

SOME ETHNOGRAPHIC REMARKS ON THE COMMUNICATION OF OPERA HOUSES WITH THEIR AUDIENCES AND THE PUBLIC IN THE MULTIETHNIC AREAS OF ISTRIA, TRIESTE, CARINTHIA AND STYRIA THROUGH OPERA PROGRAMMES

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the role, practices and strategies of opera houses located in specific multiethnic areas of the northeastern Adriatic and of the Austrian province of Carinthia in representing the multicultural social structure of their cities, environments, regions and national settings. Before giving a brief ethnographic account of what kind of specificity and particularity might have been reserved for the opera companies located in the selected multiethnic regions, some conceptual remarks on how the contemporary opera house is a culturally performed institution and a socially enacted venue are elaborated upon. Further, it is demonstrated by using an ethnographic approach, how three opera companies located in multiethnic areas with officially-acknowledged minority groups, such as those in Klagenfurt (Austria), Trieste (Italy) and Rijeka (Croatia), represent the multicultural status of their towns and regions. Finally, in comparison to these three cases, a description of two opera companies, in Maribor (Slovenia) and Graz (Austria), are presented as good examples of how a musical theatre can openly communicate with multiethnic audiences and the public.

Key Words: opera house, audience, ethnicity, nationhood, communication, cultural migration, multiculturalism

ALCUNE OSSERVAZIONI DI CARATTERE ETNOGRAFICO IN MERITO ALLA COMUNICAZIONE DEI TEATRI LIRICI CON GLI SPETTATORI E IL PUBBLICO ATTRAVERSO LA SCELTA DEL PROGRAMMA IN CARTELLONE NELLE AREE MULTIETNICHE IN ISTRIA, TRIESTE, CARINZIA E STIRIA

SINTESI

Nell'articolo vengono analizzati il ruolo, le modalità e la strategia dei teatri lirici operanti nelle specifiche aree multietiche del Adriatico nordorientale e della Carinzia austriaca nella rappresentazione della struttura pluriculturale delle loro città, regioni e realtà nazionali. Innanzitutto vengono presentati alcuni concetti secondo cui oggi l'ente operistico è un'istituzione di performance culturale complessa e luogo di rappresentazione dei diversi ruoli sociali. Segue una breve presentazione di carattere etnografico delle specificità e caratteristiche peculiari degli enti lirici nelle aree multietiche prescelte. Attraverso un approccio di tipo etnografico vengono presentati tre teatri lirici che operano in aree multietiche con presenza di minoranze ufficialmente riconosciute (Klagenfurt in Austria, Trieste in Italia e Fiume in Croazia) e verificato in quale misura – soddisfacente o carente – questi enti riflettono la natura interculturale e multiculturale dell'ambiente in cui operano. Successivamente si confrontano la loro immagine pubblica e la loro strategia di comunicazione con l'immagine e l'attività dell'Opera di Maribor (Slovenia) e di Graz (Austria), affermatesi grazie alla capacità di comunicare in modo costruttivo ed aperto con il pubblico multietnico che le frequenta.

Parole chiave: teatro d'opera, spettatori, etnicità, identità nazionale, comunicazione, migrazione culturale, multiculturalismo

ANTHROPOLOGICAL OVERTURE*

True understanding and documenting of the social processes of cultural production requires ethnographic fieldwork. Practising fieldwork is of course, not the only tool for scholarly work with the worlds of art, music and culture, and can be usually combined with other qualitative as well as quantitative methods, but it is still the best possible way for anthropologists, sociologists, and historians to approach social realities in their most varied representations and transformations. If contemporary cultural anthropology wants to deal seriously with the social worlds and realities in which cultural artefacts are enacted and produced, then it needs (according to British social anthropologist Paul Atkinson) field-based research that documents the ordinary as well as extraordinary social activities that go into the making of culture. The theatre, the painter's studio, the concert hall or the opera house are, in principle, no different from any other setting of work. That being said, the anthropologist is still a very rare specialist in any major cultural setting, especially in organizations devoted to the production of 'high' culture. To this very fact Atkinson adds: "Despite the high profile of opera companies in recent years, and despite the prominence of opera performers among the 'superstars' of global culture, there has been very little work on the everyday life and work of opera companies and their members" (2004, 97). The reasons for the relatively small number of detailed ethnographic studies of operatic settings are probably multilayered, and some of them, I believe, are related also to the very constitution of the traditional anthropological paradigm which has been predominantly oriented towards the investigation of so-called rural cultures, while urban phenomena were perceived among anthropologists as part of their "domestic" settings. Opera has always been perceived as an elitist cultural form, whether supported by the state, aristocracy, nobility or some other kind of governing body and, as such, it has provoked hesitation among some anthropologists or has even been neglected as a subject. This was, I believe, simply because in the past opera was always negotiated in terms of an enchanting world belonging to high society or a well-established social class, and never as a product of actual labour and real social practice which could be observed. When we start thinking of opera as serious work, musical-theatre, institutional performance and social practice, and not only as a phenomenon of glittering ecstasy or a glamorous world, then it can also be treated as the pertinent object of an ethnographic investigation.

For centuries, opera houses have been transnational promenades and multicultural venues where different people represented by different cultural backgrounds, ethnic identities and national association have gathered or met in one place for one common reason and purpose – to fulfil their common or similar cultural needs. As a result of this multicultural, international and transnational character, opera has always surpassed national borders, social boundaries and ethnic differences in audiences by stimulating cultural migration, intercultural experience and multicultural exchange. However, in environments which are burdened by problems of accepting a multiethnic and bilingual or multilingual character, the texts and the messages that are produced by theatres in order to communicate with their audiences and the public can attest to issues related to national identity, ethnicity, boundary and cultural migration.

By using an ethnographic approach, this paper deals with three opera companies located in multiethnic areas with officially-acknowledged minority groups, specifically Klagenfurt (Austria), Trieste (Italy) and Rijeka (Croatia), and demonstrates how they represent or do not sufficiently represent the multiculturalism of their environments. But if we are to understand these three particular ethnographic case studies of specific opera venues placed along the northeastern Adriatic coast and along the mountain range of the eastern Alps, then we have to go deeper into the social context that has produced the history of the opera audience in general and, consequently has influenced the cultural production of the opera house as a way of social organization through which opera is given to audiences and the public the world over from the beginning of the seventeenth century till today. Before giving a brief account of what kind of specificity and particularity might have been reserved for the opera companies located in these multiethnic regions, I shall elaborate a brief conceptual framework for demonstrating how the contemporary opera house is a culturally performed institution and a socially enacted venue.

FIRST ACT: THE OPERA HOUSE AND ITS CULTURAL PERFORMANCE

The opera house is not only architecture. It is the location of a social occasion that can mediate, reflect and transcend temporal, geographical, political, and social boundaries. It is also a social venue in which the opera company *performs itself*, its institutional sociality, its specific theatrical life, and its communication with audiences and the public. Each and every opera house has multiple performative functions. It performs operas for its audi-

* This article offers an extended version of some ethnographic details that have been only partly developed in my recent monograph *Opera, Power and Ideology: Anthropological Study of a National Art in Slovenia*, pp. 157–165 (Frankfurt et al., 2010). Some shortcomings concerning certain historical details and their correlation with my ethnography that can be found there will be more clearly elaborated upon and more richly contextualized here.

ences. It produces stories for the media. For those same audiences and the media/public, it also enacts its own various identities. In particular, the opera house performs for its sponsors, financial supporters and admirers. In doing so, it enters into symbolic and material exchanges with all these social agents (Atkinson, 2006, 137).

From its inception at the end of the sixteenth century in Italy, opera has been marked by its "multicultural", "international" or "transnational" character and has never pertained to only one or culturally-homogenous ceremony or community. In the days before the opening of the first public opera house in 1637 in Venice, it was a privilege to be invited to this expensive form of entertainment, and ever since that time it has been prestigious to be able to afford to support the opera by possessing keys to a box, or simply by buying the best tickets. Due to this undeniable, persistent historical fact, the opera's social theatricality and cultural dramaturgy have been pervasive features of the everyday life of opera theatres in performing themselves, or of their patrons and, through them, certain communities or even entire nations too, for a variety of audiences, publics and interest groups. Even today opera companies as social organizations are enactments of different local political issues, cultural migrations, tourist attractions, and national social matters. Opera has developed many ways, (such as texts and performative acts) that surround and contribute to the performance of a particular theatre in a particular society. Some of those acts and their outcomes in particular help to shape and define the opera house, its reception, and its reputation.

One such example is the programme that opera houses all over the world produce and circulate among their audiences and the public. According to Paul Atkinson, such publications have a number of practical and symbolic functions. The content of the programmes, for instance, are vehicles for advertising which often reflects the subject matter of the programme by containing a musical or cultural orientation. Other predictable advertising space is taken up by national, regional or local companies who are sponsors of the opera company. In the programme we can find various lists: all the members of the company are listed by name, by department and so too are all members of the orchestra and chorus. As well, there are the individual members of the company's board, founders, patrons, benefactors, sponsors, and other supporters. These advertisements and listings, which embody a kind of social distinction, can be found in virtually every programme for an opera, ballet, or theatre company. The function of programmes is by no means exhausted by the practical acts of giving information and commercial advertising. The contemporary opera programme helps to frame the work in more symbolic ways, too. It is a small booklet containing short essay-like contributions, sometimes including extracts from published works. The programme can thus consti-

tute a short work of reference. Almost of necessity, these essays are read after the event, if at all. There is not much time to consume erudite essays of several thousand words before a performance as at the opera people need to socialize, doing such things as ordering and consuming drinks and snacks at the bar, greeting and talking to one another, eyeing each other up from head to foot and parading about in their finery.

Of course, though it is the case that each opera company has its own house style for the content and design of the programme, they usually include background material about the work and the composer as well as the historical background for a certain work. The opera programme accomplishes a number of cultural acts: it transforms the ephemeral experience of the performance into something concrete and physical; it can be kept, stored, or even collected; furthermore, it helps to transmute the theatrical experience into a different kind of cultural event. The act of theatregoing is framed not merely as entertainment but also as an investment that yields cultural capital. The programme notes help to create the tradition that is, in turn, implicitly invoked in order to legitimize our cultural experience. These notes and essays help to construct implied canons, traditions, and cultural orientations. The programme can act as a guarantee of the cultural experience, and can help to authenticate it. In that sense it functions in a way similar to the memorabilia of tourism and similar kinds of framed experience. Opera memorabilia can also be found in the opera shops offering books, CDs, DVDs, postcards, posters, and other souvenirs. The memorabilia add significance, not just to the experience of touristic consumption, but also to the original site or object itself (for instance, photos signed by famous singers, etc.). This is akin to the performance of collecting postcards, records, or stamps as the creation of a cultural patrimony. All these textual and visual representations of operatic performative publications can thus function to render opera part of a cultural tradition. Within the programme, the operagoer is invited to traverse and assimilate a wide range of literary, musical, historical, and other cultural topics (Atkinson, 2006, 151–157).

Through such practical output, the opera house indicates how its cultural machinery produces and reproduces the collective management and enactment of a performance and how it accomplishes opera as a cultural event and a social venue. The opera programme namely indicates how each and every staged work is achieved, how characters, costumes and actions are negotiated in the collective work of the administrators, financial supporters, producers, répétiteurs, musicians, performers and others profiles involved, how an opera is made and remade, how performances are promoted in public and among the opera house's clientele. To use Atkinson's words, what the entire team of opera company does is *cultural production*, and that such everyday

activity depends upon networks inside and outside the opera house. Everything the opera house does is cultural production. Performances are culturally negotiated. Establishing public relations is culturally negotiated. Brand names of opera houses are culturally negotiated. Building strategies of hospitality is culturally negotiated. Activities and services offered by the box office are culturally negotiated. Acting and singing is culturally negotiated. Emotions on the stage are culturally negotiated. The entire machinery of making an opera house as a cultural institution and a social venue is culturally negotiated. In other words, when presenting itself, the opera house is a culturally performed institution and a socially enacted place.

SECOND ACT: OPERA HOUSE AND ITS MULTIETHNIC ENVIRONMENT

In environments which are multiethnic and bilingual or multilingual, the opera programme can attest to issues related to national identity, ethnicity, boundaries and migration. Slovenia is surrounded by many opera companies and some of them, such as those in Klagenfurt (Austria), Trieste (Italy) and Rijeka (Croatia), are located in multiethnic areas with officially-acknowledged minority groups.

The area that makes up Slovenian and Croatian Istria, with the city of Rijeka, the Triestine region with the entire western Slovenian border and the Austrian Carinthia bordering Slovenia on the north is precisely such a place where representations of boundary, ethnicity and identity have been intensely debated in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries due to certain historical incidents that took place in this part of Europe. From the Middle Ages on, the land between the eastern Alps and the northern Adriatic Sea was shared by the Venetian Republic, Napoleonic France, Hungary and several Austrian duchies. As a matter of fact, its western Venetian part remained under Habsburg rule till the 1860s, while the eastern part of this territory remained within Austria-Hungary until it was divided between the states of Italy, Yugoslavia, Austria and Hungary after World War I. After 1918, Istria was given to Italy, while Carinthia (with the capital Klagenfurt) was formally accessed to the State of German-Austria. During World War II, this multinational and multiethnic land was dramatically marked by the occupation of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Its contemporary political form, as well as its culture, traditions, customs, national identities and other factors of its multiethnic character must therefore be considered as the outcome of the turbulent events that continued to inspire nationalist aspirations in the people of these multinational and multicultural regions. Of marked importance were the March revolution in 1848 and those events which resulted in the disintegration of Austrian Monarchy in 1918, of Fascist and Nazi

Empires in 1945 and Yugoslavia in 1991. The geographic, territorial and cultural position of these border regions provoked a constant national struggle which the inhabitants of these regions have faced ever since. The concept of "nation" and of national identity emerged and began to spread through Europe in the late eighteenth and especially in the nineteenth century, and was later, in the twentieth century, persistently re-established (Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 1987; Hobsbawm, 1990; Thiessen, 1999). Though these turbulent socio-historical events fall outside the scope of this article, the opera houses and theatres of these regions were not excluded from what took place nor were they immune to the eventual results of such events.

Let me now briefly elaborate how the opera programmes of the Klagenfurt, Trieste or Rijeka Opera Companies embody or enact certain local historical contingencies and international political events which even today define the relations between those nations. In the following three sections these three operatic scenes as multiethnic social venues and transnational promenades will be briefly sketched without delving deeper into the question of the structure, frequency and symbolic world of the opera audience in those three multiethnic regions. However, in a selective way each section will necessarily employ certain details considering local, regional or national political histories that are either shared or intertwined or both.

The Scene in Klagenfurt

Klagenfurt is the sixth-largest Austrian city and the capital of the federal state or *Land* of Carinthia, the southernmost Austrian province bordering Italy and Slovenia. The city and the whole region was marked by turbulent political events after the dissolution of the Austrian monarchy which led to the annexation of a major part of Carinthia (with Klagenfurt) to the newly established Republic of Austria. After the end of World War I, Carinthia, as well as Klagenfurt, became a hotly contested region. The Carinthian plebiscite taking place on October 20 1920, determined the final border between the southern Republic of Austria and the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (later Yugoslavia). However, as the area (and particularly some parts of it) was predominantly populated by Slovenian speaking people and by ethnic Slovenians as well, the plebiscitary annexation of this region to Austria was a moment of great trauma for the Slovenian people living there and even today the consequences of this political act are evident. In 1955, the Austrian State Treaty re-established Austria as a sovereign state. In it, the rights of the Slovenian minority are also expressly detailed. However, the relations between German and Slovenian speaking Carinthians have remained somehow problematic. Divergent views over the implemen-



Fig. 1: Klagenfurt Opera, photography, not used, published by Kunstverlag Franz Schilcher in Klagenfurt (private collection V. Kotnik).

Sl. 1: Opera v Celovcu, fotografija, neposlana, objavil Kunstverlag Franz Schilcher v Celovcu (zasebna zbirka: V. Kotnik).

tation of minority rights guaranteed by Article 7 of the Austrian State Treaty have created numerous tensions between the Slovenian minority and the Austrian majority over the past sixty years. Today the demographic situation is as follows: the people are predominantly German-speaking, but there is also a Slovenian-speaking minority known as Carinthian Slovenians. The status of the minority group is guaranteed, in principle, constitutionally and under international law, but in reality this legal fact is constantly contested there as a matter of local political bargaining or nationalist propaganda: politician Jörg Haider, who was elected Carinthian governor in 1989, 1999 and in 2004, for instance, was a rather controversial figure because of his contempt for the minority rights of Carinthian Slovenians guaranteed by the Constitution of Austria. As a result, the use of the Slovenian language there, whether in public or in the Klagenfurt state and regional institutions, such as the city theatre *Stadttheater Klagenfurt*, is not entirely a self-evident and constitutionally-grounded fact but rather a matter of numerous everyday negotiations.

The present theatre building of Stadttheater, with a seating capacity of 770, was opened in 1910. The Stadttheater is owned by the township of Klagenfurt. In recent decades the company has attracted many young singers and its repertoire has gained momentum. Many interesting productions attract not only local opera admirers, but also from Slovenia and northern Italy, too, which has recently encouraged intense cross-border cultural migration. Also, Klagenfurt's music-theatre ac-

tivities have extended across the border into northern Italy and Slovenia, where guest performances have been reciprocated by visits of local ensembles.

However, the opera programmes of the Stadttheater and the opera company, being written only in German, embody and reflect the nationalistic way and the uncertain position of the Slovenian minority in Austria. Therefore, from time to time, Slovenian-speaking visitors of the Klagenfurt Opera are rather surprised, as reported in my ethnography, if, when purchasing opera programme, they get an additional synopsis of the opera in Slovenian – or if such synopsis is left lying somewhere on the counter by the cloakroom attendant. Or, as one of our Slovenian informants coming from the Slovenian town Bled, aptly illustrates such bizarre situations:

I go to see operas performed in Klagenfurt quite often and since it's officially a bilingual area, I'd expect them to have at least the synopsis of the plot in the programme also in Slovenian, not only in German. For a long time, I was convinced that they don't even have a Slovenian synopsis, but then a friend of mine found out that if you specifically ask for it they actually do have it ready, just in case ... But you won't believe it, I saw it with my own eyes, the cloakroom attendant had it locked in a cupboard. And on my specific request for the Slovenian synopsis she took it out of the cupboard ... Unbelievable! I could say in jest that in Klagenfurt they have Slovenian carefully locked away in a cupboard.

The Slovenian translation is not a part of the programme itself, which some Slovenian-speaking theatre-

goers I have come in contact with during my numerous visits to the performances there perceive as discrimination and as another way, among the many, of disrespecting the minority rights otherwise guaranteed by the Austrian state. To this I can add my own personal experiences of attendance in Klagenfurt. I attend opera performances there on a regular basis, and I myself, have noticed this persistent lack of a visible presence of the Slovenian minority's language in the theatre. Many times there was no Slovenian synopsis available for the Slovenian speaking operagoers. And a few years ago I experienced one small, strange incident. When I was seated in the stalls, the first row centre, just behind the conductor's back and chatting during the intermission with my Slovenian friend from Ljubljana, one lavishly dressed older lady, who was seated just a few seats away from us in the same row, leaned towards us and said: "You know, these seats in the first row are usually reserved for German speaking people." Both of us were shocked by this kind of address. However, my friend immediately and naughtily responded: "Who says that I don't speak German?" And her reaction was: "But you speak Slovenian." And my friend again: "How do you know that? Do you speak Slovenian perhaps?" She answered: "No, I don't understand even a single word." My friend then: "How can you then be so sure about the language I speak? Maybe I speak Slovak or Croatian!" And she again: "No, I know that you speak Slovenian". Irritated with her patronizing stinging he asked her: "Is something wrong with that? Is it forbidden to speak other languages except German in the first row?" She was surprised by his quick wit: "No, no, not at all. The only thing I wanted to say was that some people seated around you could be disturbed perhaps. You know, these are prestigious seats in our theatre". As I saw that this kind of exchange would not lead anywhere, I kindly finished this strange conversation in German as follows: "Thank you for letting us know. Another time we will be more prudent when buying tickets." This tiny incident well illustrates the bizarre political climate in this town.

Fortunately, I have experienced there some astonishing moments and passionate standing ovations too. The last ones I remember was the performance of Verdi's *Rigoletto* in October 2007 and Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* in March 2009. The title roles of the Duke of Mantova and Gilda were played by Spanish tenor Álex Vicens and coloratura soprano of Bulgarian origin, Petya Ivanova, otherwise the soloist of Maribor Opera. Both leading performers were extremely good. Ivanova particularly stunned the Klagenfurt audience by her clear vocal interpretation of the famous Gilda's aria "*Caro Nome*". In Monteverdi's production, the English counter-tenor Andrew Watts playing the title role of Nero was, with Spanish counter-tenor Juan Carlos Falcón as Arnalta, the star of the evening. And I could name more such amazing moments there. All in

all, carefully staged works, beautifully played music, many astonishing singing talents, and artistic pleasures and delights offered by the ensemble are a kind of compensation for certain discomforts which are deliberately nourished and empowered by the calculated local politics obviously in and around the theatre too.

The Scene in Trieste

An even more notorious example can be found in Trieste, a city in northeastern Italy very near to the Slovenian border, to the north, east and south. Apart from two periods of French occupation during Napoleonic times, Trieste remained part of the Habsburg Empire until it was united with the Kingdom of Italy at the end of World War I. Trieste flourished as part of the Habsburg Empire from 1867 until 1918 when it was among the most prosperous Mediterranean seaports, as well as a capital of literature and music. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Trieste was a buzzing cosmopolitan city frequented by artists of many different nationalities such as James Joyce, Dragotin Kette, Vladimir Bartol, and Umberto Saba. The city was part of the so-called Austrian Riviera and a very real part of *Mitteleuropa*. In this multiethnic area, several languages, including Italian, German, Slovenian, and Triestine (a Venetian dialect) were spoken. While Triestine was spoken by the largest part of the population, German was the language of the Austrian bureaucracy and Slovenian was used mostly in the surrounding villages but also in the city among Trieste's Slovenian population. However, the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Trieste's annexation to Italy after World War I led to a decline of its economic and cultural standing and the annexation saw a loss of the city's importance, with the new state border depriving it of its former hinterland. The Slovenian ethnic group suffered persecution by the rising fascist regime and between the two wars the Slovenians in Italy, particularly in Trieste and its surroundings, were exposed to a great deal of fascist terror. Fascists banned the use of Slovenian in public, dissolved Slovenian associations and institutions, abolished Slovenian schools and exerted other kinds of pressure on Slovenians, such as changing Slovenian names into Italian. After the constitution of the Italian Republic in 1943, Trieste was nominally absorbed into the Italian entity. The Germans, however, annexed it to the Operation Zone of the Adriatic Littoral, which also included the former Italian provinces of Gorizia and Ljubljana, which were populated by Slovenians. In 1947, Trieste was declared an independent state as the Free Territory State of Trieste, split into two zones, A and B. In 1954, this free territory was dissolved, due to the political bargaining of great powers, with the involvement of the United States, Great Britain, Italy and Yugoslavia. After nine years of uncertainty, the city of Trieste in Zone A

was ceded to Italy. The southern part of the territory in Zone B went to Yugoslavia. The border questions with Yugoslavia and the status of the ethnic minorities were settled definitively in 1975 with the Treaty of Osimo. By signing this and some other documents, Italy recognized specific minority rights for the Slovenians living in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia province, including the Trieste and Gorizia regions, but continues to deny the existence of the Slovenian ethnic minority in the Udine region. Although the status of the Slovenians in Italy has, in general, improved in recent decades, the status, rights and the treatment of the minority still varies from region to region. Whereas Italy does not recognize any rights of the Slovenians in the Udine region, the Slovenians in the Gorizia region were granted some rights on the basis of the Peace Treaty signed in 1947, and the Slovenians in Trieste were provided with more minority rights by the London Memorandum signed in 1954.

After several decades of the efforts on the part of Slovenia and the Slovenian minority in Italy, the Republic of Italy finally adopted the Law on the Protection of the Slovenian minority in 2001. However, in reality, there are many problems associated with the use of the Slovenian language in public administration and in the public life in the city that had been famous due to its particular character as a meeting point of Italian, German and Slavic cultures. It was this character which made it a distinctly cosmopolitan city and a meeting-place for different linguistic communities, especially during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Trieste, as a border town and as a city with a turbulent political history, is definitely the biggest culprit. The city's main

language is Italian, though there are many Slovenian, Venetian and Friulian language speakers. More precisely, the official Italian language is spoken in the city centre, while Slovenian is spoken in several of the immediate suburbs. Although the Slovenian language is considered as autochthonous of the area as it is spoken by Slovenian Triestines, part of the official Slovenian minority in Italy, the use of this language is almost a taboo and a 'moral' transgression in some of Trieste's institutions, which are considered entirely Italian – as is the case with the Trieste's opera house *Teatro Verdi*.

The Teatro Nuovo was inaugurated in April 1801 with two new operas, Mayr's *Ginevra di Scozia* and Sallieri's *Annibale in Capua*. In 1821 it took the name Teatro Grande, and after it had been bought by the municipality in 1861, it became the Teatro Comunale. In the middle of the nineteenth-century Trieste shared the taste and preferences of the major European centres: Bellini's operas were successful and to a lesser extent those of Donizetti, and among other successes was of course the works of Verdi. On 27 January 1901, just hours after Verdi's death was announced, the Teatro Comunale was officially renamed the Teatro Verdi, the first theatre in Italy to claim the honour of great Italian composer. With this it became a national company with a permanent orchestra, chorus and a ballet company. The three antique postcards presented below aptly demonstrate the institutional and cultural transformation of the Trieste Opera, on the denominative level, from the monarchic Teatro Grande of the late nineteenth century and, later the municipal Teatro Comunale to the national Teatro Verdi of the early twentieth century.



**Fig. 2: Trieste Opera as Teatro Grande, phototypy before 1900, not used (private collection: V. Kotnik).
Sl. 2: Opera v Trstu kot "Teatro Grande", fototipija izpred l. 1900, neposlana (zasebna zbirka: V. Kotnik).**



Fig. 3: Trieste Opera as Teatro Comunale, chromolithography, sent in 1900 (private collection: V. Kotnik).
 Sl. 3: Opera v Trstu kot "Teatro Comunale", kromolitografija, poslana l. 1900 (zasebna zbirka: V. Kotnik).

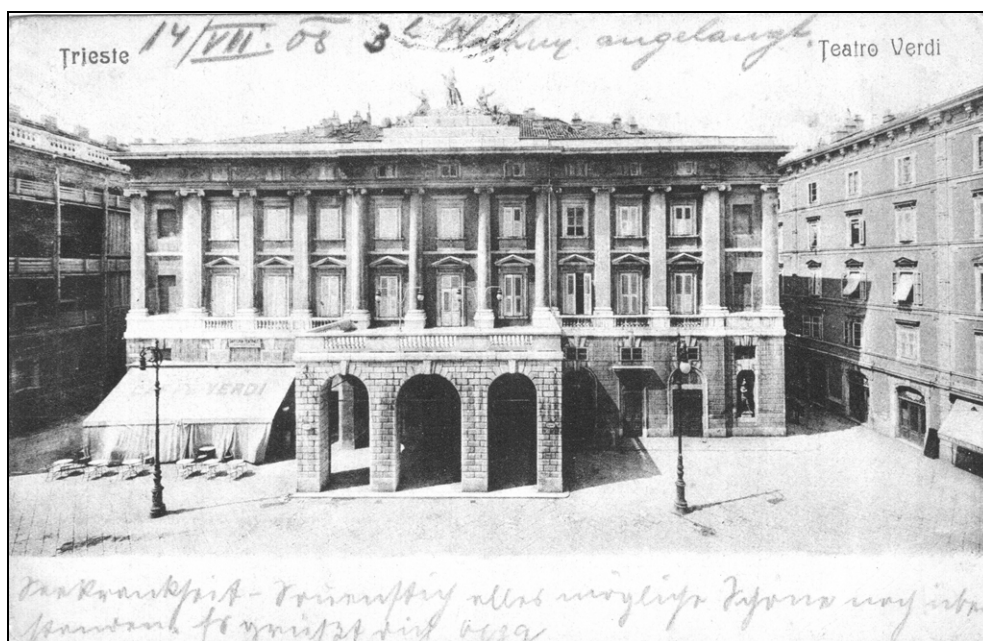


Fig. 4: Trieste Opera as Teatro Verdi, lithography, sent in 1908, published by S. D. M. (private collection: V. Kotnik).
 Sl. 4: Opera v Trstu kot "Teatro Verdi", litografija, poslana l. 1908, objavil S. D. M. (zasebna zbirka: V. Kotnik).

The municipality supported the administration and choice of events at the Verdi Theatre. The Teatro Verdi was not the only opera scene in Trieste. Spring 1878 saw the inauguration of a second important theatre, the Politeama Rossetti, seating 3000 and intended for a variety of uses. Despite a long period of inactivity it staged all kinds of musical and theatrical entertainment, from symphony concerts to operetta, operas and plays, and in the twentieth century it was also used as a cinema (Dugulin et al., 1988; Levi et al., 1962; Charna Lynn, 2005, 80–88).

Additionally, there was also a vital Slovenian opera scene in Trieste at the beginning of the twentieth century. As early as 1905 the Slovenian Dramatic Society of Trieste received local crowds in the new *Narodni Dom* (National Hall), and the Slovenian professional theatre *Slovensko Narodno Gledališče v Trstu* (Slovenian National Theatre of Trieste) was founded in 1907. Within the theatre, there was also opera, operetta and a ballet company which initially staged more operettas¹ but later also promoted serious opera, particularly those of Slavic composers, such as *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* by the Croatian composer Ivan Zajc and *The Bartered Bride* by Bedřich Smetana. The Slovenian opera company of Trieste even attempted to put on a production of Giacomo Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* in Slovenian but the premiere was cancelled just one day before opening night. The Italian authorities of Trieste put this production under a ban with the following explanation: "Trieste is an Italian city. Because of this, it is not permitted to sing Italian opera on Italian soil in the Slovenian language." Due to the Triestine political climate which was unfavourable towards the Slovenian minority, opera and operetta given by the Slovenian troupe lived only a couple of years before World War I. The repertoire of the Slovenian Opera Theatre of Trieste was represented by different national traditions: German opera (*Hänsel und Gretel* by Engelbert Humperdinck, 1909; *Der Freischütz* by Carl Maria von Weber, 1913), Czech opera (*The Bartered Bride* by Bedřich Smetana, 1913), French opera (*Les cloches de Corneville* by Robert Planquette, 1911–1912), Slovenian opera (*Ksenija* by Viktor Parma, 1913), Croatian opera (*Nikola Šubić Zrinjski* by Ivan Zajc, 1912–1913), English operetta (*The Geisha* by Sidney Jones, 1913–1914), French operetta (*Mam'zelle Nitouche* by Florimond Ronger Hervé, 1910–1913; *La poupée* by Edmond Audran, 1911–1913; *La belle Hélène* by Jacques Offenbach, 1913), Austrian operetta (*Ein Walzertraum* by Oscar Straus, 1911–1912; *Der Vogelhändler* by Carl Zeller, 1911; *Der Zigeunerbaron* by Johann Strauss II., 1912–1913; *Die geschiedene Frau* and

Die Dollarprinzessin by Leo Fall, 1912–1913; *Boccaccio* by Franz von Suppé, 1958), Slovenian operetta (*Caričine amaconke* by Viktor Parma, 1912; *Planinska roža* by Radovan Gobec, 1957; Hungarian operetta (*Ein Herbstmanöver* and *Die Czardasfürstin* by Emmerich Kálmán, 1912–1913, 1961; *Die Försterchristl* by Georg Jarno, 1913), Czech operetta (*Der Graf von Luxemburg* by Franz Léhar, 1912) and German operetta (*Die keusche Susanne* by Jean Gilbert, 1913). After World War I the Slovenian National Theatre of Trieste was renewed (Italian fascists burnt down the Narodni Dom in 1920), but performed only dramatic pieces. The situation remains the same to this day, the result of which has been that many Slovenians began attending the opera house Teatro Verdi, where the atmosphere for attendance was not always hospitable and welcoming.

In our recent short conversation, the Slovenian poet Ciril Zlobec told me that fascists systematically drove Slovenian visitors out from the opera house. Even now, the Trieste Opera remains the cultural temple of Italians, *la casa italianissima*, as can be seen in the following fieldnote given by one of my informants, a professor at University of Primorska in Koper:

I attend the opera there on a regular basis due to the fact that Koper is just a few kilometres away from Trieste, and particularly now that communication is getting much easier since the physical border between Slovenia and Italy has been removed due to the Schengen agreement. I have to say that I am very satisfied with the programme of the Trieste Opera. However, when I see the entirely ignorant attitude this company systematically shows towards the Slovenian minority, also in the ways that the Slovenian language is totally excluded from the house, from its programmes, from its newsletters and so on, I become really sad that this is still happening today when the entire European Union speaks about multicultural dialogue and respect for the other. Unfortunately, it seems that Fascism in Trieste has not disappeared entirely and that it is still, in parts of the cultural life there, very alive.

By having an opportunity to meet Slovenian-speaking visitors at Teatro Verdi, as well, some of them visiting from Slovenia and some as Slovenians from Trieste, thus the members of the minority, I was often told about the systematic exclusion of the Slovenian language from the opera programmes. Some informants have noted that it is significant that one can find the synopsis in the programme in English but not in Slovenian, even though Trieste is part of the official bilingual area with an Italian-speaking majority and Slovenian-speaking minority.

1 The nineteenth century Viennese operetta was largely spread throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire. On the social role, influence and popularity of Viennese operetta see, Crittenden 2000; Csáky 2001.

On one occasion, I had an opportunity to meet one member of the opera company administration. I asked him what the administration's policy regarding the practice of bilingualism by the company is when communicating with the public. His answer was not a total surprise to me. He said as follows: "You know very well that this is an Italian opera house, not Slovenian, and I am sure you also know that you're in Italy right now, not in Slovenia. So I don't understand your question. However, if you think of the minority, the minority has its own theatre in Trieste." As an ethnographer I tried to be an engaged trier: "That's true. But, first, that theatre is only a dramatic company. It does not produce operas or ballets. And second, the opera house in Trieste is an Italian national institution, isn't it? Due to this it is expected that it serves not only to the majority, but also to the Slovenian minority who live in Trieste and who are also acknowledged by Italian law. What do you say about that?" In the end, we both agreed that this discussion would not lead to any productive solution or change. Anyway, this ethnographic exchange was meaningful, and indicative too, in terms of the political role and cultural importance that opera programmes and other texts produced by the company play for the Trieste social atmosphere in order to engage in public relations. As we can see through this example the opera programme matters and has a great deal of cultural significance.

The Scene in Rijeka

A less blatant but still significant example of how opera companies do or do not communicate multi-ethnicity and bilingualism in this part of Europe at the beginning of the twenty-first century can be found in Rijeka, Croatia's third largest city on an inlet of the Adriatic Sea, and the host of the Croatian National Theatre, Ivan pl. Zajc. The majority of its citizens are Croats, but there is also an official Italian minority. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Rijeka, as an important seaport, was passed back and forth between the Habsburg's Austria and Hungary until being attached to Hungary for the third and last time in 1870. Although Croatia had constitutional autonomy within Hungary, the City of Rijeka was independent, governed directly from Budapest by an appointed governor, as Hungary's only international port. The Habsburg-ruled Austria-Hungarian disintegration during the closing weeks of World War I, in the autumn of 1918, led to the establishment of rival Croatian and Italian administrations in the city. Both Italy and the founders of the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) claimed sovereignty based on their "irredentist" ethnic populations. As a result, the city found itself engaged in constant and strained Italo-Yugoslav disputes

between the two world wars. The aftermath of World War II saw the city's fate again resolved by a combination of force and diplomacy. In May 1945 Yugoslav troops occupied or liberated – depending on one's point of view – the city of Rijeka. Once occupied, the city became Croatian (i.e. Yugoslav); a situation formalized by the Paris Peace Treaty between Italy and the wartime Allies on February 1947.

The Croatian National Theatre, Ivan pl. Zajc, reflects these turbulent historical and political circumstances. The name of the theatre in Rijeka changed several times. The old Adamić civic theatre in Rijeka was replaced in 1885 by the Italian Teatro Comunale (Community Theatre) designed by famous Austrian opera architects Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer. It was directed by impresarios who for the most part engaged Italian companies. The operas performed were usually from the Italian bel canto repertoire, but French and German works were also staged. Prominent singers and composers were invited: the famous tenor Enrico Caruso appeared in *La Bohème* in May 1898, and Giacomo Puccini had an enthusiastic reception at a performance of *Manon Lescaut* in May 1895. After being called the Teatro Comunale in 1913, it was renamed Teatro Verdi after the greatest Italian opera composer, a reasonable choice, as the auditorium in Rijeka later confirmed, as the most significant aim of the theatre was opera. Because of historical and political circumstances, Croatian plays and artists had no access to the theatre till the end of 1945.

In 1946, the Croatian National Theatre was founded with two permanent theatre departments or units, the Croatian and Italian stage, and with its own opera and ballet company. This structure of the theatre is to be found today. In 1953, the theatre was given a new name after another composer, but this time it was named for the greatest Croatian composer, Ivan Zajc, who was born in Rijeka (Cihlar, 1961). The cultural transformation of the Rijeka Opera from the Italian Teatro Comunale and Teatro Verdi to Hrvatsko Narodno Kazalište (Croatian National Theatre) is meaningfully depicted in the following three postcards in the way of political contexts that marked this theatre.

In the light of the Italo-Croatian character of the city and the theatre, I recently asked the administration of the theatre whether or not their opera programmes, published within theatre's opera and ballet unit are bilingual. The publicist's answer was surprising and went like this:

No, our opera programmes are only in Croatian and not in Italian due to the fact that the Italian minority understands our language. Also, Italians have their own drama unit within the theatre, the Dramma Italiano unit. As a result, we think this is enough for them.



Fig. 5: Rijeka Opera as Teatro Comunale, phototypy, sent in 1909, published by M. Stedul in Rijeka (private collection: V. Kotnik).

Sl. 5: Opera na Reki kot "Teatro Comunale", fototipija, poslana l. 1909, objavil M. Stedul na Reki (zasebna zbirka: V. Kotnik).



Fig. 6: Rijeka Opera as Teatro Verdi, phototypy, not sent, published by Edizione M. Muscardin (private collection: V. Kotnik).

Sl. 6: Opera na Reki kot "Teatro Verdi", fototipija, neposlana, objavili Edizione M. Muscardin (zasebna zbirka: V. Kotnik).



Fig. 7: Rijeka Opera as Hrvatsko Narodno Kazalište, photography by St. Valter, published by Rima (private collection: V. Kotnik).

Sl. 7: Opera na Reki kot "Hrvatsko narodno kazalište", fotografija St. Valterja, objavil Rima (zasebna zbirka: V. Kotnik).

This answer certainly does not support any idea of making an effort to achieve equal co-existence in dealing with majority-minority relationships in a given area, and it indicates that there is still much to do in Europe in order to achieve a greater step towards true tolerance and respect for each other. Such answers did not satisfy my ethnographic curiosity. When attending opera performances there I have continued to examine this matter among the members of the Rijeka opera audience. One of my informants, a member of Italian minority in Rijeka, explained her vision of the use of Italian language within the Rijeka opera company as follows:

It is true that we have our own Italian drama company within the theatre. It is also true that Croatian opera company in Rijeka produces many Italian operas, understandably in the original language, which today is a totally normal thing, but there could be some other steps taken towards developing and advancing the presence of bilingualism in the theatre. For instance, opera programmes could be prepared in their entirety in both languages. The company could use new ways and innovative strategies for the address of different audiences. This is important not just for us, Italians in Istria, but also for the Croatian visitors. I mean, smaller opera companies should take world's most important opera houses, such as La Scala, Wiener Staatsoper or the Met, as their examples. The best opera houses all over the world are

constantly in search of something new: they broaden the repertoire, they invent new managerial strategies, they use different channels in order to reach their audiences, they use new media in order to attract younger generations ... they are flexible institutions, and they make every effort to be hospitable insofar as possible for as many people as possible. This should be the model also for more peripheral theatres, such as this one in Rijeka or those in Zagreb or Ljubljana. But as far as I can see, these second- or third-rate opera houses are far behind the leading opera houses ... not just in terms of artistic production but in terms of cultural openness too. They are unfortunately still very rigid, unprepared for new things and new challenges.

This informant's statement indicates that the way in which ethnicity is negotiated by these peripheral opera companies and their audiences, and how the cultural differences are represented and reflected upon by the theatres when communicating with the public, depends on broader social contexts and on the complex social structure of these peripheral multiethnic environments. It seems that provincialism is one of the key factors, if not the most significant one, which prevents or retards the development of mechanisms which would accelerate institutional openness, forms of urbanity, cohabitation or co-existence and social reflexivity by different social agents active on local, regional, national, interregional

and cross-border levels. Institutional openness, urbanity, cohabitation and social reflexivity have much to do with life in the cities, the regions and in the national communities. These are parameters or modes of social existence which exert influence not only on the life in the city, but on the life in city's particular institutions as well. Opera houses could accelerate the development of these forms of sociability inside and outside their walls more actively and engagingly, and, consequently, denote that the rules that make possible the co-existence of all inhabitants within a society are respected.

FINALE FROM MARIBOR AND GRAZ: OPERA HOUSE AND ITS TRANSNATIONAL PROMENADE

I suggest that the three opera companies previously mentioned do not set a good example of how a multi-ethnic identity, represented officially within an area, could, and should, be represented in the theatre. On the other hand we find the Maribor Opera, which is not located in an officially bilingual area or in an area with an official minority but is near the Austrian border, and the nearest larger Austrian urban centre, Graz, is only about 60 km away. Due to this, many of the German-speaking visitors of the Maribor Opera (the majority from Graz, and some from a small but not an officially represented German ethnic group living in Maribor) are positively surprised when they find not only a synopsis of the opera in Slovenian in the opera programmes, but also Eng-

lish and German translations. By such small curiosities, the Maribor Opera's programmes show that, as mentioned by my informant, a member of the administration, the company acknowledges not only the local language, but also the fact that German-speaking audiences from Austria are important to the company.

Maribor, a town in northern Slovenia (formerly Marburg) was marked for centuries by a strong German and Austrian impact as the city was constantly subordinate to other cities: in the era of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to Graz (the provincial capital of the Duchy of Styria) while between the two world wars and after World War II, to Ljubljana. There was no opera before the founding of the Stadttheater in 1785. From then until 1919, opera was performed only by visiting companies who were all German troupes that leased the theatre for a few seasons. The theatre had to fight for its existence, so the repertoire understandably included works of wide appeal such as farces and musical comedies. However, in the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth the town's amateur dramatic society also played an important role, presenting the first opera produced in Maribor, Vincenzo Bellini's *Norma*, in 1843 and urging the construction of a new theatre. Still in use today, it opened in 1852 with Friedrich von Flotow's *Martha*, performed by a troupe from Graz. The lack of a permanent musical ensemble in the town prevented the establishment of a serious repertoire. In the later nineteenth century most musical works staged there



Fig. 8: Maribor Opera as Marburger Stadttheater, chromolithography, sent in 1902, published by Gebrüder Mühlstein in Offenbach a. M. (private collection: V. Kotnik).
Sl. 8: Opera v Mariboru kot "Marburger Stadttheater", kromolitografija, poslana l. 1902, objavila Gebrüder Mühlstein v Offenbachu a. M. (zasebna zbirka: V. Kotnik).



Fig. 9: Maribor Opera as Slovensko Narodno Gledališče Maribor, photography by F. Mauer, used, published by Fotolik (private collection: V. Kotnik).

Sl. 9: Opera v Mariboru kot "Slovensko narodno gledališče Maribor", fotografija F. Mauerja, uporabljena, objavil Fotolik (zasebna zbirka: V. Kotnik).

were operettas. The theatre remained in German hands until 1919 and was thus inaccessible to the Slovenian-speaking part of the population. Within the framework of the Stadttheater the Slovenian National Theatre was founded in 1919, which was made up of three units: a drama company, an opera and ballet company, and a symphony orchestra. This transformation of today's Maribor Opera from pre-1919 German Stadttheater to post-1919 Slovensko Narodno Gledališče Maribor (Slovenian National Theatre of Maribor) is aptly demonstrated by the following two postcards.

Due to this new social circumstance, Slovenian operas, especially those of Viktor Parma (Petronio 2002), were added to the standard repertoire. When Maribor got its first Slovenian professional theatre and opera company, its musical stage gave the first notable performances and had subsequent successes in the 1920s, between 1922 and 1928 (Špendal, 1985, 16). However, the socio-political changes brought about during the time between the two wars had a particularly dramatic impact on the Maribor Opera which was forced to close its doors due to financial crisis for thirteen years (1928–1941), and then for another four years as the Nazis destroyed the Maribor theatre during World War II. The threat that Maribor could lose its opera company re-

mained and resurfaced several times after the liberation (Špendal, 1986, 227–244; also 1982). During the socialist period, the Maribor Opera was developing slowly but steadily, and reached its peak in the 1990s, when it became the leading Slovenian opera company. For twenty years, the Maribor Opera and Ballet was led by authoritative but visionary director Stane Jurgec who strove to elevate the institution to the level of other important European opera companies. In recent years, Maribor Opera has been exceptionally successful, in terms of the quality of production as well as in terms of recruitment and communication with local and foreign audiences coming from Maribor's neighbouring regions of Ljubljana, Zagreb and Graz.

A few years ago I interviewed the former director of the Maribor Opera, Stane Jurgec. In this interview, he took pains to describe how to improve the relationship with the audience, how to attract an audience to come to performances occasionally or to attract a regular attendance or even season ticket holders. A flexible opera audience management was, under his directorship, very important for Maribor Opera, particularly due to the fact that the company is located near Austrian border to the north and the Croatian border to the south. Maribor Opera has therefore engaged in several promotional activi-

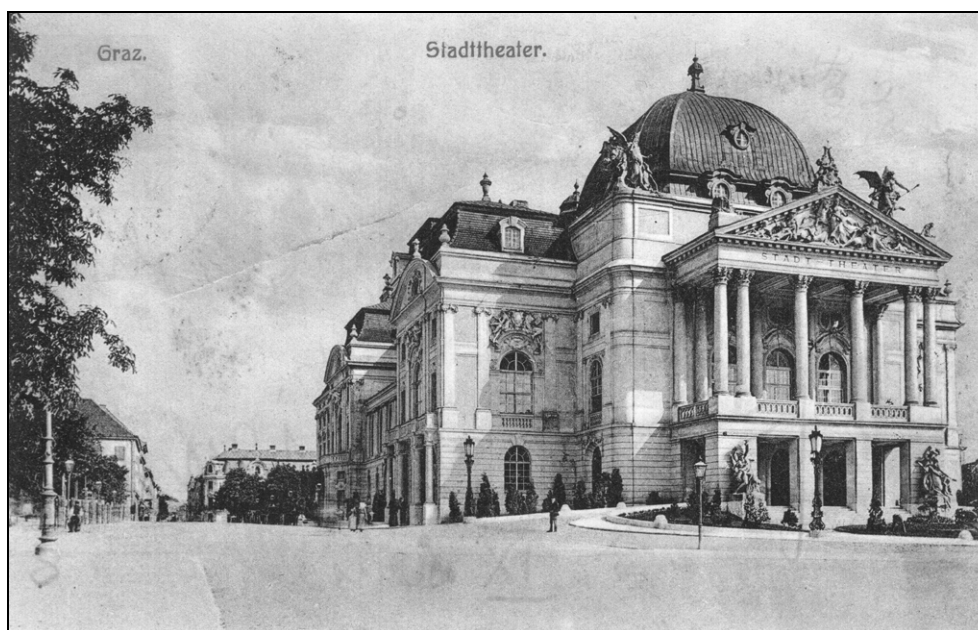


Fig. 10: Graz Opera as Stadttheater, phototypy from 1908, published by Verlag L. Strohschneider in Graz (private collection: V. Kotnik).

Sl. 10: Opera v Gradcu kot "Stadttheater", fototipija iz l. 1908, objavil Verlag L. Strohschneider v Gradcu (zasebna zbirka: V. Kotnik).



Fig. 11: Graz Opera as Opernhaus, phototypy, published by Kunstverlag H. Kölz in Graz (private collection: V. Kotnik).

Sl. 11: Opera v Gradcu kot "Opernhaus", fototipija, objavil Kunstverlag H. Kölz v Gradcu (zasebna zbirka: V. Kotnik).

ties which were directed not only to a potential local audience, but also to the neighbouring Austrian and Croatian public. This kind of opera management was not only seen by Mr. Jurgec as a matter of hospitality or a kind gesture, but also a matter of managerial flexibility and cultural openness.

Yet another inspiring example of cultural appreciation of the "neighbouring other" is to be found at the *Grazer Oper*, Austria. The Graz Opera became a springboard for artists and musicians to the most important theatres in Austria and Germany. Some of its conductors, such as Clemens Krauss and Karl Böhm, later achieved international fame. The Thalia-Theater opened in 1864 and was renamed the Stadttheater in 1870. It concentrated at first on operetta, burlesque and farce, but in the twentieth century it became the town's main opera house (List, 1966). Since then, the Graz Opera has become internationally known and a welcoming place for wide multilingual audiences recruited from the local region as well as from neighbouring regions of Slovenia, Hungary and Croatia. Moreover, the Graz Opera has made a successful transformation from the municipal Stadttheater to a national Opernhaus.

The programmes found in the Graz Opera communicate informatively with multilingual audiences and the public in that the synopses are written in German, English, Italian and Slovenian. In light of this, I asked the representative of Marketing and Public Relations at Graz Opera why they pay such careful attention in preparing programmes with a multilingual synopsis. The representative replied:

The reason why we have the synopses in Italian, Slovenian and English is simple: We have quite a few visitors from these countries, and the least we can do for them is to offer them a synopsis in their own language. It is funny that they obviously consider this an unusual service. On the contrary we think, we should do much more for our foreign guests...

One of my informants, an occasional Italian visitor from Tarvisio, describes the multilingual hospitality of Graz Opera as follows:

I am very happy when I see the Italian synopsis in the theatre programme. The presentation of an opera in my native language helps me to understand what I will see on the stage. This is particularly important in the case when lesser known operas are staged.

By one of the Slovenian visitors I was told:

I see the Slovenian synopsis within the theatre programme as a very kind gesture of the Graz Opera. It really makes me feel welcome. It is a small gesture, but very nice, and I appreciate it very much. I like to come here.

We could say that the opera programmes of Maribor and Graz Opera represent the productive point where commercial interest meets cultural appreciation. That is to say, there is a convergence of interest between the company's interest to earn money from the box office and the cultural needs of the non-local consumers who attend a particular opera house on a more or less regular basis. All these examples of opera programmes show how different opera companies "perform themselves". If, for instance, the otherwise excellently informative opera programmes of the Trieste Opera indicate a general lack of appreciation of the Slovenian-speaking minority in the house, those of the Graz Opera display their managerial flexibility (see Tajtakova 2006, Towse 2003, Vaill 1990) as well as openness and hospitality² for, for instance, their neighbouring Slovenian audience. Thus, the performative work within such cultural organizations is not just confined to the creation and reproduction of particular operatic works but is also engaged, in relation to some broader socio-historical events, in other acts of self-presentation. If the Italian-speaking visitors of the Trieste Opera do not, as a rule, even recognize the symbolism behind the absence of the minority's language in the opera house, the Slovenian-speaking visitors usually perceive the exclusion of the Slovenian language from the programmes as a direct political act reflecting the company's lack of appreciation for the Slovenian minority in Trieste.

Thus the opera programme accomplishes a number of cultural acts, as Atkinson points out in his operatic ethnography. Our five examples indicate that the opera programme can enact social matters and situations that go far beyond the performance of a given opera, of a particular performance or of a particular opera company. Through the opera programme, international, national, regional or local politics, social problems, and matters of identity and ethnicity can be performed and negotiated, represented or misrepresented, appreciated or ignored. The opera programmes are themselves part of a nexus of exchange that is partly material and partly symbolic. They help to enact the cultural work of the opera company itself, to cultivate the taste of the patrons, sponsors and audiences, to frame the politics and social issues, and to convey messages concerning matters of ethnicity, nationhood and cultural difference.

Each and every case in this article in its final instance indicates some interregional, intercultural, multicultural and transnational aspects and contacts between different national environments. In terms of opera audiences, their cultural itineraries, migrations and attending practices, the opera houses placed within cultural centres

2 On hospitality as a urban form of life, as a fine poetic art of sociality, as a means of balancing a range of social situations and boundaries, or as a tiny gesture practiced among people in a city or in a community for tolerable relationships between different populations, such as "locals", "natives", "newcomers", "strangers", "foreigners", "tourists", "members of majority", "members of minority", see Derrida, Dufourmantelle, 2000; Gotman, 2004; Wald, Leimdorger, 2004; Bottin, Calabi, 1999.

like Austria's Graz and Klagenfurt, Italy's Trieste, Slovenia's Ljubljana and Maribor, also near Croatia's Rijeka and Zagreb, are – in spite of several problems indicated in this article – no doubt intensely connected. However, it has been demonstrated that there is still a lot work to be done in order to improve and foster interregional, cross-border collaboration and transnational cultural migration, and by this contribute to the experience of social mutuality and open co-existence. This is particularly important as the central idea of this paper came from the presumption (which finds its justification in many cases from the history of culturally developed European places) that the all over the world, opera culture and its public can be a reliable barometer of the social development, refinement and urbanity of a particular place, city, region or country, and should be a stronger promotional agent of social tolerance, mutual respect, and common cultural values. Hopefully, contemporary opera houses can make vital contributions to

the balance of cultural differences in the future as they have done many times and in numerous ways in the past. Ethnicity, nationhood, geographical provenance, language and other parameters of social diversification that usually divide individuals, groups and entire communities, can be renounced at the opera at least for a moment – if not for some other reason, for the sake of the magic that only, if I may use the words of American historian Herbert Lindenberger (1984), this *extravagant art* is able to offer. All in all, the opera house is not necessarily an institution that divides and classifies. It can also be a place that integrates and unites. As a matter of fact, all opera houses presented in this article, functioned in the past and continue to function more or less successfully as international institutions and transnational venues. But the attendance of these national operas would be even more hospitable and thrilling if they would go postnational.

NEKAJ ETNOGRAFSKIH OPOMB H KOMUNICIRANJU OPERNIH HIŠ PREK OPERNEGA PROGRAMA Z OBČINSTVOM IN JAVNOSTJO NA VEČETNIČNIH OBMOČJIH ISTRE, TRSTA, KOROŠKE IN ŠTAJERSKE

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POVZETEK

V članku preučujemo vlogo, načine in strategije opernih hiš, ki delujejo na specifičnih večetničnih območjih severovzhodnega Jadrana in avstrijske Koroške, pri zastopanju večkulturne socialne strukture svojih mest, okolij, regij ali nacionalnih sredin. Preden v članku podamo kratek etnografski pregled specifičnosti in svojskosti opernih hiš v izbranih večetničnih regijah, predstavimo nekaj konceptualnih nazorov, po katerih je sodobna opera institucija kompleksne kulturne performance in prizorišče številnih družbenih vlog. Operne hiše so namreč že stoletja nadnacionalna sprehajališča in večkulturna prizorišča, kjer se ljudje iz različnih kulturnih okolij, z različnimi etničnimi identitetami in nacionalno ali kakšno drugo pripadnostjo zbirajo oziroma srečujejo na skupnem kraju iz relativno skupnega razloga in s skupnim ali sorodnim namenom, in sicer da bi zadovoljili svoje kulturne potrebe in si izmenjevali skupne kulturne vrednote. Zaradi svojega večkulturnega, mednarodnega in nadnacionalnega značaja je opera vedno presegala državne meje, družbene ločnice in etnična razhajanja med občinstvom, saj je spodbujala kulturne migracije, medkulturno izkušnjo, sodelovanje in večkulturno izmenjavo. V okoljih, ki le s težavo sprejemajo svoj večetnični in dvojezični oziroma večjezični značaj, lahko besedila, ki nastanejo v opernih hišah, kakor so denimo operni programi, katerih prvenstveni namen je komunicirati z občinstvom in javnostjo, opozorijo na probleme, povezane z nacionalno identiteto, etničnostjo, mejnostjo in migracijami. Z uporabo etnografskega pristopa bomo v članku predstavili tri operne hiše, ki delujejo na večetničnih območjih z uradno priznano manjšino (Celovec v Avstriji, Trst v Italiji in Reka na Hrvaškem), in prikazali, ali zadostno ali pomanjkljivo odsevajo medkulturno in večkulturno lego okolja. Na koncu bomo njihovo javno podobo in komunikacijsko delovanje primerjali z delovanjem operne hiše v Mariboru (Slovenija) in Gradcu (Avstrija), ki sta se uveljavili po konstruktivni in odprti komunikaciji z večetničnim občinstvom in javnostjo. Če strnemo: članek preučuje, kako različne operne hiše komunicirajo s svojim občinstvom in javnostjo z ozirom na večetnični in večkulturni značaj okolja, v katerem delujejo.

Ključne besede: operna hiša, občinstvo, etničnost, nacionalna identita, komuniciranje, kulturna migracija, multikulturalizem

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