**English Abstract**

From the librettist's perspective, the traditional, linear working methods which tend to dominate in the creation of new music drama, often result in a situation where the initial intentions are lost along the way. How can we get away from a rigid methodology, where the different professionals involved in the creation of new music drama have to succumb to a procedure which can be likened to a kind of *whispering game*? A procedure, where the dramatic content, rather than undergoing an *emotional enrichment* in its *transformation* into music, often loses the crucial connections to the initial intentions.

This doctoral project aims to reach beyond the *whispering game* by seeking alternative working methods in the creation of a new music drama with the working title *Borderlands*, circling around the subject matter of flight and borders - inner as well as outer. Borrowing from the terminology of Martin Buber, the research identified cross-border methods which helped to transform the drama into *vocal and instrumental acting*, in order to counteract the "I–It" relationship that often results from the genre's focus on virtuosity. The results from this endeavor might inspire further attempts to find alternative working methods which could ultimately create a stronger "I–Thou" relationship between the musical dramatic performance and the audience.

With the help of malleable *text and music sketches* from the music drama in progress and supported by phenomenological thinking about *intentionality* as a basic mechanism in the search for meaning, five workshops - lasting sixteen days in total - were conducted in collaboration with a composer, two opera singers and five instrumentalists. The exploration revolved around how the singers and instrumentalists can convey the development of the dramatic content using their own vocal and musical expressions, while maintaining a *common intentionality*.

A set of new tools was generated as well as a new vocabulary to facilitate communication between the librettist and composer and the participating singers and instrumentalists, such as *the emotional figured bass*, *the terrain map*, *basic exploration*, *layout in the room*, *the transformation navigator*, *physical poetry*, *emotional gesticulation*, *vocal acting*, *instrumental acting*, *emotional and associational rooms*, *chorus boxes* and *the third image*.

By using these tools, the work could be kept "unfinished" (i.e. where the content is not yet determined in a fixed score) and dramaturgically malleable late into the working process. The "unfinished" seems necessary in order to accommodate and integrate multiple *loops of*

*transformation* between drama, text, voice and music and opens up possibilities for reaching beyond *the whispering game,* thus avoiding a situation where the music drama too soon becomes an "It" in relation to a recipient "I".

In this project, the transformation from drama to music occurs through *reciprocal processes* that depend on the creation of a *common intentionality,* creating possibilities for *synergies* and *synesthetic connections* to form throughout the exploration. Selected results from the practical exploration can then be integrated into the continued writing and composition process. Furthermore, the transformation process seems to be promoted and facilitated when the communication between the librettist, the composer and the participating singers and instrumentalists occurs through the use of a *third image*. This image is neither constituted by the text nor the music, but can be described as an underlying plastic image in which the content of a scene or another given part of the drama is transformed into a concrete event unfolding in time. A moving image that the participants can both be present in together, as well as explore at their own pace, when they combine the exploration of notated material with musical improvisations. It also allows them to use their own musical expressions during an exploratory improvisation without losing their footing, in a way similar to how a blind man uses his cane as he progresses through partially unexplored terrain, that is, as an extension of his own senses (an image used by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception*).

The working methods used, made it possible to move between *identification* and *distance* on the basis of the affects of the musical drama, rather than adhering to the Aristotelian notion of continuous representation. This, in turn, opened up dramaturgical possibilities where expressions that can be seen as *postdramatic* proved valuable, even though we worked with both drama and text. A finding which, if developed further, eventually could give rise to unexpected hybrid forms of musical drama.

The conclusions and the thinking that have resulted from the practical exploration have been examined in more detail in the text "The blind man's cane. Searching for the methods of enlivening". But after that phase, which was largely collective and focused on sound, the question of the librettist's perspective in the collective exploration arose. The question led me to take a closer look at my own subjective experience of the research process using *fiction* as a method.

In the narrative "Searching for *Borderlands.* An opera expedition (dreamed)" - I have transformed my experience of the research process into a fictive journey where two ragged

figures, Donna Q and Donna P, embark on a joint opera expedition to search for alternative methods to create an opera. Through an expressionistic, sometimes absurd, sometimes poetic story in various transformations, the "Opera self" is set free in her search for a way to enliven and simultaneously document the subjective aspects of the winding path of the artistic research process.

The conclusions of trying to work with a common *intentionality* in the creation of new music drama are far from unambiguous. But on the horizon a vision hovers which, in its utmost consequence, is ethical and concerns the ability of the human voice to reach the other with its emotional content. About vulnerability that meets vulnerability. About overcoming loneliness. And about mutual vulnerability to the potential violence of the other.