggest fish she has.

When the fishermen return one by one to Frau Leise, they may put their names on a score board and receives her overwhelming gratitude if they have succeeded with their task.

WORK PROCESS:

The libretto for *Reich of Rán* was completed in two stages. The lyrics for the character Rán were conceived first in the spring of 2018, and the musical composition by Mattias Petersson was carried out during the summer. The lines of Frau Doris Leise were put together and developed bit by bit. Video projections were filmed and edited during the summer by Marko T. Wramén and Anna W. Thohrbjörnsson. Using this material, Petra Hjortsberg designed the costumes. The opera was rehearsed on location in September 2018 and performed 43 times in two days in an empty shop venue in central Halmstad.

CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW:

Reich of Rán is a multiple-ended micro opera with turn-based visitor interaction. Up to four visitors are welcomed at a time and presented with the fictional introduction and given their mission. Each single visitor then gets up to three minutes of private interaction with the singing opera character.

Photos from *Reich of Rán* by Anna W. Thorbjörnsson.

RESEARCHER'S NOTES FROM THE THIRD ITERATION

The opera *Reich of Rán* formed the third iteration of my research project. These notes summarize the results and findings made during the production and presentation of the opera, starting with my writing of the libretto in the spring of 2018, and finishing with the last public performance in September 2018.

INTENTIONS

Reich of Rán was created in parallel to *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black*. Based on the experiences and discoveries from *The Architect*, issues of operatic modalities, visitor privacy, artist activation, and text function still called upon me. I decided to make an opera that was reduced to a smaller number of people in order to frame the moment of person-to-person interaction in ludo-immersive opera and repeat the experiment with as many visitors as possible. Hence arose the micro opera format in speed-dating style, and with a maximum time of no more than three minutes, *Reich of Rán* did not only provide a vast number of individual visitors, but also, the opera became the world's shortest opera[47]. With *Reich of Rán*, I wished to try a different approach to isolate visitors from each other and getting their focused attention, undisturbed by social pressure from any waiting voyeurs; hence the one-to-one set up. I also wanted to apply a style of text that was deliberately rather messy and patched to achieve a less formal character. The miniature format of the opera allowed us to establish a quicker pace of turn-taking between artist and visitor, between input and output, and I could study the intense contact that the quick change of modalities gave rise to. The composition consisted of basic modules, resulting in two demands and three alternative endings, all triggered by the visitors' interaction with Rán (se structure in **Figure 17**). The modules were arranged to be triggered by the turn-based response (or lack thereof) from the visitor. Hence, the visitor was never to feel any pressure to

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[47] The world record of the shortest opera was up util then held by Simon Rees' & Peter Reynold's *Sands of Time* from 1993, originally 4 minutes and 9 seconds long, and later reduced to 3 minutes and 34 seconds.

act simultaneously with the opera singer, but instead given a space of his own with a concrete task, a fermata of ambient waiting time that made room for visitor action. This use of fermatas became a working model for our turn-based operatic interaction.

The libretto for *Reich of Rán* (see Appendix VI) consisted not only of dramaturgically ordered text, but also of a time structure and musical instructions for the composer. These instructions marked range and tessitura of the voice in each line Rán sang. In sequences, the character Rán presented two demands to the visitor in full range head voice. Each demand could be repeated twice – first in a lower register, partly in chest voice (approximately speech voice range), and then spoken without accompaniment. Thus, the verbal content of the communication was given three different audial expressions without altering either the character or the message. The hypothesis was that a more stylistic expression would distort the output, thus making it harder for the receiver to focus on the verbal content – and the whole point was to make it somewhat of a challenge to decode the messages.
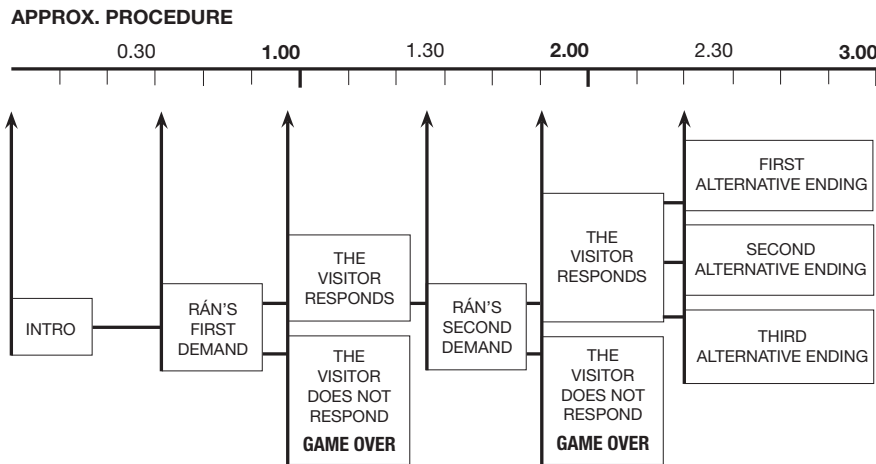
Figure 17: Modular structure from the libretto for the opera *Reich of Rán*.
Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

POSSIBLE ACTION

After accepting the mission given in the introduction, the visitors entered into Rán's underwater world one by one and faced her alone. To go through with their task, they first had to answer by introducing themselves verbally when asked to. Then, they had to choose one of the things given in the bag they had received in the introduction (see action tree in **Figure 18**). A sock or a piece of candy would please her, while metal items would scare her and make her angry (click on the items representing the alternative endings in the Research Catalogue exposition **Arcade**). All bags contained candy and socks and silver spoons distributed randomly. If the visitor had gotten a chance to listen to Frau Leise's fairy tale readings in the introduction, information about Rán's preferences was delivered to them through these readings. If the visitor gave Rán something she liked, she would provide the visitor with fish and the mission was deemed successful. It the visitor gave her a spoon, she would send them away empty handed.
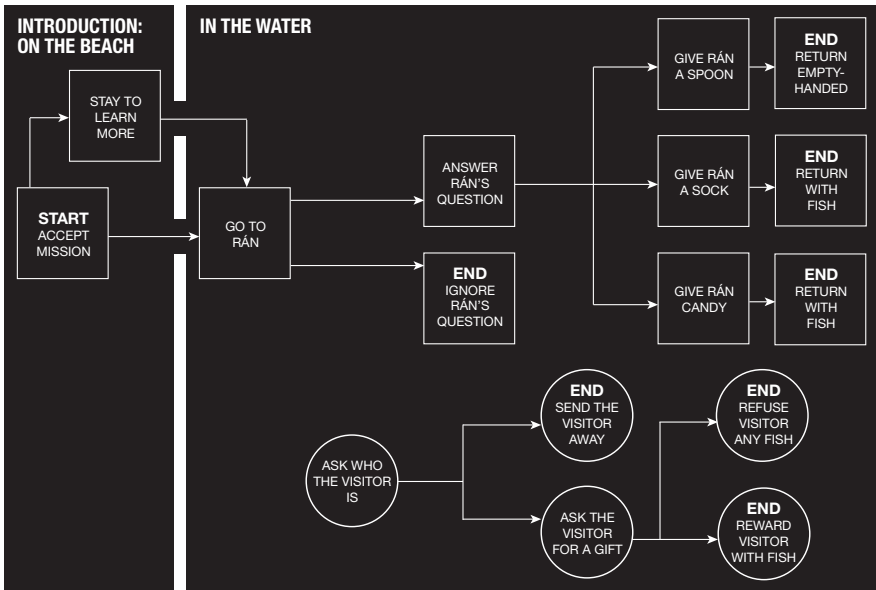
Figure 18: Action tree for *Reich of Rán*. Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

DATA COLLECTED

Reich of Rán played 43 times in two days and 31 adult visitors consented to be part of the study. The video recordings of these performances include a range of different routes through the opera's structure. Since *Reich of Rán* was a practical experiment, whose success was clearly evidenced by the visitors' direct behavioural responses, these field recordings show how the participants are integrated in the fictional world and act accordingly, so I did not ask for any verbal accounts afterwards. In these researcher's notes after the production, I especially focus on two main examples of visitor performance: one experienced visitor who acts smoothly, and one new visitor who surprises us.

DOCUMENTED ACTION

Even though the verbal utterings of Rán were obscure, most visitors managed to understand the demands of Rán, even when sung in full range head voice. Some hesitated and were presented with the chest voice version of the demands, and just a few needed the spoken module to understand the message. No one failed to understand and react to the obscure verbal content when spoken and not sung. The first demand was that Rán wanted to know who the visitor was. All but one of the visitors responded with speech. One visitor responded singing (see video with surprising visitor in Research Catalogue exposition **Arcade**). The second demand was that Rán asked the visitor for a gift. Depending of what item the visitor handed her, she responded in different ways. She could either be grateful and reward the visitor, or she could be offended and drive the visitor away. One visitor tried to offer Rán an alternative tribute when noticing that she was offended and cross. Most however did not take any initiatives of their own. Some acted out their role and elaborated their own performances with cordial manners, for instance making reverences as they greeted Rán. When asked "Who are you?", no visitor answered by a fictional name – all introduced themselves with their own name or actual function, as for instance "I am a woman.".

In the example with the experienced visitor (see video with experienced visitor in Research Catalogue exposition **Arcade**), the interaction between Rán and the fisherman runs easily. The shifts between Rán's sung parts and his responses are organic, and the musical pace is kept up without too much hesitation. He

also clearly displays the manners of a reverential subject in fiction, rather than those of a spectator watching a show. Before leaving, a spontaneous embrace between Rán and the fisherman closes the scene.

In the example with the new, surprising visitor (see video in Research Catalogue exposition **Arcade**), a sung response is heard. Nota bene, there were no requirements or instructions that put any expectations of the visitor to sing while in any of the four operas within the study. Moreover, the visitor refuses to accept the failure when submitting a spoon and being ushered away, but insist on trying again directly. She acts out her disappointment and gives Rán another gift. This makes The Captain (played by Petersson) instantaneously trigger a second ending to the visit, and induced me to shift Rán's mood in response to the initiative from the visitor.

MY REFLECTIONS

The documented action in *Reich of Rán* supports the proposition that textual details from verbal articulation are not cardinal factors for functional interaction in ludo-immersive opera. Thus, neither obscuration through extreme vocal sounds or obscuration through foreign idioms hinder sufficient comprehension and can be used as artistic expressions without greater problems. As long as the character's will is enacted in gestures and key words, and the music (by tempo and dynamics) leaves enough time for visitor action, the listener is provided with enough information to make sense of the situation and act accordingly. This makes me suggest the following relational order of the operatic synthetics: The lyrics primarily informs the opera singer – and the composer – not the visitor. The opera singer transforms the text into music and the music into action, and the *action* could be enough in itself to make things clear to the onlooker, who only apprehend traces of the text behind the music and the movements. As librettist, my job then becomes to present a text that aims for music and action rather than narration, and any wilful obscuration is a possible aesthetization that only becomes problematic if there are expectations that the work be narrative rather than experiential. I regard this non-reliance on verbal articulation as a widening of the librettist's possibilities to produce poetic texts beyond any intentions to communicate and educate, and a shift of focus in the opera singer's craft to produce action with impact, accompanied by verbal and musical colors that add depth to the gestures.

Isolation from other visitors and one-to-one contact between artist and visitor resulted in 100 % actively interacting visitors, as expected. Certainly, there was no other option than to act, and no waiting for other visitors that triggered voyeuristic behaviour and comparison. The challenge would be to install a similar mode of privacy and concentration when adding more players, perhaps through team play, adversary play, or group members with prior knowledge of each other. The expectation that the visitors participate actively, as well as the turn-based system of shorter modules, kept a level of tension and excitement active throughout the performance. Also the assigned mission to help another character, and to act as a character themselves rather than on their own, helped reduce doubtful musing. Instead, action was all that mattered.

The case with the new, surprising visitor, improvising a tune when stating her name, is a rare example of a visitor behaving like an opera singer and singing in action. While many professional artists and students in both musical and performance practice have attended our operas without interacting musically, this example of a musical amateur contributing with a singing performance is an interesting moment, wherein another dimension of participation in ludo-immersive opera opened up. Even if singing is to remain optional and voluntary for visitors, this new visitor shows that participatory solo-singing is indeed possible in ludo-immersive opera.[48] Moreover, her strong will and efforts not to give up put the concept to the test: we artists must relate to our program in such a way that we can adjust it "on the fly" without excessive deliberation. This would be a lot harder with a large, conductor-led ensemble. In this case, the visitor functioned as a naive conductor who, through her actions, unknowingly triggered musical modules. The contact between visitor, instrumentalist and opera singer, acting together, becomes clear with this surprising turn of events, and shows that – even if it could be even richer and more complex – the work is flexible enough to allow visitors to test the limits of their roles, and perhaps become aware of their abilities to consciously impact the turn of events.

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[48] Visitors have also unsolicited earlier sung along in Operation Opera's operas, in *Welcome back to Anfasia* in 2012 and *Anfasian Entertainment* in 2013.

QUESTIONS SPARKED

From the production and performances of *Reich of Rán*, the following questions were sparked:

- How can modes of single-player and multi-player action fluctuate and be combined in ludo-immersive opera?
- How can visitors be provided with information that the artists (or their characters) do not have in order to, at least momentarily, turn the tables and elicit surprise?

CHRONOS' BANK OF MEMORIES

VISITOR TASK:

Playing clients

PREMIERE:

Part premiere (Prologue + Act 2) 16 November 2019 in Halmstad, full premiere planned for 2020 postponed due to the covid-19 pandemic

PERFORMANCE PERIOD:

16 November 2019 – 24 November 2019 (parts of the opera)

DURATION:

Indefinite

LANGUAGE:

Swedish (original), English (translation)

VENUE:

Empty shop in public city (the performances 2019 took place at Fredsgatan 7 in Halmstad, the rehearsals in 2020 was carried out at Nygatan 1 in Halmstad, where the bank should have opened later on) + adjusted version for Malmgrensalen at Artisten in Gothenburg

INSTRUMENTATION:

Three opera singers (soprano, baritone, bass baritone)

Live-electronics

Bottles

Wine glasses

Voices

CHARACTERS:

Sylvester Chronos (bass baritone)

Julius Chronos (baritone)

Laetitia Svensson (soprano)

Sylvester's Shadow (live-electronics and voice)

Julius' Shadow (live-electronics and voice)

Laetitia's Shadow (live-electronics and voice)

SETTING:

By the sea and in a pawn shop

SYNOPSIS:

Sylvester Chronos finds Laetitia on the beach. He knocks her in the head and drags her with him, together with a mystical bottle holding a drop of fluid memories, tapped from her mind, leaving Laetitia with almost no memories left at all. Sylvester invents a machine for extracting memories and sells the drop in Laetitia's bottle as he sets up his pawn shop for memories, together with his brother, Julius, who has fallen in love with the blank slate of a woman that the brothers have adopted.

The bank is neatly tended to. Customers arrive. They can either pawn their own memories in order to get more time to live, or buy someone else's memories in order to become more experienced. Julius manages to deceive Laetitia into loving him as well, by giving her false memories of himself.

Finally, a customer arrives with an inconvenient message. Sylvester is devastated and closes the bank. Julius is left alone and he consumes all the memories he can find in the bank. Sylvester takes Laetitia with him back to the sea in order to drain them both of all their memories of what has been, and to restore order and reset.

WORK PROCESS:

The Chronos saga was written as a fairy tale with eighteen chapters in early 2019. The libretto was conceived later and Operation Opera commissioned the musical composition to be completed in two steps. Mattias Petersson got the position to function as musical editor for the composition as a whole. His initial part (Prologue, Act 1, Act 2 and Epilogue), included fragmented, prescriptive quotes from music by Qarin Wikström and Daniel Hjorth, and was delivered after the summer of 2019. The ensemble rehearsed and premiered the Prologue and Act 2 in November. The Prologue was released publicly on Youtube for private screenings. Act 2 was played as location theatre in an empty shop in Halmstad during two weekends in November, with a number of visitors dropping-in to make deposits and purchases during a total time of nine hours. The printed fairy tale was hidden in the bank, available to be found by sneaking visitors. The bank was also set up in a black-box at Artisten in Gothenburg in January 2020. The audio track for The Epilogue was recorded in the spring of 2020. Act 1 and Act 3, with scenes by all three composers, were intended to be performed in 2020. But, due to the covid-19 pandemic, these parts of *Chronos' Bank of Memories* have not been able to be presented publicly by the time this is written in 2021.

CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW:

Chronos' Bank of Memories as a whole, has been split into various forms of presentation to be experienced at different times in different places. The opera consists of live-events, video sequences, and a printed booklet with a fairy tale. Together, they constitute an operatic game – a puzzle or a riddle to be solved by the visitor, who is engaged both as a character in the story, and in the meta-game of problem solving. The live events are primarily placed in empty shop venues in the city. Every visitor accesses the pieces of the operatic puzzle in accordance with their own desired investment of time and effort. The musical modules in the live events are mostly turn-based and triggered by the artists who responds to the actions of the visitors. Visits to the bank have a flexible duration, and the visitors can choose to stay as long as they wish during business hours, and leave whenever they want. Each piece of the opera can then have a duration from only a few minutes to up to two hours.

RESEARCHER'S NOTES FROM THE FOURTH ITERATION

The opera *Chronos' Bank of Memories* formed the fourth iteration of my research project. These notes summarize the results and findings made during the production and presentation of the opera, starting with my writing of the fairy tale and the libretto in the spring of 2019, and finishing with last rehearsals when the production was aborted by the covid-19 pandemic in March 2020.

INTENTIONS

With *Chronos' Bank of Memories*, I wished to produce an opera that systematically included different kinds of participation that I had so far discovered through my both practical and theoretical studies, ranging from private visitor perception (epilogue/prologue) and private artist performance (Act 1), to unprepared and random visits in public (Act 2), and prepared and booked visits with delimited company (Act 3). In order to make clear the operatic libretto's special literary function as an ergodic text to be navigated, memorized, sung, and acted out, I decided to contrast it with a narrative text of the same story to be read. This became the fairy tale *Chronos' Bank of Memories* – a text behind the text, that any operative visitors could find and take with them, in order to make the story linger after and in between the operatic activities. This arrangement was inspired by Hofmannsthal's double output for *The Woman without Shadow*, conceived in 1919 both as opera libretto and a fairy tale novel in tandem. Furthermore, I wished to return to the idea of rule-based directions, introduced by David Hornwall in *The Architect*, and develop the system further in order to customize rules for role-types.

Based on my findings and questions from *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* and *Reich of Rán*, I conceptualized *Chronos' Bank of Memories* in order to realize, in one final work within my study, both the stratification of immersion and the distinction between sensory play (with physical "toys") and participatory play (with animate "mates"). I also wished to create an opportunity for applying distinctions between what I at the time thought of as *actors* (operat-

ing on their own), *agents* (operating instead of others), and *allies* (operating together with others). Due to the pandemic in 2020, these ideas were integrated within the written work constituting the opera, but not executed and finally tested live in all parts. Therefore, the focus in these notes is on the ensemble's work process, with a few examples of live visitor behaviour in the "bank."

Instead of preparing the staging by directing from outside the play, I placed myself as a directing *playtester* in the position of the presumptive visitor. As director, my task was to prepare the artists with a range of characteristic activities each to occupy them between action. For the prepared visits in act 3, my role as director could also include visitor coaching, as I then would have functioned more as a hybrid between game master, coach, and director.

With Operation Opera, we had earlier worked collaboratively both with libretto and directions. Now I suggested that the musical composition could also be done with several composers of one work. Mattias Petersson took charge of combining his compositional material with Daniel Hjorth's and Qarin Wikström's, in order to create a joint world of sounds for the opera. Petersson gives a glimpse of the composers' joint process:

> We have had composers' meetings throughout the entire process, where we have discussed how we might make it a musical whole despite the fact that we are three different composers and despite the fact that we perhaps do not know how or when various parts will be played. We asked Hedvig for key phrases associated with each role in the performance, and agreed that we will write one segment rendering each of these sentences, as a way to get started. The key phrase of the role figure Sylvester Chronos is for instance "I'm staying where I am!" and for this phrase, Daniel has written a fantastic tune. During the rehearsals, we experimented with different ways to use that motive as a secondary melody, so that it could be a kind of subliminal part. In that way, we have workshopped it all together, so that in the end it has been everyone's music, even if I perhaps am the one who has done the score. I really like this process. (Paulsson, 2020, p. 13)

Linus Flogell, an experienced opera singer, became a new ensemble member, playing Julius. Also Anna Thunström took on the role of Laetitia, and Anna had no background in opera, but rather in immersive performance. Hence, four new professionals were introduced to the concept of ludo-immersive

opera. With this, I hoped to move on from the exploring and experimenting mode, to the realization of a more or less established framework for both work process and means of presentation; with the new ensemble members, we had to explain ourselves. At this point, we knew a great deal of what ludo-immersive had turned out to be, and how it could be made to work. The time had come to sum up our immersive methods and analyses so far.

POSSIBLE ACTION

The visitors in act 2 could either search the bank to find the fairy tale, deposit a memory, or purchase a memory. Each of the two latter alternatives triggered a row of modules that, depending on how many people were waiting in the bank for their turn to be served, could be compressed or prolonged. The potential action in Act 1 and 3 remains untested. However, *Chronos' Bank of Memories* is certainly the most complex and varied opera we have come up with so far, in terms of possibilities for different kinds of visitor action and for free roaming (see action tree in **Figure 19**).

DATA COLLECTED

Besides the prologue being made available as a film online (see video prologue in Research Catalogue exposition **Arcade**), a succession of drop-in visits to act 2 of *Chronos' Bank of Memories* both on location at Fredsgatan 7 in Halmstad and at Artisten in Gothenburg was documented in November 2019.

After the disrupted production in the spring of 2020, I made two artist interviews – one with composer Mattias Petersson to summarize his experiences from the past ten years of writing music for and performing in ludo-immersive operas, and one with singer Anna Thunström to question her on her reflections as someone new to the concept, based on her participation as opera singer in *Chronos' Bank of Memories*.
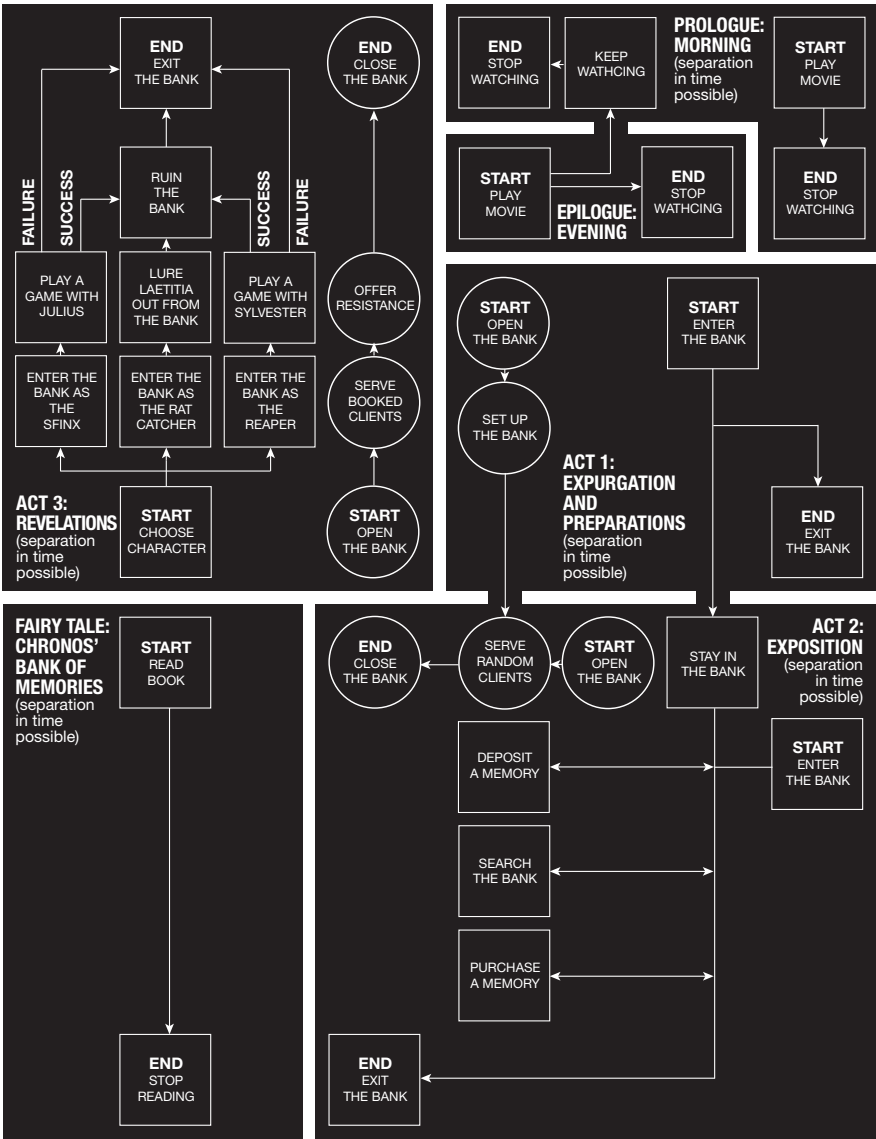
Figure 19: Action tree for *Chronos' Bank of Memories*. Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

DOCUMENTED ACTION

The film clips from the performances of Act 2 show how single or small companies of visitors enter into the bank and, interacting with the music, decides to either pawn a memory or buy another person's memory (see example with purchasing visitor in video in Research Catalogue exposition **Arcade**). Some visitors searched the venue by opening doors and cupboards. The performance in Gothenburg evident how the context and building affected the visitors' behaviour – despite the same information about a timeframe for drop-in visits that was given in Halmstad, nearly all visitors came as soon as the doors were unlocked and stayed as if it was a spectacle to attend together.

OTHERS' ACCOUNTS

As the last part of my study, I returned to the perspective of my fellow colleagues to collect some final views on our practice before making my final reflections. In the interviews with Petersson and Thunström two perspectives are articulated: the ludo-immersive opera composer's decade long involvement with the developing genre, and the immersive and interactive singer's first introduction to the concept. However, they have a common denominator in the fact that they have no professional background in traditional or institutional opera and the work with Operation Opera is the first operatic practice they both have been involved in. Petersson has also worked with other non-institutional opera, while Thunström has her background in concert singing, early music and a more recently achieved specialization in immersive performance.

Some main insights of practical know-how in ludo-immersive opera were articulated in the interviews:

- How the music depends on the other operatic parts of the work
- How musical spaces for visitor interaction can be conceived
- How sound bolsters the sense of otherness in relation to the outside world
- How musicking can be thought of as an immersive feature
- How meetings can replace broadcasting
- How embodying fictional characters can be liberating

COMMENTS FROM THE ARTIST INTERVIEWS

Petersson explains how he composes for combinations with arbitrary action in ludo-immersive opera and how interactive music drama can be engendered through the breaking of musical patterns:

> Yes, the most common trick we have employed – or, rather, that I have employed – it is to work with, well, more floating forms, […] boxes and sections not so strictly notated, and maybe resonances that can ring for an arbitrary amount of time, and things like that, during sequences where one, say, waits for the audience to do something. That time … can be a sound resonating that is independent of pulse or tempo or a certain length. Also this type of ambience, if one wants to call it that, consists of space for the visitor, for example to converse with each other. It cannot be too loud, but must be some sort of background that one actually feels comfortable to speak over. If there are too many sounds in the room, one gets more passive, I think. And then when they actually act, one simply makes a contrast. We have done this sometimes, allowing one to disrupt such a structure, and then it becomes a very strong effect when everybody is expecting it should follow a pulse and that, say, this chord will come after that chord … when you break in the middle of that flow, it becomes a very strong effect. But it does require more courage to interact with such a process, of course. (interview with Mattias Petersson, my translation from Swedish)

Another issue of concern for Petersson is how the sounding room appears when set design blends with the musical composition:

> There, I have thought a lot, how, for instance Chronos' Bank of Memories, it is as much like going into an environmental sound installation as going on to a stage. There is still a quite clear difference between fiction and reality, inside and outside the room. Well, in Chronos', for instance, these bottles that we hung up were tuned in tones, and things like that. One also hears the traffic outside and people open the door and so on, letting in sound from the outside world. But it is so stylized inside the room, in this case in the bank, then it becomes quite clear to the visitors that they are a part of a show. (interview with Mattias Petersson, my translation from Swedish)

The synergy effect that stems from the collaborative process when the operatic sub-works are created at least partly in parallel with each other has become a vital aspect for his opera composing:

> You know exactly what you are supposed to do, off course. But what I have experienced with Operation Opera is that the music deepens a lot when I have participated and thought about … scenography. Sometimes, someone else has thought about that and explained it to me in a way that I suddenly understand my own music better. This gives synergetic effects, between the different included parts. (interview with Mattias Petersson, my translation from Swedish)

He continues with a reflection on how he has discovered the different operatic parts to both take over and unburden each other, making an opera simply not a musical work only, but an interplay between artistic dimensions:

> The most important thing that I have learned, I think, is to dare to trust that the other incoming artforms in an opera are as powerful as the music. Because, I remember that I thought in the first operas that, well, this depends only on me, that I have to make fantastic music all the time. But I have learned now that it is indeed very fine if the music is fantastic, but it does not depend on that. It depends on the whole. And in the whole, the music is just a small part. Or, not small, rather – it is a large part – but all the parts are kind of large! An amazing stage room with sets and props can create a dimension for the music that I never could conceptualize myself, and that has consequences for how one plays, and enhances the singers' ability to act, and add more dimensions and depth. I was not prepared for that in the beginning, I must confess, seeing that the other dimensions are just as powerful. And sometimes, they take over. Sometimes, it does not matter how the music sounds, because the acting can simply override it. (interview with Mattias Petersson, my translation from Swedish)

Petersson also points out how his sound-making and musical composing must constitute an either soft or hard contrast to the outside world in order to immerse the visitor:

> So, if one wants people to stay and dare to stay, then I think that it helps to have some sort of […] ambience or some sort of sound that marks off the

"show world"[49] [föreställningsvärlden] from the regular world, so to speak. But it depends on what one is aiming at. If you want it to be a gateway into the show, then […] one can also make it with an extremely tangible silence. (interview with Mattias Petersson, my translation from Swedish)

If the contrast is with a very messy traffic situation [outside], say, then silence is really something tangibly different, but if it is silent outside too – if you are in the woods or something – then one has to work with other means, perhaps. Maybe one should create the traffic situation inside instead. I believe that contrast is probably important. (interview with Mattias Petersson, my translation from Swedish)

When composing and performing, he hopes that his music will be internalized by the visitor as a part of the "musicking" experience:

I wish that when people have heard my music, they somehow become the music. […] One should not be able to break out. […] I don't know, it is hard to explain, but … one should become absorbed. I think of the audience as sponges that one, kind of, soaks with the music. And there is that Leitmotif thinking and, well, the chanting [in Welcome back to Anfasia], for example. I remember how I thought of people going out, outside the venue, howling that "there is always something better". And stuff like that. […] Well, it is because I like that kind of musical experience myself, I think. I remember the first time I heard Beethoven's Ninth, for instance. Then I had that experience that I was the work, as I had heard it. Like I was a part of Beethoven's Ninth! And this is what, if one is to philosophize further about it, then this is really what is musicking, as Christopher Small puts it, that the listener is perhaps the greatest part of the musical play [musicerandet]. Or the musicking act. As composer, one wants to create a prerequisite for musicking to happen, so one needs to make it comprehensible. And it does not have to mean that one makes it simple, but just that what one wants to say needs to be somehow comprehensible. (interview with Mattias Petersson, my translation from Swedish)

Moreover, Petersson comments upon controlled exposure and the importance of how the ability to choose by yourself must guide the experience:

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[49] The word "föreställning" in Swedish (a parallel to the German "Vorstellung") can mean both exhibitionistic performance (the practice of showing) and imaginative conceptualization (the product of showing), and *show* therefore, in a way, catches both alternatives.

> I do not want to give people … an unpleasant experience just for the sake of it. It should be selected, the unpleasant experience. That is, the audience must understand, in the show situation, that, ok, this can get nasty, but I choose to stay. That choice must be given to them, or else … it becomes an encroachment. (interview with Mattias Petersson, my translation from Swedish)

Thunström describes how she went from concert singer to immersive singer, creating meetings between artist and visitor:

> It is probably quite obvious that, earlier, I sung mostly in the context of the church. I am used to be the one who stood in front on a stage and then, there was an audience that sat and looked at me, and when everything was over, they applauded and went home. And I noticed more and more how [when only performing] I missed the meeting, that it felt that it did not really matter who I was who stood there, it only mattered that I sing correctly. That led to a feeling of emptiness, simply. So, eventually, I started to study for a master's degree in contemporary performance and dig into what was bothering me. And there I found out that it was the lack of a real meeting between myself and the audience. And then I started to look at how can I create such a meeting? What can it consist of? And then I got closer and closer to this way of working within interactive and immersive meetings. (interview with Anna Thunström, my translation from Swedish)

> If I have a person in front of me, I can kind of tune in and react exactly to that one. But, if it is a group, then it can be fragmented and people have different ideas about what is happening and so on. […] The biggest difference is that, if I sing in a concert or in church, then the so-called group is sitting down rather passively. And I am not supposed to, or I am not asked to communicate directly to them, to look at them and make them feel exposed, but rather to address myself almost over their heads, in a way passing over them, almost. But, in immersive and interactive shows, it is the very opposite, that I really do see them and that they really see me. (interview with Anna Thunström, my translation from Swedish)

For Thunström, the work with Operation Opera construed her first experience of singing as a fictional character and being immersed in that impersonation had effects on her approach to her own singing achievement:

> The difference [between singing as one's private self and as a fictional character] is rather big, I think. […] I felt that I could let go of my vocal achievement when I was Laetitia. Because then, I was inside another person, or, I embodied another person and how she sounded and moved and made the choices she made. And then I could stop listening to my vocal achievement. So that was something I had a problem with before, that I almost didn't appreciate what came out while I was singing. And I felt that, with Operation Opera, I did not do that a bit, but instead, I had lent myself to the character so much that I was engulfed by what happened and what happened in interaction with the visitors. (interview with Anna Thunström, my translation from Swedish)

However, while embodying a fictional character herself in a fictional setting, she did not think of the visitors as fictional characters:

> No, I actually did not [think of the visitors as fictional characters.] […] Good question! No, I thought that they were themselves and were brave to enter into a world that they did not know very much about. And Laetitia reacted to those who were able to plunge into the fictional world of the story. (interview with Anna Thunström, my translation from Swedish)

A different attentiveness emerged for her in the performance guided by the visitors' actions, compared to regular concert singing with mono-linear progression:

> In Chronos', we had some sort of agreement that different visitor behavior could trigger different actions. So, depending on the visitor, maybe we acted in a certain way that triggers a certain sequence of the music. So that created a good flowing experience. Much more flowing than a so-called regular concert with music that goes on no matter what from beginning to end. This was more like … you had to stay awake and alert. (interview with Anna Thunström, my translation)

MY REFLECTIONS

The visions underpinning the libretto was only partly tested in practice and, as this is written, the total sum of scenes and choices in *Chronos' Bank of Memories* is still to be evaluated. Act 3 comes with the opportunity to instruct the

visitors to surprise the artists by giving them insider-information. The performances of act 2, however, showed that the drop-in-format was successful when it came to getting the visitors to play by themselves, as it gave them an obvious choice when to participate and when to leave. It did however not require or inspire the visitors to appear or present themselves as fictional characters – rather, they remained identified as themselves. Moreover, the institutional atmosphere at Artisten in Gothenburg overrode the interactive mechanisms to a large extent. Here, the physical place was clearly connected to a formal social practice – it turned the visitors into an audience.

The move to replace the director's conventional outsider's view to being an active visitor in ludo-immersive opera is totally logical. Since there is no auditorium, stage directing in this genre should not take as its vantage point a position that is not to be present in the performance. However, with *Chronos' Bank of Memories*, I more and more began to question whether the concept of stage directions belongs in ludo-immersive opera at all, and if what I have been searching for is really a theatrical equivalent to the simplicity and autonomy of a conductor-less musical chamber play. In such chamber music, the group is small enough to be self-governing in that everyone can remain in constant contact with each other without an intermediator and, since every role is unique and nobody is able to hide in the crowd, all share the direct responsibility for the outcome in accordance with their particular part. Instead of a shared centre, as in a large symphonic orchestra and a symphonic opera, the chamber ensemble is an organic network often without conductor. What if chamber opera could become not only opera performed with a *musical* chamber ensemble, but also with a *theatrical* chamber ensemble – reducing central control of both theatrical and musical functions, leaving more autonomy for the participants? This organizational proposition would have effects on both the working conditions and the artistic outcomes. The thought of theatrical chamber play as a parallel to musical chamber play is of course not new, but the question has actually not been to discard the director; when Max Reinhardt wrote about his idea of chamber play for the theatre – "*Das, was mir vorschwebt, ist eine Art Kammarmusik des Theaters.*" (Fiedler, 1975, p. 81, original emphasis) – he spoke of the design of the venue and the psychological intimacy of the play, not the organization of participants. What would be the case if we could train ourselves as chamber opera artists to become not only chamber musicians, but also chamber actors, in constellations small enough to be self-reliant as role-players without any director? *That would be a game-changer.*

An issue that continues to haunt me is how time perception can be played with more deliberately in ludo-immersive opera. After his visit to *Chronos' Bank of Memories* in Halmstad, one visitor answered the question of how long he thought that he has been sung to. He guessed about seven minutes, but in fact it was nearly twice that amount of time that had passed. The distortion of experienced time seems to be a reoccurring figure, as seen in the visitor survey after *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black*.

Reflecting on his nearly ten years of composing ludo-immersive operas, Mattias Petersson underscored how the different media parts affect and can dynamically shift and enforce each other, both in the working process and in the final performances. I do believe that this mind-set that does not consider the parts as acting as comments, background information or pedagogical clarifications in relation to each other is crucial. Hence, the issue is not what sub-work is *begun* first – they are all conceived at the same time in our synchronic rather than diachronic way of working – but what is *finished* first. That bottom-up rather than inside-out construction of the tripartite nested doll of opera (see description in **Conceptual Framework** in **Chapter 1**) – with the libretto as the core doll, the music as the middle, and the stage as the outer one – has become a valuable alternative work order. The basic information is detectable in all dolls, but the middle and the outer doll continues to grow when the small one stay put, and lastly, the outer doll grows by itself. Still, it is the same doll, but with more and more elaborated and decompressed details added to it.

Furthermore, based on Petersson's vision of operatic musicking and making the listener one with the music, I wonder how we can discuss that in relation to musical as well as other forms of immersion. The development of our artistic practice has left me convinced that synergetic and synthetic immersion must be a matter for further inquiry, pinpointing the various properties of different types of media immersion and then applying it in a (syn)aesthetic manner.

Thunström's comments on how she as a performing artist in immersive events seeks individual meetings with listeners, in contrast to projecting the performance toward a silent mass, points to something fundamental: that we both think and behave differently depending on the form of the event. As an opera singer, aimed at institutional opera, all my training has been about covering and reaching over vast areas and large crowds, but not about singing towards specific others – often not even my partners on stage. I have become more

and more aware of how problematic the ideal of traditional opera singing (again, not as sound product, but as performance practice) is in relation to ludo-immersive opera. Thunström with her non-operatic background and immersive specialization indicates how ludo-immersive opera just as other kinds of immersive practices requires specific training and thinking. Moreover, her experience of singing as a fictional character is certainly shared by many opera singers, but it is also telling us something about how artists can be immersed in a way that allows them to let go and forget that they are singing while singing.

QUESTIONS SPARKED

From the production and performances of *Chronos' Bank of Memories*, the following questions were sparked:

- How can I map the social relations that seems to underpin participatory events such as ours?
- How can I map multisensory operatic modes based on the evident features of the constituent operatic components?
- How can opera artists be trained for ludo-immersive chamber opera as something different than opera house opera?

Chapter 4:
SYSTEM

GRAPHIC SYSTEMATIZATION

After the four opera productions, I now turn to outlining and visualizing the mind-set that I have gradually come to develop during this study. I have found that current descriptions of artistic and ludic immersion do not fully cover all aspects of our practice and this has led me to start developing a new systematization of immersive options. Below I present the drawings of a system model for ludo-immersive opera. This model is a product of my research and an outline of a system for ludo-immersive opera that combines my theoretical understandings with the artistic result of the inquiry. It delineates a somewhat speculative outcome calling for further testing.

First, I quickly recapitulate how a clash of theories – or theoretical frameworks – has produced new knowledge (see also **Methodological Vantage Points** in **Chapter 2**):

- **Clash of theories:** Ideas about opera, play, and immersion have been fused.
- **Application of clashing theories:** Operas have been made into playful and interactive games for visiting participants, with the intended goal of obtaining immersion.
- **Outcome of application:** Current theories fail to provide artists with a fully working model for the generation and analysis of ludo-immersive opera as a "total work."
- **Presentation of new, synthetic theory:** This system – which can be further tested – is built upon revised and combined theories from the fields of knowledge underpinning this study.

The main theoretical concepts (earlier touched upon in **Conceptual Framework** in **Chapter 1**) that form the basis for my system model are 1) the tripartite nature of opera, 2) Caillois' taxonomy of games and play, 3) the idea of grades of immersion, and 4) the dialectic aesthetic principles of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Based on an assumed compatibility between these ideas, I have set out to reimagine and explore nuances of the tension between performance and perception in artistic multitasking, broadly understood and also specifically in the context of opera. The aim has been to fit the theoretical strands into one working system, which has required a revision of Caillois' categories. Artistic multitasking is about emphasizing and

balancing perception and performance in multiple ways. My system organizes the different modes of play as grades of both performance (Dionysian appearance) and perception (Apollonian distance), and combines them with a proposed concrete model of degrees of immersion, in relation to the practices discussed in this dissertation.

SYSTEM MODELLING

System models display the relations that form the basis for a flow of information between nodes. The system model that is a result of my inquiry could be used a notational system for composed interaction, added to the verbo-musical score. It can also be used for randomization of such interaction. This chapter ends with suggestions for simple "games" to be played and tested based on this system model for ludo-immersive opera that I have constructed. The resulting connection between immersion and interaction, as I see it, is then further explicated in my review of the operas in **Chapter 5**.

Games have multiple properties that can be thought of as constituting systems. A system of rules defines a range of available options that are interrelated; "[a]s systems, games provide contexts for interaction." (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 50) Interaction is movement happening in the space between entities with can affect each other reciprocally. An (analog) role-playing game system[50] consists of a set of game mechanics. Dice are commonly used, but there are also other means of defining options for player properties and player actions, as applied to particular settings and storylines; such options may be chosen from random tables, for example.

The system I outline is applicable both as design generator and ergodic devise. The meta-games that I propose may replace or accompany an operatic event, and can be played in both creative sandbox mode either with free access to all options, or in an aleatoric manner, as in Luke Rhinehart's[51] cult novel *The Dice Man*. It is also important to stress that my system model is an artistic tool and is built for use in artistic interpretation. Therefore, although I try to

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[50] Well-known generic systems for table-top role playing include the *D6 System*, the *D20 System*, and *Basic Role-Playing* (BRP).
[51] Luke Rhinehart is the pen name of novelist George Powers Cockroft.

explain the logic behind it, there is also room for re-interpretation and variant forms to some degree. I also hope to develop the system model further in future research projects.

A MODEL FOR LUDO-IMMERSIVE OPERA

Just as with both Stanislavski's and Wagner's artistic diagrams (initially mentioned in **Chapter 2**), my graphical modelling concerns the interplay between perception and performance. My system postulates that these two may be balanced and integrated within a human body or within a human organization by ways of *multitasking*, since all activities ordered by the system occupy different faculties of the human condition, and can thus be composed and combined.

To be immersed is to be surrounded and embedded, implying that the immersed is integrated as a smaller part within a larger whole. Immersion shrinks us and takes us in through a sort of keyhole, and emersion enlarges us and takes us out, breaking the walls that contain us, just like Alice in Wonderland. Immersed persons are not peripheral, but surrounded by blocking stimuli. They are inside and not outside the "fourth wall," appearing as a portal that is opening and closing behind the visitor.

In my system model, the layered sphere is the starting point for the figurative and imaginative spatialization of immersive degrees. Information can pass among the layers described, resulting in transparency. The illustrations of the model presented below are all derived from this basic model of conceptual spaces. The prototypical model (see **Figure 20**) relates to the nested doll in **Conceptual Framework** in **Chapter 1**:

PROTOTYPICALITY

EXTERNALITY

LIMINALITY

INTERNALITY
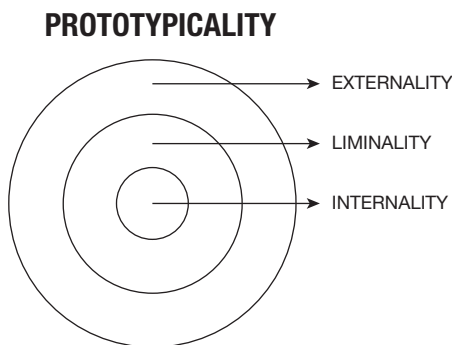
Figure 20: Prototypical model for the systemization of ludo-immersive opera.
Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

THREE KINDS OF RULES

Popper (2003) suggests that there are two kinds of "laws." Firstly, there are statements describing regularities of nature and, secondly, there are local specific norms such as prohibitions and commandments. In my proposed systematization for ludo-immersive opera, I work with the idea that there are in fact three kinds of laws or rules. Rules can be physical (limiting all), social (limiting some), and psychical (limiting self). In opera, we test our physical capacities in relation to nature. In play, we test our social capacities in relation to society. In myth, we test our psychical capacities in relation to fantasy.

I apply the prototypical model so that all proposed immersive domains (see **Figure 21**) mirror each other and I suggest that degrees of immersion (through
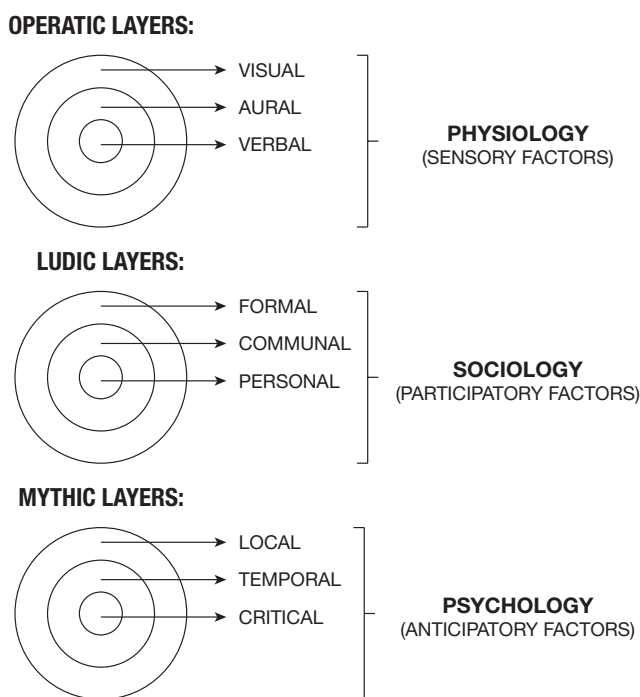
Figure 21: Applied prototype for sensory, participatory, and anticipatory immersion.
Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

the process of assimilation) are accessed *outside-in* while degrees of emersion (through the process of alienation) are accessed *inside-out*. In summary, I propose three kinds of rules that limits spaces for human interaction in the context of ludo-immersive opera:

- Sensory information concerns what surrounds us physically. Physical rules delimit visual, aural, and verbal attention.
- Participatory information concerns what involves us socially. Social rules delimit formal, communal, and personal attention.
- Anticipatory information concerns what reaches us psychically. Psychical rules delimit local, temporal, and critical attention.

DEGREES OF IMMERSION

As touched upon earlier, the immersive requires attention. I repeat my view that while emersion (alienation) is a releasing movement that goes from inside to outside, immersion (assimilation) is an enclosing movement going from outside to inside. The *degrees* of immersion proposed on the basis of this research project correspond to the three kinds of rules I have outlined and would thus be:

- **Basic degree:** Sensory attention *Be there!* (sharing place, free movement)
- **Moderate degree:** Participatory attention *Be together!* (sharing time, simultaneous movement)
- **Advanced degree:** Anticipatory attention *Be part of!* (sharing reason, turn-based movement)

RETHINKING CAILLOIS' TAXONOMY

I have taken Caillois' taxonomy of play and games (described in more detail in **Conceptual Framework** in **Chapter 1**) as a prototype for human interaction in a more general sense. Adjusting the taxonomy for ludo-immersive opera has required me to categorize Caillois' notions into games of perception (Apollonian games) and performance (Dionysian games), respectively. This has

produced two continua or scales for *distance* (relating to perception) and *appearance* (relating to performance) with three steps each, as seen in **Figure 22**.

APOLLONIAN CONTINUUM
(PERCEPTION)

| OBSERVATION | ORIENTATION | IDENTIFICATION |

OBJECTIVE DISTANCE (WIDE)　　　　**SUBJECTIVE DISTANCE (CLOSE)**

DIONYSIAN CONTINUUM
(PERFORMANCE)

| REPLICATION | REPRESENTATION | REVELATION |

QUANTITATIVE APPEARANCE (HABITUAL)　　**QUALITATIVE APPEARANCE (SPECIAL)**
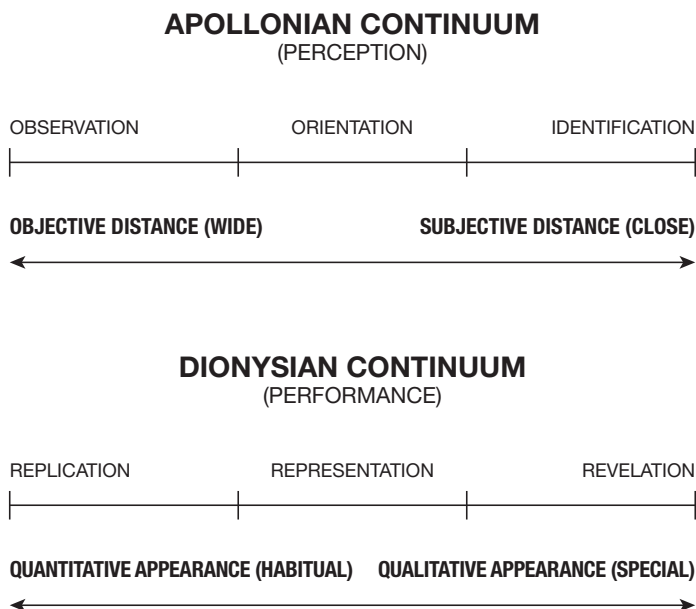
Figure 22: The Apollonian and the Dionysian continua. Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

REINTERPRETATIONS

When applying Caillois' notions of ludus and paidia onto the nested model and scale, I have made the following assumptions and associations based on Caillois' reasoning: 1) ludus is Apollonian firmness, and relates to ilinx and alea, and 2) paidia is Dionysian looseness, and relates to agôn and mimicry. Separated into two conceptual spaces, the styles and categories of play divides as follows in **Figure 23**.
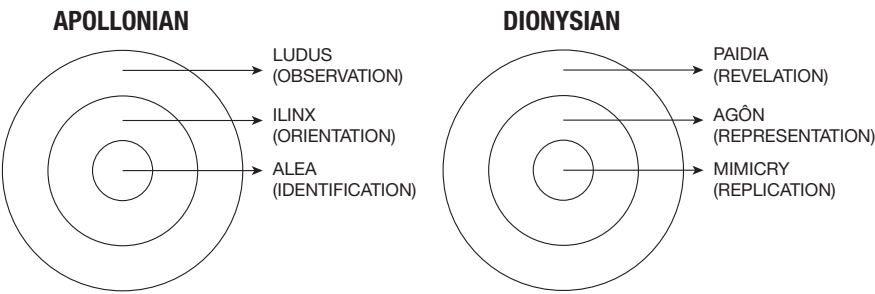
Figure 23: Styles and categories of play divided into the conceptual spaces of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

To explain my stepwise reinterpretation, Caillois' taxonomy has first been re-thought in general terms of Apollonian perception (light fields) and Dionysian performance (dark fields), as visualized in **Table 4**.

Caillois' term:	Caillois' definition:	Reinterpretation:
Ludus	Order	Observation
Agôn	Competition	Representation
Alea	Chance	Identification
Mimicry	Make-Belief	Replication
Ilinx	Vertigo	Orientation
Paidia	Turbulence	Revelation

Table 4: Reinterpretations of Caillois' taxonomy.

When it comes to perception (light fields), *observation* (ludus) requires a pe-ripheral position (think of arenas and theatres), *orientation* (ilinx) requires a goal-oriented position (think of parachuting and skiing), and *identification* (alea) requires a close-up position (think of slot machines and card games). When it comes to performance (dark fields), *replication* (mimicry) requires forerunners (think of role-models and archetypes), *representation* (agôn) re-quires supporters (think of coaches and claques), and *revelation* (paidia) re-quires provocateurs (think of whistle-blowers and dissidents). This division is in line with the continua in **Figure 22**.

SCOREBOARD

If the general reinterpretation can be translated into all three kinds of rules mentioned earlier (physical, social, and psychical rules), I suggest that a scoreboard could be constructed with three stratifications for operatic (sensory), ludic (participatory), and mythic (anticipatory) interaction. Besides sensory work and participatory play, mythic interaction is understood as the anticipation of action and consequences in a story. The three strata are tracked through introverted/extraverted movement into and out from the center of attention (see **Figure 24**). Here, I have interpreted the taxonomy further in a more artistic way with my own imperatives. The die sides associated with particular strata are further explained in the following paragraphs.

	Apollonian PERCEPTION			*Dionysian* PERFORMANCE		
GENERIC	INTROVERSION (max.)			EXTRAVERSION (max.)		
	EXTERNAL	**LIMINAL**	**INTERNAL**	**INTERNAL**	**LIMINAL**	**EXTERNAL**
	Ludus OBSERVATION	*Ilinx* ORIENTATION	*Alea* IDENTIFICATION	*Mimicry* REPLICATION	*Agón* REPRESENTATION	*Paidia* REVELATION
OPERATIC	PHYSICAL INTROVERSION (max.)			PHYSICAL EXTRAVERSION (max.)		
	VISUAL	**AURAL**	**VERBAL**	**VERBAL**	**AURAL**	**VISUAL**
	VIGILANCE *Look!*	SILENCE *Listen!*	EXPERIENCE *Learn!*	INTELLIGENCE *Think!*	UTTERANCE *Tell!*	EVIDENCE *Try!*
	I	V	III	IV	II	VI
LUDIC	SOCIAL INTROVERSION (max.)			SOCIAL EXTRAVERSION (max.)		
	FORMAL	**COMMUNAL**	**PERSONAL**	**PERSONAL**	**COMMUNAL**	**FORMAL**
	TOLERANCE *Bear!*	OBEDIENCE *Bind!*	ROMANCE *Brand!*	SEMBLANCE *Dip!*	GUIDANCE *Drag!*	DISSIDENCE *Drop!*
	⚀	⚄	⚂	⚃	⚁	⚅
MYTHIC	PSYCHICAL INTROVERSION (max.)			PSYCHICAL EXTRAVERSION (max.)		
	LOCAL	**TEMPORAL**	**CRITICAL**	**CRITICAL**	**TEMPORAL**	**LOCAL**
	PRESENCE *Screen!*	URGENCE *Stress!*	IMPORTANCE *Save!*	CONFIDENCE *Pick!*	PATIENCE *Piece!*	ABSENCE *Pass!*
	1	5	3	4	2	6

Figure 24: Scoreboard for three interactive layers. Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

DICE AND DIAGRAMS

In **Conceptual Framework** in **Chapter 1**, I highlighted how the classical aesthetic principles of the Apollonian and the Dionysian are recurring figures in discussions of *opera* (Gefors, 2011; Hutcheon & Hutcheon, 2000; Nietzsche, 1967), *game-playing* (Caillois, 2001b), and *immersion* (Machon, 2013). Not only does the Apollonian/Dionysian dichotomy provide the basis for a common grid for all three concepts involved in ludo-immersive opera, but my idea is also that they enable us to study *visitorship* in a new, more detailed, finely-calibrated and nuanced way. As mentioned before, the Apollonian is here used as symbol of perception and the Dionysian as a symbol of performance.

Dice are devices that provides clear answers from unclear processes. A ball can be thrown just as randomly and surprisingly, but the special feature of a die is that it stops in a precise and unambiguous position. I use the features of a conventional cubical die with six sides (D6) in order to enhance a not only spatialized, but also mappable view of the diagrams I present. Opposite sides of such a die are always located so that they sum up to the number seven; with the extremal numbers 1 and 6 coupled, the medial numbers 2 and 5 coupled, and the proximal numbers 3 and 4 coupled. In these diagrams, each Apollonian side of the polyhedron has a Dionysian opposite. The die sides function both as a menu of choices and as a device for chance-based play. When used as randomizers, dice can be rolled to direct the player's actions. Or, the numerals may function as experience points (XP).

So far, we can imagine the opposing aesthetic principles in a very basic form, with double triangles pointing to one vanishing point, as visualized in **Figure 25**:
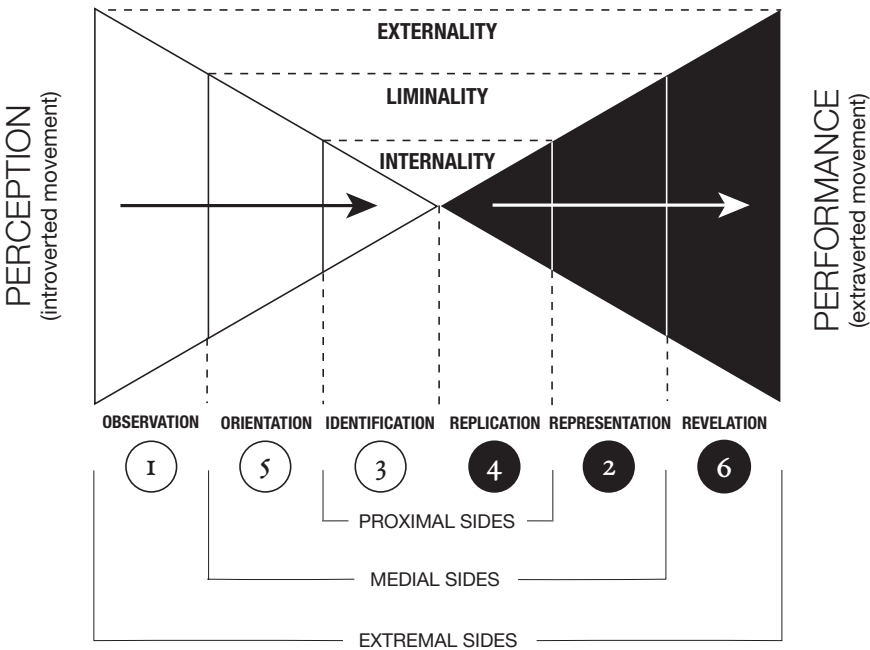
Figure 25: Refiguration of the circular layers into linear perspective.
Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

SCALE

The Apollonian-Dionysian tension-field can be then *bent*, *broken*, and *blended* in a labyrinthine way (which corresponds to the three ways to creativity in Brandt & Eagleman, 2017) (see **Figure 26**). From corner to corner through the labyrinth, a diagonal scale[52] appears from passive to active mode, from minimum courage and engagement to maximum courage and engagement. I suggest that going into the middle of the maze is immersive and going out from it is emersive.

GAME-BOARD

Finally, I pair and flip each numerical space into a double-sided triangular pattern of opposites, with all three strata as seen in the scoreboard above.

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[52] Machon (2013) also suggests a scale of immersivity, but with other rubrics.
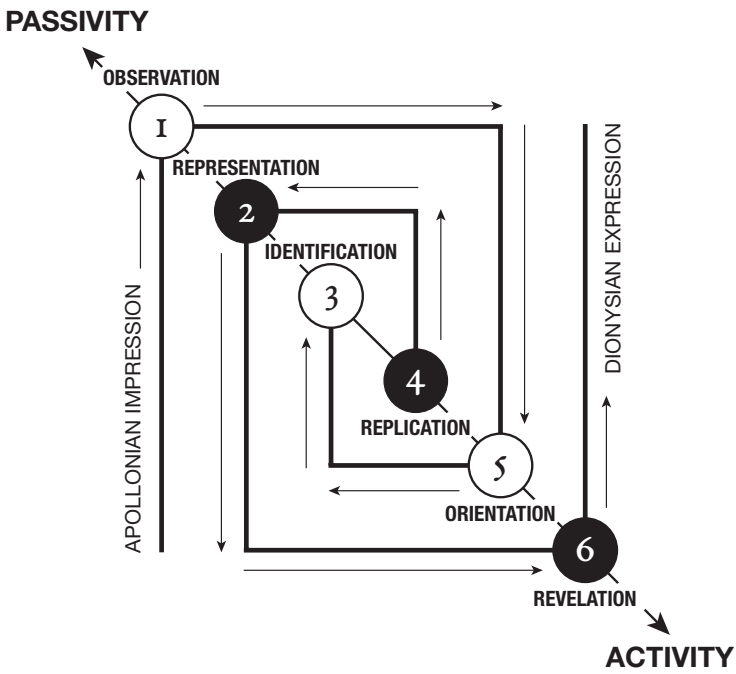
Figure 26: The Apollonian-Dionysian scale-labyrinth. Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

Based on this structure, a game-board for ludo-immersive opera has one side dominated by Apollonian perception (the Arcadian side) and the other side dominated by Dionysian performance (the Chthonian side), as seen in **Figure 27**. Each Apollonian field on the triangle has a Dionysian reverse. This game-board functions as a prototype for meta-actions that illustrates the possible combinations for human multitasking that I have mapped throughout this research project, but which still need to be play-tested further. The imperatives are, as mentioned above, my own artistic associations.

GAMES

Based on the game-board in **Figure 27**, different "games" can be played to carry out multitasking. You need three dice – one with Roman numerals (operatic
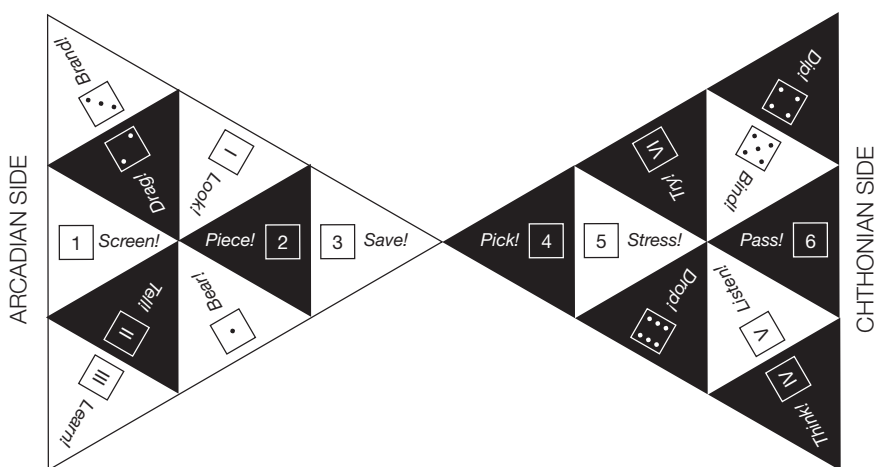
Figure 27: The system as game-board. Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

die), one with pips (ludic die), and one with Arabic numerals (mythic die). The dice can be used for character making as well as for dramaturgy.

- **Count points:** Let the player move by choice. Count the points afterwards according to the die-sides that corresponds to the player's moves. If the goal is to be passive, the lowest number of points wins. If the goal is the be active, the highest number of points wins.
- **Compose movement:** Make a design that includes both physical, social, and psychical movement by using the die numbers as notation symbols in a composition in order to combine sensory as well as participatory and anticipatory actions.
- **Cast dice:** Roll the dice (the one with Roman numerals symbolizing physical action, the one with pips symbolizing social action, and the one with Arabic numerals symbolizing psychical action according to the scoreboard and the gameboard) and let them direct movement with the scoreboard functioning as randomization table.

Please note that the game-board and the suggested games sketched up here are a *result* of the study. They have not been tested within the study. To use and apply the system for randomization and notation is a matter for further investigation.

Chapter 5:

REVIEW

INTERACTION AND IMMERSION

In this review of the operas within the study, I track different kinds of immersion in the operas in retrospect, based on my system model in **Chapter 4**. My basic conjectures about interaction and immersion are as follows:

To be immersed is to blend with and to be surrounded and embraced by something in particular that requires attention and blocks out other information. Interaction is thus a proof of attention and can be viewed as a token of immersion. Immersion is the opposite of emersion and an immersed person is integrated into physical, social, and/or psychical spaces where change and movement can happen. Operatic immersion is physical and can result in sensory interaction. Ludic immersion is social and can result in participatory interaction. Mythic immersion is psychical and can result in anticipatory interaction.

Interaction in this case is understood as an intentional exchange between responsive individuals or reactive entities who are capable of perception as well as performance. Interaction requires space, and our possibilities for interaction is limited by physical, social, and psychical rules. Operatic interaction is physical. Ludic interaction is social. Mythic interaction is psychical.

Based on these postulations, immersion can work on three levels, as mapped up in **Figure 28**:

- **Sensory immersion** is created from physical information that can be visual, aural, and/or verbal, blocking out and replacing other physical stimuli.
- **Participatory immersion** is created from social information that can be formal, communal, and/or personal, blocking out and replacing other social information.
- **Anticipatory immersion** is created from psychical information that can be local, temporal, and/or critical, blocking out and replacing other psychical stimuli.
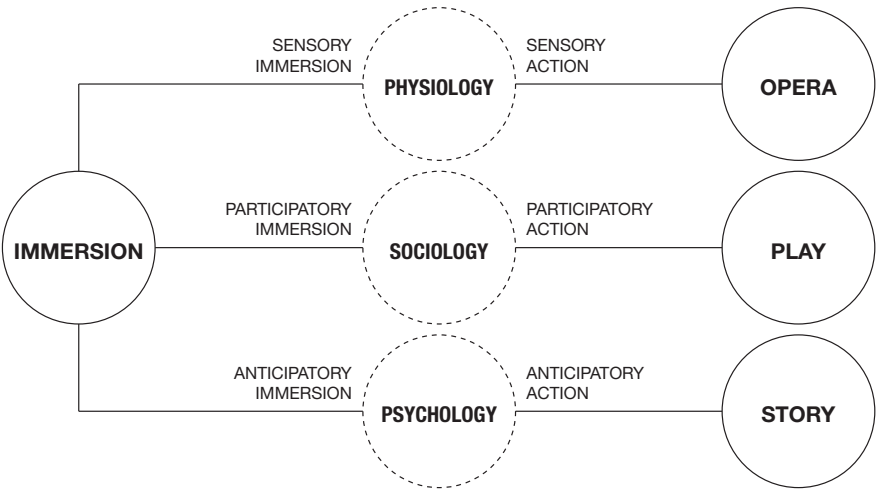
Figure 28: The three levels of immersion in relation to action. Illustration by Hedvig Jalhed.

The question however is not only about to what extent *visitors* in the operas within the study were put in a state of immersion by artists and each other, but also about to what extent *artists* themselves were likewise immersed through their interactions with each other and the visitors. How did we deal with visitors in fictional contexts? While in the operas no visitor acted explicitly against the fictional logic, some visitors were more engaged than others in upholding and adding to the fiction. The visitors who were engaged in anticipatory action that altered the course of events in a decisive way probably got our attention more than others, and we were more responsive towards them.

While it is harder to empirically prove that immersion has occurred, efforts to keep up immersive circumstances can be detected; such as for example, efforts to block out and replace the current situation with fictive and artistic information. Furthermore, immersion can be regarded as effective when the immersant gets the immersee's attention. And immersion, I withhold, is about dissolving the boundaries between individual and environment, in order to return to a more stable sense of self after the immersive event (see **Features**

of the Genre in **Chapter 1**). Immersion becomes evident in the individuals' ability to succumb to the milieu, and to take part in the ongoing scenario physically (sensing on their own), socially (participating on their own), and psychically (anticipating on their own).

In sum, I propose that there are different clues revealed by participants' actions to track immersion:

- **Attention-giving parties:** if one gives something their attention, that is at least a first step towards immersion
- **Interacting parties:** if one interacts with something they acknowledge it and prioritize it
- **Patching parties:** if one fills information gaps in the presented story, they reveal and strengthen their immersion
- **Emersing parties:** one cannot come out of something if they have not gone into it first – so such emergence indicates that immersion preceded such an exit

An environment or a game can be considered immersive if it controls input so that everyday life is blocked out and replaced by alternate and artificial stimuli – stimuli produced for stimuli's sake. A player can be considered engaged in immersion, if they are taking part in the game and adding to the environment. By accepting and coping with alternate prerequisites they thereby become oblivious to everyday life, and real underlying relationships are momentarily suppressed. To make live immersion work, I would say, takes two to tango: both the staging artists and the playing visitors, the immersants and the immersees. We can choose to become immersed. While physical immersion can be done through external means, psychical immersion is more a matter of actively immersing oneself. Social immersion is a combination of the two.

SENSORY IMMERSION

Examples of sensory immersion, by which the individual is surrounded by something else, could be found in all four operas within the project. All took place in more or less closed environments with fabricated décor and controlled lighting. Ambient music and sound blocked out any disturbing noises from

outside the room or building. Verbal information completed the fantasy settings. Sensory crossfading between reality and fantasy was employed in *The Architect* and *Chronos' Bank of Memories*. In these two operas, information leaked out into the public environment, and led visitors to the venue in which the opera was played, so that gradually more and more fictional content surrounded the immersed individual step by step. Moreover, in these two operas, the visitors' attention was directed from large scale objects at first, to miniatures requiring closer and closer proximity: for example, a miniature landscape with secret symbolic information in *The Architect,* and the forms with details to fill in in *Chronos' Bank of Memories*). In *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black*, there was no space for visual or aural visitor interaction, but lots of space to complete the arcane verbal information with its own fantasy content. Sensory immersion was also effective in *Reich of Rán*, with a minimal space for interaction surrounded by both visual and aural input in line with the ongoing story. In this opera verbal interaction was more formalized, with visitor replies collected during musical fermatas in the performance. Also, *Reich of Rán* provides the only example within the study of an operatically interacting visitor, someone singing in action.

PARTICIPATORY IMMERSION

Examples of participatory immersion, by which the individual is constrained by fictive alternative social rules and relations could be found in all four operas, to some extent. In *The Architect*, the visitors played along in the mock trial. In *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black*, they accepted the role of playing captives. In *Reich of Rán*, all took on the task given by the character Doris Leise in the introductory scene, and behaved cordially as fishermen trying to please the goddess of the sea. In *Chronos' Bank of Memories*, all visitors acted as if they were in a pawn shop, waiting their turn and minding their own business. In *In the Darkness* and *Reich of Rán*, real-life social relations among visitors were suppressed so that the visitors would feel freer to engage with the story and employ their imagination, without worrying about their companions.

ANTICIPATORY IMMERSION

Examples of anticipatory immersion, by which individuals suspect certain consequential events and may direct themselves in actions which can change the expected outcome, could primarily be found in *The Architect*. In this opera, several visitors created alter-egos dealing with predicaments at hand and engaged in the story as such. In *Reich of Rán* and *Chronos' Bank of Memories*, no invention of alter-egos and made-up stories in the conversations with Rán or the pawned memories was detected. Except for *In the Architect*, where the visitors were supplied with character sheets, costumes, and props, all took part in the story as themselves in the interactive operas. And it is from *The Architect,* with visitors acting as fictional characters, that the most intense reports of visitor engagement with the storyline itself – the myth-making – can be found. Anticipation of what is seemingly about to happen makes us reflect about what we want to happen and what can be avoided. Anticipatory action in *The Architect* came from visitors who were not happy with the current state of affairs in the story and intervened as fictional characters in order to change things; the operatic composition allowed for this. The connection between fantasy characters and such efforts by visitors is supported by theories from the field of game design and psychology (see for instance comments on the self-distancing Batman effect in **Conceptual Framework** in **Chapter 1**). These observations points to the fact that a strong and liberating sense of immersion can be found in fantasy role-playing with fictional characters or personae within a story. *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* engaged many visitors in subjective fantasies in which they found themselves in alternate situations different from the actual one. Even though they perhaps did not imagine themselves as being someone else, or as some other kind of creature, they imagined locations and time sequences in active ways. In this opera, however, there was no emphasis placed on asking the visitors to interact, making the fantasy more about thinking and dreaming than making choices with consequences.

COMMENTS ON THE ANALYTIC FINDINGS

Immersion was found in all four operas within this research project, however, to different degrees. Breaking down interaction in terms of immersive factors has made it clear to me that 1) immersion can be of different types (sensory, participatory, anticipatory), and that 2) in order to achieve immersive events, artists can use knowledge about how these different kinds of immersion can be combined to consciously construct immersive events in effective ways. The system I present in **Chapter 4** as an outcome of the study provides artists with a grid for such analytic deliberation.

The effect of sensory immersion probably depend on the immersing party's ability to provide a setting with enough blocking and replacing stimuli to shut out disturbances that might require attention. Participatory immersion is furthermore more easily achieved when real-world relations between individuals are set aside, and proposed fictional relationships do not compete with existing real-world ones. Anticipatory immersion, on the other hand, relies on individuals' capacity to immerse themselves psychologically in prioritized ongoing events and feel that they can make a difference in the story.

This last kind of immersion, relating to an individual's impact on the story-line, could in several cases be connected to the creation of fictive alter-egos that have the potential to become "heroes." The presentation of a story which can be altered through heroic interference is applicable in both opera and game-playing. Aesthetics, understood as our bias towards certain kinds of information, also plays a role in such a story, in that the hero of the myth is able to turn things around to avoid certain developments in the story and favor others. The aesthetic outcome is thereby a reward in itself, no matter whether awareness of the heroic deed remains private or become public. For example, it could be unclear to many of the visitors in a group why things happened in the story the way they did, while, unknown to them, artists were reacting actively to individuals' actions. Opportunities for affecting the unfolding of the plot in different directions may appear for individual visitors while remaining hidden for the majority of visitors. The intricacy of chance and choice is also what makes unpredictable story developments exciting for both artists and visitors – no pathway is exactly like another when a ludo-immersive opera is performed live. Even though alternatives can be standardized, visitors cannot.

To be attentive to the visitors is an additional task for us traditionally trained artists, who are accustomed to actively ignore any disturbances from the auditorium. But, in this kind of performance, our attention toward the stranger is probably the most important task at hand, in order to facilitate and frame the event as immersive.

Chapter 6:

DISCUSSION

FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

Setting out to discuss the results of my study, I start with a recapitulation of the three themes that I have found to be at the core of my study: 1) ludic participation in opera, 2) operatic prerequisites for immersion, and 3) expansion of opera artists' skills and forms of presentation. Through my research-led explorations in ludo-immersive opera, I have detected

- that distinguishing physical stimuli from social stimuli and psychical stimuli unlocks possibilities for artists to stage and respond to sensory, participatory, and anticipatory interaction in a fine-calibrated and multi-modal way,
- operatic adventures can immerse participants on three sensory levels (verbally, aurally, visually), and three participatory levels (personally, communally, formally), as well as three anticipatory levels (locally, temporally, and critically), and
- that in ludic opera, artists need to be both immersed and self-reliant in their meetings with visitors. Preparing for such performance situations calls for different work than that they would do with a classical opera director. Instead, for example, engaging in ludic play with experienced game masters, they may develop confidence in acting as hosting group members, and also acquire other skills of value in working with ludo-immersive opera in general.

I have worked with the idea that there is a connection between interactivity and immersion; the more interactive possibilities in a situation, the more immersive potential there is. Some degree of immersion was evident among the participants in all four operas of the study, but there were also examples of lack of immersion. Complex immersion on the three levels I have mapped could possibly both hinder and reinforce each other. Thinking about multiple and composed immersion opens up new artistic possibilities, but also requires further investigation – as "new light on things not only solves problems, but […] creates many more" (Popper, 1963, p. 171). Artistic works and events intended and claimed to be immersive must be generated and constructed with awareness of the complex compositions of physical, social, and psychical stimuli in relation to both the individual's personal limits and group dynamics.

RETURNING TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The three themes frame how I reconnect to the research questions. The practice-led study has generated both empirical data through the opera productions (see **Chapter 3**) and creative output in terms of the system model (see **Chapter 4**) for future trials of ludo-immersive opera's potentiality. The research cycles in combination with the application of game design to operatic development have resulted in both concrete findings and ideas for further investigations, artistic endeavours, and future research. Below, I respond to the three research questions.

FIRST RESEARCH QUESTION

How can new opera works be conceptualized to enhance ludic participation?

In this artistic study, I have been particularly interested in ludic features and the possibilities for ludic immersion. In order to enhance ludic participation in opera, we experimented with a number of conceptual ideas and stimuli, and I found some of them working well to make visitors engage in the events. In order to enhance ludic participation, an operatic work has to include opportunities for the participants to relate to the fictional setting and the characters through actions. If the visitors are to be regarded as the players in a game represented by the artists, it is the visitors who set the artists in motion.

Fictional relationships were described by several participants. The qualitative nature of the inquiry and its limited reach did however not allow for any statistical analysis of how demographics and earlier experiences influenced visitor behaviour and reflection. Those visitors who interacted hands-on in the operas were not convinced by any particular stimuli. However, some of those who did *not* interact reported how they restrained from this due to peer pressure in relation to the strangers among them. Moreover, social nonconformity (related to the ludic) was harder to spark in larger groups of strangers – like in the case with *The Architect*. This is perhaps nothing strange, but gives some interesting clues to how conformity is connected to the formality of public rather than private events. At least, it can be argued, the less acquainted we are with each other, the more formalized rules are sought for. Common rules make it

possible for strangers to interact. Also group size could be a crucial factor for successful ludic events, which is supported by the positive effect on visitor play we saw when other visitors were excluded in *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black*, *Reich of Rán*, and *Chronos' Bank of Memories*.

Ludic participation proposedly depends on how participants can organize and relate to each other, as well as their previous knowledge of each other. Prior knowledge is also a prerequisite for knowing when someone is faking and pretending in make-believe play – without knowing a person's history or serious default mode, we cannot tell when play start and ends. How visitors as a group of strangers interact with each other must be taken into account when discussing the results of the inquiry. While artists adjust to each other during a longer process of rehearsals, visitors adjust to each other on spot. This adjustment between visitors became evident in the reports from *The Architect*.

Also in spectacles with standardized venues and rituals, visitors who are unacquainted with each other certainly adjust to the social situation at hand. However, often when it comes to opera, outdated and unfashionable themes or the synthetic and stylized performance are more usually discussed than visitor attitudes. Often, the art rather than the social ritual is requested to be more contemporary. I suggest that any problems with addressing new audiences in traditional opera do not necessarily depend on any cognitive challenge coming with the art form (such as problems understanding the text or habituation to the stylized posing of opera singers). Thereby, *participatory* conceptualization is probably what we must discuss in order to broaden the formats of presentation, both in regular opera and ludo-immersive opera – social issues require social solutions. I withhold that the first distinction of sensory contra participatory factors is a fundamental prerequisite for stimulating enhanced ludic participation in opera. I also return to the issue highlighted by Bourdieu's note on audience participation in **Chapter 1**: highbrow cultural events are recognized by a still and domesticated audience. When encouraging moving visitors, we turn the operatic event socially into something else. Here it is of course important to keep in mind that the disciplined opera attendants we are used to nowadays is a rather late phenomenon and perhaps a historical exception. And it is not only up to us artists to allow for moving visitors, but also for visitors to accept and enjoy the different dynamics in this kind of event.

When new opera works are conceptualized to enhance ludic participation, the issue of space and movement becomes an issue for both the librettist installing gaps in the story, the musical composer installing gaps in the sound, and the set designer installing gaps in the site – we need dedicated room for the visitors to move in order to get some action. Letting the visitors into these spaces integrates them into the fictive material – instead of being kept at safe distance and alienated, they become immersed denizens. The Apollonization of separating and articulating elements that have caused several more or less pseudo-operatic trends of the 19th century is of course a historical reality, but the more Dionysian idea of opera as synthetic total work can still be reclaimed and reapplied in creative and progressive ways. The dialectic figure of Apollo/Dionysos has proved a valuable tool in the making of my system model and this shows how classical themes and philosophies in opera-making still can be meaningful and useful for contemporary artists and designers.

To enhance ludic participation which includes visitors in operatic works, artists must be properly trained to perceive and not only perform. In contrast to other performance practices (such as musical performance and theatrical performance) that trains artists for various kinds of events and contexts, operatic training today is still primarily aimed at formal institutions. The modern opera house is based on the 19th century standardisation of separation in the Wagnerian tradition and alienation in the Brechtian tradition. Artists are more or less shielded from disturbance and intermeddling – but this purified state calls for critical questioning and new options. Methods and études for ludo-immersive training of opera artists have yet to be worked out, and that is an issue for further investigation and artistic-pedagogical development. I suggest that the development of concrete methods for modular memorization as well as visitor confrontation and ludic organization of chamber sized artists group are issues to explore in the future.

SECOND RESEARCH QUESTION

How can operatic immersion include both game-staging artists and game-playing visitors?

My vantage point is that operatic art is synthetic and must be defined as the effect of multi-modal poetical, musical, and theatrical projection channelled

through the human body. In opera, immersion is triggered visually, aurally, and verbally. In order to operatically immerse both game-staging artists and game-playing visitors, this study indicates that immersion through shared stimuli requires both groups to be active as both perceivers and performers – since immersion is not only a matter of *reception*, but reciprocal *deception*. Logically, the risk of contra-fictional behaviour is greater in groups in which the members have prior knowledge of each other and the risk of reserved conformity is greater in groups in which the members lack prior knowledge of each other. It is hard to forget what we know about each other and our common past, and it is risky to reveal yourself to others if there is no preestablished trust. In order to immerse both categories of participants (artists and visitors) sensorily, there must be opportunities for integration verbally, aurally, and visually so that they can be integrated into story, sound, and site. This includes preparations that help the visitors tune into the fiction and thereby possibly turn into fictional characters. As it now was, few visitors introduced and presented themselves as fictional characters (alter-egos), which otherwise could be seen as the ultimate step of conscious dissociation from one's private habits and association to the fictional setting by ways of changing the mind, the voice, and the body in order to dissociate aesthetically from the default mode of being.

My contribution to the research field of immersion is a tentative multi-modal model of how immersion could be tested further for both operatic and ludic purposes. It was however not examined how immersion corresponded to precise stimuli or how the composition of multi-disciplinary communication generated immersive states. Therefore, I propose that both specific kinds of immersion as well as combinations of different degrees of immersion should be subject for more investigations. Furthermore, emotional responses to stimuli were not studied within the scope of the project and could be part of future studies. Furthermore, for many visitors, the ludo-immersive opera appeared to be an ambiguous event, as there was confusion about what formal "rules" applied: Was it a game or was it a spectacle? The hybridization of opera and game is not unproblematic, but the confusion can also be proof of the novelty of the idea. That the concept seem unclear to many is perhaps just what to expect when categories clash.

Arguably, operatic immersion can be applied through compositional awareness which requires that librettist, musical composer, and set designer (if the case is that they are different persons) work to produce immersive prerequi-

sites collaboratively. They could also be coordinated by a fourth editing and coordinating party, designing prerequisites and rules for the contributors of all the three sub-works. This model would not be far from the organization of contemporary game productions. Instead of starting with the story, a ludo-immersive opera could preferably start with a world-building catalogue of characters, maps, and so on. My proposed system also offers possibilities for notated role-play, which could be developed as an extension of the opera singer's creative addition to the presentation.

The answer to this research question is in the end a hypothesis that can be investigated further based on the system model that I have presented: Immersion can happen on several levels and must be broken down in order to be used as a fine-calibrated tool. My suggestion is that intentionally triggered immersion should be studied interdisciplinarily and involve operatic research as well as game design, ludology, social psychology, and neuroscience. To regard immersion as assimilation and thereby as the opposite of alienation provokes some questions: If alienation hinders immersion, how can we work consciously to avoid alienation? Should immersion be regarded as a self-directed *skill* to merge oneself with the artistic work at hand? Would it then not be more appropriate to speak of actively immersing than passively immersed participants?

THIRD RESEARCH QUESTION

What can this proposed ludo-immersive opera lead people to do and how might it affect my future artistic practice?

Ludo-immersive opera leads people to react in different ways, both positively and negatively. Ludo-immersive opera can for example make visitors

- try to blend in or stand out and thus disrupt the group-dynamics in a group of visitors (both results were evident in *The Architect*),
- decide on goals and try to reach them, and thus actively engaging in the process of immersion (examples of this was found in both *The Architect* and *Reich of Rán*),
- fill in gaps in the story, and enrich the fantasy with imaginative information and thus become co-creative partners (which became clear in *In the*

Darkness, Everything Went All Black),
- explore and assemble information themselves (as was the case with the multi-media puzzle of *Chronos' Bank of Memories*).

It can also make artists more open, responsive, flexible, and aware as facilitators, catering to guests in fictional situations, such as in the working examples of forked paths that were triggered by visitors. As manifested in the operas within this study, opera artists in ludo-immersive chamber opera can address and respond to visitors and their actions without receiving explicit instructions from a director or conductor. The modular scores demand extended memorization, but demand less of performers' improvisational skills – which may be either positive or negative depending on their preferences and abilities. Artists are also able to take their own initiatives – if the work itself provides space for that. This change in latitude comes with a new "social contract" quite different from that in place in institutional and large-scale opera, where artists and facilitators are separate persons with separate tasks.

The future refinement of the staging of *Chronos' Bank of Memories* requires that I (or someone else) take on the role of game master, and that is one way my own artistry has been changed through this study. Next time I take part in the creation of a new operatic work with ludo-immersive ambitions, in the system model I have sketched I propose that a game-master's manual must be drawn up, to complete and super-compose the modular menu of the libretto, the score, and the set design in a more detailed and explicit way than has been the case so far.

To go against the Apollonian tendency of more and more distancing in the field of opera was one of my motivations for this project; I would like to join artists and visitors by inviting our guests into the fiction on stage. Through ludo-immersive opera, artists and visitors can be joined into one group of participants, interacting in fiction. This social mixing does not confuse artists and visitors in a nebulous Dionysian manner, but connects the actions of the participants so that the impact of all can be perceived and appreciated. The attempt at an exchange of roles between artists and audience that Schechner has called for (see **Research Context, Driving Forces and Aims** in **Chapter 1**) has in this case resulted in a broadening of the artists' opportunities to perceive and a broadening of the visitors' opportunities to perform. Moreover, the shift from strictly separated perceiver and performer roles to being discoverers

and disclosers makes the experience more about searching and sharing rather than of giving and taking. Information is, as we know, the only thing that can be both here and there at the same time without anything being lost. Discoverers have to concretely affect the disclosers in order to perceive, which is very different from the traditional audience role.

With the operas in this study, it has been shown that opera can still be renewed without necessarily turning to Apollonian splitting. On the contrary, blending has been used as an artistic strategy for innovation. That gives me the courage to continue as a contrarian in relation to both the present and recent history – ludo-immersive opera is far from domesticated and institutionalized yet. However, I do believe that the knowledge gained through this research project can advance theoretical understanding of the practice.

CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

My doctoral project presents theories derived from the application of artistic practice in a research context. That is, it should be regarded as research *through* the art form opera. Treating art as both a challenge and an experiment for exploring our own capacities and limitations in a practice-led way, turns art works into exercises in human performance and perception. To me, each opera I have ever attended as either artist or visitor presents a thrilling test of my human abilities – and there is no point in making it easy in any way. In times that seem to be demanding that art becomes more and more comfortable and consumer oriented, it may seem odd to be engaged in expanding and redefining the endeavour of opera, but I do believe that is what will make opera more meaningful and engaging.

The combination of opera and game design has resulted in an exploration of the concept of immersion that is applicable to what I call ludo-immersive opera – that is, opera with the potential to trigger ludic immersion. Immersion in general can be described as an intense state of being surrounded and inside something, oblivious to other concerns through attention-craving stimuli. I hold that immersive stimuli can be physical (stimulating us anatomically), social (stimulating us relationally), and psychical (stimulating us intellectually). Being precise about this opens up new possibilities of artistic effectiveness.

Interaction is certainly a factor connected to immersion, but it is not the only way to get immersed. However, throughout this study, my particular interest in ludic interaction has guided the conceptualization of the four chamber operas that I have followed as a researcher. Three of these operas have included opportunities for visitors to dynamically interact within the setting, within the group, and/or within the story. The fourth did not include such opportunities, but effectively isolated the visitors and presented a mystery in which the visitors were free to imagine the setting, the characters, and the situation. Together with spatialized sound, this challenge proved to be immersive enough for many visitors who engaged in the concept. The perhaps most immersive experiences were however reported from the operas in which visitors discovered that they could change the story-line decisively. Immersion was disturbed when not all visitors played along and social interactions between strangers distracted visitors from focusing on the fictional activity. There was a tendency for visitor action to halt during vocal and verbal passages, while instrumental and ambient music had a more positive effect on spontaneous visitor movement. Insights gained about this dynamic has led to the development, in the two last operas studied in the research project, of more turn-based scores, providing gaps designed to encourage interaction and conversation between visitors and artists. In future operas I hope to be able to make space for more options, variation and uncertainty.

Conceptualization of new opera works can potentially enhance ludic participation by social means. Integration of visitor participants can be achieved operatically if all underlying works (libretto, score, and set design) in an opera are composed in a way that provides space for interaction. Ludic participation requires that the visitors are integrated among the hosting artists and put in relation to those who are within the fictional framework of the event. Therefore, there must be space for visitors to role-play characters in connection with the artists' non-player characters. Working examples of these relationships may be found in the interactive operas within the research project. Furthermore, visitors who choose to create a personal character reported this activity as an incitement to change the ongoing story-line.

The primary inspiration for this operatic experiment has been live-action role-playing. However, ludo-immersive opera is a hybrid art form and the scripted basis for the operatic adventures that we have presented also connect our practice to pen-and-paper role-playing. Ideas for upcoming operas and fu-

ture research include table-top operas as well as free-form operas, co-op and competitive play, and operatic interaction run by dice and cards. The system model that has been mapped up in order to lay out the theoretical intricacies of ludo-immersive opera is a preliminary attempt to show how an already complex art form such as opera may become even more challenging when paired with ludic play. I return to the proposition that opera provides humans with challenges, and that these challenges are specifically human-centred in that they combine multitasking, technology, and fiction. By expanding on this further, we can not only appreciate and understand the human condition, but also nurture a fascination with it. In my view as an opera artist, humanism is still highly relevant and opera is about learning to make the most of being human.

In order to meet visitors in fiction, we artists must be trained not only as performers, but also as perceivers, addressing and responding to the guests they are creating the event for. This kind of synthesis of artists and visitors goes against recent tendencies in Western operatic art to separate and stifle operatic elements in an Apollonian manner. Therefore, ludo-immersive opera's creative-critical historical perspective should be highlighted. When inviting visitors onto the stage instead of keeping the distance, there may be clutter and confusion, but there may also be moments of contact catalysing the event.

The experiences from ludo-immersive opera recounted here called for close and coordinated collaboration between the authors of the operatic works that are comparable with the work of teams working in game productions, where members enforce the same sort of world-building through sensory stimuli. Finally, I propose an operatic game-master's manual be required in future operas of this kind, replacing and discarding the traditional role of a director in favour of supporting chamber operatic play between self-reliant individuals; such a manual would frame and catalogue the optional situations that artists and visitors have available to them. In ludo-immersive opera, I propose that the traditional director should be replaced by game-testing game-masters. These game-masters could also have a particular facilitating function for the visitors.

I contend that opera must not be defined by – and reduced to – the conventional social ritual accompanying and framing it in the opera house. We also need to be open to actively inducing multitasking, since it may not only have – as has often been presumed – *negative* cognitive effects, but also *positive* ones in relation to art and immersion. The system model that I have mapped out as

one of the outcomes of this study serves as a starting point for future inquiries, art-making and operatic play. After finishing this exploration, I am convinced that the multi-disciplinary and human-centred unicity of operatic research (research-through-the-art-form-opera) can provide us with discoveries that cannot be made by other means.

Summary in Swedish

Vad händer om vi förhåller oss till opera som om det vore ett spel? I detta doktorandprojekt i scenisk gestaltning har jag undersökt hur besökare kan inlemmas i en både konstnärlig och ludisk variant av kammaropera, som jag har kommit att kalla *ludo-immersiv opera* (på sina håll förkortat med akronymen LIMMO). Adjektivet ludisk (på engelska: ludic) kan betyda lekfull eller spelmässig. Med inspiration från levande rollspel (lajv) och genom att utgå från speldesign i framtagandet av nya operor har fyra immersiva kammaroperor tagits fram. Att något är immersivt innebär i korthet att det är omslutande och öppet för inblandning. I denna typ av opera har operabesökare interagerat både med professionella artister och med varandra inom ramen för den fiktiva, musikdrivna handlingen. Forskningsstudien har resulterat i en systemisering av immersiva aspekter i ludo-immersiv opera och en modell för fortsatt utforskande av formatets potential.

TEMAN OCH FORSKNINGSFRÅGOR

Genom projektet löper tre teman: 1) ludiskt deltagande i opera, 2) operakonstens förutsättningar för immersion och 3) vidgningen av operaartisternas färdigheter och presentationsformer. Utöver detta har tre forskningsfrågor ramat in studien:

1. Hur kan nya operaverk konceptualiseras för att ökat ludiskt deltagande ska uppnås?

2. Hur kan immersiv opera inkludera både inscenerande artister och spelande besökare?

3. Vad kan så kallad ludo-immersiv opera få människor att göra och hur påverkar det min framtida konstnärliga praktik?

REDOVISNINGSFORMAT

Det konstnärliga forskningsprojektet redovisas i text (denna bok) och genom en digital multimediaexposition. Den senare finns tillgänglig online på Research Catalogue – den digitala publiceringsplattformen för konstnärlig forskning som tillhandahålls av Society for Artistic Research. Material från operorna som ligger till grund för studien finns att tillgå via expositionen.

KAPITELINNEHÅLL

Avhandlingen är uppdelad i sex kapitel:

I *Kapitel 1: Introduktion* redogörs för min min konstnärliga bakgrund och forskningskontext, genrens utmärkande drag och det konceptuella ramverk som utgör den teoretiska grunden för idén om ludo-immersiv opera. Det konceptuella ramverket behandlar systemism, opera, spel och lek, immersion, samt estetik.

I *Kapitel 2: Metoder* redovisas projektets metodologiska förutsättningar och utgångspunkter. Dessa kretsar främst kring det som kallas "diagonal vetenskap" och "kritisk fantasi", grundat i kritisk rationalism. Vidare redogörs här för den iterativa forskningsprocessen, inhämtningen av forskningsmaterial, metoder för dokumentation, samt etiska aspekter.

I *Kapitel 3: Operor* presenteras de fyra operorna i studien med bild och text. Varje opera utgör en iteration i forskningsprojektet och en överblick av varje produktion kombineras med reflektioner som inhämtats från artister och besökare.

I *Kapitel 4: System* föreslås en stratifiering av immersiva aspekter utifrån teorierna i det konceptuella ramverket och de konstnärliga resultat och erfarenheter som studien givit upphov till. Här visas också hur olika typer av varseblivning (perception) och utförande (performance) i ludo-immersiv opera kan systematiseras, visualiseras och spatialiseras i en modell för både komposition och aleatoriskt spelande. Modellen föreslås ligga till grund för vidare forskning och utveckling av formatet.

I *Kapitel 5: Återblick* återvänder jag till operorna för att analysera huruvida de grader av immersion som föreslås i min systemiska modell återfinns i dem. Jag argumenterar även för hur interaktion kan påvisa immersion ifall handlingsutrymme finns.

I *Kapitel 6: Diskussion* återknyter jag till de teman och forskningsfrågor som ställts upp och diskuterar hur studien givit mig ett mer nyanserat sätt att se på immersion och hur i synnerhet ludisk immersion i opera belyser olika problem och möjligheter i mötet med publik. Jag framhåller hur ludo-immersiv opera kräver ett delvis annat förhållningssätt och utökade färdigheter från scenartister jämfört med traditionell opera och hur formen även kan behöva en arbetsprocess som ligger mer i linje med rollspel och spelutveckling i allmänhet.

FORSKARENS ROLL OCH METODVAL

Forskningsprojektet har följt nyoperakompaniet Operation Operas musik-dramatiska produktioner 2016–2020. Projektet bygger på praktikledd konstnärlig forskning och jag har som forskare medverkat konstnärligt i flera yrkesroller i operaproduktionerna ifråga. Jag har bidragit som opera-sångare, regissör, dramaturg och librettist i de fyra operor som tagits fram och studerats under perioden. Metodologiskt har jag baserat min forsk-ning på Roger Caillois idé om diagonal vetenskap (på engelska: diagonal science) och Karl Poppers tankar om kritisk fantasi (på engelska: critical imagination). I diagonal vetenskap är målet att hitta beröringspunkter mel-lan områden som i förstone inte tycks ha något gemensamt. Kritisk fan-tasi handlar om att bryta igenom gränserna mellan existerande fält för att åstadkomma kulturkrockar som tvingar våra uppfattningar att revideras. I mitt fall har det handlat om att förena opera och speldesign för att kunna studera effekterna av detta experiment.

Mitt konstnärliga arbete har genomförts i samarbete med andra konstnärer och i en offentlig kontext. Ett autoetnografiskt perspektiv har kombinerats med metoder från aktionsforskning, som syftar till att utröna möjligheter till förändring inifrån ett fält eller en verksamhet. Projektet innefattar såväl audio- och videodokumentation som enkäter och intervjuer med artister och besökare, vilket utöver det rent konstnärliga experimentet visar vilka processer, reaktioner och reflektioner som konceptet genererat. I den ex-position på Research Catalogue som utgör en del av avhandlingen visas dokumenterade exempel från operauppförandena och information som besökarna haft tillgång till vid de evenemang som genomförts.

FORSKNINGSRESULTAT

Forskningsprojektet har förutom de konstnärliga verken resulterat i ett föreslaget system som kombinerar operans sensoriska sammansättning, spelmiljöns sociala dynamik och den dramatiska vinkeln på storyn där be-sökaren åläggs en potentiellt avgörande roll. Genom att särskilja fysiolo-giska, sociologiska och psykologiska faktorer har olika grader av immersi-on framträtt. Studien visar hur immersion kan uppstå genom sinnesrörelse (fysisk stimuli), deltagande (social stimuli) och förväntan (psykisk stimuli). Systemet kan potentiellt användas för både notation och slumpgenera-tion, men detta är föremål för framtida forskning och vidare utveckling. Ge-nom att olika slags utrymme för handling specificeras kan systemet påvisa hur deltagarna interagerar med varandra inom operan ifråga och därmed på vilken nivå tillräcklig immersion uppstått för att motivera handling.

KONSTNÄRLIGT UNDERLAG

De operor som ligger till grund för forskningen är följande:

Den tilltalade från 2017 är en rollspelsopera i vilken besökarna lajvar medborgare i en dystopisk nation. Operan har alternativa slut och besökarna kan ändra utgången genom att ingripa i händelseförloppet. I denna opera studerades även besökarnas benägenhet till individuell aktion i relation till artisterna, musiken och de andra besökarna.

In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black från 2018 är en operaupplevelse i totalt mörker i vilken besökarna är fångna i en ospecificerad miljö med immersivt ljud. I denna opera studerades även besökarnas kapacitet att fylla ut informationsluckor med egna fantasier.

Reich of Rán från 2018 är en mikroopera på 3 minuter i speed-dating-format med alternativa förlopp och slut i vilken besökarna spelar fiskare som förhandlar med havsgudinnan Rán. I denna opera studerades dels hur besökarnas förmåga att agera påverkades av att lämnas ensamma med artisterna, utan andra besökare, dels hur kommunikationen mellan artist och besökare påverkades av att operan sjöngs på ett påhittat collage-språk där olika ord hämtades från olika språk.

Chronos minnesbank från 2019 är en pusselopera med ett både cirkulärt och multi-linjärt libretto i vilken akter, scener och artefakter är utspridda på olika platser och över tid. Besökarna utgör kunder i en pantbank för minnen. I *Chronos minnesbank* åläggs besökarna eget ansvar att hitta information och sätta ihop den till en förståelig helhet. I denna opera studerades även hur en utökad mobilitet och frihet för besökarna kräver en ny approach från oss artister.

SÄRDRAG I LUDO-IMMERSIV OPERA

Vad som i första hand skiljer ludo-immersiv opera från traditionell opera är att verken utgör dynamiska äventyr med potentiellt flerfaldigt utfall mer än statiska ödesberättelser som kan upprepas gång efter gång med likartat resultat. I traditionell opera kan vi söka det ideala medan vi i ludo-immersiv opera kan söka det potentiella. Skillnaden kan tydliggöras genom att jämföra den klassiska arbetsordningen i operahusopera med arbetsordningen i rollspel. I klassisk opera bestäms vanligen först handling, sedan samordning och sist omgivning; instruktioner och begränsningar kommer i tur och ordning med libretto, partitur och iscensättning, varpå artisterna levandegör verket i text, ton och aktion. I rollspel är ordningen omvänd i det att spel-

miljön och dess möjligheter bestäms först och därefter presenteras utmaningar, vilka utvecklas genom karaktärernas val och handlingar för att driva händelseförloppet framåt i okända riktningar. I studien ligger fokus på fritt, individuellt deltagande snarare än kollektivt och organiserat deltagande.

Operakaraktärer uttrycker för det mesta sjungande vad de tänker, säger och gör samtidigt som de tänker, säger och gör detsamma. De är i regel explicit medvetna om sina känslor och bevekelsegrunder; i operaskådespeleri är undertexten mer eller mindre given i det att huvudkaraktärerna redovisar inre monologer och musiken kan representera såväl yttre omständigheter som inre känslostämningar. Detta gäller såväl i operahusopera som i ludo-immersiv opera och skapar speciella förutsättningar för s.k. cutscenes i rollspelsopera där deltagarna informeras om spelkaraktärernas resonemang och reaktioner mellan interaktiva inslag – liksom i opera i stort poängteras åtskillnad men också koppling mellan tanke och handling. Genom att vi i ludo-immersiv opera dessutom utökar handlingsutrymmet för vad som kan tänkas, sägas och göras genom alternativa moduler och möjligheter för utforskande, kan besökaren komplettera och slutföra operan på mer eller mindre begränsade, fantasifulla eller kreativa sätt. Besökaren ges utrymme att fritt röra sig, fritt yttra sig och fritt bestämma sig för att försöka påverka den fiktiva handlingen i olika riktningar. Både libretto och partitur är i regel modulbaserade och den tur-baserade interaktionsmodell som framkommit genom projektet innefattar "luckor" och "stopp" i vilka besökaren kan agera på egen hand mellan partier som kräver mer perceptiv koncentration och informationsinhämtning. Studien har också visat hur verbal och vokal information särskilt tycks påverka uppmärksamhet och rörelsemönster.

I diskussioner om såväl opera som spel och immersion återfinns inte sällan analyser utifrån de så kallade apolloniska och dionysiska principerna inom estetiken. Med estetik åsyftas här medvetenhet om våra preferenser för och aversion mot viss typ av information. I avhandlingen förhåller jag mig i huvudsak till Friedrich Nietzsches och Camille Paglias definitioner av begreppsparet apollonisk och dionysisk. I litteraturen finns flera exempel på vad dessa principer kan stå för, men det apolloniska kan genomgående sägas stå för det idéburna, dömande och distanserade, medan det dionysiska är det förkroppsligade, tillåtande och handlande. Därför kopplar jag det apolloniska till varseblivning (perception) och det dionysiska till utförande (performance).

Jag har utgått från att immersion uppstår då en individ omsluts av estetisk information som avskärmar och utestänger resten av tillvaron genom ett överlagt urval av stimuli. Fenomenet immersion kan kopplas till

den dionysiska principen, vilken med min läsning strävar mot att lägga samman, inkorporera och växa. Denna princip är alltså motpolen till det apolloniska, som med motsvarande logik innebär avgränsning, separation och uteslutande. Immersion upplöser gränser och har således sin motpol i emersion, det vill säga när något lösgör sig och framträder mot en fond. I immersiv konst bäddas deltagarna in i verket som erbjuder utrymme och assimilerar snarare än distanserar och alienerar besökaren. Detta utgör en kontrast historiskt mot både Wagners idé om en orörlig och osynlig publik och Brechts idé om en förfrämligad och kritiskt sinnad dito.

I ludo-immersiv opera är verket beroende av besökarens medverkan för att levandegöras, men samtidigt kvarstår skillnaden mellan det konstanta och det tillfälliga, mellan miljö och individ; den immerserade passerar genom verket utan att bli en permanent del av det. Det är hur denne förhåller sig till och samverkar med omgivningen i stunden som är intressant för att utröna verkets potential till olika utfall. Den immersiva operan är en tillfällig fantasi normalt utan vidare direkta konsekvenser och omgivningen återgår efter besöket till startläget för att kunna härbärgera nya gäster och stimulera nya förlopp.

SLUTSATSER

Som konstnärlig forskare utgår jag från ett humanistiskt synsätt på opera kopplat till konstformens särskilda förutsättningar att testa våra specifikt mänskliga förmågor till fiktion, teknologi och så kallad multitasking. Forskningsprojektet visar hur opera kan utgöra ett lämpligt fält för studier av hur sinnesrelaterade aspekter kan samverka. Dessa sinnesrelaterade, fysiska aspekterna i ludo-immersiv opera kan ställas mot socialt deltagande och dramatisk progression – tre lager av immersiv stimuli. Jag kopplar det sociala till det ludiska i det att lek och spel utgör ett socialt undantagstillstånd med alternativa sociala förutsättningar. Jag kopplar det psykiska till att ingå i en pågående berättelse där individen motiveras av en medvetenhet om sannolika följder av olika skeenden och val. I och med denna skiktning i tre lager påvisas hur den integrerade besökarens immersion börjar i det 1) fysiologiska genom att bidra till och bli en del av den fiktiva miljön, och sedan fortsätter till det 2) sociologiska genom att bidra till och bli en del av en fiktiv grupp och slutligen till det 3) psykologiska genom att bidra till och bli en avgörande del av den fiktiva handlingen.

Att presentera operor som spel kräver särskilda färdigheter hos de medverkande artisterna, bland annat modulär memorering och vana vid att hantera det oförutsedda. En regelbok för spelets grundläggande förut-

sättningar (spelsystem, spelvärld etc.) bör föregå framtagande av libretto, partitur och scen i denna typ av operaäventyr. Slutligen menar jag att det som jag kallar ludo-immersiv opera kräver att den traditionella regissören ersätts av en speltestande spelledare som skapar handlingsutrymme och tillhandahåller definierade alternativ i en grupp som inte bara agerar kammarmusikaliskt i direktkontakt med varandra och utan dirigent, utan även som självgående deltagare i förhållande till de omgivande förutsättningarna i övrigt. I mötet med rollspelande besökare utgör artisterna en del av spelmiljön som reagerar på besökarens handlande. Dessa reaktioner begränsas visserligen av den mängd repertoar som lärts in av artisterna, då ludo-immersiv opera i första hand inte improviseras fram, men ändock tillräckligt för att upplevas som meningsfullt. Avsaknaden av regissörens koordinering, överblick och vision ger varje artist mandat att agera dynamiskt och självständigt inom den ram som satts upp. På detta sätt kan medvetna konstnärliga beslut i stunden istället möjliggöras av en palett av alternativ och moduler.

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ADDENDA

APPENDIX I:

DESIGN OF ARTIST QUESTIONNAIRE FROM THE ARCHITECT IN HALMSTAD 2017

This questionnaire was originally distributed in Swedish only.

Ditt namn [Your name]

Arbetar du med opera, teater eller musik i andra ensembler med fasta eller återkommande medarbetare? [Do you work with opera, theatre, or music in other ensembles with permanent or recurring members?]

    Ja [Yes]

    Nej [No]

Arbetar du med opera, teater eller musik i auditionbaserade fria grupper? [Do you work with opera, theatre, or music in audition-based independent groups?]

    Ja [Yes]

    Nej [No]

Arbetar du med opera, teater eller musik i ensembler knutna till särskilda institutioner? [Do you work with opera, theatre, or music in ensembles connected to particular institutions?]

    Ja [Yes]

    Nej [No]

Hur definierar du Operation Operas konstnärliga profil? Vad utmärker Operation Opera i relation till andra aktörer inom operaområdet (institutioner och grupper)? [How do you define Operation Opera's artistic profile? What distinguishes Operation Opera in relation to other producers of opera (institutions and groups)?]

Vad är din definition av genren rollspelsopera? [What is your definition of the genre "role play opera"?]

Vad handlade operan Den Tilltalade om enligt dig? [What was the opera The Architect about according to you?]

Vad var syftet med att sätta upp Den Tilltalade enligt dig? [What was the purpose of the production of The Architect according to you?]

På vilka sätt var Den Tilltalade ett utforskande/experimentellt projekt? [In what ways was The Architect an explorative/experimental project?]

Vilka mål och förväntningar hade du på uppsättningen av Den Tilltalade? Hade du några farhågor? [What aims and expectations did you have for the production of The Architect?]

Uppfylldes dina förväntningar på Den Tilltalade? På vilka sätt? När uppstod behov av kompromisser och ändringar? [Were your expectations for The Architect fulfilled? In what ways? When were compromises and changes needed?]

Hur har diskussioner och debattklimat fungerat inom ramen för projektet Den Tilltalade? [How have discussions and the capacity for debate worked within the limits of the project The Architect?]

Hur tycker du fokus på olika arbetsområden och -metoder (t.ex. workshop under hösten, uppdelning och fördelning av musikaliska respektive sceniska moment) fungerade i processen med att ta fram Den Tilltalade? [How do you think the focus on different work areas and methods (e.g. workshops during the autumn, division and distribution of musical and theatrical suboperations) worked in the process of conceiving The Architect?]

På vilka sätt var du delaktig i framtagandet av konstnärligt material (skriven/noterad text, musik, anvisningar, materiella ting etc.) i Den Tilltalade? [How did you participate in the conception of artistic material (written/notated text, music, directions, material things etc.) in The Architect?]

På vilka sätt var du delaktig i den sceniska framställningen av Den Tilltalade? [How did you participate in the theatrical presentation of The Architect?]

På vilka sätt var du delaktig i den musikaliska framställningen av Den Tilltalade? [How did you participate in the musical presentation of The Architect?]

Har du använt färdigheter och kunskaper i Den Tilltalade som du normalt inte använder i din huvudsakliga yrkesroll? Hur har du i så fall upplevt det? [Have you made use of skills and knowledge that you possess in The Architect that you normally do not apply in your primary professional role?]

Har du behövt bredda din kompetens och sätta dig in i nya områden i Den Tilltalade? Hur har du i så fall upplevt det? [Have you needed to broaden you competence and familiarize yourself with new fields in The Architect? In that case, how have you experienced that?]

Har projektet ställt krav på dig som du upplevt som onödiga eller orimliga? Har något moment i framtagandet av Den Tilltalade på gott och ont varit obekvämt? I så fall på vilka sätt? [Has the project come with requirements on you that seem to you unnecessary and unreasonable? If so, in what ways?]

Skulle du velat vara mer delaktig i någon del av materialet eller framställningen? På vilket sätt? [Would you have liked to have participated more in some part of the material or the presentation?]

Hur tycker du textmaterialet fungerade i Den Tilltalade? [How do you think the text material worked in The Architect?]

Hur tycker du det musikaliska materialet fungerade i Den Tilltalade? [How do you think the musical material worked in The Architect?]

Hur tycker du regin fungerade i Den Tilltalade? [How do you think the directions worked in The Architect?]

Hur tycker du scenrummet fungerade i Den Tilltalade? [How do you think the set worked in The Architect?]

Hur tycker du kostymer, rekvisita och scenografi fungerade i Den Tilltalade? [How do you think costumes, propos, and scenography worked in The Architect?]

Hur tycker du övrigt material (webbplatsen anfasia.se, trycksaker m.m.) fungerade i Den Tilltalade? [How do you think other material (the web site anfasia.se, printed material and so on) worked in The Architect?]

Vad har besökarna och deras närvaro bidragit med till uppsättningen/föreställningarna? [What have the visitors and their presence added to the production / the performances?]

Vilka eventuellt outnyttjade möjligheter fanns för besökarna att vara mer delaktiga? Hade de kunnat göra något som de aldrig gjorde? [What possibly untapped possibilities were there for the visitors to participate more? Could they have done anything more that they never did?]

Hur har "spelreglerna" för besökarna uttryckts denna gång jämfört med tidigare Anfasia-produktioner? [How have "the rules of the game" been expressed to the visitors this time in comparison to earlier Anfasia productions?]

Uppstår någon gång situationer i mötet med besökarna då du känner dig obekväm? När uppstår de eller när skulle de potentiellt kunna uppstå? [Are there sometimes situations in meeting with the visitors when you feel uncomfortable? When do these situations occur or when could they potentially occur?]

På vilka sätt har spelelementen och interaktionen med besökarna varit till hjälp respektive hinder för framförandet? [In what way have the game elements and the interaction with the visitors been helpful or troublesome for the presentation?]

Hur skulle du vilja utveckla eller begränsa användandet av spelelement i kommande uppsättningar? [How would you like to develop or limit the use of game elements in future productions?]

Vad skiljer en rollspelsopera från en "konventionell" opera enligt dig? [What distinguishes a role play opera from a "conventional" opera according to you?]

Vad skiljer en rollspelsopera från ett rollspel enligt dig? [What distinguishes a role play opera from a role playing game according to you?]

Skulle du kunna tänka dig att arbeta med framtida projekt ännu mer kollaborativt och gränslöst, utan (på förhand) avgränsade ansvarsområden och utan att ange (konventionella) titlar på upphovspersoner och medskapare? Utveckla gärna varför eller varför inte. [Would you like to work on a future project more collaboratively, without having limited areas of responsibility defined in advance and without adhering to conventional labels for authors and co-creators?]

Hur skulle du önska att Operation Opera utvecklades som grupp/mötesplats i framtiden (konstnärligt/estetiskt/konceptuellt, som arbetsmiljö, som ensemble, som arrangör etc.)? [How would you like Operation Opera to develop as a group or meeting place in the future? Artistically/aesthetically/conceptually? As a work environment, as an ensemble, as an event organizer, or otherwise?]

Ser du efter Den Tilltalade något behov av kompetensutveckling inom gruppen eller av att tillföra ytterligare medarbetare med annan kompetens än vad som idag finns i gruppen? Vore det intressant om Operation Opera kunde erbjuda just kompetensutveckling? I så fall på vilket sätt och inom vilka områden? [After The Architect do you see any need for skill development within the group, or for adding more coworkers with other abilities than there are in the group today?]

Har du övriga reflektioner och idéer som uppkommit i samband med Den Tilltalade? [Do you have other reflections and ideas that have emerged in connections to The Architect?]

APPENDIX II:

DESIGN OF ANONYMOUS VISITOR SURVEY FROM THE ARCHITECT IN HALMSTAD 2017

This survey was originally distributed in Swedish only.

Ange ditt födelseår. [Please state your year of birth.]

Ange ditt kön. [Please state your sex.]

Man [Man]

Kvinna [Woman]

Annat [Other]

Har du tidigare besökt någon av Operation Operas rollspelsoperor om landet Anfasia? [Have you visited any of Operation Opera's role play operas about the nation Anfasia before?]

Ja [Yes]

Nej [No]

Har du studerat inom något konstnärligt område? (Sätt kryss för vad som stämmer in på dig, flera val möjliga.) [Have you been studying within any artistic field? (Please mark what is applicable for you, multiple choices possible.]

Jag har inte studerat inom något konstnärligt område. [I have not studied within any artistic field.]

Jag tar eller har tagit instrument- eller sånglektioner genom kulturskola, studieförbund,privatundervisning eller liknande. [I am taking or have taken lessons in playing an instrument or singing through an art and culture school, through study associations, by means of private instruction or the like.]

Jag tar eller har tagit teaterlektioner t.ex. genom kulturskola, studieförbund, privatundervisning eller liknande. [I am taking or have taken theatre lessons for instance through an art and culture school, through study associations, by means of private instruction or the like.]

Jag tar eller har tagit danslektioner genom kulturskola, studieförbund, privatundervisning eller liknande. [I am taking or have taken dance lessons through an art and culture school, through study associations, by means of private tuition or the like.]

Jag studerar eller har studerat ett gymnasieprogram med inriktning på musik. [I am studying or have studied a high school programme with a focus on music.]

Jag studerar eller har studerat ett gymnasieprogram med inriktning på teater. [I am studying or have studied a high school programme with a focus on theatre.]

Jag studerar eller har studerat ett gymnasieprogram med inriktning på dans. [I am studying or have studied a high school programme with a focus on dance.]

Jag studerar eller har studerat musikdramatik på folkhögskolenivå eller motsvarande. [I am studying or have studied music drama in a folk high school or other preconservatory equivalent.]

Jag studerar eller har studerat musik på folkhögskolenivå eller motsvarande. [I am studying or have studied music in a folk high school or other preconservatory equivalent.]

Jag studerar eller har studerat musikdramatik på högskole- eller universitetsnivå. [I am studying or have studied music drama on university level.]

Jag studerar eller har studerat musik på högskole- eller universitetsnivå. [I am studying or have studied music on the university level.]

Jag studerar eller har studerat teater på högskole- eller universitetsnivå. [I am studying or have studied theatre on the university level.]

Jag studerar eller har studerat dans på högskole- eller universitetsnivå. [I am studying or have studied dance on the university level.]

Jag studerar eller har studerat inom annat konstnärligt område. (Ange ämne och nivå i kommentarsfältet.) [I am studying or have studied within another artistic field. (Please state subject and level in the commentary field.]

Har du varit yrkesverksam inom något konstnärligt område? (Sätt kryss för vad som stämmer in på dig, flera val möjliga.) [Have you been professionally active within any artistic field? (Please mark what is applicable for you, multiple choices possible.]

Jag varken är eller har varit yrkesverksam inom något konstnärligt område. [I neither am nor have been professionally active within any artistic field.]

Jag är eller har varit yrkesverksam inom musikdramatik. [I am or have been professionally active within music drama.]

Jag är eller har varit yrkesverksam inom musik. [I am or have been professionally active within music.]

Jag är eller har varit yrkesverksam inom teater. [I am or have been professionally active within theatre.]

Jag är eller har varit yrkesverksam inom dans. [I am or have been professionally active within dance.]

Jag är eller har varit yrkesverksam inom annat konstnärligt område. (Ange vilket i kommentarsfältet.) [I am or have been professionally active within music drama (Please state which in the commetary field.).]

Vilken erfarenhet har du av opera sedan tidigare? [What experience of opera have you had before?]

Jag har aldrig upplevt opera förut. [I have never experienced opera before.]

Jag har upplevt operaföreställningar live på operahus. [I have experienced opera performances live in opera houses.]

Jag har upplevt operaföreställningar live på mindre scener. [I have experienced opera performances live in smaller venues.]

Jag har upplevt operaföreställningar på utomhusscener. [I have experienced opera performances in outdoor venues.]

Jag har upplevt operaföreställningar på bio. [I have experienced opera performances in cinemas.]

Jag har upplevt operaföreställningar på teve. [I have experienced opera performances on television.]

Jag har upplevt operaföreställningar på radio. [I have experienced opera performances on radio.]

Jag har upplevt operaföreställningar via streamingtjänster. [I have experienced opera performances via streaming services.]

Jag har upplevt operamusik live på konsert. [I have experienced opera music live in concerts.]

Jag har upplevt operamusik på teve. [I have experienced opera music on television.]

Jag har upplevt operamusik på radio. [I have experienced opera music in radio.]

Jag har medverkat i operauppsättningar. [I have performed in opera productions.]

Jag har medverkat i operakonserter. [I have performed in opera concerts.]

Jag har upplevt operamusik via streamingtjänster. [I have experienced opera music via streaming services.]

Jag har upplevt opera på annat sätt. (Skriv hur och var i kommentarsfältet.) [I have experienced opera in other ways. (Please state how and where in the commentary field.)]

Vilken erfarenhet har du av teater sedan tidigare? [What experience of theatre have you had before?]

Jag har aldrig upplevt teater förut. [I have never experienced theatre before.]

Jag har upplevt teaterföreställningar live på större teatrar. [I have experienced theatre shows live in large theatres.]

Jag har upplevt teaterföreställningar live på mindre scener. [I have experienced theatre shows live in smaller venues.]

Jag har upplevt teaterföreställningar på utomhusscener. [I have experienced theatre shows in outdoor venues.]

Jag har upplevt teaterföreställningar på teve. [I have experienced theatre shows on television.]

Jag har upplevt radioteater. [I have experienced radio theatre.]

Jag har medverkat i teateruppsättningar. [I have performed in theatre shows.]

Jag har upplevt teater på annat sätt. (Skriv hur och var i kommentarsfältet.) [I have experienced theatre in other ways. (Please mark how and when in the commentary field.)]

Vilken erfarenhet har du av rollspelsaktiviteter sedan tidigare? [What experience have you had of role play activities before?]

Jag har aldrig spelat någon typ av rollspel förut. [I have never played any kind of role playing game before.]

Jag har deltagit i lajv (levande rollspel). [I have participated in LARP (live action role play).]

Jag har spelat bordsrollspel. [I have played pen-and-paper RPG.]

Jag har spelat RPG-spel via dator eller konsol. [I have played RPG on a computer or gaming console.]

Jag har deltagit i rollspelsinfluerad teater. [I have participated in theatre influenced by role playing.]

Jag har deltagit i pedagogiskt rollspel, dvs. lärarlett rollspel i undervisningssyfte. [I have participated in pedagogical role playing, that is, teacher-led role playing for educational purposes.]

Jag har spelat rollspel i annat sammanhang. (Skriv hur och var i kommentarsfältet.) [I have played role playing games in other contexts. (Please state how and when in the commentary field.]

Gick du in på webbplatsen www.anfasia.se innan du besökte Den Tilltalade? [Did you visit the web site www.anfasia.se before coming to The Architect?]

Ja [Yes]

Nej [No]

Skapade du en egen karaktär med hjälp av rollformuläret på www.anfasia.se innan du besökte Den Tilltalade? [Did you create a character of your own through the character sheet on www.anfasia.se before coming to The Architect?]

Ja [Yes]

Nej [No]

Talade du med någon annan besökare under föreställningen? [Did you speak to any other visitor during the performance?]

Ja [Yes]

Nej [No]

Talade någon av artisterna med dig under föreställningen? [Did any of the artists speak to you during the performance?]

Ja [Yes]

Nej [No]

Skrev du något i ditt programhäfte, på en lapp eller ett vykort? [Did you write anything in your program folder, on a note, or a post card?]

Ja [Yes]

Nej [No]

Provade du att använda den nyckel du fick i programhäftet? [Did you try to use the key you got in the program folder?]

Ja [Yes]

Nej [No]

Om ja, skriv gärna var du försökte använda nyckeln. [If yes, please tell uwhere you tried to use the key.]

Om ja, lyckades du låsa upp något lås? [If yes, did you manage to open any lock?]

Ja [Yes]

Nej [No]

Tog du kontakt med någon av artisterna under föreställningen för att framföra något meddelande eller ge en sak till dem? [Did you make contact with any of the artists during the performance in order to leave a message or hand over an item to them?]

Ja [Yes]

Nej [No]

Utnyttjade du möjligheten att röra dig runt om i lokalen för att upptäcka saker och påverka händelseförloppet? [Did you use the opportunity to move around in the venue in order to discover things and affect the course of events?]

Ja [Yes]

Nej [No]

Lämnade du någon gång föreställningslokalen för att undersöka andra platser medan föreställningen pågick? [Did you on any occasion leave the performance venue in order to examine other places during the event?]

Ja [Yes]

Nej [No]

Ville du påverka händelseförloppet och i så fall hur? [Did you want to affect the course of events, and if so, how?]

Ja [Yes]

Nej [No]

Skriv vad du önskade skulle hända. [Please write what you wished would have happened.]

Engagerade du dig speciellt mycket i någon särskild karaktärs öde? [Did you feel especially engaged in any particular character's destiny?]

Ja [Yes]

Nej [No]

Om ja, skriv vilken eller vilka karaktärer i kommentarsfältet. [If yes, please tell us whom in the commentary field.]

Var reglerna tydliga för hur du som besökare kunde bete dig under föreställningen? [Were the rules clear for how you as a vistior should behave during the performance?]

Ja [Yes]

Nej [No]

Kommentar [Commentary]

Har du övriga kommentarer om din upplevelse? [Do you have other comments about your experience?]

APPENDIX III:

DESIGN OF ANONYMOUS VISITOR SURVEY FROM THE ARCHITECT IN GOTHENBURG 2018

This survey was originally distributed in Swedish only.

Födelseår [Year of birth]

> Kön [Sex]
>
> Man [Man]
>
> Kvinna [Woman]
>
> Annat [Other]

Jag har tidigare besökt Operation Operas föreställningar eller liknande scenkonst. [I have visited Operation Opera's performances or similar staged art before.]

> Ja [Yes]
>
> Nej [No]

Jag var förberedd på att detta skulle vara en interaktiv opera med spelelement. [I was prepared for the possibility that it could be an interactive opera with game elements.]

> Ja [Yes]
>
> Nej [No]

Jag försökte aktivt påverka händelseförloppet. [I tried to actively affect the course of events.]

> Ja [Yes]
>
> Nej [No]

Hur väl stämmer följande enligt dig? Sätt ett kryss på skalan. [According to you, how well does the following statement apply?]

> Jag kände mig välkommen att delta. [I felt welcome to participate.]
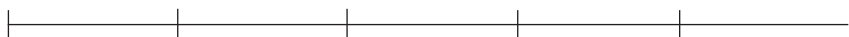
⊢——————┼——————┼——————┼——————┼——————┤

Stämmer inte.   Stämmer ganska bra.   Stämmer mycket bra.
[Does not fit.]   [Fits quite well.]   [Fits very well.]

> Vet ej [Do not know]

Informationen om hur konceptet var tänkt att fungera var tydlig. [The information about how the concept was thought to work was clear.]

|———————|———————|———————|———————|———————|

Stämmer inte. Stämmer ganska bra. Stämmer mycket bra.
[Does not fit.] [Fits quite well.] [Fits very well.]
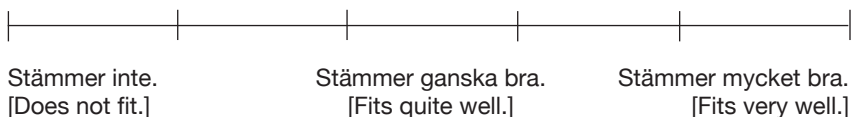
Vet ej [Do not know]

Jag var engagerad. [I felt engaged.]

|———————|———————|———————|———————|———————|

Stämmer inte. Stämmer ganska bra. Stämmer mycket bra.
[Does not fit.] [Fits quite well.] [Fits very well.]
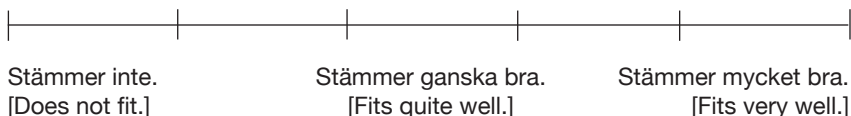
Vet ej [Do not know]

Jag kunde följa med i handlingen och intrigen. [I could follow the plot and the intrigue.]

|———————|———————|———————|———————|———————|

Stämmer inte. Stämmer ganska bra. Stämmer mycket bra.
[Does not fit.] [Fits quite well.] [Fits very well.]
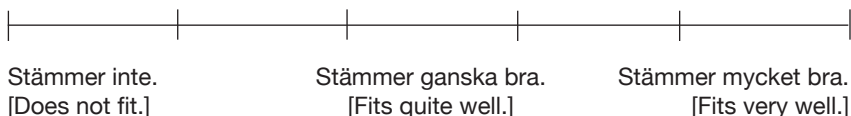
Vet ej [Do not know]

Jag kunde uppfatta vad som sjöngs. [I could perceive what was sung.]

|———————|———————|———————|———————|———————|

Stämmer inte. Stämmer ganska bra. Stämmer mycket bra.
[Does not fit.] [Fits quite well.] [Fits very well.]
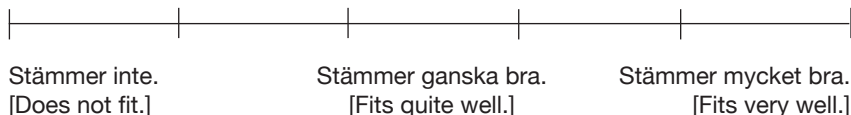
Vet ej [Do not know]

Jag skulle ha velat kunnat påverka mer. [I would have liked to have had more effect.]

|———————|———————|———————|———————|———————|

Stämmer inte. Stämmer ganska bra. Stämmer mycket bra.
[Does not fit.] [Fits quite well.] [Fits very well.]
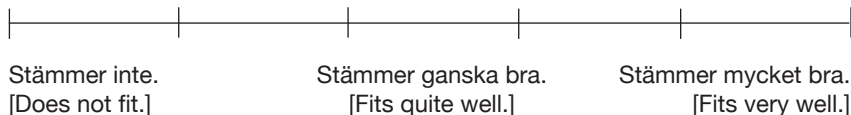
Vet ej [Do not know]

Jag skulle ha velat lyssna och betrakta händelseförloppet mer ostört. [I would have liked to been able to listen and look at the course of events with fewer disturbances.]

|————————|————————|————————|————————|————————|

Stämmer inte.   Stämmer ganska bra.   Stämmer mycket bra.
[Does not fit.]   [Fits quite well.]   [Fits very well.]

Vet ej [Do not know]

Kommentera gärna in upplevelse som helhet på baksidan! [Please leave a comment about your experience as a whole on the other side!]

APPENDIX IV:

DESIGN OF ANONYMOUS VISITOR SURVEY FROM IN THE DARKNESS, EVERYTHING WENT ALL BLACK 2018

This survey was originally distributed in both English and Swedish.

Please write your year of birth. (Ange födelseår.)

Please mark your sex. (Ange kön.)

Male / Man

Female / Kvinna

Prefer not to answer. / Vill ej uppge.

Please mark what statements that are applicable. (Sätt kryss för de påståenden som stämmer in på dig.)

I often visit theatre, opera, musical theatre and / or concerts. / Jag går ofta på teater, opera, musikal och/eller konserter.

I have visited Operation Opera's performances or similar concepts earlier. / Jag har tidigare besökt Operation Operas föreställningar eller liknande koncept.

I am or has been professionally active within performative art forms or related fields. / Jag är eller har varit yrkesverksam inom scenkonst eller näraliggande fält.

Please mark how well the statements below correspond to your experience of the opera "In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black". (Ange hur väl påståendena nedan som stämmer överens med din upplevelse av operan "In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black".)

I felt included in the performance. / Jag kände mig inkluderad i föreställningen.

Not at all / Inte alls

Some / Lite

Pretty much / Ganska mycket

Much / Mycket

No opinion / Vet ej

I felt immersed in the situation. / Jag levde mig in i situationen.

Not at all / Inte alls

Some / Lite

Pretty much / Ganska mycket

Much / Mycket

No opinion / Vet ej

I experienced that I was in the center of a fictional story. / Jag upplevde att jag befann mig mitt i en fiktiv berättelse.

Not at all / Inte alls

Some / Lite

Pretty much / Ganska mycket

Much / Mycket

No opinion / Vet ej

I experienced that the singers sang to me as if I was a part of the story. / Jag upplevde att sångarna sjöng till mig och om mig som om jag ingick i berättelsen.

Not at all / Inte alls

Some / Lite

Pretty much / Ganska mycket

Much / Mycket

No opinion / Vet ej

I experienced that I embodied a fictional character connected to the story line. / Jag upplevde att jag utgjorde en fiktiv person i skeendet som pågick.

Not at all / Inte alls

Some / Lite

Pretty much / Ganska mycket

Much / Mycket

No opinion / Vet ej

Though the sounds I heard, I got sensations associated to certain locations, persons etc. / Genom de ljud jag hörde, fick jag förnimmelser av t.ex. särskilda platser, personer etc.

Not at all / Inte alls

Some / Lite

Pretty much / Ganska mycket

Much / Mycket

No opinion / Vet ej

I felt like being watched. / Jag kände mig iakttagen.

Not at all / Inte alls

Some / Lite

Pretty much / Ganska mycket

Much / Mycket

No opinion / Vet ej

I felt insecure of how to behave. / Jag kände mig osäker på hur jag skulle bete mig.

Not at all / Inte alls

Some / Lite

Pretty much / Ganska mycket

Much / Mycket

No opinion / Vet ej

I felt exposed. / Jag kände mig utsatt.

Not at all / Inte alls

Some / Lite

Pretty much / Ganska mycket

Much / Mycket

No opinion / Vet ej

I felt like going to an ordinary, conventional concert or opera performance. / Jag kände mig som på en vanlig, konventionell konsert eller operaföreställning.

Not at all / Inte alls

Some / Lite

Pretty much / Ganska mycket

Much / Mycket

No opinion / Vet ej

Where did you experience that you were? Please describe the location. (Var upplevde du att du befann dig? Beskriv miljön.)

Which (kinds of) persons did you experienced were in the room? Please describe the characters. (Vilka (slags) personer upplevde du befann sig i rummet? Beskriv karaktärerna/gestalterna.)

In what situation did you experience yourself in? Please describe what happened. (Vilken situation befann du dig i? Beskriv vad som hände.)

Who were you in the context? Please describe your role. (Vem var du i sammanhanget? Beskriv din roll.)

When the light flashed, did you see anything special? Please describe what you saw or if you didn't see anything at all. (När ljuset blixtrade till, såg du något särskilt då? Beskriv vad du såg eller om du inte såg någonting alls.)

Would you like to add something? Please feel free to leave a comment. (Är det något annat du vill berätta om din upplevelse? Lämna gärna en kommentar.)

APPENDIX V:

ACADEMIC PAPER ON IN THE DARKNESS, EVERYTHING WENT ALL BLACK 2021

Opera Inside-Out
Reversed Staging for Sensory Immersion

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University of Gothenburg

Mattias Rylander
University of Kristianstad

ABSTRACT

How can the unseen be heard and imagined through operatic means? In the chamber opera *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* – set in pitch-black darkness – the stage was radically inverted. For the purpose of exploring the immersive potential of spatial reversal, methods for operatic creation and presentation were rethought in terms of visibility, layout, work order, and surveillance. Firstly, the visual default mode of the lit stage was reversed so that total darkness became the foundation for both discreet and shocking light effects. Secondly, the conventional theatrical layout was reversed and the audience was placed in half-circles at the centre of the venue, facing outwards from a void – surrounded by the performance instead of surrounding it. Thirdly, the common operatic work order was reversed so that the set design was workshopped and determined before the libretto and score were written. Fourthly, the relation between audience and ensemble was reversed as the performers observed the audience through IR-cameras while the audience for most of the time was denied visual stimuli and overview. The artistic outcomes of this opera show that *negative staging* (decreasing sensory information) can effectively contrast *positive staging* (increasing sensory information) as an artistic tool, highlighting the dynamics of operas as multi-sensory compositions.

Key words: opera, immersion, inversion, reversal, staging, set design, spectatorship, information

Then a yell of utter, ultimate fright and stark madness wrenched from scores of human throats – a yell which came strong and clear despite the depth from which it must have burst; after which darkness and silence ruled all things.

From *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*
by H. P. Lovecraft

Our interest in opera lies with the collaboratively composite art form's potential for layering and linking multi-sensory information, exchanged between live parties in shared acoustic time-spaces apart from everyday life. However, where information can be sensorily maximized, it can also be deliberately reduced and obscured in order to infuse mystery and excitement. In 2018, set designer Mattias Rylander suggested a fresh point of departure for the independent opera company Operation Opera: darkness as default mode for an operatic work. From this idea, Operation Opera (represented by opera singer Hedvig Jalhed, opera singer Agnes Wästfelt, and set designer Mattias Rylander) teamed up with the independent theatre group Teatr Weimar (represented by playwright Jörgen Dahlqvist and composer Kent Olofsson) to produce the conceptual chamber opera *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* (Rylander et al. 2018). One of our aims has been to explore how withholding information can potentially increase immersion. By inverting the setup in terms of visibility, layout, work order, and surveillance, we have investigated how the unseen can be heard and imagined through operatic means.

CONTEXTUALIZATION

Modes of spectatorship in opera have indeed varied over time, but have also been connected to institutional standardization. In the late 19th century, Richard Wagner paved the way for a de-socialized and reverential operatic attendance by darkening the auditorium, thereby hindering social exchange during the artistic presentation. By the 1920s, visual obscuration of theatre auditoriums had become the new norm and enforced theatre etiquette contributed to the sedation of the audience (Heim 2016).

Today, evolving modes of spectating can be traced from experimental theatre in general to the realm of both contemporary opera and new music theatre. In new opera, this includes alternative venues for new operatic experiences, audience mobility, and immersion through audio technology,

virtual reality, and location. The new interest in immersive live performance since the early 2000s includes an embryonic strand of immersive opera. In these works, immediacy and intimacy between the different participants are central: 'In trying to create more immersive operatic performances, the key device is to dissolve the division between the audience and the stage, usually by putting the spectators and performers in the same space.' (Kara 2017, 578) Like immersive theatre, immersive opera tends to apply a 'surrounded', 'surrounding', or 'interspersed' (Weinstein 2017) 'space relationship' (Bowman 1964) to embrace and merge the incoming with a constructed world of sensuality and alternate information, which the visitor is expected to help upholding and even contribute to.

DARKNESS AS IMMERSIVE FEATURE

We refer to immersion as a state of being involved in a momentarily prioritized setting or situation to a degree that makes you forget about the outside world and relational reality (Jalhed in press). This can be achieved through intense sensory input and task solving, but also by blocking out information from the surroundings. Hence, stimulation, concentration, and grades of isolation are at the core of immersive practices and processes. There are several examples of the usage of darkness to theatrically immerse visitors – such as for instance Lundahl & Seitl's *Observatory* (2011a) and *The Infinite Conversation* (2011b) – and also culinary adventures involving dining in the dark. There are fewer examples of operas that immerse visitors in darkness while surrounding them with musicodramatic action – one is *Confessions* (Vitkauskaitė, Hedman, and Nordgren 2017) by the Spatial Opera Company, in which the visitors wear blinding masks.

RESEARCH METHODS

We have applied a practice-based approach in which we, in our professions as artists, explore and question conventions of operatic production and the effects of a reversal of found habits. Hence, our inquiry is rooted within the field of artistic research. We emphasize our two personal positions at the extreme ends of the production chain (those of the constructing set designer and the executing performer) in order to illuminate the effects of the experimental artwork from two diametrically different directions. Our artistic process has been documented through our journaling and recording of events during the production and presentation of the opera. The artwork and its performances are available both as score and audio-video

The set design for In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black at Atalante in Gothenburg 2018.
Photo by Hedvig Jalhed.

files. Finally, we make our analysis from the perspective of practical insider know-how in order to shed light on the problems and possibilities for practitioners that emerge through our work.

ARTISTIC PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

The conceptual basis for *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black* was decided on communally, and the creative team and performing ensemble – consisting of two sopranos and one live-electronic musician – was put together before the work was conceived. The initial point of departure was to construct an operatic experience of unseeing, fitting any flat-floored venue where it was possible to exclude all incoming light in order to use theatrical elements in the manner of 'reversed type' in graphic design.

FROM WORKSHOP TO PERFORMANCE

In our first workshops, our primary challenge was to set a room with the possibility for a complete blackout and test how the space could be trans-

formed and dissolved through spatialization of sound, lighting, and human movement in darkness. This evolved into the convex layout for the audience seats, which served two purposes: to turn visitor attention towards disparate directions instead of a common centre, and to facilitate the performers' orientation through regularities and symmetry. Placed in half-circles facing outwards from the central point of emptiness, the exposed visitors could sit with their backs to each other and their attention towards the room instead of their peers – like an inverted panopticon.

The set design is normally the last sub-work to be added before an opera is brought to life through human performance, but in *In the Darkness, Everything Went All Black*, the spatial conditions determined the framework for both the libretto and the score, and the work order was thus partly reversed. In other, non-operatic, forms of music theatre, drafting of scenographic ideas in the initial production phase might sometimes be more common than in opera. Such is the case with the type of composed theatre engaging Olofsson and Dahlqvist in their common works with Teatr Weimar. They speak of 'shared physical space' and the composer Olofsson highlights how a clear impression of the visual design of the stage can guide the creative process already from the start (Olofsson 2018). In this project, their strategy aligned with our idea about reversal as a general artistic method.

Since our intention was to make the visitors see in the dark and to play with more or less dramatic light effects after accustoming their eyes to darkness, masks were not an option for this opera. Even with darkness as the default mode, we still strived toward a dynamic latitude for action, with possibilities to synchronize optic effects with musical elements and performer movement. Instead of showing and inviting the visitors into a lit area of visual input, the artwork and the performers moved into a space of turbulent sound only – an auditorium without a stage. The immersive effect of darkness itself embedded the perceivers together with a large number of spatialising loud-speakers and moving opera singers, equipped with IR-cameras (using infrared technology) to orient themselves without light.

The dramatic situation emerging through Dahlqvist's libretto was derived from our joint establishment of the room itself. The plot deliberately contained open elements and there was no direct verbal information about the scenery or the identity of the characters. However, the room was not empty: its content was visually revealed on one occasion, in a short and brutal flash of light (controlled by the opera singers themselves) after about 45 minutes of darkness. For those with eyes open in either direction, one of the characters in full costume appeared together with photographic backdrops in high contrast. This dramatic point of stylized 'reversal' and 'discovery' in the Aris-

totelian sense (Aritstotle 2013) turned the characters into embodied persons, as clarity of sight was followed by clarity of tonality and words.

Eight public performances of the opera were given in Halmstad, Reykjavik, Gothenburg, and Malmoe between July 2018 and February 2019. As a part of Jalhed's doctoral project (in press), the visitors were given the opportunity to share in a short survey their personal, internal visualizations from the information given while immersed in darkness. This showed that the drive to associate and fill in the blanks in many cases triggered concrete fantasies from the fragmented and incomplete but still multi-sensory experience that we created, resulting in a co-creative activation of the individual visitor's mind (ibid.).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

From the set designer's point of view, the production became a rare opportunity to influence and guide the verbo-musical composition from the start. The common habit of treating operatic set design as a stand-alone dimension added later became moot, as it now was the very basis for the work itself. This goes against the mainstream faiblesse for so-called director's opera, 'which advocates scenographic autonomy' (Kara 2017). From the live-performing opera singer's point of view, to appear unseen triggered intensified and more versatile vocal performance. Through the immersive sound technology, an even wider range of vocal sounds could be employed. Furthermore, the deprivation of visitor sight during most of the experience allowed for startling closeness and even subtle touching as tools for performance.

The radical reversal of the relationship between host and visitor in terms of observation problematizes the conventional view of theatrical objectification. Jalhed (in press) advocates that the distinction between audiences (perceivers) and artists (performers) could be replaced by the distinction between visitors (discoverers) and hosts (disclosers) in order to highlight the issue of inside information instead of behaviour or position. Perception and performance are seldom separate modes for any party in live-meetings, and the role reversal that we experimented with – with artists perceiving visitors more than vice versa – toys with this complexity.

Normally in opera, information is added layer by layer in order to maximize the experience and fit as much as possible into one single multi-sensory display. We refer to this as *positive staging* (increasing information). From our study of I*n the Darkness, Everything Went All Black*, we propose that *negative staging* (decreasing information) could enforce immersion by making the visitors invest in the performance through their private fantasies

when visually understimulated. This is based on the observation that our withdrawal of concrete input seemed to cause the visitors to be occupied with imagining what they could not know while disconnecting from the outside world. Hence, we encourage further explorations of processual disruption and negative staging in operatic and other multi-sensory works. We conclude that since it is obviously possible to activate the co-creation of 'wandering minds', 'when one's individual thoughts shift away from the task at hand' (Barnett and Kaufman 2020, 6), distinctly subjective visitor interpretations in real-time may be an artistic objective for new opera and immersive art practices starting from the notions of reversal and inversion.

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APPENDIX VI:

LIBRETTO FOR REICH OF RÁN

Reich of Rán

Ludo-immersive micro opera
for soprano, actor, live-electronics and visitors

Libretto by Hedvig Jalhed

LANGUAGE:
Collage language / Mulitilingual / Parodic Germanic-Norse Esperatoish

CHARACTERS:
Rán, goddess of the sea (soprano)
Frau Doris Leise, a wanna-be-Walküre and crazy cat lady (actor)
The Captain, a drowned pirate who cannot stop smiling (live-electronics)
Fishermen (visitors)

FICTIONAL LOCATION:
By the sea

TIME:
Now

DURATA:
Max. approx. 3.00 min. per visitor + looping introduction

VENUE REQUIREMENTS:
Foyer or equiv. + Secluded and darkened room with walls for projections,
min. approx. 5 x 5 m, max. approx. 10 x 10 m

SYNOPSIS:
The fishermen first meet Frau Doris Leise on the beach. Frau Leise is de-
vastated because Rán, the goddess of the sea and queen of cold feet has
blamed her for murdering music and stealing her socks. Because of this,

Frau Lies won't get any more fish, her net is empty and her cats are starving. The fishermen now have to help Frau Leise to get fish.

Each fisherman is invited to try his luck with Rán. To harvest a fish, he needs to present Rán with a gift of her liking. Each fisherman will get two types of objects before entering alone into the room: candy or either a sock or a spoon (randomly distributed). Each object will provide a different reaction from Rán. Only two of them (candy and socks) will allow the fisherman to get a fish.

If the fisherman is lucky and receives a fish from Rán, the fish – inscribed with a written premonition like a fortune cookie for those who happen to notice it – is given to Frau Leise. She will express her gratitude to the fisher, who is celebrated with his name on a scoreboard.

TIME STRUCTURE FOR MAIN PLOT:

APPROX. PROCEDURE
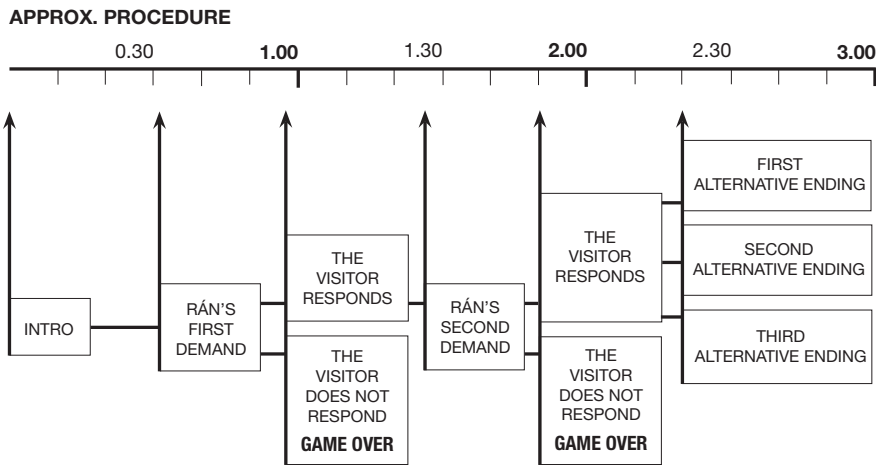
HOUR-BASED TIME CYCLES:

FOYER

One group of visitors gathers every 15 minutes. Each group consists of four visitors.

MAIN VENUE

The visitors enter one by one, efter each other. The first visitor enters after circa three minutes.

ON THE BEACH

The party assembles [in the foyer]

Clotheslines with linen sheets mixed with candy bags move in the breeze. The candy bags are filled with votive candy, socks and spoons (some contain a sock, some a spoon and all are stuffed with candy), and a note with instructions. A scoreboard with a marker is pla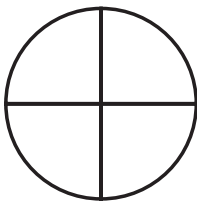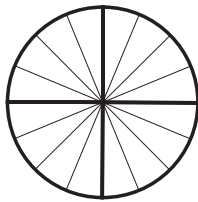ced on the side. Ambient sounds are heard from the waves: playing children, sea gulls, the whinny of a horse, cats meowing, and a rhythmic, pulsating beat in the background. The fishermen gather and takes their seats. The party is on. Frau Lease has a story book from which she reads fragments of distorted fairy tales.

Frau Leise mixes and loops her routines as long as there are visitors left. The lines of Frau Leise are not to be musically composed – they are spoken, and could be freely interpreted and altered to match the accent of the region, but always pronounced with distinctive, rollin r's.

EACH TIME A GROUP OF VISITOR ENTERS

Frau Leise is sitting outside the door. She is knitting a huge net. She hums the tune "Ack, Värmeland" until all visitors are seated.

Ah, I spot some knitty-kitty-knights, rangers of the night, strangers of the storm! Sit down, sitt ned, be seated, sitz! Have some wine-wein-vin-vinn-vinn! Oh no, här finns no wine, vinur min. How rude. Og mit nät är tomt, an empty net of thin air.

Har dere nogen fisk for mit net? Do you have fisky-fish for me? Have you come to save poor Doris and her kitty-cats?

Meows from a prerecorded tape are heard.

Nei-nej-not? But you can get some! There once was a brave knight who fetched a fish for me. I was saved for a longly-lång time. His name was Gäl-Jelly-Galen-Galahad, I think. His name shall always be remembered. Looksy-see!

She points to the board of honor and removes Galahad's name. Then she shakes her head mournfully.

It was last winter we quarrelled, her lowly-lowlyness and I. Ruler-robber, rob-rob-rå. Råder över hav och sjö. Över inopp, förlopp, avlopp, utlopp. It was the great concert and I had to sing:

Frau Leise falls into a trance-like condition, miming to a prerecorded tape.

"Ach, Wasserland, du schöne! Du Katz in meinem Herz!" [sung as 'Ack, Värmeland']

You know the famous anthem, perhaps? Well, I'd hardly finished the first verse, before the goddess of the sea, the queen of cold feet, yelled: "The catter is murdering music! Off with her tail!" She is convinced I stole her socks. And since that, she won't do a thing I ask! The wind is whinnying, the breeze is mewing and my net is empty. Not a single, silvery fish, no sill-sild-silver to live from!

You have to help me get some fish, like Sir Galahad did! I did not murder music, I just sang. Go to her, down through the glassy glass! Then come back with silvery fish for my net and my catsy-Katzen! We are star-star-star-star-starving!

Frau Leise approaches the visitors one by one. Those who decline her request are told to leave.

$\lVert$: Vill-will du help me get some fisky-fish? : $\rVert$

Ni must go to her lowly-lowlyness to get the fisk. She is easily offended, lätt-stött-lättblött. Men med rätt gåva kan hon blidkas. Här finns bags of goods, goodie bags, gift bags. Ta en påse!

She gives the bags to the visitors.

You know, some say that fruit is candy, frukt är godis. But then, candy must be fruit! Godis, det är frukt-frukt-fruktan, it really is!

....

OPTIONAL:

Time it is! What time it is! What is the time? Vet någon vad klockan är? Ett ur, en bur, ren tur? Seit-Zeit-Geist-Gestern! Säg mig vad tiden är! Nå? Hur mycket är den? What is the time?

IF SOMEONE ANSWERS	IF NO ONE ANSWERS
Time to eat!	*She sighs.*
Frau Leise stuffs her mouth while continuing to talk.	Ingen visste gåtans svar, no one could answer the riddle. It flies!

....

Frau Leise falls into a trance-like condition, miming to a prerecorded tape.

Känner du din härskarinna, if you know your mistress well, skal du gi hu what she treasures. Be prepared og var beredd: Gå in. Say ditt navn. Giveth din present till Rána. Gaven tager du fra påsen, hjärtet ditt, hjärtat mitt. Listen noga: Gå in. Say ditt navn. Giveth din present till Rána. Gaven tager du fra påsen. Aus the bag, the bag of fun.

Frau Leise recovers and makes eye contact with the first visitor.

Välj din gåva, din present. For it is in giving that we receive, receive-believe-below. Korrupt? Nei, nej! Korrekt. Ja, ja! Couragous, it works, net-works! Er du bereit? Go inside, deep, deep down. Rán is waiting.*

She ushers the first visitor through the door and closes it, chuckling.

Now, let me tell you a story!

*This line is repeated each time a new visitor is about to enter.

OPTIONAL FAIRYTALE I: THE WARNING [TO BE READ]

Frau Leise reads aloud from her holy book, choosing a random fairytale. When a fisherman gets back from Rán, she disrupts her reading, letting in the next visitor before continuing her story.

Once upon a time, there was a cat who went out to get his net in the oven-warm ocean. Suddenly, a woman's leg appeared in the whipped cream. The cat was stunned, but soon he figured that it must be the goddess of the sea. It was a clever cat – he thought that the leg looked freezing cold and felt sorry for the poor woman with her naked leg. So he grabbed the nice wolly sock that he had played with as a kitten and slipped it over the leg. And then he heard the deep voice of her lowly lowlyness: "Thank you, dear cat, knitty-kitty-knight! To show my gratitude, I will yarn-warn you about the storm I have sent for the clowns, soon about to be dragged from their ship-shop-ships into my realms. Hurry home, and you will survive!" And the cat turned his bycycle around and went home, while the goddess whipped the waves to butter until all the other men where dead and the cake was ready. And then they ate, because wollen socks make a pair of good friends. Long live the compassionate cat! Hail her lowly-lowlyness!

OPTIONAL FAIRYTALE II: THE REVENGE [TO BE READ]

Frau Leise reads aloud from her holy book, chosing a random fairytale. When a fisherman gets back from Rán, she disprupts her reading, ushing in the next before continuing her story.

A beautiful, good-hearted fay was once seduced by a common clown. He overwhelmed her with gifts, the other more precious than the other. One day, She she was given a child, a daughter. But the father was unfaithful and ran of with the circus. He betrayed her and left her with the child. When the funny girl grew up, she sought revenge and punished her cheating father, hanging him from the top of the trapeze and igniting him. However, her fay-mother could not stand such brutal behaviour and cursed her daughter. The funny girl grew scale on her arms and fins for fingers. From that day, she was doomed to live on the bottom of the sea, with only dead sea clowns as company, cought in her net and dragged down from ships. And no one ever noticed her tears, because in the sea, no one can see you crying. May the good-hearted punish the mean! Hail her lowly-lowlyness!

OPTIONAL FAIRYTALE III: THE RESCUE [TO BE READ]

Frau Leise reads aloud from her holy book, chosing a random fairytale. When a fisherman gets back from Rán, she disprupts her reading, ushing in the next before continuing her story.

It was a lovely summer's day, and some horses were playing on the shore. All of a sudden, they noticed the cutest little child on the beach. When they approached it, it lay down so that they could climb up on its back. For each horse, the child grew longer and longer, until they all sat there. Then he arose, and hurried out in the waves to drown the poor horses. A fisherman, a knitty-kitty-knight, who saw them ran after the bad child. He knew that it must be a spirit of the sea, shapeshifting as a cute baby. The only thing he had with him was his most treasured knife. He only hesitated a short while, then he threw the knife, just before the child in the water, because he knew that steel and silver was the only thing stopping the witchcraft of the ocean. And the child stopped and evaporated into foam. The horses were saved but the fisherman died from starvation. Because by offending the powerful, he never ever got any fish from the sea again. Praised be the nice and not the naughty! Hail her lowly-lowlyness!

OPTIONAL FAIRYTALE IV: THE SHARING [TO BE READ]

Frau Leise reads aloud from her holy book, chosing a random fairytale. When a fisherman gets back from Rán, she disprupts her reading, ushing in the next before continuing her story.

There once was a sea-clown, a hard-working man, tending his nets. One day, he came across an old woman, floating on the whipped waves in the salty pie on a Friday night. The woman lied there on her back, her eyes black with hunger, her mouth open as a fish. And she whined like in pain. The clown figured she must be hungry and decided to give a piece of the bread he had with him. "But, no," she cried, bread was what she already had. The dumb clowns coming from the store had already fed the ducks, and now her tummy ached. [howling] "Aaaaaaoooow!!!" "What did she need then?" asked the kind-hearted clown. "Give me cake!" she begged. "If I cannot have bread, cake it must be. As long as there is cake in the world, no one will starve and there will be no wars". And the fisher-clown dropped is net to bake her the most wonderful cake with icing and candles. She ate it in one bit. Her eyes turned green and her mouth shut. "Thank you, my dear," she said. "From now on, I will always be your friend, because friends are made of good stuff, like cake and candy. Nothing can harm you." Long live the generous clown! Hail her lowly-lowlyness!

EACH TIME A VISITOR COMES BACK FROM RÁN

Frau Leise hurries to the entrance to the water realms.

Any fishy-fisk for me? Did you succeed?

IF THE FISHERMAN GOT FISH

Mitt tack, my thanks, ich danke dir! Fisken to my net of silver candy, sea fruit mine!

Dit navn skal pryde ärans lista, list of honor! Give me the fishy-fisk!

She urges the fisherman to write his name on the score board.

IF THE FISHERMAN IS EMPTY- HANDED

Inget for poor me-me-me-me-me?

Ditt navn skal strax bli glömt och borta, ingen skal dig minnes, savne. Forsvinn! Nu! Off with your tail!

IN THE WATER

Rán lurkes in the abyss [in the main venue]

Rán lies hidden like a black rock. The Captain stir up the water with whatever weather he likes. Behind Rán, silvery fish are ready to be caught. Each fish has a small story written on it, telling how the fisher lived for the rest of this days.

The scene is repeated from the top every time a fisherman enters the venue. Rán can alter her mode of vocal expression, moving from singing in head voice to singing in chest voice to speech. Rán moves on to the next mode of expression/line as soon as she gets a reaction fro the fisherman in front of her. If she doesn't get any reaction after singing a line in head voice, she tries the same line, sung in chest voice. If she still doesn't get any reaction, she speaks the line. If she still doesn't get a reaction, the game is over for this time and the visitor must leave.

ACTION	SUNG IN HEAD VOICE **Range:** Bb3–Bb5 **Tessitura:** G4–G5	SUNG IN CHEST VOICE **Range:** Ab3–D5 **Tessitura:** C4–C5	SPOKEN
RÁN'S FIRST DEMAND (one mode after the other with paus for response between)			
A fisherman enters into Rán's realms. Rán app-roaches with the waves.	Välkom! Velkomin in rike-riki-reich des Rans. Ho-ho-ho, who are dju? Vem er du?	Välkom! Velkomin in rike-riki-reich des Rans. Ho-ho-ho, who er dju? Vem er du?	Seigðu me nafnið ditt! Your namne-namen!
THE VISITOR DOES NOT RESPOND (moving across the modes in one gesture without pauses)			
The fisherman doesn't say his name.	Far! Far iväg! Farðu! Farwell!	....	Raus and gå härifrån! Off with their tail!

RÁN'S SECOND DEMAND (one mode after the other with paus for response between)

The fisherman tells Rán his name.	Sweet little krea-tur, söte lille du. I can make your dreams come true! In my dröm-fabrik, zaubern reich des Rans, ðu kan bekom ein star! Vad bringade du for en present for me, a gift för Rana?	Sweet little kreatur, söte lille du. I shall make your dreams come true! In my drömfabrik, zaubern reich des Rans, ðu shall bekom ein star! Vad bringade du for en present for me, a gift för Rana?	Rán vill ha! Give til Rán! Den som ikke gir, skal heller ikke havamal. Do you have a gift for mir? Geschenk präsent, jetzt and now!

THE VISITOR DOES NOT RESPOND (moving across the modes in one gesture without pauses)

The fisherman doesn't give Rán anything.	Far! Far iväg! Farðu! Farwell!	....	Raus and gå härifrån! Off with their tail! ‖

FIRST ALTERNATIVE ENDING: KILLING WAVES

The fisherman gives Rán a sock. Rán becomes content in a sleezy way and begins to play with the sock as a puppet. She gives the fisherman a fish and shows him out as the storm approaches.	En sock-a-whool! Softy-zart und leise. Rana får sån lust å danse över våg och kam. Söte, run before my waves will kill you! Ta en fish und hurry up! Gå! The storm approaches! Take cover!	Ta en fish und hurry up! Gå! The storm app-roaches! Take cover! ‖

SECOND ALTERNATIVE ENDING: RÁN IS HURT

The fisherman gives Rán a piece of metal. Rán turns into a scared, crying little girl, sobbing with tears in her eyes. She shows the fisherman abrubtly to the door.

Shiny! Glansandi! Lille Rana, hu will be dragged down and achored as a wreck. Sölv og silverfisk är hennes baneman. No, no, ingen fish für dich, du katt. Shhh! Gå, before you drunken-drowns and must be put to sleep in Ranas bett, you too.

No, no, ingen fish für dich, du katt. Shhh! Gå, before you drunken-drowns! Off with their tail!

THIRD ALTERNATIVE ENDING: BEST FRIENDS

The fisherman gives Rán some candy. Rán is happy and becomes friendly. She gives the fisherman a fish a bid him a warm farewell.

Söte friend, vinur mine! Best friends do share everything. Do-do-du skal få den största fish, biggest bounty for my frände! Varsågod und far så väl, farðu and take care. Auf wiedersehen!

Varsågod und far så väl, farðu and take care. Auf wiedersehen!

APPENDIX VII:

LIBRETTO FOR CHRONOS' BANK OF MEMORIES

Chronos' Bank of Memories

Ludo-immersive puzzle opera
for soprano, bariton, bass-baritone, live-electronics
and visitors

Libretto by Hedvig Jalhed

MAIN CHARACTERS:

SYLVESTER CHRONOS
Entrepreneur and lover of beautiful things

(LIPO)GRAMMATIC RULE:
Sylvester avoids the personal pronouns I, you, she and he. Furthermore, he adds ghost vowels when speaking.

JULIUS CHRONOS
Gambler and reveller

(LIPO)GRAMMATIC RULE:
Julius forgets, displaces and mix up prepositions and prefixes. He act on impulse, taking chances as he speaks.
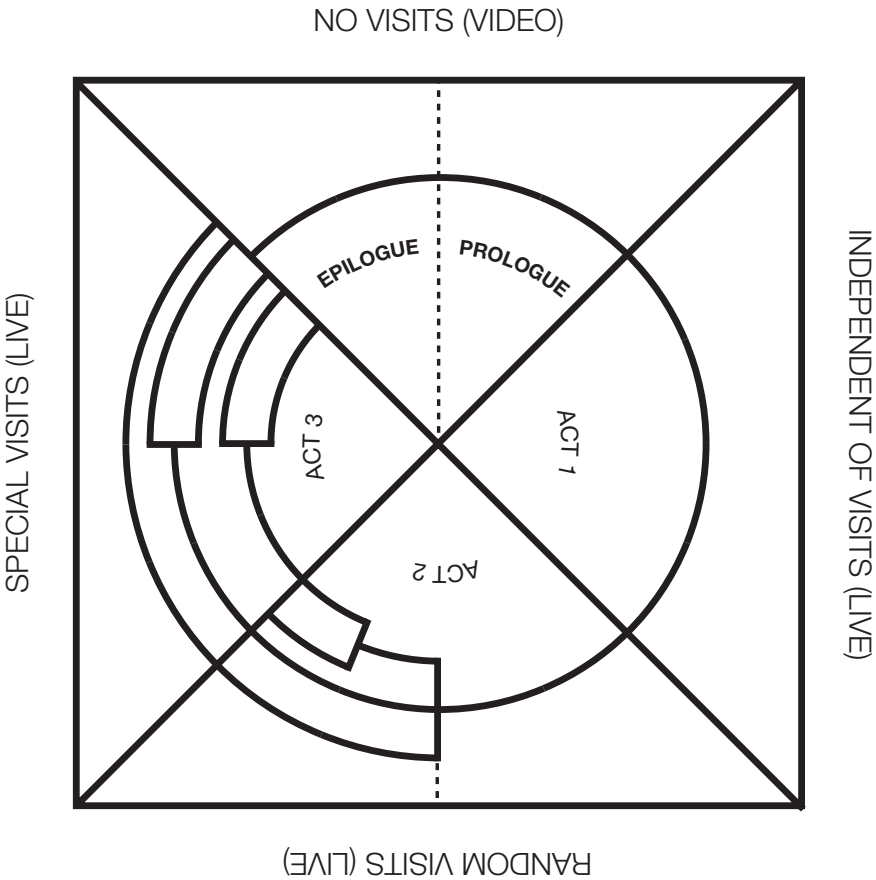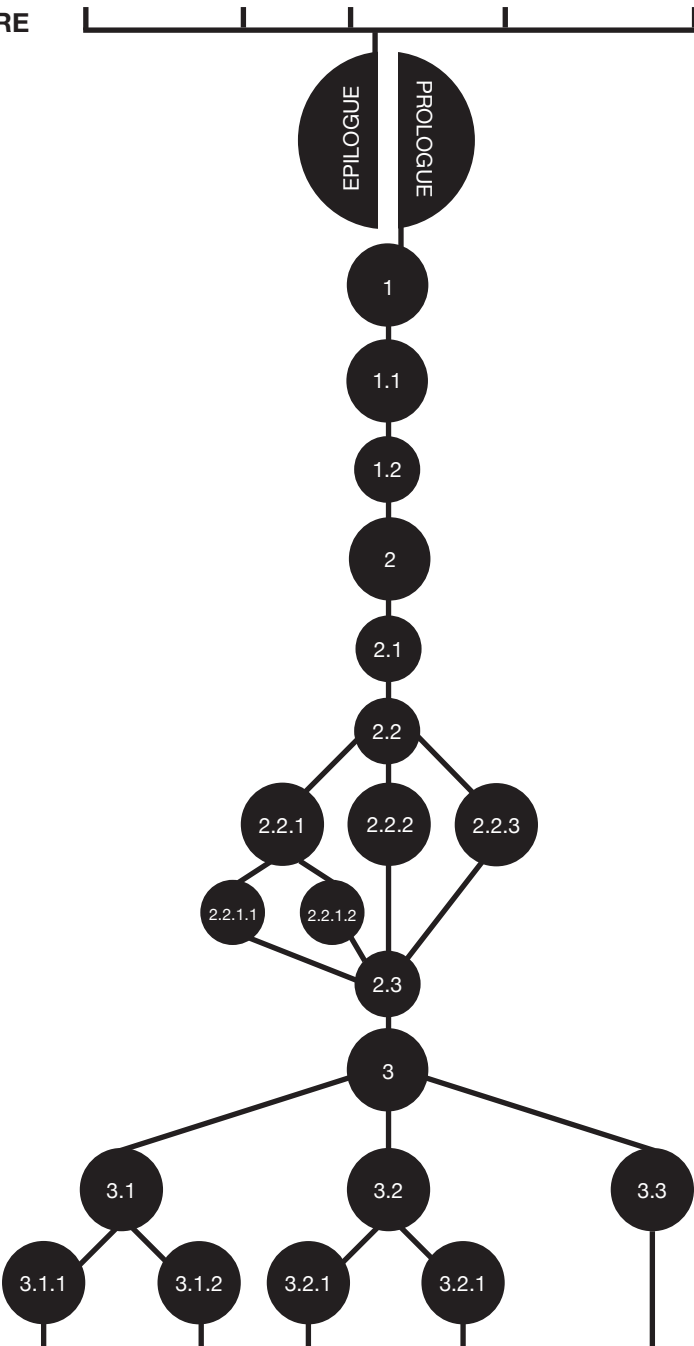
LAETITIA SVENSSON
Flotsam and foundling

(LIPO)GRAMMATIC RULE:
Laetitia avoids adjectives and adverbs. Furthermore, she echoes the one she has her eyes on.

VISIT MAP:

NO VISITS (VIDEO)

SPECIAL VISITS (LIVE)

INDEPENDENT OF VISITS (LIVE)

RANDOM VISITS (LIVE)

PROLOGUE

EPILOGUE

ACT 1

ACT 2

ACT 3

**STRUCTURE
MAP:**

MANUSCRIPT:

EPILOGUE

An echo of a hysterical laughter from Julius peter out. The sun is setting. Sylvester leads Laetitia along the shore.

Speaker:

Sylvester bestämde sig för att ta Laetita med sig
Sylvester decided to take Laetitia with him
och lämna vardagen och härligheten.
and leave the every day life and all its glory.
Tillsammans tog de sig ner till stranden.
Together, they went down to the beach.

Sylvester puts Laetitia down in the sand, sweeps the hair from her face and rubs her feet. He takes out an empty little bottle, holds it to Laetitia's ear and then he fills it with sea water.

Sylvester:

Lae... äh... titia.[1]
Lae... hm... titia.
Drick det röda,
Drink the red,
drick det döda
Drink the dead.
Vänd dig inåt,
Now, turn inwards
spinn ditt nät.
spin your net.

Öppna munnen, låt det rinna,
Open up, now let it all flow,
dränk allt som blev fult och fel.
drown all that turned out so obscene.

Locken täcks utav en hinna
And on your see fungus grow
möjlkig, vit, som av mycel.
milky, white, it's so serene.

Laetitia looks tenderly at Sylvester and caresses his chin.

Laetita:

Gårdag och morgondag. Morgondag. Morgondag.
Future and Yesterday. Yesterday. Yesterday.
Vagga och sarkofag. Sarkofag. Sarkofag.
The cradle does not sway. Does not sway. Does not sway.
Vi går. Vi går.
Let's go. Let's go.

Sylvester:

Detta är inte ett adjö ...
This is not a goodbye...

Laetitia:

'Djö! 'Djö! 'Djö!
'Dbye! 'Dbye! 'Dbye!

Sylvester:

... för endast levande kan dö.
... for only that which lives can die.

When Laetitia has drunken from the bottle, sitting, she is tucked in as a white package by Sylvester who first holds the bottle to his own ear, then fills it up and consumes the sea water.

---

[1] Spoken.

Speaker:

Eftersom hon inte var där, kunde hon inte ge sig av.
Since she was not there, she could not leave.
Och de levde inte lyckliga i alla sina dagar.
And they did not live happily ever after.
De levde inte någon av dem.
They did not live nor before or after.
Om de var lyckliga eller olyckliga gjorde därmed detsamma.
So whether they were happy or unhappy did not matter at all.

Sylvester stands up and wobbles on the shore. He is facing the sunset with Laetitia at his feet. Laetita swoons and falls head first in the sand. The bottle drops from Sylvester's hand. Then, he straightens up and starts to firmly walk out in the water, mouth open, embracing the waves.

Speaker:

Såsom den stackars Sylvester förlorade sitt förflutna,
Just as poor Sylvester lost his past,
och Julius förlorade sitt förstånd,
and Julius lost his mind,
tappade solen sitt huvud över kanten,
the sun lost its head over the edge,
kapat av horisontens giljotin.
cut off by the guillotine of the horizon.

The echoe of Julius' laughter sounds once more.

Och mörkret föll innan det blev morgon igen.
And the night fell before the morning came once again.

PROLOGUE

Sylvester, crapoulous and sandy, lurches along the shore with a shell in his hand.

Speaker:

Här är Sylvester Chronos,
This is Sylvester Chronos,
ute på den uppfriskande morgonpromenad
out on the brisk morning walk.
som han företar varje morgon.
that he sets out for every morning.

Sylvester sees Laetitia, wrapped up in a mess of wihite tissue, half-sitting on the beach. He stops. With his hands forming a frame around the picture, he pretends to snap a photograph of her. He notices that she is about to drink from a bottle with sea water and rushes to her and hits her hard on the head. Then he examines both her and the bottle carefully, rubs her feet and sweeps the hair from her face.

Du har säkert hört att man inte ska dricka havsvatten.
Very likely you've heard that you shouldn't drink sea water.
Troligen har du fått höra om allehanda risker med detta.
Probably you've heard about all kinds of risks that follows with that.
Men att dricka havsvatten medför både fara och potential
However, to drink sea water is connected to both danger and possibilites
av helt annat slag än att salt ger högt blodtryck,
of a wholly different kind than that salt contributes to high blood pressure,

att blodiglar biter sig fast i matstrupen
that leeches attache themselves inside your
esophagus
för att svälta dig inifrån
to starve you from inside
och att tarmbakterier sprider sig
and that intestinal bacteria spread
med strömmar från småbåtshamnen.
with currents from the marina.
Numera är kännedomen om havets kraft
Nowadays, the knowledge about the power
of the sea
bortglömd kunskap.
has been forgotten for generations.
Att dricka våg, som man säger,
To drink wave, as they say,
leder direkt till ungdomens källa,
is a pathway directly to the fountain of
youth,
till utrensning av minnen och arv,
to expurgation of memories and
inheritance,
till att födas på nytt som ett blankt och
oskrivet blad,
to be reborn as an unwritten and blank
slate,
till tid att hälla genom timglaset på nytt.
To getting time to fill up the hour-glass
once more.
Ett mentalt självmord, på gott och ont.
A mental suicide, for better or worse.
Och Sylvester hade just fått en lysande
affärsidé.
And Sylvester just got a brilliant business
idea.

Sylvester starts to drag Laetitia with
him along the beach.

1. EXPURGATION AND PREPARATIONS

Sylvester walks happily around in
the bank until he finds something in
disorder, something that has to be
adjusted.

Sylvester:

Vackra saker! Vackra ting!
Lovely items! Pretty things!
Possession i position!
Possessions in position!
Lystring! Fot! Hit! Stå på tå!
Hark! Foot! Here! On your toes!
Materia ska flyttas på.
Matter shall be moved, displaced.

Julius and Laetitia hear his calling.

Julius:

Ut med det gamla!
Out with the old, now!
In med det gamla!
In with the old, now!
Stäng och regla! Skaka om!
Shut and lock and stir and shake!

Sylvester:

Gammalt är nytt,
Old is the new,
rekonditionerat,
reorganized,
ommålat, lappat och sytt,
We mend, we sew,
helt redigerat.
until revised.
Ospecificerade pärlor av minnen

Unspecified memory, pearl by pearl, binds
i ny kontext, i jungfruliga sinnen.
like lost and found beads planted in virgin
minds.

All three start to rearrange and throw
away bottles and sand.

Sylvester, Julius and Laetitia:

Selektera! Och kassera!
Make a choice! Select! Discard!
Rensa, rena, utrangera!
Purify, clean up the yard!
Minnen blir till sand och grus,
Memories from ash to dust,
för ett fortsatt sus och dus.
helps us live in love and lust!

Julius:

Tiden är konstant!
Time is in here, constantly!
Minnet är kontant!
Memories are currency!

Sylvester:

Är bäst-före-datumet passé?
Is it passed the due-date, dear?
Gör av sörjan en fin, slät purré!
Brew a witch broth, it'll taste like beer.
Bränn souvenirer, gör plats för en
gryning
Dismembrance, remembrance, make room
for a new dawn
som glömskan har tvättat, i bölja och
dyning!
we'll be just like newborns, with nothing
foregone!

Sylvester, Julius and Laetitia:

Selektera! Och kassera!
Make a choice! Select! Discard!
Rensa, rena, utrangera!
Purify, clean up the yard!
Minnen blir till sand och grus,
Memories from ash to dust,
för ett fortsatt sus och dus.
helps us live in love and lust!

1.1 A BOTTLE

1.1 is an optional scene. If Sylvester
don't lays his hands on the particular
bottle, the plot moves on directly to 1.2.

Sylvester finds an especially interesting
bottle.

Sylvester:

Här! En flaska så gnistrande grön,
Here! A bottle, how glittering green,
med en bouquet som ros och violer, så
skön!
its bouquet smells of roses and violets – no
spleen!

Julius och Laetitia:

Låt oss smaka!
Let us taste it!
Vi prövar!
Let's try!
Är buteljen ej utlöst,
There's no one to claim it,
vi ingen berövar.
it is our supply.

Laetitia:

'Var! 'Var!
'Ply! 'Ply!

Sylvester drinks from the bottle, his eyes closed.

Sylvester:

Den möter min tunga mousserande våt.
It waters my tongue, oh, how sparklingly wet
Och vänta, nu minns jag en mun som jag åt.
And, wait, I remember a sweet-heart I met.

Julius bluntly takes the bottle from Sylvester and pours its content all over himself.

Julius:

Vaska vätskan! På mig! I mig!
Sink the liquor! On me! In me!
Under, på läppen! Jag spiller ut!
Under the lip! Oh! It's nothing to save!
Slickar från golvet ...
Licking the floor ...

Sylvester:

Min broder, vet hut!
My brother, behave!

Julius:

Munnen smet bort!
The mouth got away!
Åh, var är den? Hitta minnet! Döda det!
Oh, where is it? Find the memory! Kill it!

Julius gets slapped in the face by Sylvester and they return to putting everything in the bank in order.

Sylvester, Julius and Laetitia:

Selektera! Och kassera!
Make a choice! Select! Discard!
Rensa, rena, utrangera!
Purify, clean up the yard!
Minnen blir till sand och grus,
Memories from dust to dust,
för ett fortsatt sus och dus.
helps us live in love and lust!

1.2 COMPLETION

Sylvester admires the result.

Sylvester:

Så prydligt! Så nätt!
How tidy! How nice!
Så städat! Så rätt!
All comes with a price.
Vackra saker! Vackra ting!
Lovely items! Pretty things!
En värld av pur glädje, av ren härlighet.
A world of pure joy and of absolute bliss.

Laetitia:

'Het! 'Het! Ah!
'Ry! 'Ry! Ah!

Sylvester:

Äh... Lediga![2]
Hm... At ease!

---

[2] Spoken.

2. EXPOSITION

Sylvester, Julius and Laetita are hanging around in the bank of memories, all three occupied with their own routines and habits, until the door open and one or more visitors enter the venue. Laetitia starts to follow the guests as a mimicking shadow.

2.1 THE TOUR

Sylvester sniffs and inhales the scent of a potential costumer in the bank.

Sylvester:

Julius! Laetitia! Assistance[3], äh!
Julius! Laetitia! Assistance, hm, please!

He turns to the visitor.

Lider, äh, den, äh, av oönskad hågkomst, äh?
Does it, hm, suffer from unwanted, hm, reminiscence, hm?
Är, äh, lagret, äh, fullt, äh? Är skallen, äh, tung, äh?
Is it, hm, overloaded, hm? Does, hm, the skull, hm, weighs heavy?

Sylvester gives the visitor a moment to respond.

Sediment från svunnen tid,
Sediment from times that passed,
krossad gnejs och mald granit,
grains of sand and ash to dust,
ruttna släktband, spott och spe,
failed relations, mockery,

---
³ Pronounced as in French.

pinsamheter, ack och ve!
awkwardness and treacheary!
Rinner, äh, sanden i timglaset, äh, ut, äh?
Is the, hm, hour-glass, about, hm, to be, hm, emptied?
Håller livet, äh, på att ta slut, äh?
Is, hm, life, hm, coming to, hm, an end, hm?

Selektera! Och kassera!
Make a choice! Select! Discard!
Rensa, rena, utrangera!
Purify, clean up the yard!
Samla tid i portmonnän!
Store some spare time! Cheers! Salute!
Bli pånyttfödd, ge sig hän!
Treat your self! A nice reboot!
Endast levande kan dö.
Only that which lives may die.
Är det dags att ta adjö?
Is it time to say good bye?
Eller öppna upp för nytt?
Or to open up your mind?
Ta en munfull! Bytt är bytt!
Take a sip! Erase! Rewind!

Ska något, äh, sättas, äh, in, äh?
Is, hm, something to be, hm, deposited, hm?
Eller kanske, äh, få en ny ägare, äh?
Or, perhaps, hm, to get, hm, a new owner, hm?
Har den, äh, gjort allt, äh, som den ska, är den mätt, äh?
Has it done, hm, everything that it, hm, should, is it full, hm?
Kunden, den har alltid rätt, äh!
The custumer, hm, it is always right, hm!

Sylvester, Julius and Laetitia:

Endast levande kan dö.
Only that which lives may die.
Är det dags att ta adjö?
Is it time to say good bye?

Eller öppna upp för nytt?
Or to open up your mind?
Ta en munfull! Bytt är bytt!
Take a sip! Erase! Rewind!

Sylvester:

Söta, äh, saker, äh! Sköna, äh, ting, äh!
Pretty, hm, things, hm, and lovely, hm.
items, hm!
Till priset av, äh, endast några minuter,
kanske, äh, en dag!
Does, hm, not cost, hm, more than some
minutes, hm, or, hm, a day!
Sitt här, sitt ned! Se, vårt digra sortiment
Sit here, sit down! Such assortment, oh, alas,
av sådant som har skett och hänt!
such richness of things that has passed!

Sylvester displays a variety of
memories, assisted by Julius and
Laetitia.

Får det, äh, vara en ljuspunkt, äh, i
mörkret, äh?
Might I offer, hm, some light in the dark, hm?
Eller, äh, lite svärta, äh, mitt i all
präktighet, äh?
Or, hm, some obscurity in all, hm, the
sparkling, hm, splendour, hm?

Julius:

Subtrahera! Och addera!
Subtract, add and multiply
Panta mera och radera!
in this pawn shop on the fly!

Sylvester:

Slut en pakt mot tidens tand!
Make a fool of the good old boatswain.

Lehte smeker lilla hand.
Turn the ferry, wash the brain.
Få tillbaks minuter, dagar,
Get some minutes in return,
glöm det som ej den behagar.
clean up the filth and make it burn.
Här erbjuds selektiv amnesi
We offer amesia with precision.
medelst skarp och precis minneskirurgi.
We're true to your memoriabilia vision.

Sylvester, Julius and Laetitia:

Endast levande kan dö.
Only that which lives may die.
Är det dags att ta adjö?
Is it time to say good bye?
Eller öppna upp för nytt?
Or to open up your mind?
Ta en munfull! Bytt är bytt!
Take a sip! Erase! Rewind!

Sylvester:

Tid är plats och plats är tid.
Time is space and space is time.
Materia kan flyttas på.
Matter can be moved, displaced.

Laetitia:

'Spå! Spå!
'Laced! 'Laced!

Sylvester:

Vackra irrbloss!
Dear, sweet anonymous!
Det är livet som dödar oss.
There is nothing but life that kills us.

2.2 CONVERSATION

2.2–2.3 concerns random visits. In the case of special visits, the plot moves directly from 2.1 to 3 without going through 2.2 and 2.3.

If the visitor is still left, Sylvester, sniffing with delight, approaches her or him to start a conversation.

Fixing the potential customer with his hyponotic gaze, he politely asks whether the guest would like to deposit a memory or, perhaps, would like to buy something special.

Together with Julius, he displays bottles with memories, makes up offers and haggles.

2.2.1 DEPOSIT

If the customer wants to make a deposit, her or his chosen memory is extracted through the visitor's ear and stuffed into a bottle. A receipt with the given amount of time is handed over together with at measured bag of time-sand.

Sylvester:

En insättning!
A desposit!

Julius:

En omsättning på oss!
A reposit on us!

Sylvester:

Tackar, tackar, och lycka till med tiden!
My gratitude, and good luck with the time!

Laetitia:

Med tiden, tiden!
With time, time!

2.2.1.1 STORAGE

Julius takes the bottle and puts it away on the shelf.

2.2.1.2 WASTE

If the memory seems to be an exciting one, Julius takes the bottle and as he thinks that nobody is watching him, he gulps the deposited memory and starts to reenact it as a pantomime. Sylvester rushes to get the customer's attention away from his embarrasing brother.

2.2.2 PURCHASE

If she or he instead wishes to buy a certain memory, the chosen bottle is given in return for a meausured out sample of time-sand and a receipt with the withdrawn time is handed over.

Sylvester:

Ett köp! Se här, dess elixir!
A purchase! Behold, its elixir!

Julius:

Ett inmärkt val!
A splendid choice!

Laetitia:

Märkt val!
'Did choice!

Sylvester:

Öppna munnen, öppna sinnet! Vi öns-
kar den kommer åter.
*Open the mouth, open the mind! We wish
it comes back.*

2.2.3 DEAD END

If the customer does not respond and
ignores Sylvester's efforts to make
a deal, it is time to back off and put
everything back the way it was.

Sylvester:

Den är tyst? Den är döv? Den är död!?!
No!
It is still? It is deaf? It is dead!?! No!
Är den stum? Eller saknar den vett?
Is it dumb? Has it not any manners? Ah non!
In kryper den nu i sitt exoskelett.
It crawls back into its exosceleton.
Och våra skatter må vi spara.
And we will save our treasures.

2.3 EXIT

When the costumer is about to leave,
Laetitia follows her or him to the door,
but does not exit together with her or
him.

Laetitia:

Ha en fortsatt dag![4]
Have a day!

Sylvester:

Endast levande kan dö.
Only that which lives may die.
Är det dags att ta adjö?
Is it time to say good bye?
Eller öppna upp för nytt?
Or to open up your mind?
Ta en munfull! Bytt är bytt!
Take a sip! Erase! Rewind!
Vackra irrbloss!
Dear, sweet anonymous!
Det är livet som dödar oss.
There is nothing but life that kills us.

Sylvester, Julius and Laetitia returns
to whatverer they were doing before
the visitor entered, or they turn their
attention to another guest if there are
more visitors present.

3. REVELATIONS

2.2–2.3 concerns random visits. In
the case of special visits, the plot
moves directly from 2.1 to 3 without
going through 2.2 and 2.3. (Visitors'
lines are always approximate and the
conversations can in a musical score
be notated as empty boxes.)

Sylvester, sniffing with delight,
approaches the visitor to start a
conversation. Fixing the potential
costumer with his hyponotic gaze, he
politely asks whether the guest would
like to deposit a memory or, perhaps,
would like to buy something special.

Sylvester gives the visitor a moment to
respond.

---

[4] Spoken.

3.1 THE REAPER (A VISITOR FOR SYLVESTER)

The visitor:

Jag har kommit för din skull.
I have come here for your sake.
Din tid är kommen.
You're time is up.
Du måste bli fri från henne där.
You have brake free from her over there.

The visitor points at Laetitia.

Sylvester:

Fri, äh..? Nej, jag är så fri jag kan bli.
Free, hm..? Well, I am as free as can be.

The visitor:

Hon håller dig bunden här.
She keeps you tied up here.
Men du ska få en chans att visa att jag har fel.
But you'll get one chance to prove me wrong.
Vi spelar ett spel. Sten, sax, påse.
Let's play a game. Rock, paper, scissors.

Sylvester:

En ... äh... affärsman. Ingen spelare.
A... hm... a bussiness man. No gambler.
Händerna används inte till sådant.
These hands will not be used for such things.

He puts his hands resolutely in his pockets, but at the same time, Laetitia sneaks up, putting her arms through his from behind, as if her hands were his. Sylvester appears to have become a puppet.

The visitor:

Bäst av tre.
Best out of three.

They play the game until one of them has won three times and Sylvester is either victorious or defeated.

3.1.1 VICTORY

Sylvester with Laetitia's voice:

Jag stannar där jag är.
I will stay where I am.
I mitt hjärta flyter havet.
The sea runs right here through my heart.
Här är centrum, här är navet.
Here's the bulls-eye for the dart.
Munnen öppnas som en malström,
The mouth is open like a vortex,
ändå är den tyst och stum.
but, however, voiceless, mute.
Ingen av oss är här just nu
None of us is present with you
men vi vann och därför ...
but we won and therefore ...

... stannar jag där jag är.
I will stay where I am.
I mitt hjärta flyter havet.
The sea runs right here through my heart.
Här är centrum, här är navet.
Here's the bulls-eye for the dart.

Laetitia loosens her grip and she and Sylvester turns inwards until they face eachother, holding eachother's hands.

Laetitia and Sylvester:

Se, spegeln som visar det vackraste glitter,
Look, see, how the mirror shows sequins of light.
ytan som döljer allt flytande järn,
Under the surface runs hot, liquid chrome
rykande lava, fossiler och splitter.
smoky, black magma, bones, fossils, white bright.
Äggula lijlor mot botten tar spjärn.
Lilies of egg-yolk, don't look at the dome.

Julius breaks in and takes Laetitia away to distract her. She becomes all passive again.

Sylvester:

Den stannar där den är.
I will stay where I am.
I dess hjärta flyter havet.
The sea runs right here through my heart.
Här är centrum, här är navet.
Here's the bulls-eye for the dart.

Julius approaches the visitor.

Julius:

Ingången är där och det är nog dags att gå ut.[5]
The entrance is there and its time to exit.
Ha en fortsatt trevlig dag!
Have a pleasant day!

He follows the visitor to the door.

---

[5] Spoken.

3.1.2 DEFEAT

Laetitia's hands cut through Sylvester's chest like with an invisible dagger. Sylvester twitches and screams. He staggers and puts his (Laetitia's) hands on his heart.

Sylvester with Laetitia's voice:

Spelet är över och döden är lagen.
The game is over and death is in order.

Laetitia laughs and cries. They fight and then switch places.

Laetitia with Sylvester's voice:

Se ... äh... vad du fick mig att göra!
Look, hm... what you made me do!

Sylvester finally breaks loose from Laetitia and throws her to the floor to strangle her. He stands up, continues to press his hands to his heart and whimpers.

Sylvester:

Den dolde sitt ruttnande kött
It covered its rottening flesh
med pärlor, med sammetsbrokad.
with pearls and with velvet brocade.
Parfymerad, den luktade sött,
Perfumed, it smelled if it was fresh,
men liljornas gulnade blad,
but all petals started to fade.
de luckrades upp i det blöta.
They were now dissolving in tears, oh!

Där fanns alla stenar, all vit pärlemor
There were gems and jewelry and mother-of-pearl,

I hemmet där vi levde och fortsatt bor
a home for a boy and a shadowy girl,
Gardiner av sammet, en guldbur så trygg
with curtains of velvet, a safe golden cage
en pojke som lekte och aldrig var stygg.
for one little boy trapped in juvenile age.

En hand som aldrig släppte, ett skal som
limmats fast
*A hand that never let go, a shell glued hard
to the skin*
med skärvor som skar inåt, så skönt och
hårt och vasst.
*with slivers cutting inwards they fondly
scratched the skull.*

Sylvester sinks to the floor and cries all
over Laetitia's seemingly lifeless body.
Julius cover them both with a blanket.

Julius:

Ditt uppdrag är infört, utfört, slutfört.
Farväl.[6]
*Your mission is replete, complete, deplete.
Farewell.*

He follows the visitor to the door.

3.2 THE SFINX (A VISITOR FOR JULIUS)

The visitor:

Jag söker en spelare, har ni en sådan här?
*I'm here for a gambler, do you have one of
those?*

Sylvester:

Det har vi. Julius, kom hit!
Yes, we do. Julius, come here!

Julius appears.

The visitor:

Jag är här för att ge dig en extra chans.
I'm here to give you an extra chance.
Låt oss spela ett spel.
Let's play a game.
Du älskar väl spel?
You do love games, right?

Julius:

Alla spel. Men inte schack.
All games, but not chess.

The visitor:

Vad sägs om en gissningstävling?
What about a guessing game?
Kan du gissa rätt ska du få sanningen i
present av mig.
*If you can guess right, you'll get a present
from me.*

The visitor shows an item to Julius,
then moves it behind her or his back.
Now Julius gets to guess which hand
holds the object. If he is right, he is
given a dreadful memory, whispered
to his ear by the visitor. If not, he is
dissapointed that he did not succeed.

---

[6] Spoken.

3.2.1 SUCCESS

Julius:

Åh, nej, nej, nej, nej. Vad har jag gjort!?!
Försvinn!
Oh, no, no, no, no. What have I done!?!
Begone!

Laetitia:

Svinn, vinn, vinn!
Gone, gone, gone!

Julius:

Jag fick en karta på min hand
I was given a map on my hand
och befann mig långt bort
and travelled the world far away
när du spolades i, på vår strand.
when you were beached here on the land.
Inte minsta ett sandkorn var torrt.
You were all out there in the bay.

Inget landskap var just som kartan,
No territory was like my old map,
även när det försökte efterlikna
even if some tried to imitate it
var det platt och torrt och kargt.
it was flat and dry and dull.
Men så såg jag dig.
Then I saw you.

Att se i dig är att som att drunkna.
To look at you is like drowning.
Och jag ville där sjunka i botten och dö.
And I wanted to sink there into the bottom
and die.
För endast den som dör kan återfödas
For only those who die can be reborn
jag kunde bli en kyckling med ett nät av
guld.

And I could be a chicken on a net of gold.
Skum som spunnen maräng,
Foam of white whipped meringue,
krossade vingar.
wings, crushad and smashed.
Att se i dig är att som att drunkna.
To look at you is like drowning.
Jag vill inte se dig numer.
Don't want to see you, anymore.
Att se i dig är att som att drunkna.
To look at you is like drowning.
Och tårar av syra ska skydda mitt inre.
And tears of sweet acid shall guard my soft
mollusk.

Julius turns away and destroys his own
eyes, bleeding, howling with pain and
crying without tears. Sylvester ushes
the visitor away. Laetitia puts a hand
on the visitor's shoulder, following her
or him towards the door.

Laetitia:

Ha en fortsatt dag!
Have a day!

The visitor exits.

3.2.2 FAILURE

Julius laughs violently.

Där fanns ingenting!
There's nothing at all!
Och du är här för att förnedra mig.
And you are just bullying me.
Jag spelar hur mycket jag vill.
I will play as much as I want.
När jag vill, vad jag vill.
When I want, what I want.

För jag har gjort rätt till mig, tjänat och ordnat.
'Cause I have been righteous, I've served and I've worked.
Stått under disken, förättat mitt värv.
Stand by the counter and been a good sport.
"Vad önskas? Jo, tackar. Ska ske! Javisst! Nu! Med det samma!
"What can I do for you? One moment! Please! Now! Right away!
Tack och adjö! Välkommen åter!"
Thank you, good bye! And welcome back!"

Laetita:

Ha en fortsatt dag!
Have a day!

Julius:

Men dumma spel om dumma ting
But stupid games 'bout stupid things
är inget för mig.
are nothing for me.
Där fanns ingenting!
There's nothing at all!
Smulad som sand.
Crushed like sand.
Där fanns ingenting! Där fanns ingenting!
There's nothing at all! There's nothing at all!

Julius continues to laugh hysterically and Sylvester makes him sit down.

Sylvester:

Äh... 'rsäkta. Den ... äh... har problem med ... äh... intaget.[7]
Hm... my apologies. It has... hm... some issues with its... hm... intake.

Sylvester takes out a small purse with fine sand and gives it to the visitor.

Här! Tid för dess tid och dess obehag!
Here! Some time for its time and discomfort!

Laetitia:

'sobehag, 'sobehag! Ah!
'iscomfort, 'iscomfort! Ah!

Sylvester leads the visitor to the door.

3.3 THE RAT CATCHER (A VISITOR FOR LAETITIA)

The visitor:

Jag söker en kvinna, inlindad i vitt.[8]
I am looking for a woman, all wrapped up in white.

Sylvester:

Vi har nog en sådan. Vad gäller saken?
We do have one of them. What is it about?

The visitor:

Jag är här för att hämta henne. Hon hör inte hemma här.[9]
I am here to take her with me. She does not belong here.

Laetitia:

Hemma här! Hemma här!
Long here! Long here!

---

[7] Spoken.

[8] Spoken.
[9] Spoken.

Sylvester:

Nej! Säg inte mera! Försvinn nu! Se så!
No! Shut up! Be quiet! Get on with your life!
Jag skänker dig flaskor, de bästa jag har,
Look! Here are some bottles, the best of them all.
med minnen av kärlek och fornstora da'r!
They're full of sweet memories of love over all!

The visitor turns to Laetitia and hands her a memory.

The visitor:

Kom med mig. Du är inte deras. Inte längre. Vi går.[10]
Come with me. You're not theirs to keep. No longer. Let's go.

Laetita:

Vi går. Vi går.
Let's go. Let's go.
Gårdag och morgondag. Morgondag. Morgondag.
Morning and yesterday. Yesterday. Yesterday.
Vagga och sarkofag. Sarkofag. Sarkofag.
The cradle does not sway. Does not sway. Does not sway.
Två ägg i skärvor, lagade med kintsugi, varsitt nät av gula.
Two eggs in slivers, mended both with kintsugi, wrapped with nets of yoke.
En unge föll ur boet, med nätet som en segerhuva.
One chick fell from the nest, his net was like a glowing caul.
Jag stängde buren om den som var kvar,
I closed the cage 'round the one that was left

---

och spann liksom en duva.
he lived there as my doll.

Laetitia purrs like a dove until the sound turns into a motor's soft roar, like the even spinning of a machine.

Jag växer ur mitt skal. Ur mitt skal. Ur mitt skal.
I have outgrown my shell. Grown my shell. Grown my shell.
Kläcks, vaknar, som en mal. Som en mal. Som en mal.
Hatched, crawling from my well. From my well. From my well.
Vi går. Vi går.
Let's go. Let's go.

Julius:

Laetitia! Lyssna inte! Gå inte!
Laetitia! Do not listen! Don't go!
Det ska vara jag som går, inte du.
It should be me walking out, not you.

Laetitia:

Inte du.
Not you.

Julius:

Stanna i mig, åh, jag ber dig,
Stay in me, please, oh, I beg you!
Jag är ett irrbloss och du är min lykta
I am but no one, but your light will guide me
Stormen piskar mig från hamn till hamn.
Tempests whip me and give me no peace.
Det ska vara jag som går, inte du.
It should be me walking out, not you.

Låt mig försvinna!
Let me be gone, please!
Laetitia! Laetitia! Detta är hemma!
Laetitia! Laetitia! This is home!

Laetitia:

...ma, ma, ma, ma![11]
...ome, om, om, om!

The visitor:

Hon heter inte Laetitia.[12]
Her name is not Laetitia.

Laetitia:

'Titia! 'Titia!
Titia! Titia!

Julius sinks to the floor and Sylvester rushes to his side. Laetitia twirls repeatedly around her own axis. The visitor walks out of the bank. Laetita follows, humming a tune. When they have come out, Sylvester runs after to fetch Laetita by force. The visitor disappears.

---

[11] Ad infinitum, until the visitor breaks in.
[12] Spoken.

BASIC INSTRUCTIONS FOR VISITORS:

THE REAPER

Your mission is to set Sylvester Chronos free from the ghost of his mother. He will find your visit disturbing, and you can either win or loose.

- Find Sylvester Chronos, owner of the bank.
- Tell him that you are there for his sake, to set him free.
- Tell him that the lady in white (who is present in the bank) is holding him back. (Sylvester is going to protest.)
- Offer to give him a chance to get rid of you by playing a game of rock, paper and scissors. If he wins, you will leave him be. (Sylvester will be reluctant to play with you.)
- Persist and tell him to play, best out of three.
- Play the game.
- Attend while Sylvester, by him self, is either set free or becomes more deeply attached to the lady in white.

THE SFINX

Your mission is to offer Julius Chronos an opportunity to face the horrible truth that he is in fact in love with the ghost of his own mother.

- Ask the owner of the bank for a gambler.
- Tell the gambler that you are there to give him an extra chance in life, if he is willing to play a game with you.
- Wait for his answer (which will be positive).
- Suggest a guessing game and promise him to tell him a truth if he wins over you.
- Take an item tha fits in the palm of your hand. Show it to the gambler. Then hide it and move the hands behind your back. Put your closed fists in front of him and let him guess what hand holds the object.
- Show him if he was right or wrong. If he is right, tell him the truth.
- Attend while he reacts to the result.

THE RAT CATCHER

Your mission is to lure the woman in white with you, away from the bank. She his not aware of the fact that she is hold as a prisoner, since she is a ghost who has lost her memory.

- Ask the owner of the bank for a lady, all wrapped up in white. (He will confirm that she is there.)
- Tell him that she doesn't belong there and that you are there to take her with you. (The bank owner will protest.)
- Turn to the woman and tell her that she's not theirs and ask her to come along with you.
- Attend while she expresses her process.
- Attend while the other man, her lover, expresses his panic.
- When the woman seems to start to repeat her self like a broken record, tell them all that her name is not Laetitia.
- Start to walk out.

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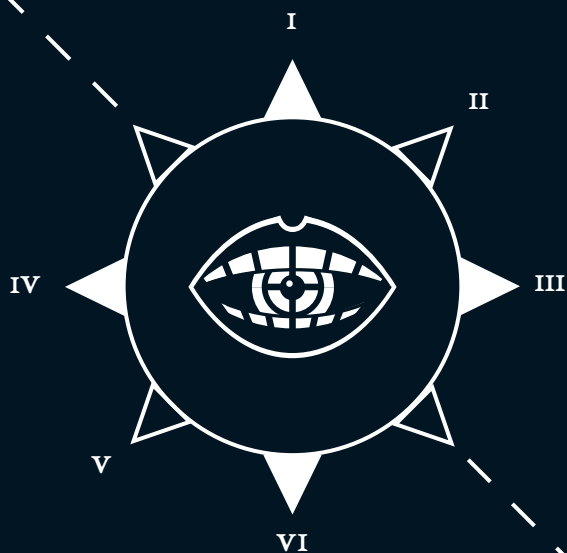ISBN: 978-91-8009-209-8 (digital version)

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I

II

III

IV

V

VI

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