

Music theatre in a changing society

The influence of the technical media

**Edited by Jack Bornoff
Secretary of the International Music Council**

Unesco

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Preface

The General Conference of Unesco, at its thirteenth session, in 1964, adopted a resolution authorizing the Director-General 'to carry out a survey of the present situation and trends and possibilities of artistic creation and of attempts at new forms of expression linked with the new techniques for the dissemination of culture'.

To this end, a number of studies have been undertaken and meetings have been convened to enable leading specialists in different fields of artistic creation to exchange views on the factors that have a bearing on contemporary artistic creation, such as new means of expression, and the response of the artist to the needs of an ever-growing public, which also goes beyond national cultures and frontiers.

This book, which is aimed at presenting a survey of current trends in music theatre, is based on the discussions of a Round Table organized in Salzburg in August 1965 by Unesco, the International Music Council and the International Music Centre. The meeting brought together creative and interpretative artists (composers, choreographers and designers; musicians and dancers) and representatives of the technical media to examine the impact of the media on opera, ballet, pantomime and other forms of artistic expression. The participants had before them papers submitted by leading experts. The book also draws on reports of other international conferences and workshops bearing on the same subject held since 1956 by the International Music Council and the International Music Centre.

Mr. Jack Bornoff, Executive Secretary of the International Music Council, who had been closely associated with these various meetings, was invited by Unesco to collate and edit the information and opinions resulting from them and to add his own views. Responsibility for the choice of facts presented and the views expressed lies with those to whom they are ascribed and with the editor.

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Introduction

The revolutionary new techniques in sound and visual reproduction made possible by recent scientific discoveries are greatly influencing the course of music today.

Because the International Music Council (IMC) believes in the need for a meeting point between musicians—both creative and interpretative—and professionals of the technical media, we are happy to have been asked by Unesco to prepare a survey on the development of contemporary music theatre arising from the use of these techniques.

Our credentials for undertaking this task are the following: in 1956 the IMC initiated a series of congresses and seminars to illustrate all aspects of the presentation of opera, ballet and pantomime and also, abstract music and mixed forms of music—‘*spectacle musical*’—in film, radio and television. Austrian Radio-Television have been our main partner in this venture and Salzburg the venue of several of the most important events. Indeed, the Salzburg Opera Prize, created as a result of the 1956 congress, has resulted in over thirty works being commissioned by television stations in various parts of the world—all of them operas written especially for television.

In 1961, the Internationales Musikzentrum (IMZ), with headquarters in Vienna, was established jointly by Austrian Television and the IMC. It has taken over and extended our work of research; it has demonstrated the suitability—or otherwise—of various forms of music to the technical media; and it has helped to bring about a closer co-operation between the creative artists in our field and the representatives of the media.

In 1964, we were responsible for the first international congress ever to be devoted to the subject of contemporary music theatre. The congress took place in Hamburg and thanks to the close collaboration of the Hamburg State Opera we were afforded the possibility, every night, of illustrating the subjects of the congress by performances of contemporary works in the theatre.

All the events so far held in Salzburg have been placed under the auspices of Unesco. In 1965, Unesco did more; it co-operated with us in organizing two round-table discussions devoted respectively to ballet in film and television and to the prospects for the future of music theatre. The Organization commissioned a number of papers from leading experts for these discussions.

Enrico Fulchignoni, representing Unesco at the 1965 round-table discussions, conceded that through the many examples which we had shown in Salzburg and elsewhere of works written especially for television, and through the meetings arranged between creative artists and the practitioners of the technical media, we had demonstrated that tradition and experimentation were not necessarily implacable enemies; we had confirmed that in music, as in literature and the plastic arts, it was no longer possible to dissociate creativeness from theory, the work of art from the aesthetic conflicts which surround its birth. Fulchignoni cited Alberto Moravia's *L'attenzione* to castigate the inattention of modern society. This was due as much to an excess of riches as to poverty: the first because of the quantity of visual and sound pictures created by technological developments; the second because of inhibitions and compression in the means of expression. Music theatre, especially where television was concerned, would benefit from the adaptation of both aristocratic and democratic forms of spectacle. The formula of the Renaissance—involving myths, both Greek and Roman, with the development of the individual and of scientific knowledge—might well be applied to the present. There was a parallel in the contemporary public's desire to return to the roots, to discover the origins of its entertainment.

Ten years of research, of congresses, seminars and practical work in this field have led to certain conclusions concerning ways of assisting creative artists—in so far as they wish to be assisted—to exploit the far-reaching possibilities of the technical media, and ways of helping

interpreters to modify their style of singing, acting or dancing to suit the artistic peculiarities of the medium.

It is significant that the exponents of the different forms of entertainment which constitute music theatre have severally come to similar conclusions concerning the transfer of their art to film and television, more particularly the latter. It may now, as a result, be easier than even ten years ago to formulate certain common conventions with regard to space, movement and time in television. These will apply above all to the interpreter—his body, his face and, in many cases, his voice. And here we must remember that the interpreter is at his best when a contact is established with a public, a human contact with a live audience. Surely, one of the most important tasks of television will be to seek ways of intensifying what the French composer Emmanuel Bondeville has termed the 'tepid, filtered emotion of the receiver and the small screen'.

Gerhard Freund, Director of Austrian Television, closed the 1965 Round Table with some valuable advice both to creative artists and also to television stations with less experience than his own in artistic midwifery. It happened too often that there was a lack of sure co-operation between the creative, reproductive and technical elements involved; teamwork was essential in the creation of television opera, ballet and music theatre. Often, too, the components of such a team were not aware of the possibilities and limitations of the medium. Hence the value of the television workshops which it had been proposed to organize in association with the Vienna State Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. The music experts of several stations had complained that the wrong people had been commissioned to create works for television. This criticism proved to be a boomerang, neatly returned by Mr. Freund; it was to their own musical staff that directors of television should look to find the creative talent of the right calibre.

It should not be forgotten that to the great mass

of the public, *all* modern music—whether of moderate or of extreme tendency—was *a priori* equally suspect. Those responsible for the destinies of television were working for the wide public which had it in its power to annihilate the efforts of creative artists, interpreters and technicians alike . . . simply by switching off. One could not live and work in a vacuum and, in television, '*l'art pour l'art*' was the greatest sin of all.

In his comment on modern music, Mr. Freund was considering what we please to call 'serious' music. All forms of 'light' music are on the contrary *a priori* acceptable to the general public. The fact that little mention is made in the present study of musical comedy in no way implies that its importance as a form of entertainment is underrated. On the contrary, the influence of the American, or American-inspired 'musical' on the public of today is considerable. And, at its best, the 'musical' represents a well-nigh perfect example of the total theatre which composers, authors and choreographers of more serious pretensions are striving to achieve. But musical comedy reaches the public through an entirely different channel of communication—a commercial and often highly successful one, it should be said. Its authors may have their problems but they differ completely from those which beset the authors of opera or music theatre. It will indeed be an auspicious day when a *Wozzeck*, or even a *Carmen*, enjoys a run of several months at a leading theatre in a capital city.

Returning to television, and without in any way minimizing the importance to cultural life of the development of the sound media, it must today be obvious that television, the youngest of the technical means of communication, is also the most influential. It combines the fascination of things seen with the advantage of seeing them in one's home. But let us remember that television, like the other media, is no more and no less than a conveyor of information. It is for the creative artists—authors, composers, choreographers and design-

ers—to accept the challenge and make it also one of the most potent artistic media of our time.

The following study will cover three aspects of the subject: (a) the application of modern techniques in the creation of works written for the stage; (b) the transmission through the media of radio, television and film of works written for the stage; and (c) the creation of works especially for these media.

1 The historical background of music theatre

History, says Jean Tardieu, reveals many examples of group ceremonies in which speech, song and the drama combined to evoke a fundamental myth or extol the divine. Later on, the musical, dramatic and visual art values belonging to the original rites gradually broke away and assumed a life of their own—at least in the Occidental world. And for Tardieu, the richest, the most total form of this new life, is what we call the 'lyric theatre' or 'opera'.

It is of significance for our present study that the earliest form of opera was known as *dramma per musica*, i.e., a drama by means of music, and that it was born in Florence around the turn of the sixteenth century. The *dramma per musica* derived partly from the *Sacre rappresentationi* (Sacred dramas) popular in Italy up to the middle of the sixteenth century, which were sung and mimed and contained both religious and profane music, together with instrumental preludes and interludes with dancing. It derived also in part from the madrigal; in the transitional phase, choral sequences forming the background to spoken action gave way to sung dialogue and soliloquy, supported by a discreet instrumental commentary. For their subjects the Florentine artists went back to classical mythology; they gave them rich costumes and the elaborate decorations were moved into place by a not inconsiderable stage machinery. Mythology treated in a realistic rather than a symbolic manner provided most operatic plots throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

It was owing to the changing social structures and attitudes of the eighteenth century, and the consequent development of opera as a public entertainment for middle-class as well as aristocratic audiences, that comic opera (with its various national differences) became established and, as the critic of the London *Times* points out, inevitably devoted itself more to the everyday doings of ordinary people than to miracles performed by classical gods. Romantic opera with its characteristic

seriousness of purpose usually favoured historical plots having political or social significance. Indeed, romantic opera culminated in what may be dubbed 'philosophical opera', in which historical or mythological plots are used not merely for their interest as stories but for their symbolic significance and thus for the philosophical or metaphysical concepts they may be seen to embody.

Mario Labroca, then President of the International Music Council, in introducing the IMC's 1964 Hamburg Congress on Contemporary Music Theatre, recalled that the various aspects of opera have been influenced, if not actually determined, by the variations in the tastes and habits of audiences from the last years of the sixteenth century to this very day.

'The most recent influence with the most far-reaching implications consists in the present-day phenomenon of a great public able to chose from among multitudinous forms of entertainment. Today, in addition to the spoken theatre or the musical theatre, there are the cinema, television, radio and sport, and each of them has created its own following. We are led to ask ourselves what contact is possible between the prevailing sensibility of today and a form of entertainment which creates fabulous and unreal worlds in which heroic characters become the symbols of ethical and religious problems.'

(Here it might be relevant to quote a remark by a famous German actor and producer, the late Gustav Gründgens, that it is precisely the unreality of opera which brings it closer in spirit than any other kind of entertainment to the original form of the theatre.)

Until the First World War, said Labroca, opera was the entertainment *par excellence* of an affluent society. Even where the musical idiom had already assumed an essential role in the dramatic development, the decorative elements were still much sought after by the public; the ballet, for example, was considered indispensable, although the music might clearly call for a further and speedier development of the action.

‘Think of the extraordinarily effective telescoping’, continued Labroca, ‘by which Verdi, in the opening scene of *Otello*, unfolds within the space of only eight minutes a storm, a battle, and a victory.’

The preceding congress of the IMC, devoted to ‘Music and its Public’, had revealed a certain weariness of opera on the part of the public. This was not entirely surprising, thought Labroca: ‘When the public today goes to the theatre to hear a new opera, it almost always experiences a conventional spectacle, little different from which our grandfathers used to enjoy. There is a feeling of unease, particularly among the younger generation, on being faced with a spectacle which to them seems antiquated, useless, a dead weight. And yet, masterpieces have no age, they are above passing tastes and fashions, and therefore music drama as a genre is alive today in exactly the same way as are the literature and the works of art of past centuries.’

‘We have a duty to welcome new forms of expression, to help the creation of works which do not conform to conventional patterns, to place means at the disposal of those who wish to tread new paths, and where necessary to transform theatrical institutions so as to adapt them to the use of new stage techniques.’

2 Music theatre today—contemporary forms and staging

Contemporary music theatre looks back increasingly to the beginning of the genre, both in form and in staging. There is no more 'contemporary' work than Monteverdi's *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (1624), with its dramatic story which is mimed, danced and narrated in song. We find the narrator again, in a completely different style, in Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat* (1918) and in Britten's *Rape of Lucretia* (1946).

There is more than a question of semantics in the use of the term 'music theatre', as opposed to 'opera'. Music theatre has become current in the past two decades among the more sophisticated public, mainly in German-speaking countries. It can mean a production of a standard opera, which stresses its theatrical or dramatic aspect; as it can mean a work which eschews the classical musical forms of aria, ensemble, chorus, etc., in favour of the dramatic continuity.

H. H. Stuckenschmidt keeps steadfastly to the term 'opera', even when describing what many of his contemporaries refer to as music theatre. He believes that the opera of the future will consist of a combination of new musical expression with contemporary subject matter: 'Opera on the whole has remained very unresponsive to the new achievements in literature. Nevertheless the first steps towards a *rapprochement* have been made. A few musicians have secured the collaboration of such dramatists as Beckett, Ionesco, Michel Butor and Ingeborg Bachmann, while others have written directly for such *avant-garde* stages as the Dancer's Workshop of San Francisco. The scores written by Luciano Berio and Roman Haubenstock-Ramati to texts of Samuel Beckett and other modern poets are preliminary studies for new forms of opera.'

It appears to Stuckenschmidt that the genre of opera has not, as we all once believed, died; indeed, there are many small signs which point to its vigorous rejuvenation. To him the fear that the opera public may not accept a radical renewal of its favourite musical forms does not

seem justified. We are now all aware that Alban Berg's musical language which, at the first performance of *Wozzeck* in 1925, had the effect of a revolutionary shock has lost all its difficulty simply through familiarity.

'There are changes in human existence,' says Stuckenschmidt, 'which are so strong, which penetrate so deeply into everyone's daily life, that the art of drama should not avoid their problems. Man's situation in the middle of the twentieth century reveals a series of such radical changes or possibilities of change. For this reason I felt it was particularly important that Karl Birger Blomdahl composed an opera to Erik Lindegren's libretto, based on Harry Martinson's epic, *Aniara*. The work leads us into the acutely problematic sphere of the period of astronauts, that is, into a space ship which wanders from its course and thus loses all contact with the past and the future. Modern means of musical expression are in this case completely adequately adapted to the modern subject matter.'

'It no longer worries us,' Stuckenschmidt continues, 'to see plays on the stage dealing with daring social and sexual-pathological questions, before which the generation of our grandfathers would have crossed themselves. Since stage techniques—and also the art of production—have developed to the same degree as literature and music, all arguments seem to speak for a total renewal of opera.'

'Are new forms perhaps possible,' asks Everett Helm, 'through the combination of various factors—spoken word, pantomime, ballet, dance, *Sprechchor*, rhythmic recitation and other "non-operatic" elements, including electronic machines and devices such as film, tape recorders, loudspeakers and the like? Most of them have, of course, already been incorporated into musical stage works. The "opera-ballet" is an old French tradition. Spoken sections in what is otherwise an opera are not new. Pantomime and mime form the basis of Stravinsky's *Renard*. His *Perséphone* is a melodrama in the original

sense of the word, combining dramatic recitation with speaking, dancing, singing and miming—one of the most interesting examples of mixed forms in our century.’

It is these new mixed forms, used in various combinations and to varying degrees, which in our view make up the contemporary music theatre. A word of warning, however, on the dangers of categorization: it comes from no less an authority than Günther Rennert. ‘No one’, says Rennert, ‘is able to explain what the term mixed forms really involves. At best, one can sum up its various manifestations, elements, subjects and intentions, but in the twentieth century there exists no predominating conception of form providing a model as did, *opera seria* and *buffa* in the eighteenth century and music drama and romantic opera (later *verismo*) in the nineteenth. Now, every work creates its own style, or rather each of the many aspects of contemporary music theatre has its own inherent stylistic rules. Some see this as a degeneration of the art of opera, others as a sign of its vitality and of its constant need for renewal and change. What matters is that creative richness should be recognized even when it runs contrary to our taste. It is to be found in works as different as Schönberg’s psychogram *Erwartung*, Blacher’s *comédie-ballet Prussian Tales*, Alban Berg’s *Wozzeck*—expressionistically based on a musical structure—Fortner’s ‘lyric ballad’ of *Don Perlimplin* and even Jan Cikker’s ‘dramatic passion’ based on Tolstoy’s *Resurrection*. And even a prototype, such as the so-called scenic oratorio, admits of a number of greatly divergent variants which in turn have their own style and corresponding rules of production.

‘For example, Stravinsky’s *Oedipus Rex* and Britten’s *Rape of Lucretia*, Honegger’s *Jeanne au Bûcher* and several works of Orff all use stylistic elements which have been ascribed to “scenic oratorio”, and yet these works differ greatly. There can be no definitive style of production for contemporary music theatre as one might almost say exists for Handel, Mozart, Verdi and Wagner.

And yet the works which represent today's music theatre do seem to have one thing in common: they do not seek to move us by acting psychologically on our emotions, by drawing us into an emotional whirlpool, but by moving us from a distance, through an alert but committed *vis-à-vis*. This appears to be less; it is in fact more, because the whole of the work of art, its all-embracing message, is directed at the whole man, his intellectual and spiritual being, his emotions—perhaps even to the subliminal. It is through no mere coincidence that so much emphasis is laid today on this particular "distant" form of music theatre, let us call it scenic oratorio, musical play, scenic cantata, etc.

'The scenic oratorio is related to Brecht's epic theatre. It confronts the audience with a dramatic event, enables it to participate in the action without being hustled, opposes contemplation and reflection to illusion. More often than not a narrator or speaker who fulfils a dual function is introduced; he acts as a buffer between the dramatic action on stage and the public, and also as a link, explaining or participating in the action. This role is often entrusted to a small choir.' (In Searle's Ionesco opera *The Photo of the Colonel*, the characters of Bérenger and Edouard would have been totally incomprehensible with 'conventional' music.)

'Dodecophony and its successors can now encompass the new characters, settings, action and developments offered by contemporary writing with the result that the opera-goer, his interest in the characters and events on the stage dulled through centuries of opera clichés and trained to a one-sided visual and auditive enjoyment, will find new interest in the characters and events as such. Opera is given a chance to develop from what we might call its "culinary" character towards intellectual stimulation.

'The very lively discussion which followed every performance, not only the première, of *The Photo of the Colonel* and the strong reaction it evoked in the

newspapers and elsewhere seem to confirm the need for striking events in opera as well as in other forms of theatre.'

The groundwork for the music theatre of today can be said to have been laid in the two decades or so between the two world wars. Many of the composers who then belonged to the *avant-garde* achieved only short-lived fame or merely a *succès de scandale*. One hears little nowadays, for example, of the German, Max Brod, and his constructivist opera *Maschinist Hopkins* or of the Czech, Emil František Burian, who collaborated with the Dada Theatre in Prague; the influence of these precursors of our most advanced music theatre should nevertheless not be underestimated.

Others have stayed the course and some of their works now belong to the current repertoire, at least of those countries where opera-going has been and remains a tradition. But it is not always the most successful works of the major composers of this period which have proved to have the greatest influence. Busoni's *Doktor Faustus* and Malipiero's *Sette canzoni* in Italy; Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf*, a considerable but short-lived success, Hindemith's *Cardillac*, Schönberg's (earlier) *Die glückliche Hand*, the Brecht-Weill *Mahagonny* and the Brecht-Hindemith-Weill *Lindberghflug* in Germany; Milhaud's *Christophe Colomb* (first produced in Berlin) and Honegger's *Antigone* in France; Janacek's *From the House of the Dead* in Czechoslovakia; all of these have contributed, to a greater or lesser degree, to our contemporary styles and forms of music theatre.

Their contribution, perhaps, is less than that of Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire* (1912), a melodrama for recitation and chamber orchestra; Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat* (1918), 'à réciter, jouer et danser'; Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges* (1919), Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* (1927), and the Brecht-Weill *Die Dreigroschenoper* (1928).¹

1. The dates are those of the first performances.

Here, certain outstanding creative personalities, all of whom have already been mentioned in one connexion or another, deserve special mention for their general influence. All but one of them are fortunately still alive and active.

Stravinsky

It is significant that, even at this early stage in our consideration of contemporary music theatre, mention has been made of three works of Stravinsky. According to Massimo Mila, with but three exceptions (in *Le rossignol*, *Mavra* and the *Rake's Progress*), Stravinsky has accepted none of the forms of music theatre handed down from the past. Hence the multitude of new forms, of 'spectacles' which are so difficult to classify since they belong to no pre-established type but create on each occasion their own unique and individual genre: *Les noces*, *L'histoire du soldat*, *Renard*, *Oedipus Rex* and to a certain extent also works like *Pulcinella* (which only the sung parts remove somewhat from the normal ballet) *Perséphone* and also *The Flood*, composed more recently for the new medium of television.

As Mila reminds us, Stravinsky himself has indicated to us the criterion which governs his experiments: liberate music from all subservience to other artistic forces; make it the absolute master of an entertainment, its *raison-d'être*. And this, paradoxically, even in cases where the music has only a fragmentary role to play.

Massimo Mila considers that, in *L'histoire du soldat*, the imposition of the small orchestra on the stage, well in view of the public, is tantamount to a conquest and a sign of the music's hegemony. It is not without astonishment that one reads afresh the reasons which Stravinsky gives for this disposition in his *Chronicles of my Life* (I, p. 157): 'For I have always hated listening to music with my eyes closed, without the eye taking an active part in proceedings. It is essential, in order to

understand the music in all its fullness, to see the gesture, the movement of the different parts of the body which produces it. The fact is that all music which is created or composed requires in addition a means of exteriorization if it is to be perceived by the listener. In other words, it requires an intermediary, an executant. If this is an inevitable condition without which music fails to reach us, why then ignore it or try to ignore it, why close one's eyes to this fact which is in the very nature of the art of music?" This same text leads to the familiar polemic against the kind of musical listening based on 'dreaming' in which one indulges more easily with eyes closed in the 'absence of visual distractions.' 'But', continues Mila, 'when Stravinsky tells us—"these are the ideas which incited me to place my little orchestra... well in evidence on one side of the stage"—when he adds—"why not let the eyes follow movements which, like those of the arms of the tympanist, of the violinist, of the trombone, help the auditory perception?"—how can one fail to sense the tremendous feeling that here is the germ of the new theories which govern the *avant-garde* music theatre, here is the intuition of a music theatre where the performance of the music, with its accompanying gestures, is a spectacle in itself, the genre of music theatre based on music and its performance which musicians like Berio, Stockhausen and Kagel are seeking to provide?

'Stravinsky uses new forms in order to "demystify" the theatre, i.e., to purge it of the, to him suspect, element of "interpretation". What Stravinsky seeks particularly to avoid is the paradox of the actor, of a person who represents someone other than himself for the time is on the stage. The use of masks in *Oedipus Rex* and *The Flood*, the action of *L'histoire du soldat* tending towards the form of the narrative, the monumental plasticity which the use of Latin allows *Oedipus*, all these are efforts to depersonalize the theatre. The distribution of the voices in *Les noces* represents another attempt at

depersonalization. "Individual roles do not exist in *Les noces*, but only solo voices that impersonate now one type of character and now another" (Stravinsky, *Expositions and Developments*, p. 115).

'Stravinsky's most recent stage work, *The Flood*, says Günther Rennert, is a variant of the scenic oratorio and one which, for all its economy of means, represents an extension of the form. The composer describes *The Flood* as a musical play whose subject is the creation, the fall of man, the flood, the rescue and finally the pact of God with man.'

In form and in the use of stage machinery, there is an unbroken line from *L'histoire du soldat* (narration, comedy, dance) and *Renard* (speaker, vocal soloists, choir) to *The Flood*. Here, Stravinsky's music theatre appears in its most reduced form but at the same time leaving all previous works far behind in the manifold use of stage elements. Solo and choral singing, pantomime, the spoken word and ballet are all used side by side or in contrast to illustrate this human mythology. Stravinsky and his librettist Craft have devised a kind of scenic and musical shorthand. The story of the creation is swiftly and concisely told—in more or less telegraphic language—and each of the theatre disciplines mentioned is given equal importance.

But Donald Mitchell questions Stravinsky's use of the spoken word combined with music: there was good reason why melodrama had gradually ceased to function in opera as a prominent part of the composer's resource. 'The spoken word and music simply do not mix—they tend to cancel one another out,' thinks Mitchell. And yet, to do Stravinsky (and indeed the melodrama itself) justice, he admits that there are many passages in *The Flood* which fall very convincingly on the ear as a combination or alternation of speech and music. Might it not be that a device which seems to be regressive in a stage work—and *The Flood* was originally written for television—will prove to be the very stuff of television?

Carl Orff

Unlike Stravinsky, whose influence can be discerned in the musical aspects of his work, Carl Orff is so completely a man of the theatre that his means of expression, music with rhythm, almost primitive rhythm, as the major element, mime and gesture, dance and the spoken word, are inextricably interwoven. Orff has told us in his own words how he has gone about writing his several important works based on Greek tragedies: 'I have not created a libretto, a text specially adapted to the music or a basis for composition, but have tried to interpret the unadulterated original text, just as, for example, it was bequeathed us by Sophocles in *Antigone* or *Oedipus*. I purposely avoid the term "compose" and consider my work here as an attempt at interpreting the Greek tragedies for present times with present-day means.

'The case of the *Carmina Burana* texts is similar. I merely extracted these twelfth-century Latin songs (from their context), without any addition or commentary, without even an action and used them as a peg on which to hang the music. This is hardly what one would call a libretto—and, of course, the work was referred to as static theatre and by many other catchwords. Well, it is certainly something different—but this is no achievement of mine; this particular kind of theatre just happened to be due. The same happened with the poems of Catullus which I put together to build a small argument: a madrigal-play. But here I took the liberty of adding an introduction and a conclusion. And again in *Aphrodite* I used the Greek text to create a link with Sappho.'

Brecht

Another considerable influence in contemporary music theatre is Berthold Brecht. According to Egon Monk, speaking at the Hamburg Congress, Brecht's theory of the epic theatre was first formulated in the notes to the opera *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, for which Kurt Weill wrote the music. It was therefore

Brecht's work on an opera which gave rise to his criticism of the bourgeois theatre he liked to describe, in terms taken from the kitchen vocabulary, as 'culinary'. Why did he choose an opera?

'Opera for Brecht represented in its cleanest form the theatre's alienation from social topics. What he wished to combat, Brecht found here in wellnigh textbook exposition: shutting out of the real world, construction of an inward-looking sham world. All this to the applause of the spectator. Supply and demand were in complete concordance. Brecht described the opera public as "avid to become wax in the hands of magicians", willing, in the last hours of its own world, to escape to another.

'For Brecht himself, his innovations represented the renewal of already-existing patterns, not real transformations. Renewal through the music, which for a short time had disposed of a new technique; renewal in the choice of subjects, which brought in contemporary scenes of action and characters; renewal through design which brought machines, trains, cars, planes on the stage. But what are we to think of this penetration of the symbols of our time, when their significance does not go further than their mere presence, when the new means of locomotion are merely used as a vehicle to carry old fables—old feelings—the so-called eternal values?'

'Opera,' wrote Brecht, 'had to be raised to the technical standard of modern theatre. The modern theatre is an epic theatre.' Monk continues: 'The point of departure of epic theatre is the audience. What it needs in the stalls are critics of the events which it portrays instead of consumers of musical sweetmeats.' But such a critical, distant attitude on the part of the spectator towards the action presented on stage demanded that a stage technique in use in Europe for the past two thousand years be abandoned.

'The course of a play or of an opera should no longer appear to be impervious to influences; the spectator

should not say to himself "it had to happen thus" but rather "it happened thus; it could have happened otherwise." If he said something to himself, this meant he had to think; if he thought, one had to cease drawing him into the spell of the theatre, one could no longer attempt to offer him the feelings of authors and composers as if they were his own, one could desist from provoking sympathy rather than observation from him. One had to replace psychological motivations for ways of behaviour by sociological ones, for the spectator was to be invited to cease contemplating his own navel in order to observe the doings of the powerful ones and no longer confuse them with fate.

"The Elizabethans were the first to portray man and the fate of man, and their play construction seemed suited to the realization of these intentions. No longer compact acts but many short scenes, each an entity in itself, ordered according to the unfolding of the plots which in turn should correspond to the unfolding of social processes. No merging of details into a whole but interest in the contradictory behaviour of the characters and the interrelation of the various scenes. Stage designers were no longer to give precedence to the creation of a mood or an atmosphere, for a familiar atmosphere could well have engendered boredom. The stage was to be brightly lit, for investigations of that kind could not be carried out in darkness. Decorations were to be recognizable as decorations, made of a little wood and light material, to be acted in but not lived in, thus leaving the spectator no opening to confuse the representation of life with life itself. And finally actor-singers were to cease to make the audience believe that they were not really actor-singers but the lumberjack Jim Mahoney, for example, or Widow Begbick. They must cease to identify themselves with the character they portrayed, lest the audience identify itself with them, for identification meant loss of the faculty of judgement.

'Brecht's epic theatre was a rationally ordered system

aimed at making the spectator think in a rational manner, the final purpose being to awaken "an interest in things of personal concern which occur outside one's own four walls."

"Music was the first element in epic theatre which had its wings clipped. It was to make little or no use of its faculty to conjure up emotions and to move. It could neither intoxicate nor hypnotize, just as it was demanded of those who played music not to yield to it. The function of music should be no different from that of the text, the stage-setting, the acting and all other components which make up the theatre. And all with the object of "conveying truthful and unadulterated representations of life, and in particular those which suggested solutions to the various problems."

"Since music is not in a position alone to fulfil these demands, it had in epic theatre to accept the function of a component part of the theatrical work, the intentions of which could not be expressed in music, and in the realization of which it could do little more than help. Did this represent too great a limitation in the possibilities left to music? Or was the claim to complete primacy for music in opera on the contrary a burden which hindered rather than helped? Kurt Weill subscribed to the latter opinion: he felt that "the new operatic theatre which is being created today has an epic character; since the narrative form never leaves the audience in uncertainty or doubt about the stage action, the music is able to retain its own, independent, purely musical effect."

"This met Brecht's demand for the complete separation of the three elements of music, text and design; but it did not alter the fact that music was now allotted a limited function in a field in which it had previously been dominant. Brecht's relation to music was that of a dramatist for whom a play and an opera were only slightly different means of expression of one and the same theatre, and to whom therefore the question of

which art deserved precedence did not matter in the slightest. Only within this limitation did he conceive that music should have an intrinsic value, and only within this limitation did he consider real beauty to be at all attainable.'

Henze

Hans Werner Henze's views on the staging of music theatre are diametrically opposed to those of Stravinsky and Brecht: 'When I compose instrumental music, I meet with difficulties of form, difficulties in accommodating and distributing the thematic material, difficulties in recognizing the purpose or the meaning of a particular development of abstract motives. Such a situation never occurs in writing for the theatre because, here, everything is real, tangible, immediately communicable to the senses and because life itself carries the music with it to such an extent that my senses want to react musically. For me these facts explain my passionate enthusiasm for "theatre in music". From them also derives my sense of unease, of dissatisfaction with existing conditions, and my desire for a complete accord and harmony between the components represented: painting, drama, libretto and music. The combination of these should result in a single great and clear harmony whose origin should be the music, and which should in fact be dictated by the music. And in order to overcome my feeling of dissatisfaction without doing anybody an injustice, I should myself take over the control of and the responsibility for the production, scenery, costumes and lighting, as well as the musical direction. This I have actually done in two cases with results which—for all their occasional awkwardness or conventionality—have satisfied me personally even if not the world at large.'

Henze adds: 'For an operatic score of our time to be contemporaneous, it need not necessarily be based on the political and social dilemma of our day and age. Verdi

was a very political musician, but even he did not use subjects taken from the period in which he lived. The actuality of a modern opera rests solely in its musical idiom. Producers and designers should first study these idioms, and only then think of practical possibilities of interpretation. If such training were to exist on a broad enough scale—and musicians cannot sufficiently insist on its importance—the much lacking unity in scenic realization would be more easily attainable. One would suddenly become aware of certain relations like, for example, that between expressionistic theatre and the asymmetrical idiom of true modern scores, since both have a common source. Such a conception would however demand a stronger historical sense, which would necessarily call for further clarification and pointing out and seeking after new aesthetic territories.’

Britten

Of the major composers of our time, none has been more successful than Benjamin Britten in reviving the form of chamber opera. And none, surely, has produced a greater range of sound or greater volume in its sonority from an orchestra of thirteen. Almost every one of Britten’s works for the stage, starting with *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946), has added some new aspects to music theatre. His work for children, *Let’s Make an Opera*, includes a first part in which the opera, *The Little Sweep*, is rehearsed with the participation of the audience in the choruses; it is both instructive and entertaining—and is highly original. This is not the only work in which Britten uses children as interpreters. We find them, as a chorus, in the dramatic cantata *Noyes Fludde*, intended for staging in churches or halls; and, individually, to great dramatic effect, in *The Turn of the Screw*.

Britten’s *Curlew River* (1964) is based on a Japanese Noh play. The action has been transferred to mediaeval England and a correspondence established with the ceremonial character of the original. *Curlew River* has

been written as a mystery play intended for performance in church; in fact, a plain-chant processional precedes and follows the work proper. The score contains a number of instructions concerning the production which mark *Curlew River* as a strikingly original example of music theatre. Of special interest is the integration of orchestral seating—a chamber orchestra, of course—with the décor of the play; the original set includes seats and desks for the instrumentalists and the shape of the chamber organ is built into the design of the set.

The Burning Fiery Furnace, Britten's latest work for the stage (1966), is another 'parable for church performance'. It treats of the biblical story of the three Hebrew adolescents who are miraculously saved from Nebuchadnezzar's punishment for refusing to worship a golden idol. Like its predecessor, the work is cast in the dramatic form of a mediaeval ritual.

Béjart

'Total theatre' is a term which is becoming increasingly associated with Maurice Béjart. According to Pierre Chevreuille, it answers a new need felt by certain authors, and the public is responding to it favourably. With 'total theatre' the authors wish to break down the partitions which separate the individual components of a theatrical performance.

Béjart himself considers that today the cinema comes closest to 'total theatre', but that opera, if it were to remember its origins, might well go back to the '*spectacle total*'. Song and dance separated comparatively late; Béjart possesses some astonishing letters in which reference is made to certain dancers of the Royal Academy under Louis XIV who, it was said, sang divinely. It was perfectly normal at the time for a dancer to sing and for a singer to dance. But today this applies only to the Chinese Opera and Japanese Noh or Kabuki with their adjunct of acting and acrobatics and, in a more limited way, to certain American artists.

But, continues BÉjart, the association within one and the same spectacle of song and dance does not necessarily make for '*théâtre total*'. Total theatre should convey the impression of life, wherein the means of expression are constantly mixed. In this sense, total theatre is a kind of 'super realism', an attempt to come as close as possible to real life but in a highly stylized fashion. It is precisely because he considers the cinema to be a stylized art in which people take part in a realistic action that BÉjart has inserted film sequences in a spectacle on two occasions, in *A la recherche de Don Juan* and in *La reine verte*. In the former, BÉjart shows unconnected screen actuality—usually scenes of horror—to coincide with a crucial point in the dramatic action on the stage. This recalls the treatment of contemporary newsreel in the Czech *Antigona* (see Chapter 11).

'In most of his productions,' says Chevreuille, 'Maurice BÉjart goes far beyond the ordinary prerogatives of the choreographer. Choreography alone no longer satisfies him; he has tried several times to produce an artistic synthesis of the various elements which go to make up a theatrical performance: ballet, mime, song, spoken text, film, staging.'

In *La reine verte*, it seems that he has fully realized his project. This work, according to Pierre Chevreuille, purports to show the three ages of man in the form of concrete symbols. The casting of the two leading roles complies with BÉjart's concept of total theatre: Death is played by an actress, a dancer impersonates Man and the different elements of the work are so closely interwoven that they form an inseparable whole.

On the staging of music theatre

It would be impossible to speak of music theatre in the world today without mentioning a very important kind of interpretative, or perhaps a better term would be re-creative, artist—the producer. In traditional opera

until close on the turn of the nineteenth century the singer was master; the conductor's role was more or less that of a discreet accompanist; production was practically non-existent. With the era of the star conductors—the 1910's with Mahler in Vienna, the 1920's with Toscanini in Milan, and each in succession at the Metropolitan in New York—the singer's hegemony waned. Toscanini was able to tell Chaliapin that he had to sing in time. However, opera production was still, in most places, a rather perfunctory affair. Even to this day in Italy, opera posters and programmes carry the name of the conductor, the '*maestro concertatore*' in much larger type than that of the producer. And yet the day of the producer has arrived even in Italy, where some of the best-known producers in the legitimate theatre have made reputations for themselves also in opera—reputations which have very quickly extended abroad.

There are today two diametrically opposed conceptions of the production of traditional opera: neo-realist—of which Visconti and Zeffirelli, in Italy, and Felsenstein, in Germany, are probably the most distinguished exponents; and the expressionist-abstract—expounded, for example, by a Schuh, and the much-lamented Wieland Wagner. Henze is a strong supporter of the former category. Taking not opera but ballet as his starting point, he says: 'Every version of Stravinsky's *Firebird* which differs from the original—whether its modifications be due to a know-it-all attitude or to plain ignorance—is less good than the original we know (now in the repertoire of the Royal Ballet, London) which moves us through the complete accord between the composer on the one hand and the choreographer and scene-painter on the other. This *Firebird* is the perfect proof of my theory that nothing should be changed in a successful realization of the "ur-text". The musical theatre of a period conveys not only the music of its period but also, with it and from it, an exact image of its stylistic, spiritual and psychic origins. Performances of Stravinsky's *Firebird*

which depart from the elegant, clear, naïve and creatively detailed original version, with all its lovable "mistakes", I find insupportable. And just as insupportable, to me, is every representation of an operatic work of an earlier period in which the scenic components do not correspond to a "t" with those of the period in which it was created. Felsenstein, Visconti and Zeffirelli take pains over such exactitude; they know that material can communicate and colours speak, they succeed in capturing the accents of the music on the stage. And for this reason they are far removed from the so-called modern music theatre.'

And it is precisely to modern music theatre that Günther Rennert looks for the rejuvenation of the contemporary operatic stage. 'Are new types of scenic realizations which result from attempts to produce new works of music theatre applicable also to the classical and romantic opera repertoire? I believe that, within certain limitations, the answer is in the affirmative. A producer who produces a contemporary work with his eyes open, who has come close to the stylistic laws inherent in these works and has transcribed them in terms of the living present, suddenly looks "differently" at *The Magic Flute* and *Don Giovanni*, *Fidelio* and *Falstaff* or an oratorio by Handel. Nor would he wish to force these works on to the procrustean bed of modern formulae or to modernize them unduly.

'But here and there he will recognize the symbolical aspect, the depersonalized sense, perhaps also the romantic unreality of an older work and transpose it by using what he has learned from the technique of stylization, "de-personalization" or the spatial choreographic practice current in contemporary music theatre to reveal in works which have become frozen through convention surprisingly new aspects which speak for our day and age.'

None of the important personalities active in music theatre today has gone so far as Vaclav Kaslik in accepting the visual media as an integral part of stage

production. Kaslik is convinced that in the future recognition will be given, thanks to the influence of film and television, to a synthesis of sung and spoken words, acting and the dance, as is the case with the best contemporary musicals. In this conception, he rejoins BÉjart.

The housing of music theatre

The housing of music theatre has an influence on contemporary production; it has even been suggested that the difficulty in finding suitable new works may be due to the lack of stages and auditoria of the right shapes and sizes. New works, say Milko Kelemen and B. A. Zimmermann, two composers of the younger generation, deserve new houses in which to be heard and seen. We are outgrowing the traditional type of opera house. And Michel Butor, looking very far ahead, conceives of the future music public sitting in a nacelle, surrounded by mobile sound sources.

From the point of view of sound, there is much to be said for providing the possibility of raising or lowering the orchestral pit according to the type of work being performed. Electronic devices should be available to composers who wish to experiment with distribution of sound. Visually, a modern author-composer may well find the proscenium arch an encumbrance to the kind of relation he wishes to establish between stage and auditorium.

Of course, not all creative artists agree with Kelemen's contention that we are outgrowing the traditional type of opera house. Swoboda, the Czech designer, who has from the outset been connected with the *Laterna Magika*, has said that the less modern a theatre, the better he likes it: 'I hate theatres with modern equipment because I feel I must use it; I can take all my machinery into a traditional theatre.' And Luigi Nono was perfectly happy to see his opera *Intolleranza* staged by Vaclav

Kaslik, with abstract sets and lighting effects by Emilio Vedova, in Venice's Teatro La Fenice.

Quite apart from experiments in the electronic diffusion of sound in the opera house, composers have also for a long time been seeking—partly for musical, partly for dramatic reasons—to break away from the traditional concept of voices on the stage and orchestra in the pit. For example, in Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat* and Weill's *Mahagonny*, the musicians play on the stage. And Alberto Ginastera, in his very successful opera *Don Rodrigo*—produced first in 1965 at the Teatro Colon, Buenos Aires, and then at the New York City Center Opera—has distributed groups of brass and bells at certain points in the auditorium.

One of the most recent experiments in total theatre, Lars Johan Werle's opera *Dreaming about Thérèse*, created at the Stockholm Royal Opera House in September 1965, is conducted in a large circular room. The action takes place on a raised central platform around which sits the audience; round the audience sits the orchestra, disposed in groups of two or four. Concurrently with the 'live' performance, loudspeakers on the ceiling and under the platform relay a pre-recorded, electronically distorted sound track on tape. The effect is said to be almost hypnotic.

3 Experimental music theatre

A publication of the 1966 Holland Festival devoted to the first performance of a much discussed work of total theatre, *Labyrinth*, quoted some apposite remarks made two years earlier by Peter Brook: 'We stand today before an undreamt field of experimental possibilities, above all in theatrical architecture, but also because television has given us a new tempo, a new manner of looking. We must now combine this new tempo and these new forms with the possibilities of theatrical architecture.'

'Only in destroying old forms, in experimenting with new ones, lies hope for the future. Only such a radical change will open for the theatre a possibility of developing further. In the same way as serial music exists, so must it be possible to find such a thing as serial theatre, which would originate directly from experience and lead to a new truth.'

Michel Butor makes a subtle distinction between an '*ouvrage*', which derives from experimentation, and an '*œuvre*', which is the result of creation. The most recent developments of music theatre lead us to experiments in improvisation—both musical and dramatic—which have more than a touch of dadaism about them. They contain in varying proportions elements of music, ballet, mime, the spoken word and dramatic action. Many of them incorporate the performing musician in the stage action. Almost all make use of electronic components in their musical or sound structure; some include visual effects involving film projections on single or multiple screens. And in all there is a general and genuine concern with space acoustics.

The use of electronics

The late Hermann Scherchen used to say that the most powerful single factor in the future physiognomy of music would be electronics: 'The creation of sound through electronics is a reality today. We have a new instrument at our disposal—the magnetophone—and

from it results the new technique of producing a musical structure electronically. This discovery—liberating us from the limitations of pitch, scale and instrumental colour imposed by hitherto-existing instruments—offers unimagined possibilities. It enables us to extend the sound range, which in the time of J. S. Bach was limited to three octaves, to its total possible span of seven octaves.'

Not so much the range of sound as the disposition of sound in space, according to Bruno Maderna, will prove to be the main contribution of electronics to the music theatre of the future.

For a decade and a half now, in addition to Professor Scherchen's own experimental studio at Gravesano, Switzerland, studios have existed in various countries where serious research on the possibilities of electronically produced music has been carried out. Pierre Schaeffer's pioneer work in *musique concrète* originated in the early 1950's in Paris with Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française, and soon after, electronic music proper began to be 'manufactured' at Cologne in the studio set up by Westdeutscher Rundfunk. Several similar institutions have since been created, of which one of the most important is in Milan at Radiodifusione-Televisione Italiana, where Bruno Maderna, together with Luciano Berio, created a 'Studio di fonologia musicale'. Here a synthesis between *musique concrète* and electronic music has been attempted and also a synthesis between various kinds of 'music on tape' and instrumental music. There are other studios in Ghent and Utrecht, in Berlin at the Technische Universität, in Munich, in Warsaw, in Tokyo at the State radio NHK and in the United States of America at Princeton University and in San Francisco.

The dramatic possibilities which electronically produced sounds could afford the 'live' theatre, the cinema and television quickly became apparent. It took longer for operatic composers to accept these new sounds as

a valid musical element, but in the last few years the situation has radically changed with the improvement in the musical quality of electronically produced material.

In this period several important works of music theatre have been created incorporating an electronic component. Their authors have indeed shown courage in experimenting with such new and relatively untried material, although with very unequal results as to the intrinsic artistic quality. These works, combining or alternating the use of electronic techniques with 'legitimate' instruments, have provoked sharply divided public reactions. For example, *Intolleranza*, by Luigi Nono (1924), which was created at the 1961 Venice Festival of contemporary music, is an expression of its composer's violent protest against oppression and torture; several aspects of its startling and—to judge by public reaction—controversial originality are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

Other Italian composers of the younger generation are also making a clean break with traditional opera. Luciano Berio's *Passaggio* and Giacomo Manzoni's *Atomtod*, both produced at La Scala within the last five years, experiment with new forms and with electronic instruments. In the latter, sound tape and corresponding visual projection are superimposed on an already completed sound structure. Both Nono and Manzoni have incorporated in several of their recent scores the recorded sounds of machinery in a metallurgical factory.

Boris Blacher's most recent stage work, *Zwischenfälle bei einer Notlandung* ('Incidents during a Forced Landing'), bears the subtitle 'Reportage in 2 Phases and 14 Situations'. It was commissioned by the Hamburg State Opera and given its first performance there in February 1966. Not surprisingly with such a subject, the work contains a very large electronic element, which was composed with the assistance of Professor Fritz Winkel, the distinguished electronic engineer of the Technische Universität in Berlin. Professor Winkel claims that:

‘The traditional concept of an operatic performance—voices, instrumental music in a separate orchestra pit and an optical construction in space, light and colour has given way to a synthesis of all these elements in space—in a space which encompasses stage and auditorium. This transformation can, but need not, faithfully reflect the original sound; it can be deliberately distorted . . . Thus a new acoustical construction is achieved, which uses space according to the producer’s conception.

‘Just as the stage has been cleared of machinery and properties and lighting allowed to set the action, so have electronics become the main element in the acoustical aspect of a production. They can even transform the human voice in cases where “pure singing” no longer conveys the sense of an action . . . and they can—through the vastly improved quality of electro-acoustical reproduction—so support a voice that a singer can now sing satisfactorily with his back to the public. Today electronics allow sound to be directed from a particular source placed anywhere in a given space; and unidentifiable sources to fill the whole space. This is a step nearer to the idea of a space-theatre, at least from the sound point of view. It has its visual counterpart in the fast-improving technique of movable stage-lighting.

‘The idea of “space music” can be said to have been realized. In opera it can and should be more than “music in space”; and the designation “electronic music” then becomes too limitative, since electronics serve more than just the musical part.’

‘At first,’ continues Professor Winckel, ‘one thought of constructing the opera [*Incidents during a Forced Landing*] without any instrumental parts whatever . . . However, the composer Boris Blacher considered it an even greater challenge to contrast instrumental and electronic parts and, together with the singers—some heard naturally and others through electronic distortion—to create a new kind of polyphony . . .’

Total theatre

If the French term *spectacle musical* were translatable, it would most accurately describe the kind of music theatre which is developing out of contemporary experiment with musical, dramatic and choreographic form and content, using both 'live' and electronic means. However, some of its practitioners have invented the expression *théâtre total*, which fits a whole range of works which use any or all these ingredients in differing degrees. We have already applied it to at least one work by Maurice Béjart.

Bernd Alois Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* was composed between 1958 and 1960 as a commission from the City of Cologne and was first performed there in 1965. At first sight, the subject of *Die Soldaten*, based on a play by Jakob Lenz, who had a great influence on Büchner, does not seem to call for electronic treatment. It is the story of the misadventures and downfall of the daughter of a bourgeois family at the hands of licentious officers. The composer gives this description of his adaptation of Lenz's play: 'The extended scenes with the officers have been condensed in the form of a *collage*; in three places. . . three poems of Lenz have been incorporated, which are not part of the play. [In one part] three scenes play simultaneously. The division of acts and scenes, in accordance with the musico-dramatic concept, serves the notion of "pluralism" within time (i.e., the simultaneous unfolding of disconnected actions). What comes later is placed first and what precedes is made to follow. Bach chorales and jazz are juxtaposed with, *inter alia*, snatches of formal opera and music theatre. All of this is contained within a kind of pan-acoustical form of music theatre, which fuses together every element of speech, song, music, painting, film, ballet, pantomime, tape montage (noise, speech and *musique concrète*) to form a pluralistic flow of time and experience. . . Unity of the inner action: the nucleus out of which every phase

of the plot, of the characters, indeed of the whole theatrical phenomenon develops.'

In this work, the composer has attempted to dissolve space and time and, in so doing, to realize Joyce's injunction to 'put all space in a nutshell'.

Not everyone will agree with Pierre Boulez in considering Peter Schat's *Labyrinth*, created in Amsterdam during the 1966 Holland Festival, to be a 'turning point in the development of music theatre'. But that such an outstanding musical personality as Boulez should hold such a view is bound to cause many people to take very seriously this first stage work of the 31-year-old Dutch composer.

The Dutch critic Reinbert de Leeuw, in an article reproduced from *Delta* in a publication of the Holland Festival, describes *Labyrinth* as an opera of sorts. The programme refers to the creators as a team: the composer Peter Schat, the author Lodewijk de Boer, the choreographer Koert Stuyf and the film director Albert Seelen. The youngest is 28, the oldest 37. Conductor and producer of the first performance were Bruno Maderna and Peter Oosthoek. Maderna considers *Labyrinth* to be a 'happening' in the true sense of the word, in that the artists responsible for creating each of its components worked independently; the teamwork did not therefore begin until the rehearsal stage.

De Leeuw's article on *Labyrinth* contains the best description of the purpose of total theatre which this writer has yet read; let us therefore quote fairly extensively from it:

'In *Labyrinth*, the total theatre's plurality of dimensions is achieved by treating the various components as independent units. Each "layer" of the work—music, acting, film, dance, scenery—evolves in its own way. The ensemble necessary for a performance consists of an orchestra, a choir, three vocal soloists, four instrumental soloists, five actors, five or six dancers, a stereophonic sound installation, and stage scenery including three projection screens.

'In contrast to . . . traditional operatic forms whose different "layers" serve to illustrate or symbolize the content or action, the components of *Labyrinth* act almost as commentaries on one another. Their function is disorienting rather than correlative. There is no question, therefore, of normally proceeding action, "logical" plot, "meaningful" ballet, "decorative" setting, or programmatic, illustrative music.

'...*Labyrinth* might be described as a triptych on the theme of woman: Beauty Kitt, the commonplace, realistic picture of woman; Naamah, the ideological picture of woman; and the film, the picture of woman's corporality. The dramatic section presents a story centred round Beauty Kitt, partly in the manner of the naturalistic theatre of the absurd, and partly in fragments of so-called silent play.

'...The at once commonplace and enigmatic dramatic action is interrupted at several points by the three vocal soloists. Chanting in Latin, they relate the mythical story of Naamah, some important elements of which derive from *The Bird of Paradise*, a book published in 1958 by the Flemish writer Louis-Paul Boon.

'...Just as the dramatic action represents the common, realistic picture of woman and the chants her ideological image, so the film sequences in *Labyrinth* depict her physicality.... These sequences expose the anonymous nudity of woman, ignoring her individuality. The aim is to create an alienation effect, a disorientation, in relation to this physicality. The spectator is denied any hold on the individual: all he sees is torso or limbs.

'The activities of the dancers do not form a ballet in the usual sense; the choreography takes its departure not from traditional, expressive ballet steps, but from elementary, everyday movements, which the audience may interpret in an infinite number of ways. Here, too, the aim is an alienation effect. Unlike illustrative ballet, the dances are more in the nature of "events", interrupting the dramatic action without rhyme or reason.

“The scenery can also be considered an independent “layer” of *Labyrinth*. Designed by the architect Aldo van Eyck, it consists of a number of labyrinthine set pieces of such dimensions that the cast can act and dance both on top of and underneath them. The great mobility of these sets contributes to a disorientation in spatial concepts. The choir, which sits in the auditorium as spectator during the first two acts, in the third act mounts the stage . . . and becomes involved in the action in and about the set, only to disappear afterwards.

‘ . . . The music of *Labyrinth* embraces several forms: the purely orchestral dances; the chants for three soloists (contralto, tenor, and bass) and orchestra, relating the story of the Bird of Paradise; the incantations for choir and orchestra; improvisations for the three singers and four instrumental soloists (piano, bass clarinet, double-bass, and percussion); and electronic music.

‘ . . . The aleatoric elements in the dances occur, more strongly, in the so-called improvisations. Prompted by signals from one of the singers, acting as guide, the two other singers and the four instrumental soloists perform certain prescribed musical actions in a sequence determined by themselves. The signals consist of hand-clapping, laughing, singing, coughing, and so forth. The improvisations are intended as punctuation inserted between the actors’ dialogue.

‘ . . . The mounting of the various layers of *Labyrinth* in relation to each other rests on the principle of increasing and decreasing complexity. The simultaneous occurrence of several events—verbal, musical, or plastic—fosters disorientation in the spectator; he is left with an unlimited number of interpretative possibilities . . . The various combinations of event and dance, acting and improvisation, silent play and song, lecture and film do not add up to a logical or symbolical unity but to a neutralization, leaving the spectator to create his own unity, if necessary. He has to interpret the connexion, the tension, between the elements. In this way the spectator

becomes the "subject" of the "opera" *Labyrinth*. The disorienting effect of simultaneity opens up for him the possibility of creative participation; what in the traditional theatre stood for the truth now becomes merely his truth.

'In analogy with the truth, which as a concept has lost its one-dimensional character, time, too, has ceased to function as a phenomenon with a single meaning: it is no longer possible to speak of chronological time, of a time sequence open to only one interpretation. The following quotation from Jorge Luis Borges may be regarded as the starting point for the concept of time in *Labyrinth*. This quotation, from the English translation by Lionel Trilling of one of Borges' short stories, concerns the description of an imaginary book entitled *The Garden of Forking Paths*: "*The Garden of Forking Paths* is a picture, incomplete yet not false, of the universe such as Ts'ui Pen conceived it to be. Differing from Newton and Schopenhauer, your ancestor did not think of time as absolute and uniform. He believed in an infinite series of times, in a dizzily growing, ever spreading network of diverging, converging, and parallel times."

'This concept of time characterizes both the simultaneity of the different layers of *Labyrinth* and their separateness; the music with the simultaneous operation of "objective", "subjective", and "amorphous" tempi, and the absurd, non-dialectic dramatic action. Or in the words of Peter Schat himself: "*Labyrinth* is a multi-dimensional space as a function of different, independent, acoustic and plastic time structures." The infinite play of poly-interpretable truths and times is the labyrinthine basic idea not only of *Labyrinth* but of many modern musical theatre works: Stockhausen's *Originale*, *Votre Faust*, (based on a text by Michel Butor, with music by Henri Pousseur); Luciano Berio's *Passaggio*; Mauricio Kagel's *Sur scène*; and Ann Halprin's *Parade and Changes*. In *Labyrinth* this basic idea has become both point of departure and content.'

Roman Haubenstock-Ramati attempted a difficult task when he made an opera out of Kafka's novel *Amerika* and its stage adaptation by Max Brod. The first performance was at the 1966 (West) Berlin Festival and, once again in the case of a 'difficult' modern work, Bruno Maderna was at the helm. Haubenstock-Ramati explains his intentions as follows: 'In our dreams we meet both a real, familiar unequivocal world and a blurred, unclear and equivocal world (dimensions which not only complete each other but, through the conscious and the unconscious, project two versions of the same notion). We must therefore attempt to represent on the stage, on two separate levels, this division of the indivisible.

'On the one hand, the conscious, through clear and unequivocal action, persons and things; on the other, the projection of the same persons, things and action into the subconscious, through a blurred, unclear and distorted picture and ambiguous, often absurd incidents. On the one hand, therefore, speech, song, recognizable persons and familiar forms as *expression* of reality of the conscious; on the other hand, broken words, monologues and unidentified voices, snatches of ballet and pantomime of the absurd, deformation of objects and abstract projections, effects of darkness and light as *impression* of the subconscious, of the transcendental.'

Musical phonetics

The more present-day composers explore the frontier regions between music and sound, the greater their preoccupation with the human voice in general and the artistic capital they are now able to derive from the electronic processing of all forms of human utterance, from song to speech and even ejaculation.

In a recent interview with the French author and critic, Martine Cadieu, Luigi Nono tells of his phonetic and semantic analysis of the words of his text in relation

to their musical setting: 'Bel canto,' he says, 'utilizes only partly the acoustical properties of the human voice, just like rhythmic speech and *Sprechgesang*. A comparative analytical study of the different physical properties of the vocal apparatus is fundamental to our understanding of the phonetics of different languages as spoken, of different physico-acoustical techniques of voice production.'

With *Hyperion*—a '*lirica in forma di spettacolo*'—Bruno Maderna (1920) has experimented with phonetics as the basic working material. Like so many of the more advanced works of the day, *Hyperion* was brought out by the International Festival of Contemporary Music (1964), organized each year by the Venice Biennale and of which Mario Labroca is director.

György Ligeti (born 1923) is another composer for whom musical phonetics represent an additional means of expression. His *Aventures* for three singers and seven instrumentalists were created in concert form in Hamburg in 1963; to *Aventures*, the composer added *Nouvelles aventures*, also performed for the first time in Hamburg (1966). The complete work, under the title of *Aventures et nouvelles aventures—a musico-dramatic action* was staged for the first time in a mimed version at Stuttgart, October 1966. Ligeti has this to say about his 'imaginary opera': 'The musico-phonetic-dramatic pieces *Aventures* and *Nouvelles aventures* represent a new art form in that their text, music and imaginary stage action are completely integrated and constitute a joint compositional structure. There is no "meaningful" or significant text which is there "set" to music but a musico-phonetic "text" which belongs to no particular kind of human language and does not result from the transformation or deformation of a language. This "text" has no semantic meaning but it does have a high emotional content; the basic expressiveness of human sound communication has been developed into an independent "sound composition". The actual musical composition and the "sound composition" form an indivisible whole; the

text is communicated through the music and the music through the text. The instrumental setting does not "accompany" the vocal line; the various instruments are used in such a way that they complement and set off the human sounds so that the phonetic composition spills over into the sound composition. The action may well be considered enigmatic, though its expression of human character and behaviour does make dramatic sense; it is, though semantically incomprehensible, nevertheless emotionally a clearly understandable musico-phonetic structure. We experience in a kind of imaginary opera dramatic adventures of illusory characters on an imaginary stage. Thus the situation as one normally finds it in the theatre is reversed; the action does not take place on a stage, the music is not conveyed through living persons, but stage and protagonists are evoked by the music, whereby each individual singer is called upon to represent a number of unreal persons; this is not music for an opera, but an "opera" unfolding from within the music.'

Harald Kaufmann's explanation of this strange, successful work of Ligeti's may be a clue to other somewhat enigmatic stage works of the recent past: 'The increasing mechanization of our life has led to a crisis in communication. Human attitudes have become clichés . . . human relations have been degraded to a meaningless obviousness on the one hand, to senseless incomprehensibility on the other . . .'

Mauricio Kagel (1931), who comes from the Argentine, is a specialist in what we have called the frontier regions of musical expression: 'I am convinced,' Kagel said in a recent interview with the German *Jeunesses musicales*, 'that, under the designation "composer" one must understand not only a "Tonsetzer"—"one who writes down music" . . . but also "Zusammensetzer"—"one who compiles music". This is the reason why I take heterogeneous elements and try, through the processes of musical composition, to articulate them musically, to

take them forward into new worlds. I am becoming increasingly committed to materials which do not "sound" and therefore give considerable importance to scenic action. Words, light, movement can be articulated in a similar manner to notes, tone-colours and *tempi*.'

Kagel has written one of the more successful *avant-garde* stage works, *Sur scène*, a one-act chamber music 'theatre piece' for a speaker, a mime, a singer and three instrumentalists (keyboard and percussion). It was finished in 1960 and first performed in 1962. The titles and description of some of Kagel's later works for the stage will give an idea not only of the kind of subject which appeals to his dadaistic imagination but also of the sound and visual material with which he builds: *Antithese*, a play for one performer with 'electronic and public noises'; *Phonophonie*, completed in 1964, four melodramas for two voices and other sound sources, the reconstruction of the biography of an imaginary singer at the time of his vocal decline. Kagel's latest piece *Tremens*, first performed in 1966, describes the hallucinations and reactions of a person under the influence of drugs; visual projections add another dimension to the scenic representation of this work.

Improvisation

Concert music has in recent years developed two quite distinct trends. One results from the application of electronics to composition and reflects the interest of many composers in creating their own sounds through the manipulation of electronic instruments, in other words tightening their control over the interpretation of their music by being their own interpreters. The other trend is diametrically opposite since it represents a revival in the baroque custom of improvisation, albeit within certain strict formal structures. This has, through the ages, been a characteristic of the classical tradition of certain Oriental musical cultures, Indian music, for

example. And in the West, it is also a characteristic of jazz. Bruno Maderna has told the writer that he considers improvisation to be the expression of a '*musical joie de vivre*' and the realization of the figured bass in baroque music the equivalent of a musical 'happening'.

Many Western composers today have taken improvisation very much further in their pursuit of aleatory music, and the freedom they grant their interpreters to perform alternative versions of certain passages. These are 'open forms of music, containing a multitude of possible relationship of structure, which the executants are called upon to resolve freely but according to a rational orientation'. Some striking concert pieces in 'open forms' have been written by Berio, Boulez, Earle Brown, Pousseur and Stockhausen among others.

Not surprisingly in a time when the distinction between a concert interpretation and a stage performance becomes less and less obvious, these same principles of improvisation are being applied to many works conceived in terms of the stage—some kind of stage.

There is improvisation of a much more traditional kind in Gunther Schuller's immensely successful opera *The Visitation*, created in Hamburg in October 1966, an adaptation of Kafka's *The Trial* in which the action is transferred to present-day America and has a Negro as its protagonist. The improvisation in which Schuller's opera abounds is given over indifferently to instruments of the orchestra or to a jazz combo which contrasts with it. What concerns us here is the 'spectacle' of musicians performing abstract music and, more particularly, the dramatic elements inherent in the open form of improvisation as opposed to the interpretation of a predetermined score.

The 'spectacle' of the musician performing

John Cage was probably the first musician to initiate experiments which led to the 'staging' of instrumental

and vocal concert music. Unless, of course, one considers that there is a 'dramatic' element in the placing of an orchestra on the stage in Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat* and the Brecht-Weill *Mahagonny*, with its musicians playing on the stage. And yet, as H. H. Stuckenschmidt reminds us, Schönberg's *Pierrot lunaire* of 1912, a seminal work if ever there was one, now invariably heard in concert form, was first performed as a stage work; '[there were] dark screens on a podium between the singer . . . who appeared dressed as Columbine, [while] a handful of musicians played behind the screen.'

Almost every one of the composers mentioned in this chapter has written at least one work—several of them many more—in which dramatic capital is made out of the performance of one or several musicians, singing or playing an instrument. This applies as much to Stockhausen's *Microphonie I*, in which a giant gong is struck in a multitude of different ways, as to Kagel's *Match*, where two cellos play 'against' each other with a percussion as 'umpire'. Luciano Berio, also, whose opera *Passaggio* contains several of the features we have described in the work of other composers, has written a whole series of 'short studies in musical dramaturgy' in which the 'story' is supplied by the relationship between the soloist and his or her voice or instrument. Marius Constant's *Chants de Maldoror* (1963) show considerable originality in this respect; the recitation of Lautréamont's poem is accompanied by a conductorless orchestra which takes its cue from, i.e., is 'conducted' by, a dancer-choreographer.

4 Oriental influences in contemporary music theatre

When a Japanese composer writing in a completely contemporary Occidental musical idiom wins the Salzburg Opera Prize, and when one of the leading Western composers of the day transcribes a Japanese Noh play in terms of an English mystery play for performances in a church, it is time to talk of the mutual influences of Oriental and Occidental cultures. The first of our examples concerns Yoshiro Irino who, in 1962, won the Salzburg competition with his television opera *The Silken Drum*, based on a Noh play—the same play, incidentally, as was used in a radio opera by the Italian composer Orazio Fiume. Irino's *The Silken Drum* is an opera in the Western tradition, written in a fairly free twelve tone technique, but it retains much of the dramatic elements of the Noh and these are most effectively incorporated in the action. The second example is described briefly in Chapter 2 of the present report; it is Benjamin Britten's *Curlew River*. Britten's compositional technique in any work, and for any combination of instruments, is recognizable within a very few bars. But, from the instrumental point of view, it would be wrong to think that this work is any more or any less 'Japanese' than Irino's.

These may be particularly striking cases but they are by no means isolated. We have indeed come a long way since Debussy first heard Balinese music at the Exposition Universelle de Paris in 1889; or even since Messiaen studied Indian scales.

'The problem which interests us basically,' says Alain Daniélou, 'is to determine what are the principal conceptions of music theatre to be found in Oriental countries today—conceptions which can and inevitably will play a role in the renewal of contemporary music theatre, to the extent that they will become accessible and will little by little take their due place in international music culture.'

'We should first of all make a clear differentiation between the diverse conceptions of theatre: many of the

forms of the Oriental theatre are not fundamentally foreign to the Occident. They form a part of the common fund of conceptions from which there have been developments in different directions. When we examine them more closely we often find that they represent for us a return to our own sources. Our reconstitutions of the antique theatre or of music of the Middle Ages and even of the Renaissance appear, from an Oriental perspective, to be highly artificial and tendentious since they are seen through the screen of tonality and classic-romantic polyphony. It would be much simpler and more effective to seek in our neighbouring countries the forms equivalent to those of ancient European music which our neighbours have preserved and which we have lost. That would make our reconstitutions easier and above all bring them much closer to reality. Elsewhere, naturally, there are conceptions of the theatre fundamentally different from our own, and even if we can borrow directly from them only surface colours, they enable us the better to realize our own limitations and thus open up the way to new developments.

‘Certain special aspects of the Oriental music theatre may, on occasion, be applied to all theatrical techniques, including those of the Occident.

‘For example, the prologue in the Hindu theatre situates the action which is to follow within a framework of actuality and makes a link between everyday life and the historical or mythological theme. It is often in the form of a conversation in the wings between the actors who are going to play the piece and who speak about their personal problems which will find their continuation, their development, in the subject of the piece. We have, then, simultaneously a modern scene and a classic piece—in which the characters are the same. The scene of the prologue may also be set, for example, in the gardens of heaven. Gods discuss their problems—war, social or dynastic questions—with which the play is concerned. Thus, the prologue presents a sort of “*fait divers*” which

the play itself will enable us later to see unfold in its human and symbolic reality.

'In other cases the subject matter itself presents situations involving moral problems with which we are not familiar. We have made prodigal use of Greek and Hebrew subjects but there remains for us an immense store of subjects, of situations, to be discovered. The structure of the librettos may take us from the static statement of a psychological problem, as in the Noh, to the heroic drama of action of the Persian Tazié. In the Hindu theatre it is important to note the alternation of purely realistic and human scenes with scenes in which supernatural characters take part, and which create a double plane of dramatic action, the individual plane and the general plane of human destinies. Another procedure followed in the popular Hindu theatre is the alternation of two plays, a drama and a comedy, which have no relation to each other at all. The acts of the comedy are played during the intervals of the drama, rather like the European *divertissement*, but with a continuity from one act of the comedy to the next.

'An important element in the classical Indian theatre is the fact that singers and actors are different, the roles are sung with the orchestra while the actors mime the words and express them by danced gestures using a symbolic language. In the danced theatre called *Kathâkali* a thick, vividly coloured make-up creates very impressive, mobile masks.

'There is no scenery in the Hindu theatre and the actors' technique should be sufficient to make it comprehensible that they are walking in a park, climbing a staircase or climbing a mountain. The stage, as also in the case of the Japanese Noh theatre, is situated in the midst of the public. It consists of a very small platform which can be reached by four different paths, so that the audience may be aware of the approach of off-stage characters in advance of the on-stage actors themselves. An event can thus be anticipated, much to the satisfaction

of the public, which likes to warn the hero of the danger or, on the contrary, of the happiness which is approaching. The lighting of the scene is provided by an enormous oil lamp which permits the actors to be in full light or in the shadow or to disappear in the darkness according to their position on the stage.

‘In the classical Chinese theatre the scenery is symbolic, a chair may represent the tower of a castle where the warrior mounts his horse, but the accessories are numerous, while in the Hindu theatre there are no accessories. Everything must be suggested by gestures. In the Japanese, and especially the Balinese, dance drama, the choruses are fair-sized groups and perform ensemble movements in which the entire public participates at the end.

‘In the music itself the musical theatres of Asia present a prodigious variety in conception, structure, instruments, orchestration, rhythms, developments and improvisation. Indian music seeks the means of acting directly on the psychological state of the listener, the modes vary with the nature of the action according to the criterion of the nine distinct emotional states which the musical treatises define: love, heroism, disgust, anger, laughter, fear, pity, astonishment and peace.

‘Malayan music, from Thailand to Bali, tends above all to create a climate, an atmosphere, and with this end in view uses complex orchestras and a great variety of tonal percussion instruments.

‘The music of the Japanese theatre, with its taste for economy, succeeds in giving an extraordinarily expressive value to an isolated note. The same is true in the highest forms of Chinese music in which the aim is more towards symbolism than psychological effect. In the popular forms of musical theatre the music tends to be at the same time abstract and noisy. Its principles and its forms could contribute interesting elements to contemporary musical conception in the West.

‘In the Asian countries the theatre is almost always

music theatre. Recitative, dance, and rhythm are the very foundations of the idea of theatre. Poetry, an epic or erotic story are always sung.

'It is never a question, as is the case most often in the Occident, of theatre set to music, and it is perhaps on this plane that the fundamental difference between Occidental and Oriental music theatre lies. Our theatre lost its musical foundation, then, later, adapted plays to music. The unity in the thought of the poet-musician is a rare thing in the Occident. In this sense, one might be able to say that in his conception of the '*Gesamtkunstwerk*' Wagner is at once the most Occidental and the most Oriental of Occidental musicians.'

A very long time will elapse, even with contacts of the kind we rejoice to see increasing every year, before Western audiences will truly appreciate the conventions and the musical sounds of most types of Oriental theatre. And, having in mind the relation which exists in the Orient between stage and audience, we wonder whether Oriental music theatre will ever have the same meaning for the West.

But there is no denying the influence of many forms of Oriental music and music theatre on creative artists in the West. We would not be surprised, in view of the several characteristics they share, if Oriental music theatre were to reach the Occident through the Occident's own most modern music theatre.

5 The influence of technical media on contemporary music theatre

In the previous chapter, there has been much evidence of the way in which the newest inventions in electronics have made available to composers an extended sound palette and new dimensions of sound in space. Those responsible for realizing the visual aspect of music theatre have benefited from the inventions first of the cinema and then of television with its electronic camera. In both sound and vision, authors and composers now have at their disposal a whole range of instruments attuned to the mood of the twentieth century. And we have seen how the recent application of artificial reverberation, ambiophony; the possibility of disposing loudspeakers in considerable number in different parts of an auditorium; and the development of stereophonic transmission of sound have induced many composers to include electronic 'effects' in their most recent works for the stage.

Boris Yarustovski considers that the emotional perceptiveness of man has changed: 'He has become much more impulsive, is able to take in a wider range of the "polyphony" of events. Man has developed a greater capacity of association; it often requires but the slightest allusion in the dramatic action and music for him to grasp at once the course of events. Science has proved that material which used to appear to us as unique and indivisible is in fact but a complex of units, a "micro-world". This notion has had great influence on the artist's conception of life, and hence on the nature of his interpretative or creative spirit.

'This new perception has brought about a renewal in many art forms (including music theatre), and in particular that of the cinema—the most modern of art forms. Through such novel technical means of expression as cuts, close-ups, etc., the cinema has proved its ability to represent life in all its diversity. The influence of the cinema has been noticeable in the new Soviet operas by S. Prokofiev (*The Story of a Real Man*), K. Molchanov, N. Giganov and others.'

But here a word of warning which, applied to television opera, has been echoed very forcibly by successive juries of the Salzburg Opera Prize: modern techniques have provided new means of expression; they are not an end in themselves. H. H. Stuckenschmidt attacks the intrusion of loudspeakers in presenting a sound picture where traditional means would suffice to give an undistorted impression of the composer's intentions.

'It is time we ask how much longer some of our opera houses are going to permit these technical abuses. Granted, machines can on occasion act as a kind of fireman to remove acoustical defects; but when they are an end in themselves they destroy the natural sound and become enemies of art.'

Stuckenschmidt cites as a positive example Hans Werner Henze's use, in his radio opera *Der Landarzt* ('The Country Doctor') after Kafka, of electronic sounds where the psychological development of the text seems to demand them.

The late Hermann Scherchen, who conducted the famous Berlin production of Schönberg's *Moses and Aron*, had some particularly intricate choral passages in this work pre-recorded and relayed through loudspeakers placed around the auditorium. He hoped in this way to make the texture clearer and the words, which are partly spoken, understandable. Bruno Maderna goes even further in advocating the pre-recording, generally, of difficult choral passages which cannot be rendered to perfection under normal conditions of rehearsal. In the writer's opinion, the use of mechanized music as a substitute for a live performance poses not only aesthetic but ethical problems which deserve to be very carefully investigated.

A particularly obnoxious practice, in this respect, is the use of a taped accompaniment to a live performance of ballet. Taped music, i.e., music which has been created especially for this modern 'instrument', has a *raison d'être* within the most recent aesthetic trends. But, to the writer,

nothing speaks in favour of a performance given on the stage by living artists who have to fit their movements and rhythm to the pre-ordained tempo of a musical accompaniment conveyed, in disembodied form, through a recording.

There is today, surely, enough music heard second-hand through the gramophone and sound radio—in themselves, of course, legitimate and welcome means of communication to an invisible public—for the essential qualities of a performance to be preserved that is presented in the theatre before a live audience. And music, as we know, is an essential part of ballet.

We have dwelt sufficiently on all the positive aspects of the impact of the technical media in the musical life of our time for us now to feel justified in protesting against the increasing disappearance of the living musician from performances involving music. In other words, the technical media—electronic music, *musique concrète*; spatial acoustics and stereophony; playback and doubling, etc.—are all there to be used, but not to be abused.

Of the eminent composers of the day, none has thought more about this problem than Ernst Krenek. Electronic music, he considers, has influenced above all the 'image of sound'. 'Composers having had experience in working with electronic sound equipment have frequently felt the urge to create similar sound effects while dealing with traditional instruments. In particular, certain aggressive, sharp articulations and peculiar echo-effects so typical of electronic sound production have inspired composers to develop the percussion section of the orchestra and to invent a great many new manners of handling percussion instruments (including the piano) so far unknown or very little exploited.

'Electronic sounds are being introduced into the musical sector of the stage work: (a) As background, illustrating certain situations of the drama. This may be done because the required acoustical phenomena cannot

be produced by other means, or because it might be desirable to set off such illustrations against the regular orchestral accompaniment for clearer distinction and contrast. Such background elements may consist of pure electronic sounds derived from frequency and noise generators, or of recorded and electronically treated natural sounds and noises (distorted vocal sounds, etc.) in the manner of *musique concrète*. Such sounds may appear where they are required by the plot, or may form a continuous fabric expanding behind, and independently of, the musical processes assigned the orchestra and singers. (b) As musical elements of the foreground, in which case they would replace the traditional orchestra. The main problem here appears to be the synchronization of singers acting to an extent freely on their stage with the sounds emanating from a tape inexorably running off. More experimentation will be necessary, and perhaps also a new stylistic approach.

‘The influence of the cinema on musical theatre (opera) may be seen in a tendency towards a further breaking up of the still lingering Aristotelian concept (unity of time, place and action) of the stage work. Continuity of the dramatic line is no longer associated with the, so to speak, Euclidean geometry of the plot, the phases of which are ostensibly linked by the mechanism of cause and effect. Continuity is broken by rapid changes of locale and situation and the concepts of simultaneity and sequence in time are less rigidly defined than in the traditional styles. This does not merely suggest new technical tricks, but it affects the sense and meaning of the drama as such.

‘One of the earliest uses of film in a stage work occurs in Milhaud and Claudel’s *Christophe Colomb*, first performed in Berlin in 1930. Claudel writes, in what Helmut Schmidt-Garre considers to be an astonishing misconception of the different styles of theatre and film: “Everyone knows that a rigid stage set, as soon as its novelty has worn off, becomes tiring and repellent to

the eye; that it is more likely to poison than to nourish the illusion which the poet has sought to awaken. Now—this is just where a new means is offered to the man of the theatre. Why not make use of film? Why not just consider the set as a frame, as a first sketch, which leaves the way free for dramas, for recollections, for fantasy? Why must the spectator . . . be confronted with painting, with a landscape of traditional images? Why not use the flickering screen as a kind of poster, a projection of thoughts, in which all sorts of shadows and shadow-pictures, blurred or distinct, rush past, dissolve, mix, part? . . .” Film sequences are therefore included, which show sea-pictures and pictures of the landing in America. “Their naturalism,” says Schmidt-Garre, “introduces an irreconcilable stylistic break into the otherwise strictly stylized action.” ’

One of the most recent uses of film is in Luigi Nono’s *Intolleranza*, first performed at the Teatro La Fenice in 1960 under Bruno Maderna, in Vaclav Kaslik’s production and with scenery and costumes by the painter Emilio Vedova. Vedova has this to say about the visual realization of this important work: ‘In *Intolleranza 1960*, the intentions shown by the choice of themes were clear, but everything could have been ruined if the scenic realization used facile, illustrative effects—illustrations rather than effects designed to engender catharsis. . . .

‘I have always been keenly interested in the problem of situating man in the space around him. . . . I learned a great deal from the adaptation of the dramatic elements to the music, making it possible to create groups of images moving across the different planes or levels, at possible intersections of these planes—dynamic superimpositions. My aim was to destroy the feeling of safety through the dramatic element of moving projections. I wanted to avoid naturalistic elements in the details—which seemed at first impossible to eliminate. The spotlights centred on the general field of the stage—

devouring the too-stilted figures of the actors and extras, inventing them again, so to speak, and giving them real and more meaningful values, making them an integrating element of the expressive complex, without star, prima donna roles, thus breaking with all the old traditions of the actors as demi-gods.

‘While it is true that the various planes I was provided with were “structures of consciousness” of 1923—that is, belonging to the constructivist period of the Russian theatre’s influence (for example, Kaslik and Swoboda, who, in Prague, have worked with the *Laterna Magika*)—it is equally true that I superimposed upon all of this my own outlook of a man of today. . . .

‘As for the relationship of the theatre, with this new concept of space, everything that was done in the original production of *Intolleranza* was only relative, for the spectator should be pulled into the fire of the action to a greater degree, in a circle of moving levels, while making direct projections of images and sounds, thus really revolutionizing all the old relationships between theatre elements and materials.

‘I was also interested in going beyond the limits of the old dimensions of a building like *La Fenice*—a difficult task in a theatre of this type, filled with shades of the past, past rituals, dialogues, presences. . . .

‘But then, suddenly, the projected images had destroyed that atmosphere of the past and provided another dimension. For anyone who was not at *La Fenice* on that evening, everything that I have just said may seem to be coldly and calculatedly cerebral. Yet the studies, designs, sketches, the panes of glass which I painted in the theatre itself—all of these were conceived under the influence of the emotion created by Nono’s music. These were direct images stimulated by co-participation and not filtered through an *a priori* of intellectualized symbolism.’

Kaslik’s own views on the use of film and television technique in the staging of music theatre are important:

‘Television, to be sure, has direct and indirect influences on the stage as well as on the theatre public. For the moment, we use television directly in the theatre, as an aid in transmitting the gestures of the conductor as technical information to the assistant conductors.

‘With the dependability of television equipment today and the progress being made in its development, we shall soon be able to make greatly enlarged television projections on the stage itself in order to transmit or emphasize parallel action and reproduce on multiple screens the details of the acting. The television technique also indirectly affects the mental attitude of the spectator and inspires the stage director to make use of the kinetic style of staging.

‘Whether we like it or not, the new technical media—the microphone, magnetic tapes, film—penetrate contemporary life and therefore they must be used creatively also in the staging of operas. They are, of course, regularly used in modern compositions, but they can also be used purely functionally in the classical and romantic works. Only recently, as conductor, I made extensive use of tapes with echo and sound filter and microphone in the opera *Pique Dame*. The broadcast sound coming from loudspeakers placed at different points on stage and in the auditorium contrasted functionally with the live, direct sound of the orchestra and the singers, intensifying the dramatic and musical atmosphere.’¹

One of the most original uses of a modern technique in music theatre is that of *Laterna Magika*. The principle of this process, invented in Czechoslovakia, is to project pictures simultaneously on a number of screens showing characters who ‘leave’ the screen to continue the action on the stage. (This process is referred to below: see Chapter 9, ‘Opera in television and television opera’, page 81.)

1. cf. Maderna’s remark on page 38 above.

6 Sound radio and music theatre—mutual accommodation

In forty years of sound broadcasting, many attempts have been made to create a musico-dramatic form belonging specifically to this medium. One of the first attempts at a radio feature with music was based on Charles Lindbergh's first transatlantic flight in 1927. *Der Lindberghflug* has words by Brecht and in the original version, music by both Weill and Hindemith; it was later adapted for the stage, with music by Hindemith alone. A few years after, Werner Egk's *Columbus* (1931) was produced and there have since been a few outstanding works in this form, for example, in England in the late forties, *The Dark Tower* by Louis MacNiece and Britten, and in Germany in the early fifties, Henze's radio operas *Das Ende einer Welt* and *Der Landarzt*. The contribution to this art form of the Prix Italia, founded in 1948 by Italian Radio, will be discussed in Chapter 11.

In the fifties the Club d'Essai of Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française, founded by the poet Jean Tardieu, gave young authors and composers every opportunity to experiment in radio with works which, Tardieu hoped, would then find their way to the stage. Some of these works showed the effects which could be obtained from a meticulous analysis of speech in relation to musical sound or noise, a study which has recently been taken a step further by Italian Radio. These were the early days of *musique concrète* and there was a great spirit of adventure in Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française.

From radio to stage—*Columbus, Report and Image*

Werner Egk writes with particular authority on the stage presentation of this work which he conceived for radio.

'I shall refer exclusively to my radio work, *Columbus, Report and Image*, one of the earliest attempts to invent a new form for the pictureless radio which would be analogous to musical theatre. Commissioned by the Bavarian Radio, this work was completed in 1931 after

I had gained a certain amount of experience in this still-young medium.

'The idea that there was a new medium through which one could expose a vast number of people to artistically formed impulses—people who up to then had avoided all such impulses in every form—was fascinating to me. This fascination lay in the human potentialities and had nothing whatsoever to do with aesthetic speculations for their own sake.

'Had not the enormous success and wide influence of the *Dreigroschenoper* proven that through the very use of new forms one could break down the walls which art—despite all the well-meant inscriptions on the state-supported temples of art—erected against the general masses? The decisive question was only to find the appropriate bait to attach to the hook of the radio. In a radio work using artistic means, what could rivet the attention of the mass listeners who were not ordinarily accessible to poetry and music? Perhaps brilliantly conceived songs dealing with subjects which through their social content would touch a large majority of the listeners? That was a usable formula, but not an all-inclusive one. It is generally conceded that "being on the spot" at an event corresponds to a general need or desire. Nothing draws listeners to the loudspeakers more than direct transmissions of interesting or important events. This would be useful in reaching a broad public through a work of art—one might almost say in spite of all the artistic means employed. Brecht and Hindemith had taken a step in this direction with their *Lindbergh Flight*, and had tried through poetic and musical means to bring to life again an event of the century. But the new form would have to be even more direct and more easily comprehensible. . . . the artificial element withdrawn further behind the actual event.

'All these demands were mulled over and reckoned with when *Columbus* was conceived. The event presented appeared to be contemporary. The form was easily

comprehensible. And, thanks to the conversations which preceded them, the sung portions were easily accessible to everyone. A part of the text consisted of authentic documents to which, from the musical side, similarly "concrete" insertions, such as the Gregorian *Te Deum* or Indian free polyphony, corresponded.

'No one thought then about a possible stage performance. Only through the emergence of the conception of "music theatre" and of an opera dramaturgy such as Oscar Fritz Schuh presented in Vienna and later in Salzburg, did *Columbus* appear a decade after its creation as almost the definitive example of "modern tendencies" of the opera stage.

'The question concerning the influence of radio on the stage conception of the work is easy to answer. All of the opera houses played the radio work in its original form. There were no changes, no rearrangements and no additions to the stage directions. The stage directors could get their cues only from the music, the text or, if need be, from the titles of the individual scenes, such as "The Council", "The Recruitment", "Conspiracy and Betrayal", etc. It is therefore perhaps fitting to ask not only about the influence of radio on the stage version in a narrower sense, but also about the dramatic form which the work assumes under the public spotlight.

'The stage directors felt the necessity of making the event directly contemporary and thus realized a new form of work which was more streamlined, clearer, simpler and more lucid than the conventional opera could ever be, so that the question as to the influence of radio on the dramatic form—or form of production—can also be answered positively.'

From stage to radio

The adaptation of a stage work for sound radio, says Otto Tomek of Westdeutscher Rundfunk, in most cases involves a more or less radical infringement of the original

musical and dramatic action of a piece. Not, however, through the inversion or omission of individual scenes but rather through the interpolation of additional sentences. The mere 'argument' which usually precedes the broadcast of a classical or romantic opera from the normal repertoire does not suffice in the case of most new works.

In cases where more is involved than merely to call to mind the content of a work which is in any case known to most listeners, where a whole new subject matter must be introduced, where in addition it might be necessary to draw attention to certain hidden intentions of the composer, the introductory text acquires the value of an interpretative element and becomes a key to the understanding of the work. The more progressive the style, the more necessary such an interpretation becomes. It is particularly the kind of work whose musical language is not familiar to the listener which requires a detailed analysis of the plot before each act, or even where possible before each scene, whenever and wherever a break is permitted in the music. For if the music is not to remain completely incomprehensible to the listener, he must be able at every moment to match words and sound, to detect the musical equivalent of a given situation in the action.

'Thus the introductory and intermediate commentaries acquire the value of an intrinsic part of the radio version of a musical stage work,' says Tomek.

'The problem,' he continues, 'is almost always one of dramaturgy, rarely of technique. Hardly any use can be made in opera of all the technical possibilities which are peculiar to the medium of radio and which, in radio plays for example, can be employed with such virtuosity that they become an essential dramatic element. Superimpositions are mostly avoidable, while such effects as artificial echo, not to speak of sound montages, background effects and the like, are to be condemned. Never must the original musical sound picture be affected;

the addition of spoken elements in the dramatic continuity is already sufficient intrusion. I am well aware of the difficulties of making a satisfactory sound picture out of a continuous, "*durchkomponiertes*" work. But what method can be employed to make it easier to appreciate a new opera, whose strange musical idiom might at first appear too difficult even to open-minded and interested listeners?

Two radio productions of this nature were made by the Westdeutscher Rundfunk. The first was Giselher Klebe's *Alkmene* made in collaboration with the Deutsche Oper Berlin; the other, Luigi Nono's *Intolleranza* with the Cologne Opera. Both date back to 1962.

In the radio adaptation of Klebe's *Alkmene* the text was written and spoken by Gustav Rudolf Sellner, the producer of the first performance. The content of the work—well-known as a story but difficult to follow in the individual scenes, even confused, obviously called for a special radio version. Not only are Alkmene, Sosia and the Theban generals placed before the problem of who is the real Amphitryon; the listener with his radio set also needs to know and he will quickly lose interest if he is not given the exact information which will enable him to follow the course of the action. Sellner's radio presentation seems exemplary to me for his general introduction immediately catches the hearer's attention. Beginning with a hymn of praise to antiquity in general, he quickly leads from history to this particular story and then explains in some detail the amorous adventures of Zeus, the father of the gods. Who could fail to listen to such a charming, informal *causerie*? Then comes the exceptional case among the female mortals loved by Zeus, Alkmene, whose charm and innocence inspired Kleist to write what is perhaps the most exquisite German comedy. And while the listener believes himself still to be in Kleist's company, he has long been with Klebe. Just a few short sentences to inform him of the circumstances and the Introduction to Act One begins.

‘The radio adaptation of Luigi Nono’s *Intolleranza* presented me with problems of a quite different nature. The necessity for a special radio version was even more acute here than in the case of Klebe’s opera. Nono’s ‘Action in two parts after an idea of Angelo Maria Ripellino’ involves the most heterogeneous elements: the extremes of lyrical and dramatical expression, musical spatial effects, and the avowed intention of giving actual stage life to present-day ideas and tendencies. Nono was striving to realize a modern conception of music theatre. The work does not contain consecutive scenes adding up to a continuous action but individual situations, illuminated as if by lightning, of a man under the yoke of intolerance. Even in a stage performance it is not easy to perceive without careful preparation the new ideological and scenic connexion resulting from the concentration of elements from spheres which are widely separated in time and space; how much less, then, through a radio set. Another, and immediately confusing, factor is the dual role of the chorus. On the one hand, it plays an important role in the action, as voice of the people, of the prisoners, of the peasants, etc.; on the other, it is given the function of poetical reflection, for which Nono makes use of texts by Brecht, Eluard and Mayakowski. Nono resolves this dichotomy by indicating in the score that the reflective texts sung by the chorus should be projected on to a large screen.

‘This gave us a legitimate clue to a radio version, in which the projections were replaced by a speaker. For the general introduction and the later intermediate texts, a second speaker was used, with a completely different kind of voice.’

One cannot escape the feeling that the composers of today have not yet fully exploited the artistic and dramatic possibilities of radio. Works of the quality of Niccolò Castiglioni’s *Alice through the Looking Glass* and Humphrey Searle’s *Diary of a Madman*—the former written for, and the latter adapted to, radio—are a rare

occurrence (both were selected, in their time, by the IMC's International Rostrum of Composers).

Radio remains one of the last, perhaps the last, stronghold of artistic expression in which there is room for a direct appeal to man's imagination, without the visual underlining, illustrating and stressing which have permeated every other form of entertainment.

But in encouraging authors and composers to turn, or to return to radio, let us heed Tardieu's reminder that when media created by technology take up the succession of fundamental and traditional arts, they are led not only to 'transmit' and 'translate' them, but also, sooner or later, to 'transform' them.

7 Characteristics of film and television

Writing in the *Film Teacher's Handbook* in 1960, A. W. Hodgkinson said that in twenty years' time there would not be one separate medium called film and another called television; the viewer, whether at home or in a public place of entertainment, would have no means of knowing which method of presentation was being used; film and television, as we know them today, would each have fallen into its place as part of a wider screen medium. This basic consideration should be born in mind in any survey of music theatre in film and television, particularly so in the approach to the public.

There is a very great difference between an artistic message conveyed to a collective personality in the shape of an audience and one which seeks out the individual in the intimacy of his home. And this difference is certain to have a bearing on the composer's mode of expression.

It is of course a paradox of television that this mass medium *par excellence* should, even more than radio—since the eye is more easily led than the ear—have the faculty of appealing directly, intimately, to the individual. But television, potentially the most influential of all the mass media of communication, is the one which has so far given the least opportunities to creative musicians. And creative musicians have too often repaid this cold-shouldering on the part of television with an indifference which verges on suspicion or even contempt.

The best basis for a memorable artistic experience is a sense of occasion and it is this sense of occasion which the cinema and broadcasting lack: the former, through its method of commercial exploitation, the idea of a 'continuous performance' being the very negation of a sense of occasion; and the latter, because of the 'conveyor-belt' aspect of its programmes, although here the reportage of an 'event', if correctly presented, can give the listener or viewer a vicarious sense of being present.

Evelina Tarroni, an expert on television teaching, makes some helpful comments for a creative artist who

would like to try his hand at writing for the medium. She reminds us that in recent years the cinema has shown a tendency to develop its spatial possibilities. Television, on the other hand, develops its pictures in depth, never in width; the foreground is the essential element in television and there is a strict limitation in the number of persons who can appear at one time on the screen. Television seems to be destined to be a frame for the human face. And it is a fact that in technical television terminology camera distance is defined not by the space surrounding the actor, but by his size. In television, space is defined according to the movements and actions of the actor.

But in the end, what should be one of the main limitations of televised expression has led to one of its new possibilities, a capacity for psychological penetration of the character which neither the cinema nor the theatre possesses.

The essential characteristics of television, according to Evelina Tarroni, are immediacy, spontaneity and topicality. 'The small size of the screen,' she says, 'the absence of any subsequent editing,¹ the immediate and spontaneous nature of the communication, the need to develop the story or drama by concentrating it in the faces of the leading characters and entrusting it to their movements, are, in short, the limitations within which the television author must operate in performing his work.

'These very limitations, however, may give rise to possibilities for original expression, to the extent that authors succeed in mastering them and turning them to their advantage.

'The television screen can gain in depth what it lacks in width. The television author will find it difficult to show us the grandeur and beauty of the physical world in which men live and work; but he can show us its

1. Not necessarily. [Author.]

reflection in the eyes and faces of men. What is more, he can make us discover the human face in all its complexity and beauty and depth of expression.

‘The picture which television manages to offer us has, as yet, nothing of the marvellous beauty captured by the cinema image. This obliges authors to limit the elements within the frame as much as possible.

‘Yet this limitation may itself be transformed into an advantage for the author who knows how to get the best out of it. For here we come to one of the greatest possibilities of the art of television. By concentrating the dramatic conflicts in a single character or a few characters, it can come closer to the spectator and make him participate in a way which, though less emotional and impassioned than participation in the cinema, is no less lively because it is more conscious. In other words, the television viewer can participate even at the rational level.

‘Moreover the author enjoys greater freedom in his narration. For instance, he can refer to his character in the third person, i.e., he can dissociate himself from the character whenever he considers it appropriate; he can use the inner voice. The character on the screen does not move his lips, but the voice we hear is his—it is his inner voice: we, the spectators, are thus inside the character himself and achieve maximum participation. The thoughts and feelings expressed by his words are reflected in his eyes and face. This is one of the possibilities of television: representation of a drama, not in its external development (the facts), but in its psychological development.¹ In this connexion, D’Alessandro says that the narrative structure of the television drama should, indeed, be based on the development of the characters.

‘Within the framework of this new prospect, we can again consider the problem of the relationship between pictures and speech in television. It is obvious that in a

1. The same can be said, increasingly, of the cinema. [Author.]

world in which the main, if not the only, element is man, speech is much more important than it is in films. In the film world, man is often only one of the elements in the landscape, hence speech cannot be substituted for pictures; but in the world which television describes, speech is one of the most important elements.'

Giorgio Albertazzi, a stage actor who has worked for Italian television, describes the challenge of the new medium:

'... As soon as the little red light on the camera goes on, the actor must feel in advance that it is his turn, for it is essential not to be caught in repose. . . . Moreover, he must be conscious of the distance between him and the audience, which is sitting no more than two yards from the screen; he must keep himself in a state of constant tension and maintain an uninterrupted flow of expression, because he is so close to the viewer. . . . The television actor, revealed to the uttermost in the economy of his movements and the measure of his artistic expression, has at least as much responsibility as the director for his discourse with the public. . . .

'It is mainly on facial expression, rather than movements of the whole body, that the television actor must rely to create his character. He must therefore develop an entirely different style of acting, characterized by utter authenticity. He must master all the resources of mime at his disposal. His delivery must, in a sense, be a "micro-delivery", for the slightest tensing, of his facial muscles will have an effect on the public.' Another Italian stage actor, Paolo Stoppa, admits that television has given the public, and even the actors themselves, a taste for truth. 'Television,' he adds, 'inexorably destroys a certain type of outdated, rhetorical and conventional acting. . . .'

'It seems clear,' Evelina Tarroni states, 'that television's technical limitations can always be converted by a skilful and intelligent author into so many potentialities and advantages.'

All the above conclusions are based on experiences with the legitimate theatre and other forms of the spoken word. But they derive from the laws of television and, as such, must be applicable to music theatre. It does not often happen that distinguished actors are able and willing so clearly to express their reactions to the camera; the lesson which the actors Giorgio Albertazzi and Paulo Stoppa have learnt will be invaluable to their singing colleagues. Television music theatre is very young, but experience already shows that here too the human face is capable of great expressiveness when it belongs to a sensitive and sincere artist.

One more aspect of television, or rather of television programmes, should be mentioned in this context (it is discussed more fully in Chapter 10): the impact of a broadcast which takes the viewer behind the scenes or 'in the wings', shows him the musician at work and thus reveals to him the man behind the artist. Although it is not primarily concerned with the transmission of actual music—it is the human being who interests us here—this kind of programme has its importance as a means of capturing an audience. It applies equally to other artists—creative or interpretative. It is good television, and it may be good art.

8 Opera in film and filmed opera

There are in principle two ways of presenting opera on the screen: (a) as a documentary film, which seeks to reproduce as closely as possible the experience of the performance in an opera house, framed by the proscenium arch, and (b) in a filmed version in which the technique of the cinema is applied to giving the closest equivalent to the original work.

It can be said in favour of the former method that it serves both to convey the art of opera to audiences which may never have been inside an opera house and to preserve for posterity standard interpretations of a particular epoch. On the other hand, the conventions of opera, which demand that dramatic continuity be interrupted every so often for meditation or comment, are diametrically opposed to the art of film, the essence of which is movement and the natural flow of the action. Or so it has seemed until this day, when the converse tendencies which seem to be developing in each of these arts may bring their divergent conventions closer together. One might well ask whether the camera-minded opera producer and the poetically, not to say musically, inclined film director may not merge to produce a new form of musical theatre which would belong to the screen.

There are differing views as to the merits of film treatment of a standard opera, but the fact that it can bring an opera more quickly within the reach of an infinitely larger audience is wholly to the good. Nevertheless, whether one regards the cinema as a technical means of communicating a work of art conceived in another medium or as an art form in its own right, an opera seen on the screen ought not to be too far 'translated' from its original dramatic and musical habitat.

Fulchignoni believes that new accomplishments can be made in this field only if directors of opera films submit to the established conditions of the art of film. Pabst's *Don Quixote* (1935), which gives Chaliapin in

the role of the Don a legitimate opportunity of singing as well as acting, is certainly not an opera in the proper sense of the word, nor is it at all typical of the average feature film. But it is a masterpiece of art, perhaps of the very art we are today striving to create when we talk of music theatre. The same might be said, for very different reasons, of Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky* (1940), in which unforgettable crowd scenes are the pretext for Prokofiev's great 'operatic' choruses.

The most famous exponents of the documentary approach to opera are probably Carmine Gallone and Paul Czinner. The former is a pioneer of filmed opera of the conventional kind; between 1946 and 1956, he made several films of operas by Verdi and Puccini. Czinner considers it totally impossible to make a film version of an opera, i.e., of a good opera; this, he feels, could only result in the destruction of the original artistic form.

'What I want to achieve with my films,' says Czinner, 'is not cinema at all. Only the technique of cinema is used in order to catch and hold an expression and its variation in the immediate moment.' The camera can work in steps, as the theatre can not. This is where the film scores most over the theatre, even in the act of reproducing the theatre.

Paul Czinner has put his theories into practice, both in opera and ballet. As far as opera is concerned, he has made films of the Salzburg Festival performances of *Don Giovanni* in 1954, the last conducted by Wilhelm Furtwängler and in the production of Herbert Graf, and of *Der Rosenkavalier* in 1960—conductor Herbert von Karajan, producer Rudolf Hartmann. These are straight documentaries conveying nothing more nor less than the complete stage performance and intended to give present and future generations evidence of the standards of operatic performance of our time.

Herbert von Karajan is the conductor and Francesco Zeffirelli the producer of *La Bohème* (1965), in a filmed

version of the famous La Scala production. Karajan, has since made several films of orchestral works and operatic excerpts with Georges-Henri Clouzot. Better than any other famous conductor, von Karajan has understood the fascination for the public of a film showing the preparation for a performance.

The Soviet approach to filmed opera is completely different. Several works from their standard repertoire—including *Boris Godunov*, *Khovanshchina*, *Eugène Onegin* and *The Queen of Spades*—have been filmed strictly according to the conventions of the cinema. In most cases, the principal roles are doubled by actors. The cinema technique is most effective both in close-up and in crowd scenes. But, to the writer, the open-air locations which are often used seem far more artificial than the stage sets one would normally expect as a background to arias and ensembles. This, however, is the reaction of an opera *habitué* and it may well be that such a process will help the habitual film-goer to accept the conventions of opera. It is good news that a film version of Shostakovich's *Katerina Ismailova* has been made under the composer's supervision.

Outside the U.S.S.R. there have been but sporadic attempts at transcribing opera in terms of the screen. In Michael Powell's film version of *The Tales of Hoffmann*, made in 1950, certain liberties were taken with the story in order to include ballet sequences. Gian Carlo Menotti, expert film director as he is, has made a gripping film (1954) out of his one-act opera *The Medium* (see his comment in Chapter 9). Technically, *Carmen Jones* is a wonderfully vivid transcription of Mérimée's story and Bizet's music into film terms; but the change of style of vocal delivery made necessary by the transmutation of Bizet's score into a more 'popular' idiom places it outside the classification of opera.

However far removed it might be from opera in the real sense of the word, musical comedy—the American musical—would seem to be better suited to the film

medium. *Porgy and Bess* comes closest to our conception of opera, while *West Side Story*—for all the sense of embarrassment which, for some people, the songs and duets in their realistic film setting evoke—may be nearest in pointing the way to a filmed music theatre of the future.

By far the most interesting experiment in presenting music theatre—of a kind—on the screen comes from France. *Les parapluies de Cherbourg* (1963), directed by Jacques Demy with a score by Michel Legrand, is musically rather sentimental and banal. But it does break new ground by being the first film in which every word is sung. The composer shows great skill in setting an efficiently laconic film script. And, judging by the success it has had with film critics, if not music critics, everywhere, *Les parapluies de Cherbourg* does seem to have contributed something to the chequered story of musical films.

Quite apart from the question of aesthetic standards, *Les parapluies de Cherbourg* is one of the very few instances in which a composer required to collaborate in the making of a film has been given his head. And this is perhaps the most important conclusion to be drawn from the experiment. In their next film, *Les demoiselles de Rochefort*, Demy and Legrand revert to the more traditional style of a 'music' with long stretches of ballet. But most of the ballet inserts seem contrived in their out-of-door settings.

The Soviet director, Lev Arnshtam, using the analogy of Tchaikovsky's willingness to write ballet music by the yard for the choreographer Petipa, considers that it is part of a composer's craft today to comply with a film director's last-minute requirements. The writer believes that no serious, original musical work of art can come out of film unless the composer is an equal partner in its creation. It is to the credit of Demy and Legrand that they have made a film in which 'the direction is regulated by the music'. But it remains to be seen

whether they have fulfilled Virgil Thomson's prophecy (made at our first congress) that the substitution of the singing voice for the spoken work might help to break the domination of the banal which characterizes commercial productions almost everywhere in the world today.

9 Opera in television and television opera

Our comments here will deal successively with the creative aspect, production problems, the interpreter, and presentation. First, however, a few words on audience habits.

Opera relayed from the stage corresponds to the documentary film of opera, with the difference that the opera *habitué* at least can associate himself—from the comfort of his hearth—with the atmosphere, with the sense of occasion of the theatre: the tuning up of the orchestra, the sudden silence when the lights are dimmed and then go out, the curtain calls, etc.

Gian Carlo Menotti dislikes television: 'I do not welcome the fact that people listen to my music while eating risotto or cutting their toe-nails or shaving. I feel that the ceremonial quality of the theatre is terribly important. It is part of the artistic expression of the theatre. People should sit down and stay seated during the performance—they should only get up as a sign of protest and not to go to answer the door-bell or the telephone.'

Music and drama exert their influence in divergent ways on different peoples; one need go no farther than observe the reaction of audiences from country to country at the end of a performance of the same work, the rise and fall of applause, the marked differences in its speed and intensity, to prove this contention. Differences exist not only between countries with a long-standing tradition in opera and less operatically minded countries, but also in the psychological make-up of audiences. The differences here lie in the degree of classicism or modernism, of realism or mysticism, they find acceptable in style and interpretation.

How often has Dr. Johnson been misquoted when his quip about opera being 'an exotic and irrational entertainment' has been made to apply to opera as a whole. In fact, it was directed at the prevailing habit of performing Italian opera in eighteenth-century London. Today, it seems that precisely those countries which

have not maintained an unbroken tradition in the stage performance of opera are the most appreciative of the original language, i.e., the language in which an opera is written. Audiences in these countries will either not care if they miss the finer points of the text or they will have taken the trouble to look it up beforehand. In countries where the vernacular is used, one accepts the undoubted sacrifice of the impact of the exact musical equivalent to sentences, words and syllables in the interest of intelligibility of the text, always provided the singers' diction and vocal powers are equal to the demands made upon them by acoustical conditions and the musical balance between stage and orchestra. This incidentally is where the film can help, but here too conditions are changing. Star casts are assembled in German-speaking countries to perform Mozart and Verdi in the original Italian, and a tradition of opera in English has developed in England during the past few decades.

In any country which is traditionally opera-minded, opera is still a ritual; one dresses, as Mr. Menotti requires, one goes over the piano score or at the very least the libretto, and each family has its pair of opera glasses which has accompanied it to the theatre from generation to generation. As Mario Labroca puts it, television should give the viewer at home the impression that he is occupying the best seat in the house and possesses an excellent pair of opera glasses.

The creative aspect

The original conception of the Salzburg Opera Prize was to encourage authors and composers to create dual-purpose works, i.e., works which, while written for television, could easily be adapted for the stage. This idea met with considerable opposition and was dropped when the definitive rules came to be written. Nevertheless several composers and not a few directors of opera houses are of the opinion that the kind of staging which contem-

porary music theatre requires make such an adaptation possible and even desirable. Indeed, the technique of television has encouraged the return to a stylization which is close in spirit to the ancient Greek drama or the dance-drama of some Oriental cultures.

Herbert Graf feels strongly—and in his present capacity as director of the Grand Théâtre in Geneva he is in a position to implement his beliefs—that it is possible to produce an opera on the stage in such a way that it represents both good live music theatre and good television. And this concept applies even more to the works of music theatre which will be written in the future. However, the present daily routine of an opera house hardly allows of adequate facilities for the camera to do justice to a stage performance, let alone adapt it for television conventions. And of course Graf has this in mind when he urges architects of future opera houses to plan for joint productions of works for the stage and for television.

‘Television music theatre is very young, but the experience gained in three decades of opera in television allows us to formulate three main principles for this art form: immediacy of contact, sincerity of expression, and economy of actors’ movements.’ Thus writes Hermann Adler, the conductor, who was artistic director since its inception of the alas now defunct NBC Television Opera in New York. Adler had some good advice to give composers at the IMC’s first congress on opera in television (Salzburg, 1956): ‘Composers often say to me, “I would like to write something for television. How do I do it?” It is natural that a composer who writes a concerto for flute takes into account the characteristics of the flute and its extreme technical possibilities in order to write effectively and even to write differently. . . . If somebody asks me how to write an opera for television, I say forget about television and write a good opera—an opera which takes into account that the most interesting quality of the television camera is intimacy. . . . So if you

come to me and ask, "What opera should I write?", I would say, forget about the big things, the big ensembles, the large orchestras, the *Aida* second act finale, and write an opera with a mood. . . . The first opera NBC commissioned was, as you know, Menotti's *Amahl*. . . . If you were to look at the score, I don't think you would find one bar or one word in the libretto which indicates that Menotti thought of the camera. "Gian Carlo, by the way, I never asked you, did you ever think of the camera when you wrote it?" ("Never," replied Menotti, with some vehemence, from the body of the hall).'

Dr. Adler considered that the composer, in paying too much attention to technical matters, was in danger of forgetting that the psychological tension, the mood, was at least as important. One should forget all the tricks of the camera—music suffers from too much action.

It is not without interest to note that Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, first broadcast on Christmas Eve, 1951, by the NBC, was the first opera that had ever been written especially for television. And it might add point to an argument put forward in Chapter 5 to learn that Menotti has already had considerable success on the stage with his radio opera *The Old Maid and the Thief*, written a few years earlier.

And yet, as we have seen, Menotti approaches all the technical media with the utmost reluctance: 'I believe that we are all under the delusion that cinema or the screen brings us closer to reality than the theatre. For me that is absolutely untrue. I feel that the screen, the cinema, is so far removed from reality that it has to imitate reality. On the stage people can go beyond reality; on the screen they are the absolute slaves of reality. They actually are not real people, they are shells of people. They can only live as long as they move; the moment they stop they fall dead. So a person on the screen can never stop and think and talk; the few times

when he has to stop and say something the camera has to move. It has to photograph him from the left and the right and behind and below, but everything has to be action. This is very sad for opera, because opera is not action. It is meditation on action and the screen is anti-meditationist—it does not allow for meditation. And opera is nothing but the composer's meditation and the emotional reaction of the composer in action. But the action in itself is not important. It doesn't even have to be logical. . . . In my film of *The Medium* I had to add many things which are not in the score simply to clarify the character of the singers; things on the stage are perfectly obvious, but on the screen, of course, they don't come out as logical actions and they have to be explained.'

Were the cinema a less ephemeral medium, we would all know today that, long before Menotti, a very famous composer and his no less illustrious librettist went to considerable trouble to adapt one of their most successful works for the screen. In 1926, a silent film was made of *Der Rosenkavalier*, with Hugo von Hofmannsthal as the author of the scenario, who even added the character of the Feldmarschall. Richard Strauss arranged the score for the accompanying music—adding at least one march—but the score has unfortunately been lost.

Paul Angerer, from Austria, won the first Salzburg Opera Prize in 1959 with his allegorical television opera *Passkontrolle*. For Angerer, 'the television audience wants to experience an intimate integration of argument, music, speech and picture—more intimate than can ever be experienced on the operatic stage. In the opera house one cannot avoid being conscious of the presence of the orchestra: it is both immediate and isolated even when one is unable actually to see the musicians. But they are playing in the wide space in front of the stage.

'On the screen, we see only the picture which the creator and the director set before the public. And all we "see" of the music is the sound which is emitted by the

singers. The music is heard as a background or as something which belongs directly to the action.'

Perhaps we should qualify Angerer's last statement with the comment, all we *need* to see, for the musician as he performs is fast becoming a 'spectacle' in himself (cf. Chapter 10).

'In the opera house,' Angerer continues, 'the music fills the whole space and consequently seems somehow to predominate. In television, it is the picture which predominates; the music enhances the effect and becomes what might be called a superior kind of "illustrative music". (As in a way, it already is in a stage opera. The purpose of dramatic music is to underline and point the action.) Independent musical pieces in a television opera are therefore not only impossible, but unnecessary.

'On the other hand, there are more opportunities for the music in a television opera to determine the visual aspect of a production than in the case of a stage work. This in turn puts on the composer the onus of filling in every moment of the action. He must bear in mind how the camera sees the characters and the action, and he can predetermine which character he wishes to single out by means of a close-up, a procedure which the spectator in an opera house must apply for himself with his opera glasses, thereby taking his mind off the action. It is therefore possible for the composer to work in a much more concentrated fashion and to give more attention to detail.

'We must stress particularly the importance of the intelligibility of the text. There will be little likelihood of obtaining a libretto before the performance, and a second performance is unlikely to follow soon afterwards.

'It is mainly up to the composer to make the text clear and to avoid using voices in the extreme upper or lower ranges.'¹

1. The television director has also a responsibility in making the words clear. [Author.]

Among contemporary opera composers, Benjamin Britten shows particular awareness of the need for intelligibility of words; his scoring is an object-lesson in non-interference with the vocal line.

Sir Arthur Bliss, Master of the Queen's Musick in Great Britain, whose television opera *Tobias and the Angel* won a merit award at the 1962 Salzburg Opera Prize, gave a most revealing work-in-progress report to the London *Times* when he was writing this score: 'No, I wouldn't care to write an opera on a contemporary subject, though Menotti has brought it off wonderfully well in *The Consul*. I once planned a contemporary opera with Wyndham Lewis; the first scene was going to take place in St. Pancras Station. But we had to give it up because such realism didn't seem suitable for opera; people would laugh if they heard a soprano singing "Porter, porter!" But this is just the kind of thing the authors of *Les parapluies de Cherbourg* have since done.' (See Chapter 8.)

Sir Arthur continues: 'What's so interesting about working on *Tobias and the Angel* is that, since it's intended for television, the time scale has to be much smaller. It isn't simply that they don't want an extended opera, and only partly that they're afraid people will switch off the set unless they're held in suspense. Audiences of today don't want to be told everything in detail, as in Wagner's symphonic monologues, and they certainly don't need to be told it a second time as in the old formal aria with recapitulation—a hint is enough.'

For Herbert Junkers: 'The decisive factor in television opera is not the stylized form given to the piece by the director—it is the human being.

'The human being revealed through music. . . . No longer fairy stories based on the spirit of the music, as many people rightly call opera on the stage. No opera has the right to appear on the television screen unless a human being holds the centre of interest, unless the human voice speaks to music which comes from the

heart and not only from the intellect of the composer. The unrealistic opera of the stage has no justification here, for, on the television screen, only the human—the real—is valid.'

To date one of the most successful adaptations of an opera for television has been that of Carl Orff's *Die Kluge*, broadcast by Bavarian Television in January 1955. The composer collaborated in the production and it was directed by a leading stage producer, Gustav Rudolf Sellner (now Intendant of the Deutsche Oper, Berlin), who knows the composer's work intimately. Franz Josef Wild explains why the Orff version of this fairy tale by Grimm makes such excellent television:

'It draws its life from the representation of the world in men's minds. It is not the complicated psychology of complicated characters, but the clear, simple microcosmos of primitive thoughts and feelings which can be read unmistakably on the faces of men, from their approach to their fellow men, the way they stretch out for a glass or the way they eat.

'*Die Kluge* is the story of a peasant's daughter who, with her feminine wisdom, is quite a match for the capricious, wayward, boasting king and who through true love sweeps injustice out of her little world. This story is shown in simple encounters between a few characters. What then could be more obvious than to show more than half the action in close-ups—the faces of the people, their hands, their impressions or visions of the various stage properties? These properties themselves—not a jug, but *the* jug, chest, sceptre, instrument of torture, etc.—the simplest representation, like a picture in a children's book.

'The second point in which Orff's work advances to meet the producer is that the centre of the scene is not held by a certain singer or actor, but by a universal type of *homo ludens*, a man who acts, sings or dances, not one who acts convincingly but one who *is*—from joy in acting, in movement, in expression. Apart from the likeness to

the type of actor demanded and created by the modern musical, this is just the type which both television and modern opera require.

‘The third essential hold for the producer was the linguistic and musical form. The graphic style of the text is so significant and natural that in the translation into visual media there is scarcely any danger of aiming at ‘effects’. The actors speak their thoughts so directly that one has no need of striven-for flights of imagination into unreality; one has merely to focus the camera on the symbol of these thoughts.’

So impressed was Orff by this production of *Die Kluge* that he subsequently wrote a work especially for television, the *Comoedia de Christi resurrectione*. Wild tells us that here, ‘he started out from the standpoint that the theatre is a permanent special unit, usually showing cause and effect, solution and reaction, in the action, whereas television works with constantly changing snapshots of the whole. It must therefore be possible to show and make comprehensible, merely by the reaction of those present, that which, even with the help of symbols, could only be incompletely realized theatrically. And this without ever showing the actual events.’

One of the most successful practitioners in television opera, the Canadian director Franz Kraemer, has expressed some basic ideas on the problems of opera written especially for television. They result partly from his own extensive experience and partly from having viewed most of the works entered to date for the Salzburg Opera Prize:

‘(a) *Duration*. A one-hour opera on television should have as much story and development as a two-hour opera on stage.

‘(b) *Sets*. One-set arrangements should be avoided and actions moved to sets appropriate to the mood of the moment. This is expensive, but the sets do not necessarily have to have great dimension or realistic detail. The single set makes for monotony, and keeps reminding

us of the stage and the lack of a proscenium on television.

‘(c) *Action*. In order to write an opera and still fulfil the conditions of point (a), some of the action has to be compressed. Some operatic forms must be used to reveal character or development in the action. For example, the flashback, the dream, and—more important—the narrative, in which a voice begins the story and we then see the events without words in a significant sequence of pictures, closely related to a fully composed score. It is here especially that the composer, the librettist and the television director must work together to achieve the most telling solution (which can be either live, or on film or montaged).

‘(d) *Balance of sound and vision*. On the stage (particularly of a large house), the relative importance of orchestra, singing lines, intelligibility of text and picture is as follows: (i) singing line and orchestra; (ii) picture; (iii) intelligibility of words. In television, the order is rather: (i) picture, (ii) singing line and intelligibility of words, (iii) orchestra.

‘Obviously, then, some adjustments in the concept of a television opera are required.

‘(i) The singing line and its expressive, even more than its melodic, qualities should be used with great precision.

‘(ii) If the orchestra is to make comments of a psychological, dramatic nature or of any content other than the one expressed by the singers, it is often advisable to interrupt the vocal line or reduce it to a minimum. The moment the singing stops, the orchestra will easily prevail over the picture; the “silent” images thus created automatically become visual illustrations of the composer’s thoughts in the orchestra. (The spoken word may also be used on such occasions, albeit sparingly.)

‘(iii) On the stage, one can stop pictures (the darkened house), one can stop singing and, if one wants, one can stop the orchestra (unaccompanied ensembles or

spoken dialogues). On television, one may not stop the picture; one cannot close one's eyes, so to speak. Even if this were technically permissible, even if an interlude sign were to be put up on the screen and the music allowed to "speak", it would still not be possible to achieve in this medium the overpowering effect of a suddenly predominant orchestra such as one experiences in the opera house.¹

'(iv) Because of the telling force of the picture in relation to the music, it is important that composers of television opera imagine the pictures they need in order occasionally to underline the beginning and ending of a musical episode.

'(e) *Musical form.* There should be no limit to the composer's choice of musical forms, especially operatic forms (aria, ensemble, recitative, etc.). But it is important that there be an understanding of the drawbacks of these forms when used on television.

'(i) The aria. As all other operatic forms, it should be kept shorter than in most eighteenth or nineteenth century operas.

'(ii) The ensemble. For television purposes, anything larger than a trio creates great shooting problems. Unless the composer understands these, his ensembles will lack force. It is necessary for composer and librettist to imagine the picture while they create the ensemble. The setting and emphasis of the voices in the group must be related to the pictures.

'(iii) The overture. Television opera does not need the traditional overture,² but it does need a frame and a "curtain raiser". This can take the form of a "teaser"—a dramatized opening ahead of the real beginning of the opera; some titles will need a short piece of music. These devices should be considered by composer and

1. The late Hermann Scherchen advocated the use of abstract designs projected on to a film screen to give a visual equivalent to a purely orchestral interlude, both in the opera house and on television.

2. Nor indeed do a number of the greatest operatic masterpieces.

librettist as part of the original concept of their television opera.'

Other experts have amplified certain aspects of these ideas of Franz Kraemer. Karl O. Koch, musical director of Westdeutscher Rundfunk in Cologne, agrees that television opera should tell a story, a story which captures the imagination of the viewer—particularly of the viewer who is not accustomed to opera in its traditional form. But, he says, the story need not be told in a smooth, realistic manner; the camera has the faculty of presenting weird, surrealist, fantastic elements in its own way.

The writer believes that the fantastic and the supernatural are never more effective than when presented within a completely realistic setting. The statue of the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni* appears all the more ghostly and doom-laden for being made to penetrate the actual room where Don Giovanni is dining.

We agree with Koch when he says that studio productions of existing operas have to be re-studied in terms of the television screen. Koch contends that, in *Wozzeck* for example, the screen can give greater intensity and even tension to several scenes which are difficult to stage. Works written in a conversational style, such as Richard Strauss's *Capriccio*, lend themselves particularly to adaptation to television; here, one can feel oneself being almost personally involved in the discussion and it is important that in works such as this every word be understood by the audience. Some research might well be made to find a corresponding instrumental style for television.

On the question of musical form, Desmond Shawe-Taylor reminds us how unusually well Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* is suited to television. It is concise and clear in outline, with its well-planned sequence of sixteen episodes, eight to each act; it is transparently scored for a chamber orchestra and has only six characters. An earlier work—a classic of operatic literature—which can fairly be called the ideal television opera, with its

tightly knit score, its well-ordered libretto, its pointed characterizations and above all its pace, is Verdi's *Falstaff*.

But Herbert Graf castigates television directors who are afraid of lengthy overtures, arias and finales. It means, he believes, that they are afraid of opera itself, for these are integral stylistic parts of this art form. It is betraying opera to want to rationalize it according to the tenets of the theatre; people who sing are in any case irrational and unreasonable, says Graf. To which Lionel Salter rejoins that every television director has to ask himself the question: 'What do I show on the screen during the orchestral preludes and interludes?'

Dusan Havlicek would like film techniques and aesthetics to be investigated for elements to replace those which opera loses in its transfer to television, namely colour, the plastic effects of acoustics and the atmosphere of the theatre. However, it is only a question of time—and not very much time—before the first of these elements will be widely available.

It is a measure of the progress made since 1956 in acquainting composers with the possibilities of television that Adler's advice, mentioned earlier, to forget television and write a good opera, could be flatly contradicted in 1965. And this by Francis Burt, a young Englishman with several stage operas to his credit, who recommends that his colleagues forget the word opera and write good television material. Another composer, the Austrian Paul Kont, would like television music theatre to consider its viewers as a large audience in a theatre-in-the-round.

What the conductor Bernhard Conz regrets is the absence of *fantasy* in television opera—the fantasy of authors and the fantasy of audiences. Before the advent of television, sound radio showed that it could appeal to the imagination of the listener; it is up to the camera to provide a visual equivalent.

The writer believes that the practitioners of television, both on the artistic and on the technical side, are so

much concerned today with visual problems that they are apt to forget the possibilities of sound. Sound radio is a refuge in these days of visual underlining for those who still believe in the power of evocation of things merely heard.

The rapidly improving quality of electronic 'instruments' is affording the composer quite a number of opportunities. Their application in the theatre has been considered under Chapters 3 and 5. Both in the theatre and in radio and television, they place at the composer's disposal an extended range of sound and colour. He can accept or reject them, according to his aesthetic principles; but they are there for him to use, if he so desires. And in transmitting the composer's thoughts, the microphone is—or at least could be—a challenge to him to devise, with traditional instruments if he likes, a counterpoint which would apply to it, and to it alone, rather than seek to convey a sound texture which was not in the first place meant to be heard anywhere but in the opera house (or the concert hall).

Vaclav Kaslik—who has been mentioned earlier in connexion with the *Laterna Magika*—is surprised that so many of today's composers use an advanced musical idiom as a setting for traditional subjects. Surely, it is their duty and interest to treat the aesthetic and social problems of the age in which we live. We are still far from having found a specific television style for opera or ballet. The future forms of television music theatre will use, in different ways and to differing degrees, the element of music—played and sung—the spoken word and dance. And they might well also, thinks Kaslik, work commentary or even didactic material into the dramatic action. And ballet, too, will probably incorporate a text, spoken or sung.

Kaslik is deeply concerned with the kinetics of stage production. It is no mere coincidence, he considers, that our present-day stage should have revived the principle of mobility and been directly inspired by the capacity

of film and television to place the action in continually changing *milieux*. In his own productions, Kaslik makes use of film and television, of silhouettes and marionettes. The *Laterna Magika* combines living actors and singers with the film screen—or rather screens, since several are used simultaneously. Kaslik claims that, whatever the opinion people may have of it, the *Laterna Magika* represents a revolution in the presentation of opera. And it has had considerable success in conveying opera to large audiences in many parts of the world.

Kaslik has put some of his theories into practice in his first television opera *Krakatit* (1962) based on a short story by Karel Čapek. Pavel Eckstein reminds us that this same story, dating from 1935, was once adapted as a film scenario: 'It presents in hypothetical form one of the greatest problems of humanity: should a great physical or chemical force be used for peaceful or warlike purposes?' Kaslik mixes electronically produced sounds with sounds produced by prepared instruments and traditional instrument. The work has since been adapted for the stage.

The new association of stage action and contrasting film sequences, which according to Kaslik enhances the dramatic atmosphere, has given a further impulse through even more recent discoveries. For example, projection on multiple screens—the '*polyécran*' mentioned earlier by Kaslik—and the eidophore, through which the singers' expression or even other, dissociated pictures can be thrown on to a screen simultaneously with the action.

Production problems

In the last chapter, we have not altogether avoided anticipating certain problems of the production of television opera and of opera in television. Quite the contrary; whenever these have been intimately connected with the creative process, we have considered it helpful to authors and composers alike to know of these problems

and to learn how others before them have faced and sometimes solved them. We are concerned both with sound and with vision and we shall here reverse the order which usually applies in television and consider first sound and then vision.

Sound. The perfection of modern reproduction techniques is a double-edged sword. The extension of the frequency range, stereophony and ambiophony have given new dimensions to the transmission of sound and undreamt-of faithfulness in its reproduction. But can one not be too faithful—to science instead of the music? The writer has come to regard the term ‘high fidelity’ with more than a little suspicion.

It is disquieting, for example, to be told by a recording engineer that what one finds on a tape is perfect—technically and scientifically perfect—thus providing listening conditions which do not obtain in the opera house. We for our part do not seek technical perfection, with its antiseptic or aseptic characteristics. Incidentally, the claim made on behalf of certain operatic gramophone recordings to convey hitherto unrevealed details of a heavily orchestrated score is hotly debated among musicians. Take Wagner’s *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, for example; it was conceived in terms of the theatre which was built to house it. Not by chance is the orchestra in Bayreuth covered and the distance from stage to auditorium—over what Wagner called the ‘*mystischer Abgrund*’ (‘mystical depths’)—greater than in the normal opera house. A sound picture of the *Ring* in which the orchestral texture is illuminated with the clarity one would wish to have applied to, say, *Daphnis and Chloë* is a betrayal of the composer’s intentions. We would far rather listen to recorded music under the conditions which most closely resemble an opera house, whose acoustics we are familiar with. And if those acoustics happen not to be scientifically perfect, then we gladly accept that the recording should convey those same imperfections.

It is quite different, of course, in the case of a contemporary work, whose texture has been conceived for reproduction through modern technical devices. Here, there are untold possibilities of manipulating the sound resources to favour indifferently the stage or the orchestra, or indeed any single voice or instrumental group, not to speak of electronic accompaniment. In television opera there is very much less reason than in the theatre why every word of the text should not come through with complete clarity; and in the opera house, the balance between stage and orchestra often makes this impossible.

The microphone presents a special problem for the singer. It does not necessarily follow that a voice whose power and richness make it ideal in the opera house will also 'come over' well though the loudspeaker. For example, the loudspeaker will betray quite mercilessly—in fact, it will emphasize—the slightest tremolo. It follows that casting for radio or television productions may often differ from casting for the opera house. It may be possible, for example, because of the sensitivity of the microphone and its ability to convey voice and orchestra through separate channels, to use lighter voices in certain heroic roles than would be the case in the theatre.

Visual. Peter Hermann Adler has said that the screen provides the possibility of matching the subtleties of musical dynamics with visual equivalents, which offers a challenge to both the interpreter and the designer in television. Scenery, says Koch, should suggest rather than define; it should give scope to the viewer's visual imagination. Designers are often accused of being over-conservative in their approach to television, of merely adapting stage photographs instead of rethinking their sets in terms of the medium. Desmond Shawe-Taylor refers to 'cardboard battlements and painted lakes'. Graf reminds us that, even in the theatre, three-dimensional settings are becoming more common, that one no longer works with painted canvasses.

Austria's Heinz-Bruno Gallée, one of today's leading experts on designing for television, explains the designer's problems in working for the new medium: 'We have to become acquainted with such concepts as real space, magic space, free space, light and colour space, before we can start to design the stage, and conceive the scenery as an abstract allegory of the world in which the action is taking place.

'New media must illustrate new dimensions. In film and television, in particular, the phenomena of light and shadow are added. The use of flats, foldings, graduations, foreshortening of perspective, fades, superimposed images, multiple images, various movements of stage floor, walls and ceiling, without direct relation to a particular style, can express the beauty of geometrical proportion.

'Often the scenery is there to be forgotten; often it is the basis of the action. We have to mark distances, to introduce elements which form the background against which the actor is set off distinctly, above which he may rise or which may dwarf him.

'Human distances, forms and spaces may be marked by choreography, direction or measured steps. In pantomime, character dancing and gesture, man conjures up symbolical and allegorical worlds and spaces, dimensions and characters.

'Today we tend to avoid the decorative flourish. The setting is free of the dust of tradition; it has become almost austere and bare. This is not from want of imagination, but is a result of self-denial in order to meet the demands of artistic practicability. Only now are we able to realize the demands which the painter Anselm Feuerbach made around the middle of the last century: ". . . I hate the modern theatre, because it never seems to go beyond cardboard and make-up. I hate the nonsense of stage design in all its aspects and with all my heart. It sweeps away the last remnant of artistic emotion."

'Light in film and television has to find its own paths and to follow its own laws independently of the theatre. The lens of the camera has no soul and thus is more impartial and critical than the viewer's eye. The camera glides into the picture and registers every detail with the exactness of a magnifying glass.

'The quality of a picture depends to a high degree on the lighting. General light intensity, contrast and effect lights have to be adjusted according to a lighting plan. The contrast of light and dark is the main element in black-and-white television. The number of shades of grey that can be differentiated depends upon the acuity of the eye and upon the receptivity of the individual. In the camera's eye grey is a mixture of black and white or of the complementary colours mixed in the correct ratio.

'The technical director in television has at his disposal the electronic inlay technique which makes it possible to erase some parts of a picture and replace them by others. Or he may use the overlay technique, which is an electro-optical projection on to various backgrounds.'

Not only designers but television directors are keen to experiment with lighting for scenic effects. Here especially we find that the television production methods coincide closely with some of the more modern conceptions of staging for the theatre, in present-day Bayreuth, for example.

Contemporary forms of staging not only contemporary works but also the older, even the oldest, items in the repertoire are well-suited to the requirements of television with the bare essentials of scenery and concentration on certain symbols which, as Vlado Habunek says, will hold the audience's attention while enabling, even forcing, it to add in its own complementary colours.

We have seen in the discussion above on the television production of Carl Orff's *Die Kluge* how effectively individual objects can be used to suggest the immediate surroundings of the characters. A jug becomes *the* jug

in *Die Kluge* as in *Falstaff*, Act I, Scene 1; and in the latter, much can be conveyed through the camera being fixed for a fleeting moment on an empty purse. This point has been made among others, by Helmuth Matiasek, the Austrian stage and television director.

More questionable to us is Matiasek's statement that a sentence of the text which is significant for our understanding of the action has to be 'shown' on the screen, even if the emphasis of the music happens at the moment to be placed on a different aspect of the action.

The interpreter

The most direct form of expression in television opera is the human face on the screen, or the 'scenery of the human face'. According to Mario Labroca, 'the role of an artist who on the opera stage does little more than sing, becomes on television the role of an actor who expresses himself through song. The expressive power of the music is thus enhanced. A different set of relations must be established here between singing and acting. The orchestra no longer separates stage and auditorium, the artists are no longer heroes who express themselves in song but characters of flesh and blood closer to our daily lives. They should act, speak and sing on the screen according to new conventions. And traditional opera will be the first to benefit, since it will be liberated from the present restrictive, conventional form'.

The factor of intimacy which television has created demands a different style of acting which Friedrich Sieburg characterizes as 'a serious challenge to the German stage tradition of gesticulating, screaming and over-acting'. Hans Sittner points out that, 'just as today's electronic music has its roots in Webern, Boulez and others, so the new stylistic requirements of television have forerunners in the modern, particularly the Western, theatre's tendency to underplay; and the open stage, or

theatre-in-the-round, which is increasingly in demand today is much closer to the requirements of the television camera than the old proscenium stage.

‘The practical application of all this in the pedagogical field is obvious. Operatic artists must be educated through television and future opera singers must be taught a style of acting which takes account of the television camera. Above all, and this surely is the great merit of the television camera, there must be a revival in mime. The old profession of mime on the stage and in schools has disappeared completely and today Marceau seems to us a new discovery; yet one is perpetually astonished, on looking at the faces of the more conventional opera singers through opera glasses, at how little goes on in them. This must now end. Henceforth, a singer will be obliged to show in his face and with sparing gestures what he feels and is able to express through his singing. The fewer the means of expression available to the artist, the higher will be the quality of his expression.’

Ideally, opera singers should look the part they sing. As the great English critic Ernest Newman used to say, it is perhaps one of the more unfortunate aspects of creation that a voice which is wonderfully suited to the part of Mimi or of Siegfried should inhabit a human frame which is far removed from even the most generous-minded opera-lover’s conception of those characters’ appearance and behaviour. Indeed, the finer points of musico-dramatic portrayal are more often than not beyond the conception of the average opera singer.

Singer-actors are rare birds, and the cinema and television, in an attempt to solve one of their major problems in conveying opera through the screen, have invented the technique of play-back. Given that the close-up of a singer’s mouth and throat in action are unsightly—and surely, says Newman, the proper place for these life-size dental and lingual exhibits is the anatomical lecture-room, and even though the singer’s stage presence may not bear scrutiny by the camera,

there are still many advantages in 'seeing' the sounds which are being made at the time when they are being made. The technical process of play-back can be carried to different lengths. In the simpler form, the artist who appears on the screen is the same person whose voice is being heard as pre-recorded, so that he merely goes through the motions of singing before the camera. The success of this technique depends on the quality of the synchronization and the extent to which the singer re-creates the actual effort of singing. It is quite impossible to convey the musico-dramatic content of opera on the screen unless the physical conditions under which the voice is produced are reproduced on the screen.

The more extreme kind of play-back, known as 'doubling', consists in an unseen singer's lending his voice to an unheard actor. This raises the added difficulty of correspondence between the character as seen and the voice attributed to him. If a serious attempt is made to train an actor with a good ear for music and a knowledge of the technique of singing, the result can sometimes be remarkably effective, but the more effective it is, the more false. Play-back has been from the very outset the most controversial of all methods employed in television opera.

The advantages and disadvantages of the different production methods in use have been neatly summed up by Jörn Thiel:

Advantages

Live

Perfect dramatic and vocal co-ordination without stiffness; song and dialogue impeccably linked

Disadvantages

Sound dynamics often incorrect in relation to the position of artists in the picture; difficulties of casting, since ideal singer is not often visually the ideal protagonist

Playback

Dramatic portrayal easier since 'the face of the singer is freed from the strain of singing' (Ivo Vynhalec); the camera freed from the necessity of considering sound relations

Pre-recording imposes tempo and interpretation on the singers; difficulties of synchronization

Doubling

Ideal casting possible, both visually and aurally

Lack of artistic unity; voices often do not 'belong' to the characters seen

Presentation

Visual presentation can do a great deal to win over a reluctant or indifferent public to unfamiliar music idioms. Karl O. Koch derives cool comfort from the fact that when people are shown something which is to their liking, they will listen less and therefore be less irritated. Particularly irritating to the general, uninitiated television public is said to be the vocal style of the more advanced contemporary operas. But Koch discovered with pleasurable surprise that even a production team which had recently faced with some fear the prospect of living for three weeks with *Wozzeck* very soon came to consider Berg's vocal line as quite natural.

Vaclav Kaslik names three enemies of music theatre as it is presented today on the stage: naturalism or descriptive realism, convention and boredom. The same, he considers, applies to television, for very few works of the existing repertoire can be presented on the screen without considerable adaptation. Particularly rewarding, Kaslik feels, could be the use of spoken text, for example, *Carmen* in the original version with spoken dialogue,

minus the choral parts and with the addition of Mérimée's narrative.

Kaslik is not alone in finding that the most consistently useful approach in planning a studio presentation of a repertory opera is to draw directly on the literary or dramatic source which inspired the composer. Particular importance attaches to the ways of *beginning* an opera—or for that matter any programme—for a television audience which may have been watching an item of a totally different and irreconcilable character immediately beforehand. Upon the impact of the first minute or so will depend success or failure in capturing and holding the attention of a very large television 'fringe' audience.

In a BBC production of *La Traviata*, the director, George Foa, taking his cue from Dumas, had Armand visit Marguerite Gautier's house after her death. In a Canadian production of *Eugène Onegin*, Franz Kraemer billed the programme as *Scenes from Eugène Onegin*; Peter Ustinov spoke a narrative taken from Pushkin's original poem; during this, at the appropriate moment, there was a mix to the action in mime leading up to the first musical scene, and only then did the singers and orchestra take over. (Compare with Sellner's treatment of Klebe's *Alkmene* in sound radio—see Chapter 6.)

If such methods are used to incite a vacillating audience to 'remain with' a work from the standard repertoire, there is all the more reason for applying them to contemporary works—and, with the collaboration of the author, even greater ease. In Rolf Liebermann's opera *Die Schule der Frauen* ('*L'École des Femmes*'), adapted by Heinrich Strobel from Molière, there is a Prologue in which the character of Molière appears as a kind of *deus ex machina* to introduce the plot. This procedure proves to be a gift to the television version; Molière, during the overture, is seen driving in an old-fashioned coach through modern streets full of traffic to arrive at the theatre (NDR, Hamburg). In another production, Hans Poser's *Die Auszeichnung*, after Maupassant's story *La Décoration*,

the 'narrator' is a picture of l'Oncle Bertrand looking down from the wall. And the winner of the 1965 Salzburg Opera Prize, Sutermeister's *The Canterville Ghost*, is introduced from a hotel lounge by a very suave and sophisticated announcer who happens to be a very well-known actor and directs the production.

These are a few examples of what Gerhard Freund, Director of Austrian Television, has called 'qualified provocation' in order to make an immediate impact on the average television audience. Lionel Salter, as Head of Opera of the BBC, is peculiarly well-placed to sum up the points which make for good studio presentations of opera in television:

'(a) The basic principles of translation hold good, i.e., adaptation to the new medium must retain the spirit and style of the original; and the text must be respected, new elaborations, however attractive, not being permissible unless essential to clarify the meaning.

'(b) Nevertheless, opera is designed for public entertainment and the television producer is correct in approaching it from this point of view.

'(c) Imaginative opening sequences designed to intrigue and hold the viewer, especially following on a totally different type of programme, are to be encouraged.

'(d) In the opera house the "sensuality of sonority" grips the audience. The same richness of sound must be attempted in television, in spite of the usual preoccupation of technicians with vision. The combination of lovely sound and apt picture should evoke the magic inherent in all true opera.

'(e) Casting is important, but so also are such considerations as décor, consistency in style and period, language and the quality of translation.

'(f) Where possible mixed conventions are to be avoided; this is admittedly a problem since opera itself is based on conventions.

'(g) Encouragement of intimate rather than exaggerated acting.

‘(h) The effectiveness of simplicity on the small screen in contrast to the complexity possible in film.

‘(i) The necessity of maintaining good taste.

‘This last point emphasizes the need for close collaboration between the musical director (whether a conductor or a knowledgeable supervisor) and the producer, as is the case in any important opera house. Several other points imply the provision in reputable music and drama colleges of facilities and teachers to train young singers in techniques appropriate for television.

‘*Theatre relays* from the public performances of opera are interesting mainly as *news reportage*, but are advisable only if the authorities concerned are willing to allow good camera positions and to modify the stage lighting. The compromise of using the theatre as a studio—first consideration being given to the cameras and the microphones, with proper rehearsal, such as is done annually at Glyndebourne—is demonstrably better.’

10 The 'spectacle' of abstract music

We have noted the increasing interest on the part of the present-day public in 'seeing how it works', in probing behind the scenes to discover the man behind the artist. What we lose on the swings of theatrical mysticism, we gain on the roundabouts of intellectual appreciation. Another, and less worthy, aspect of this conception is the personality cult which the popular press and the technical media have done so much to encourage. For both approaches, the best instrument of communication is undoubtedly television, to which A. M. Julien ascribes 'a faculty of total indiscretion'.

According to a great number of people, music which we shall describe as 'abstract', as opposed to music which is an integral part of a spectacle such as opera or ballet, has no place on the television screen. Music, they say, is meant to be heard and not seen; therefore, its place is on the radio. 'But,' says Michel Butor, 'the sound one hears is not the same as the sound one sees being produced.' And Butor emphasizes the aural impact of even a slight instrumental sound which is seen to be made, as contrasted with an unseen orchestral mass.

According to Lionel Salter, people who deny music a place on the television screen fail to realize that they have been completely conditioned by the circumstances of the last fifty years. Until the advent first of the gramophone and then of radio, it was physically impossible to listen to music without seeing the performers too. What television, therefore, is doing is to restore a lost sense of sight. (Salter, to support his case, quotes the same passage from Stravinsky's *Chronicles of my Life* to which Massimo Mila refers in Chapter 2 above).

It is the 'third man', the television director, who represents the greatest challenge in television broadcasting of music in general, and of 'abstract' music in particular. However musical he may be, the fact remains that the camera must impose a target on the viewer's eye. Therefore, from the moment when the director begins his work he comes between the interpretation of

the artist and the television audience. The director must select part of the complete picture, and in so doing he unavoidably exerts an influence on the message which reaches the viewer-listener.

This vitally important point in the broadcasting of music in television has been discussed in all its aspects by Peter Stadlen: 'If the camera is a more powerful instrument than the roving eye, it is also a more dangerous one. In the concert hall our fascination with the paraphernalia of music-making soon subsides as we encounter significance of a more transcendental kind.

'Though we may glance at the timpanist as he keeps on intruding in the Scherzo of the Ninth, this merely accentuates our continued awareness of the orchestra's purposeful unity. The close-up, on the other hand, monopolizes our attention by blotting out all other sources of sound.

'The score-conscious producer who pinpoints what is at any moment the most obtrusive instrument and presents a symphony as a sequence of solos is liable to falsify a complex reality both by his visual suggestion of monody and by unduly emphasizing the element of timbre.

'Yet the straying camera not only misleads us by conjuring up a world where Brahms seems less eventful than Berlioz; far from helping us to keep our eye on the ball it constantly interferes with the musical function of vision.

'We may as well admit it: we look to the conductor for the same visual guidance that is, after all, his only means of bringing about the decisive inflections of the performance. If the size of the screen will not permit a whole platform to be crowded into the picture, it may well prove the lesser evil to focus on the image of the directing will.'

S. Mettrop, Head of Opera of Dutch Television, disagrees with this last point: 'If in the concert hall the audience can see only the conductor's back, there is no

reason why it should see his face in television.' The writer, for his part, feels that this is perhaps the one place where the camera can convey the 'directing will' and, in so doing, be sure it is not betraying the intentions of the primary interpreters:

Stadlen continues: 'The adventurous photography of the solo recital confirms the suspicion that producers cannot yet resist the temptation of their new toy. Geared to his telegenic monster, the pianist is still seen to commence his Nocturne shrouded in mysterious twilight—a tiny, distant figure, sadly at odds with the proximity of the sound.

'As the camera tracks in, swerves round, shoots from a variety of angles and suddenly, with seat-belts unfastened, swoops down from lofty heights we are, in fact, being subjected to an additional interpretation of Chopin's music.

'If we are told that we could not endure a static camera for more than twenty seconds without tossing and turning, why is it that the musings of the brains-truster and the comedian's story are left undisturbed for minutes on end?

'If only television could cease trying to add a new dimension to music we should be duly grateful for a guinea seat.'

We are, of course, going to continue showing music on television. Especially when we learn that, for a BBC symphony concert broadcast simultaneously on sound radio and television, television *listeners* outnumber listeners to sound radio by five to one. But there is much to be learnt from such well-founded criticism as Stadlen's. Not least in the field with which we are particularly concerned, namely the element of spectacle in the performance of abstract music. Musicians in television can interest us in three ways: in talking about their art, in preparing to perform and in performing.

If there is one thing television can do supremely well, it is to convey personality. It has been said that

people are at their most impressive when they are doing something they consider important. The artist seized, through television, in the act either of communicating his experience to others, of teaching, or of preparing himself and others for a performance, of rehearsing, can indeed be seen at his most impressive. Musicians of the eminence of Fricsay, Karajan, Knappertsbusch and Scherchen, and even Stravinsky, have lent themselves to this kind of experiment. Rehearsals have even acquired popularity in the sound dimension alone, as witness the sale of records of distinguished conductors heard at work.

It is instructive to find the London *Times* referring in the following terms to a series of television programmes launched in 1965 by the BBC under the title *In Rehearsal*: 'On the evidence of the two programmes that have so far been shown, it is impossible to predict what the attractions of each of their successors will be. The two duet programmes we have seen have been as different as it is possible for any two programmes with a similar foundation to be. Miss Seefried, exuberant, every inch a performer, provided a rehearsal that, without taking open cognizance of cameras and microphones, was a splendid performance; her vitality and the richness of her personality gave the programme humour and as much charm as a television screen can contain. Granted that Miss Seefried's approach to *Lieder* is rather operatic, the viewer who loves 'Die Forelle' and 'Gretchen am Spinnrade' found interpretations worthy of his attention, whilst Miss Seefried, neglecting to notice any audience but treating Mr. Parsons (to his obvious pleasure) as a representative of the musically inexperienced, explained all that needed explanation.

'Miss du Pré and Mr. Bishop provided a completely different experience. They were simply a couple of musicians working together, acutely aware of each other's activities but totally oblivious of interloping cameras. They had problems to solve, and surprised the

viewer who is musically experienced because it was Mr. Bishop who worried about dynamics (usually the 'cellist's bugbear) while Miss du Pré grew anxious over minutiae of rhythmic articulation. The two lightheartedly enjoyed working together, everything was entirely good humoured, but the programme's appeal lay in the dedicated concentration of the two musicians.'

Here is indeed a perfect exploitation of the television's characteristics of immediacy, sincerity and spontaneity. More obviously spectacular is a new kind of musical biography which Ken Russell has introduced on the BBC. Incidents in the life of Debussy were re-enacted by players who 'came out of character' to examine the ideas and personality of the composer. At moments, they were even made to identify their own contemporary, personal reactions with those of Debussy and his contemporaries.

It might at first glance seem that the association of music with extra-musical images would be a 'natural' for television. Lionel Salter considers this to be 'a most controversial procedure, calling for the nicest artistic judgement. The addition of dancing, scenic films or cartoon to light music immediately reduces it to an accompaniment or background; and whereas this may be of no great moment, to reduce the stature of serious music would be a very different matter. Nothing infuriates true music-lovers more than forcing their art into a position of unjustified subordination; if a serious work is artistically complete in itself, it should not have to tolerate the imposition on it of words, dance movement or any extraneous pictures. Any attempt at a pictorial interpretation of an abstract piece of music such as a symphony is misconceived, an unmusical impertinence. People who visualize pictures in their mind's eye while music is playing are very rarely capable of concentration on the musical thought itself. Therefore, to show extra-musical images on the screen is to make things even harder for them and to run the danger of constant

association with the work of images irrelevant to the composer's conception. How many, I wonder, who saw Walt Disney's film *Fantasia* can now hear Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* and totally banish from their minds the pictures of the earth's creation and of the prehistoric monster-images quite foreign to Stravinsky's intentions?

'There does exist, however, what is termed "programme music", i.e., music which has explicit pictorial or literary associations, and here it may be permissible to draw on extra-musical images. Mussorgsky's *Pictures from an Exhibition* might be accompanied by the pictures by Hartmann which inspired them (that is, if they could all be found, which they can't), and Granados' *Goyescas* by the appropriate Goya drawings—though it would be virtually intolerable to hold a single picture on the screen for the entire duration of the piece. But with works with vaguer programmes, like Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* or Liszt's *Mazeppa*, we come back to the problem of purely subjective interpretations of a composer's ideas. It is rare to find a narrative subject as specific as Dukas' *Sorcerer's Apprentice* or the Berlioz 'Fantastic' Symphony; and in some scores by Richard Strauss, where the music is almost photographically representational—I am thinking of parts of his *Don Quixote*, for example—the orchestra already sufficiently suggests the action without our needing to gild the lily. With quasi-pictorial music of no specific detailed programme, like Respighi's *Pines of Rome* or Borodin's *In the Steppes of Central Asia*, it would be possible to associate film of the actual scenes—always provided that the length of the musical phrases was matched by that of the picture sequences—but the probability is that the music would become a mere accompaniment. We must be wary, too, of transgressing the composer's intentions. Mendelssohn, for example, deprecated any attempt at pictorializing his *Fingal's Cave Overture*; Beethoven, in a famous phrase, insisted that his Pastoral Symphony was "the expression of emotions rather than illustration",

and Debussy, though his *La Mer* might seem a series of realistic impressions, made it clear that he was thinking in terms of stylization.⁷

Disney's film *Fantasia*, which Salter so strongly deprecates, provoked some favourable comment from Hermann Scherchen, not, however, on the pictorial representation of *The Rite of Spring*. It was the abstract patterns associated with the performance of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor which fascinated Scherchen. It even led him to experiment with a graphical representation of the process of performing music; in recording a work by Yannis Xenakis, Scherchen filmed the light patterns resulting from the passage through ultra-violet rays of the sound waves.

Such experimentation, which is actively carried on today by the Groupe de Recherches Musicales of Radio-diffusion-Télévision Française, recalls the work of Fischinger in the 1920's and Len Lye in the 1930's; it might well develop into a new form of television representation of abstract music. One might add that, as soon as colour television becomes a standard feature, cartoons like those in which Norman McLaren paints abstract patterns directly on the film will surely find an additional outlet.

The most absolute views in the direction of the spectacle which can be provided by abstract music, and the musician performing, it are held by Pierre Schaeffer.

In Pierre Schaeffer's conception of television musical entertainment, both the performing musicians and the audience are directly identified with the spectacle. But for him, as for others, the starting point is the fundamental paradox of music in television, namely television's lack of success in showing what was meant to be seen as well as heard, a concert or an opera. The gramophone and radio have generated a category of amateurs which has developed an often deep musical knowledge with no bearing on a direct, live manifestation

of the musical phenomenon. A concert or an opera performance, prolonged and experienced through a camera and a receiver, is no longer a concert or an opera but a broadcast. An authentic broadcast of a musical event is the very essence of mass communication—as long as the audience may assume its rightful place as a major partner.

Still according to Schaeffer, the critics of music in television tend to deny to the medium the power to communicate anything but the superficial mobility of an event. But this is not to have understood that television is much more than a mirror selecting events according to their visual riches; television had not only to show but to make us understand what it showed. All that is worthy of being shown becomes a spectacle; conversely, a spectacle must above all be a *lesson*. Whether explicit or not, whether derived or, on the contrary, detached from all references to values, the lesson, he believes, is the foundation and justification of a spectacle. If then television, which by its very essence expresses itself through the spectacle, claims to play a part in the appreciation and propagation of music among the general public, it is important to know which forms it should take in order to be effective and not gratuitous or vulgar, in order to convey a lesson in its own way.

At the 1965 Salzburg Congress, Mr. Schaeffer showed three examples of television programmes made by the Groupe de Recherches Musicales of Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française, which he directs. All three served to question a certain modern notion of a spectacle applied to music and thereby to discover what might be the true function of television in musical life. The first example posed the problem of content, the second of authenticity, the third of communication.

The first programme, *L'histoire de l'œuf*, adapted from a folk legend of the Basutos, with music for a percussion group and piano by Serge Nigg, was an attempt to fuse

text, sound and picture in what we would today call a *spectacle total*. A black actor and actress recited the legend against a background which was constituted by the orchestra. A very important feature of the spectacle was the incorporation of the 'eidophore'—one of the first uses in public of the process mentioned both by Vaclav Kaslik and Maurice Béjart.

The eidophore is a kind of simplified closed-circuit television which projects on to large screen placed above the stage whatever picture of the stage action the director selects at any given moment. Schaeffer considers that a work could be better understood through the faculty offered to the eye of simultaneously perceiving two aspects of the same action: one on the screen, isolated, fragmentary—a close-up of a mouth, for example—the other on the stage, global, showing the whole of the actor's expression as well as that of the other participants in the action. It was the purpose of the television relay of this spectacle to convey faithfully to viewers the dramatic effects of this simultaneity. This was achieved, claimed Schaeffer, through preserving at all costs the conflict between the two plastic languages—the one of the theatre, the other of the cinema—for it was this conflict which engendered a new attentiveness on the part of the public and gave it a renewed sense of participation.

The second example was far removed from the traditional conception of a spectacle. It consisted in the visual recording, at the closest quarters, of a complete *dhrupad*—one of the most austere forms of traditional North Indian song—performed by two of its greatest exponents, the brothers Moinuddin and Aminuddin Dagar and accompanied by a *pakhavag* (the small two-sided drum associated with this art form) and a *tanpura* (the plucked string instrument which gives a continuous drone), played by a woman. The challenge here was to present to Occidental viewers in its forty-minute-long development a form of music utterly remote, both in its

musical content and philosophical and religious connotations. Significantly, the programme was entitled *Sur une étrange musique* and Pierre Schaeffer, who wrote and spoke the presentation himself—a model of its kind—added . . . *sur une musique étrangère*. With an honesty close to recklessness on the part of a director of television programmes, Schaeffer enumerated all the difficulties in understanding this music. Why then, he asked, attempt the broadcast at all? And this was the clue to his kind of presentation: because of the camera. Because one also listens to music with one's eyes; '*l'œil écoute*', as Claudel says.

The cameraman instinctively treated the Dagar brothers with the respect due to great artists and used no effects, no technical tricks. 'It was the music which gave the impulse to the camera, the music and not the musicians. They were seeking to establish and to receive something of a higher nature.' This experience confirmed Schaeffer in his belief that a spectacle, whatever form it might take, was above all the transmission of a message pregnant with meaning.

Schaeffer's third example was the very opposite of a spectacle. A visual record of the preparations for a concert, in this instance, a rehearsal of Messiaen's 'Turangalila' Symphony in the presence of the composer, which he calls an 'anti-concert'.

The normal broadcast of a concert, Schaeffer considered to be a classic example of bad television, in which the camera added nothing to a type of communication which was already established. But a rehearsal, in which the work was no longer an untouchable monument, represented for him '*la pédagogie du réel*'. Although the rehearsal as such represented only a fragment of a complete programme which was to be devoted to Olivier Messiaen, Schaeffer considered the presence of the composer to have been its essential element. One could not wish for a more significant picture accompanying a piece of music than that of its composer hearing it and

our sharing in his attentiveness, his satisfaction or displeasure while he listened, judged and corrected.

This programme had sought to communicate first-hand 'information' on a musical work *in statu nascendi* and so to 'vaccinate' the viewer turned listener against subsequent boredom, incomprehension and misunderstanding.

The three programmes had been offered as examples of 'breaches' opened in the resisting front of screened music. And if the viewer had been convinced, it was perhaps as a result of his having been taken behind the scene and no longer regretting not being present in the hall. The miracle of broadcasting, of the broadcast spectacle, will have placed him on the side of the event, of the music.

Pierre Schaeffer's ideas on the dramatic value of the preparation of a musical performance have led the Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française Groupe de Recherches Musicales to film a series of rehearsals under the title *Les grandes répétitions*. In the course of the 1965-66 season, films were made of Messiaen (another work, *Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum*, filmed in Chartres cathedral), Varèse, Stockhausen and Scherchen. Quite apart from the documentary aspect of such films—Varèse and Scherchen have since died—Schaeffer claims that there is real drama inherent in the spectacle of a composer, a conductor and an orchestra grappling with the difficulties of bringing to life a musical work. 'The cameras, the microphones reveal both the faces, the voices and the searching, the apprehensions of a group of men who are striving, with the utmost precision, to reach perfection.'

11 Patronage and prizes

Times have changed, and the limited but convenient relation between artist and patron which had existed for centuries has all but died out. The patronage of princes, temporal and spiritual, gave the world the vast majority of its mediaeval, Renaissance, baroque, Classical and Romantic masterpieces. It has been replaced by the support of state and municipality and by the encouragement of commerce and industry. In both cases, support or encouragement can be direct, for example, from ministries of culture or by grants from firms, or indirect, for example, from arts councils or trusts and foundations. All the more welcome for being so rare today are the instances when a composer receives a commission from a surviving Maecenas or, in the instrumental field, from a distinguished performer. A recent form of patronage is that of educational and academic institutions, especially in North America where several universities now have their composers and artists in residence, writing for the institution's choir, orchestra or chamber groups. Of course many of these institutions themselves receive grants from foundations.

But technological progress does not always go hand-in-hand with musical welfare. This is especially so when the increase in the size of the public for the arts, a natural and healthy outcome of the development in modern techniques, is not matched by a corresponding increase in the time devoted to music education in schools. First the gramophone, and now radio and television, have created an entirely new situation in the history of music. The public of today can, at any moment, hear the music of every past age with the same, or rather greater, ease than that of the composer of today, its contemporary.

The technical media, therefore, can be said to play a paradoxical role in the patronage of music. Broadcasting, because it has too quickly created an insufficiently educated public, has accentuated the already dangerous gap which existed in our modern life between the composer and his audience. But in a great many countries,

especially in Western Europe, and in Canada, Australasia and Japan, radio and television are the principal patrons of the composer of today. Not only do composers find in radio stations a ready outlet for their work, even though the complaint is heard that programmes of contemporary music are too often put on at eleven o'clock at night, but many institutions which promote concert performance of contemporary music can do so only because they receive financial backing from radio stations. It must be stated unequivocally that broadcasting stations, at any rate in the countries we have mentioned, are aware of their duty towards the composer of today and carry it out most loyally, even though listener (or viewer) research figures—that sword of Damocles over the head of the programme director—may show that an infinitesimal audience hears or sees a programme of modern music or music theatre. But such broadcasting stations are, either directly or indirectly, state-operated and therefore unhampered in their artistic policy by the economic considerations of commercial stations in other countries. The box-office, whether in public performance or in commercial broadcasting, will continue to be the composer's public enemy number one until such time as the public is made to forget the unfortunate notion of 'contemporary' as opposed to 'classical' music.

The above remarks apply in the main to concert music. Opera, in many countries of Europe, has a tradition which dates back to the court theatres and is continued in state or municipal opera houses. But the situation for opera is much the same and even when a new work is staged in a major opera house only rarely does it gain a permanent place in the repertoire. It is surprising to find, for example, how few performances a masterpiece such as Berg's *Wozzeck* has had in the opera houses of the world during the forty-one years since it was created.

The situation in this respect is better in Germany than elsewhere; and within Germany, thanks to the

courage and far-sightedness of its Intendant, the composer Rolf Liebermann, the Hamburg State Opera has an especially privileged position.

The comparatively recent phenomenon of competitions is increasingly in favour as a means of discovering musical talent. Some thirty international competitions in seventeen countries are members of the Federation of International Competitions (which, in turn, is affiliated with the International Music Council). The majority of these are competitions for performers. But there is a growing interest in composition prizes, some of which are awarded, or may be awarded, for opera, for example, the Concours du Prince Pierre de Monaco.

Competitions for performers may not always reward the finest interpretative talent; even more than is the case with school exams, some young artists suffer from nerves under the stress of competition conditions. Nevertheless, the list is long of great artists before the public today who, within the past twenty years, have won prizes at one or another of the major international contests. It is not the same with composers, and views are divided as to the chances of discovering a major creative talent through a competition, at any rate through a contest for which composers are invited to enter directly.

It is different in broadcasting. We have seen what an important role radio and television stations play in the patronage of music by commissioning and performing the works of today's composers. The one criticism one might level at the broadcasting authorities is that, too often, they commission works which are intended for performance in public and do not sufficiently incite creative artists to conceive works especially for their medium. The great advantage of radio and television prizes is that it is not left to the individual artists, so often shy or reticent, to enter or not. The stations themselves assume the responsibility of entering a work which they will have commissioned and performed—

of course, not without the assent of the creators—and the juries base their judgements on the finished product as it has reached, or will reach, the public.

The Prix Italia

The Prix Italia was instituted by the Italian Radio in 1948. According to its statutes, this international radio-phonetic prize is awarded each year by an international jury to one or more works created specially for radio. The creators of the Prix Italia, in inducing writers and musicians to conceive and realize works for this medium, 'affirm their faith in the poetic and aesthetic values of expression through radio'. The prize is open to broadcasting organizations which are members or associate-members of the European Broadcasting Union.

Until 1957 the Italia Prize was awarded exclusively to sound radio works, two each year, one a musical work with text, the other a literary or dramatic work with or without music. Each of these two Italia Prizes is worth at present 15,000 Swiss francs (\$3,464). Additional prizes have been awarded since 1952 by Radiodiffusione Italiana for the categories of musical works and dramatic works, to the value of 1,090,000 lire (\$1,758) and by the Italian press, for a documentary or radio reportage, to the value of 1 million lire (\$1,629).

A new Prix Italia, for radio-stereophonic works, was created in 1961. It is awarded to a musical or dramatic work and amounts to 1 million lire (\$1,629).

In 1957, for the first time, the Prix Italia instituted a new section devoted to television. At first only television documentaries were considered but since 1961 the same three categories as for sound radio, namely musical works, dramatic works and documentaries have been included. Each of these television prizes is worth 10,000 Swiss francs (\$2,310). The definition of the first category is that of 'a broadcast based essentially either on an original musical score or on an original choreography'.

The juries for the Prix Italia—there are, of course, separate juries for the different sections—meet each year in a different Italian city.

The Salzburg Opera Prize

The Salzburg Opera Prize, created by the City of Salzburg at the instigation of the IMC and Austrian Radio-Television (ORF), has existed since 1959. It is awarded every three years for an opera written specially for television. Works are submitted by television stations by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) (which to a jury of nine members, six of whom are nominated gives one seat to an affiliate-member from an extra-European country), one each by the IMC, the City of Salzburg and the ORF (which appoints the president). The creation of the Salzburg Opera Prize was a direct result of the first congress which the IMC organized in Salzburg in 1956 on 'Opera in Radio, Television and Film'. There existed at the time no other competition for a television opera. In 1957, the Prix Italia—as we have seen—launched into the field of television. Under the aegis of EBU, an agreement has since been reached between the two institutions whereby the Italia Prize does not receive entries for television opera in the years when the Salzburg event is held.

At Salzburg, ten works from nine countries were considered in 1959; seven works from six countries in 1962; and eleven works from ten countries in 1965. (In each instance, a greater number of works had been entered but were disqualified by the jury because they did not, for one reason or another, conform to the rules.)

The original intention of the promoters of the Salzburg Opera Prize was to encourage composers and authors to write works primarily for television but which lent themselves to adaptation for the stage. This was the corollary to the theory expounded by Herbert Graf that a good stage work could also provide good television.

Such works would not only accord with modern concepts of stage production—the open stage and all it implies—but would also offer the obvious prospect of better material reward for the authors. A television opera is not often given repeat performances and even less a new production by another station. In fact, the rules state that the works are intended for television, and for television alone, but that the Salzburg Festival has a year's option on stage rights. The festival has never availed itself of this opportunity and only one of the twenty-eight works admitted to the three competitions has been staged—Heinrich Sutermeister's *Seraphine*, entered in 1959 by Swiss Television. This work was not a prizewinner, but the same composer's *The Canterville Ghost*, entered by Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen, won the 1965 Prize. Lack of suitability for the opera stage may be the reason why the stage rights on these works have not been taken up, thus reinforcing the theory that real television is incompatible with the stage. But which stage? Are theatre directors perhaps too conservative and are they continuing to think only in terms of the proscenium arch?

All three juries of the Salzburg Opera Prize were presided over by Gerhard Freund, Director of Austrian Television. Expressing the jury's conclusions in 1962, Freund remarked that a number of composers from different countries, writing in totally divergent styles, had clearly sought to exploit the possibilities of visual expression which television can provide. There was a considerable improvement in the artistic and technical quality of entries as compared with the first competition. Bernhard Paumgartner, speaking as President of the Salzburg Festival, regretted that the festival had not always been lucky of late in finding suitable new works to stage. All the better, he thought, if good works could be made available to television. He expressed the hope that this activity might one day lead to the creation in Salzburg of an opera studio which would serve the

purposes both of the festival and of television. The 1962 jury warned against the dangers of distracting the viewer's attention from the musical substance of a work through visual effects, amounting sometimes to mere tricks and 'gimmicks'.

In 1965, the trend was towards a lighter kind of music—which was certainly no evil in itself, since television as a mass medium should entertain. And, we might interpolate, there is a dire lack of good-quality works written in the light form. But, Freund said, television should also educate, and for television opera the strictest rules should apply, since it had the duty of safeguarding the dignity of musical creation. Two extremes had to be avoided: newness for newness' sake and commonplace, background music which served merely to illustrate a visual action.

It is the practice to show excerpts from all the entries for the Salzburg Opera Prize to the congress which immediately follows the meeting of the jury and the proclamation of the prizewinner; the prizewinning work is shown in full. In introducing the 1965 excerpts. Wilfried Scheib, Musical Director of Austrian Television and Secretary of the jury, named three obstacles in the way of commissioning operas for television: (a) viewer research and the relevant statistics; (b) the reluctance of directors of television stations, influenced both by the costs involved and by pressure of majority public opinion, to agree to such projects; (c) the creative artists themselves, librettists and composers, very few of whom were willing to forget the stage and compose for television.

From the report of the jury and discussion by experts of the works shown, there repeatedly emerged certain points which, if taken seriously by the television authorities, might well help to raise the present standard of television opera. There was, for instance, general condemnation of the concessions to public taste in many of the examples. It was felt necessary to define more clearly the boundaries of television opera. The jury had

reluctantly declined to take one of the entries into consideration in the voting, not because of its artistic standard—which was very high—but because it could not, with the best will in the world, be considered as an opera; this was *Le petit musicien* by Georges van Parys, presented by ORTF (French Television), which belonged quite obviously to the category of light entertainment. Again, a work such as Isa Krejci's *Antigona* (Czechoslovakia), which was conceived for the stage and adapted for television, was praised for its originality and striking power. It was considered, however, to be more in the nature of a filmed cantata than a television opera—even in the widest sense of the term.

The Prix Italia, which since its creation has contributed much to the development of new musical forms for sound radio, has not been very much more fortunate than the Salzburg Opera Prize in discovering television talent of any great originality in the field of opera.

On the evidence of results of both events, it is difficult to escape the feeling that many creative artists in the disciplines concerned have not yet chosen to express themselves through the television medium. Perhaps they have not been sufficiently encouraged to work and plan together, to form the teams which creation, even artistic creation, implies in television? What is needed here surely is a present-day Diaghilev, who would with an infallible touch bring together in an artistic team the musician, author, choreographer, director and designer who would create a television masterpiece. And who knows whether this masterpiece may not result from the rediscovery, through the newest technical media, of the older forms of musical and dramatic entertainment—Greek drama and the *commedia dell'arte*?

12 Ballet and dance in film and television

The name of Diaghilev is a symbol for all that Russian ballet came to mean in the Europe of the 1910's and 1920's. Had Diaghilev not existed and given artists like Fokine and Massine their chance, it is doubtful whether ballet would have developed out of the strait-jacket of academism which the Imperial Russian tradition had imposed on it. Working closely as they did with painters like the Russians Bakst, Benoit and Larionov, and the Parisians Picasso, Derain, Matisse and Braque, and with composers like Stravinsky, Ravel, Falla and Milhaud, the innovations of Diaghilev's choreographers have indeed been a major influence on the course of ballet and music in the Western world.

From the 1930's onwards, several other trends developed, all of which have an indirect, sometimes even a direct, bearing on the present styles and standards of ballet in film and television.

1. The Russian influence spread to every part of the world, involving not only Diaghilev's choreographers but also several of the greatest dancers of the Moscow and St. Petersburg companies who had emigrated and were teaching in Paris or London or other centres of the Western world.
2. New schools of ballet developed, first in England (Ninette de Valois, Frederick Ashton) and then in North America (Balanchine), which adapted the Russian tradition to their own particular modes of expression.
3. The emergence of these new styles—all of them based on the Russian classical tradition—gave new life to other great and ancient schools, such as the French—the oldest of all—and the Danish.
4. More recently, these new schools have influenced the dance styles of Central Europe, with the Germans, in Franz Kraemer's words, 'picking up the pieces left over from the expressionism of the 1920's'.
5. The cross-fertilization of classical-trained dancers and choreographers with elements from this 'flat-foot'

expressionist school (represented by the successors of Rudolf von Laban, Isadora Duncan, Mary Wigman, Martha Graham and Kurt Jooss) produced the school of 'modern dance', a designation which is not altogether explicit.

6. An American dance style grew out of the American 'musical'; Jerome Robbins and Gene Kelly are its outstanding exponents.
7. Finally, the development of an entirely different kind of American dance style can be said to have its roots in the expressionistic school referred to under 5 above. Its principal protagonists are Alvin Ailey, Paul Taylor and Merce Cunningham. The last named has gone farthest in experimenting with the random, chance element both in choreography and in the accompaniment (with John Cage).

Many of the problems which have to be faced in any attempt to transfer opera to the screen, either in film or in television, do not apply to ballet. In the first place, the convention of movement which is inherent in ballet favours the camera; indeed, the camera has now reached a stage of technical proficiency where it can do justice not only to a *pas de deux* but also to some quite intricate choreographic patterns, provided they do not involve a large number of dancers. Second, the dancer, unlike most opera singers, has nothing to fear from a close-up to reveal his or her expression. And finally ballet does not need to consider the problem of balance between voices and orchestra.

It might even be said that, in certain aspects of the presentation of ballet, the cinema—with its wide screen and depth of focus—can give greater satisfaction to the balletomane than a stage performance. For in ballet, unlike opera, we often wish we had the faculty of being transported in a flash of a second from the front row of the stalls, where we have been watching a beautifully expressive mime passage, to the best seat in the circle, whence we can far better observe a particularly well

conceived choreographic pattern. This ideal combination of emotional and intellectual satisfaction can be derived from a filmed performance of ballet. Less from television, since the television screen is still far too small to permit observation with any comfort of the movements of large groups of dancers.

Some of the newer technical inventions such as the Canadian monorail camera will help to overcome these growing pains of television. Norman Campbell of CBC says that the purpose of this camera is to restore to the viewer of a flat television screen a sense of spatial relationship. The monorail camera—contained in a bird-cage-like structure hanging from a rail and travelling laterally at one end of the studio—gives a smooth, ever-changing point of view of the choreographic action.

Television has other advantages over the cinema, and these have been well defined by the critic of *The Times*: ‘. . . the adventurous use of camera movement and the readiness to re-think the whole approach of stage ballet, working out dance movements to be seen in the round, from all sides instead of through the stage’s fourth wall, produces results which are exceptionally exciting and show television for once doing something no other medium can’.

Several sessions of our most recent Salzburg Congress were devoted to what Mr. René Maheu, the Director-General of Unesco, referred to in his message as ‘*l’art fugace de la danse*’ (‘the fleeting art of dance’). Arne Arnbom, of Swedish Television, reminded us that we were a first generation in television and that, particularly in ballet, this meant dealing with a fast-changing situation. There was a paradox in the importance of the close-up to express personality measured against the fact that choreography—at least traditional choreography—was destroyed through this same close-up. Arnbom was very much against the relay from the stage, which he considered bad for all concerned. Adaptation had great possibilities, but the creation of ballets

especially for television was the field which was most rewarding and needed most stimulation.

Another distinguished Swedish speaker was Birgit Cullberg, one of the few outstanding choreographers who have actually become familiar with the techniques of television. Mrs. Cullberg developed her theory of the fixed camera. Why not take advantage of the fact that a dancer always knows his position in space and move the dancer rather than the cameras? What many speakers deplored, namely the inability of the camera to show the whole body of the dancer in close-up, Mrs. Cullberg welcomed: let us have close-ups of the dancer's face; let him approach the camera and make an artistic intention out of the movement. She believed that television created new choreographic possibilities. Mrs. Cullberg was constantly discovering solutions to the problems involved; in her latest television ballet, she had the floor constructed on three different levels, giving the dancers three different platforms.

Although Lev Arnshtam is one of the leading Soviet directors of ballet films—he is co-author of the famous film of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*—his preference goes to television relays because of their immediacy of contact with the public. In film, anything was possible and there was no truth in the medium.

The point of view of the composer was given by Milko Kelemen, President of the Zagreb Biennale, who has already had considerable experience in writing both for the stage and for television. Mr. Kelemen held that the composer and the choreographer had to create differently for television. He found a particular challenge in the fact that there were, at every moment, several eyes watching the stage and ready to pounce. Mr. Kelemen had already used the aleatoric principle in some of his recent compositions and was now ripe for similar experimenting with a television ballet. In fact, the choreography of his compatriot Vera Maletic to his *Dessins commentés* paved the way.

Referring more specifically to the question of adaptation, Mr. Kelemen sympathized with the composer who, because he was not a born team-man, suffered from the necessity of shortening or lengthening his scores at short notice to suit the requirements of a television production. It was particularly interesting to hear Mr. Kelemen say that the television ballet based by Vera Maletic on his *Équilibres* gave the work new dimensions of which he had not dreamt in composing it. Incidentally, this work proved to be an excellent illustration of the possibilities of television choreography in making the newest music acceptable to a non-specialist audience.

In this connexion, a particularly interesting experiment was the ballet to Earle Brown's *Available Forms*. It was a pleasure to have the composer introduce the work himself. Like Milko Kelemen, Brown thinks that there is a future in television for the choreographical equivalent of aleatoric music.

The choreographers of this world are divided into two categories—those who like television and those who loathe it. Balanchine belongs to the latter category and, although he believes in the medium of film, it is with the greatest reluctance that he has, very occasionally, been persuaded to work for television. At the congress, we saw two television interpretations of the Balanchine ballet to Hindemith's *Die vier Temperamente*. One was by the New York City Ballet dancing in a CBC studio and the other by the Netherlands National Ballet dancing an adaptation by Vida Brown of the original Balanchine ballet in a WDR production made in Amsterdam. These two versions were diametrically opposed in their television treatment and gave rise to heated controversy. WDR's brilliantly photographed adaptation was flatly rejected by the ballet purists in favour of the technically far less accomplished Canadian production. And it was of absorbing interest to learn from Franz Kraemer, who directed it, that Balanchine had controlled every camera

shot of the latter and opposed any attempt at re-interpreting the choreography in terms of television. It had to be 'shot from the front'.

Maurice Béjart is quite the opposite. He was 'discovered' in the early 1950's in Paris by Ernest Blondeel of Belgian Television (a participant at many of our congresses) and RTB has since presented twenty of his ballets. In a recent interview, Béjart acknowledges his debt to Belgium in general—Brussel's Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie is the home of his Ballet du XX^e Siècle—and to RTB and Blondeel in particular. Béjart has understood the necessity for adapting a stage choreography to the possibilities offered by the camera.

Blondeel points out that in his television adaptation of *La reine verte* (see Chapter 2) Béjart incorporated the stage, the auditorium and even the wings of the theatre in the scenic design.

Béjart goes even further and considers that these technical possibilities of the camera should be integrated in the creative process of television ballet: 'If the dancer stands still and the camera dances around him, approaches, recedes, fixes him, this is all part of dancing.' This conception of the use of the camera in television ballet is no less fascinating for being diametrically opposite to that of Birgit Cullberg. Béjart's ballet masterpiece to date is probably his *Symphonie pour un homme seul*, to *musique concrète* by Pierre Henry and Pierre Schaeffer; the subject and its choreographic treatment lend themselves admirably to transposition in terms of the cinema, and Béjart himself considers that the film version is an authentic re-creation of his work.

The recent congress showed that television was giving a new lease of life to expressionism and symbolism in ballet. An inspiring moment was the showing—in an excellent television version by WDR, Cologne—of an excerpt from Kurt Jooss' classic *The Green Table* in the presence of its author; nothing has happened, alas, in the three-and-a-half decades since its creation to make

Jooss' satirical '*danse macabre*' of politicians any less actual.

Of all forms of art, none is better able than ballet to reinterpret the attitudes of an earlier period. Quite apart from the difficulties of writing down a choreography—they are gradually being overcome and film techniques are helping to preserve outstanding creations—it is rare in ballet that the original choreography, and scenery and costumes, are for ever tied to the musical score, even when the score has been specially written for it. How different, for example, the Béjart version of *Le sacre du printemps* must be from the 1913 original by Nizhinsky, or Chagall's scenery and costumes for *Daphnis and Chloë* from those of Bakst in 1912.

The BBC in 1964 produced a ballet to the music of *Les biches* by Poulenc, a work originally commissioned by Diaghilev from Nizhinsky and Poulenc. The producers, says Margaret Dale, were not familiar with the original choreography, but they knew that it was a work typical of the twenties. It was not their intention to remake the original subject, but rather to demonstrate the attitude of 1964. The ballet, under the title of *The House Party*, presented characters of our time.

Margaret Dale, incidentally, who was with the original Sadler's Wells Company, is the ideal example of a ballet dancer turned television director. She produces and directs almost every one of the major ballet programmes of the BBC. Thanks in large measure to her influence, the BBC gives choreographers the opportunity of studying the application to ballet of the various television techniques, a procedure which is highly recommended to other television stations.

Of outstanding interest at the recent congress was the joint production by Czech and Austrian Television of *Der Befehl* ('The Order'), a ballet symbolizing the doubts of a conscience-stricken Hiroshima pilot. The director, Pavel Hobl, was the man who made the much-discussed *Antigonae* (see Chapter 11). This work uses

only prepared instruments and electronic music; the composer is William Bukovy.

When famous authors themselves take an interest in ballets derived from their works the result can be fascinating. The Danish dancer and choreographer, Flemming Flindt, has had considerable success with his first television ballet based on Ionesco's *La leçon*; it has since been adapted for the stage, thus reversing the more usual process of television's adapting stage works. And now Flindt has made a second Ionesco ballet: *The Young Man Marries*, based on *Asmodée*.

The first of a series of films, produced by Denise Tual under the title of *Les chemins de la création*, is devoted to the art of Roland Petit. An original presentation alternates black and white sequences in which the distinguished choreographer speaks of his work, and colour sequences of excerpts from some of his ballets. Of outstanding interest is a section of the film showing Roland Petit in the act of creating the choreography for his ballet based on Lautréamont's *Les chants de Maldoror* to music by Maurice Jarre.

Traditional dance

A few words on the question of traditional dance in film and television. There are two ways of performing traditional dances today. One is to dance them in their natural setting and the other within the context of a spectacle. There is, of course, a certain amount of overlapping between these two categories. The former, like many local wines of fragrant bouquet, travels badly; but it is authentic. The latter travels well and widely, usually under governmental auspices or through commercial channels; it has usually become highly stylized and drilled into something like a choreography, and the degree of its hybridization depends on the taste and scholarship of the leader.

When we say that a folk dance 'travels badly', we

mean that it looks thoroughly out of place in a concert hall or theatre; and, by the same token, in television studio. It is not easy to capture and reproduce on the screen the unsophisticated atmosphere of authentic folk song and dance being performed in its natural setting. Especially since, it must be admitted, a certain degree of professionalism not to say sophistication has imbued some of the hitherto purest kinds of folk-dance. Recently the writer happened to attend a competitive festival held in the town hall of a fairly remote region of the Balkans. It was noticeable that the groups which evoked the greatest enthusiasm on the part of the vociferous audience were precisely those who had most effectively 'staged' their performance. This attitude is the direct result of the penetration of radio, the gramophone, film and television into the lives of those in even the most remote rural areas. Radio and television can help, and in some cases are helping, through competitions, to give back to the countryside in regions where authentic traditions are still alive authenticity in the performance of folk song and dance.

Good documents of authentic folk music from any part of the world are difficult to obtain. And while the entertainment value for television of the semi-professional performer may be high, one regrets the damage he may be doing to the preservation of traditions in his country.

We would suggest that, possibly under the auspices of Unesco, some measures be taken to co-ordinate the different disciplines so as to ensure that anthropological, archaeological or scientific missions which set out to remote regions where traditional music is known to be still available be equipped with first-rate sound and visual recording material and, if possible, accompanied by a musician who knows what to record. This would make available to television stations a far greater stock of well-presented authentic material. The other kind needs no encouragement; it circulates with an ease that is all too great.

13 Tribal ceremony—ritual or spectacle?

To many peoples Western 'progress' has brought the technology which helps to develop their economy, but the West must be careful that these peoples do not equate progress with the assimilation of an alien culture; that they do not lose pride in their own music and dance; that they are not submitted to the lowest common denominator of Western commercialized entertainment. Here the technical media have a vital role to play.

Experience has shown that the serious interest of Western musicians, and audiences, in the authentic expression of native music, as opposed to the West's travelogue or worse, helps to preserve its integrity in the countries and regions concerned. Conversely, many peoples whose cultures only yesterday could be considered completely traditional are today well on the way to acquiring experience of the more sophisticated musical and dramatic forms. Here again, we must take care that in seeking an art form in which to express themselves, in their own way, in their language of today, they adapt from Western techniques only what is needed.

At the recent Salzburg Congress, we were extremely glad to welcome Akin Euba, Director of Music of Nigerian Television, as a spokesman for Africa. The congress was greatly honoured when it was informed that *Abiku*, a moving television dance-drama on the subject of childbirth, had been produced especially for the occasion. Aesthetically, this was a new art which sought to codify the dance and music of an African people and present it in a form which lent itself to transmission, through television, both at home and abroad. We felt that we were witnessing the birth of something of extreme importance in the artistic expression of the continent of Africa—and that television and film had a vital role to play here.

At the request of Unesco, Francesco Pellizzi had prepared for the congress a remarkably penetrating paper on the musical and mimed ritual of traditional cultures and the difficulties encountered in recording and trans-

mitting it through radio and television. Any such action implies the treatment of this ritual as a 'spectacle' rather than as a sacred rite. But, says Pellizzi, the public of an Occidental spectacle is not at all comparable with that of an indigenous ritual where there is complete 'mystical identification' on the part of the public; they do in fact 'participate' in the rite.

We wonder, too, what will be the result of televising indigenous ritual in these countries themselves. Will it thereby lose its magic content? Can the people maintain their spirit of identification with a ceremony which they are, so to speak, witnessing at one remove? Will the rite, for them, be degraded to the level of a spectacle? It is significant, as Mr. Pellizzi points out, that a record published by Gilbert Rouget to accompany a study of this subject carries an injunction against broadcasting it in Dahomey because of the sacred character of the music.

Mr. Pellizzi discerned a certain defeatism in a report by André Martin which he quoted: 'What purpose will talking films have served if they have done nothing to save traditional songs and dances and also the precious last examples of rural traditions?' Does Mr. Martin merely want to save by recording? We are glad that Mr. Pellizzi realized that what is of sacred significance to the peoples concerned can not be taken out of context and made into a spectacle, either live or on the screen, without betraying its meaning.

But Mr. Pellizzi is by no means a purist in his desire to preserve the ritual of traditional cultures. He leaves us with a thought expressed by Pierre Schaeffer: 'Traditional forms of music are not mummies to be wrapped up in the respect of experts, but seeds to be sown while they are still alive—like wheat in Egyptian tombs.'

14 Pantomime

The art of mime would seem at first sight to be ideally suited to film and, even more, to television. One man, relatively little movement, no orchestra—surely this should present few problems to the television director? Why matters are not as simple as they seem was explained by some of the leading artists and experts of the day at the 1965 Salzburg Congress, the first in our series to consider the subject of pantomime.

Mime is of twofold interest to us for our study of music theatre in film and television. First, as a valid partner in some of the mixed forms which we would like to see created. Secondly, as an artistic technique, in both opera and ballet, which assumes added importance when the human face is so closely scrutinized on the screen.

The Czechoslovak mime, Ladislav Fialka, reminds us that pantomime was one of the elements which helped to create the cinema, not only because the great actors of silent films, Chaplin and Buster Keaton, were mimes, but also because the whole school of acting at the beginning of the cinema derived from miming.

The problems of incorporating pantomime into film differ considerably from those encountered with ballet which, through its dynamics, soon found its level in these media. For pantomime, however, the lack of contact with a living public and the rather different technique of expression in television are a challenge. In both film and television, much of the personality of the mime is lost in a documentary treatment. Mime should seek to become a special form of television and of film in which the whole range of new technical possibilities compensate for the lack of direct contact with the public.

The modern mime depends for his effect on his position in space, his relation to space. It is therefore essential that the camera follow his continually changing movements and create the space which he needs to convey his message. Experiments with Jiri Trnka in marionette films have proved helpful in devising new lighting and

camera movements for application to a living mime. Fialka's most recent work, in co-operation with the director Vladimir Sis, is an attempt to express the art of mime according to the conventions of film. He hopes thus to create a new, independent art form, a television pantomime, in the same way that others are striving to create a television opera and a television ballet.

Yves Lorelle, from France, situates the art of the mime in relation to both the cinema and television. He recalls that television has been referred to as '*le cinéma de la personne*'—a medium in which everyone seeks his own reflection. The study of facial mimicry will surely one day become essential to television. Whereas Fialka is particularly concerned with bodily movements, it is the study of facial expression—'*le visage*'—which interests Lorelle. What in the theatre is hardly more than a mobile spot of light becomes in television '*le théâtre du visage*'. The actor, or the mime, must therefore suggest rather than express; an over-accentuated expression becomes a grimace, just as an actor's voice pitched too high appears to scream. Both film and television have already had a considerable effect on the art of mime, and here Lorelle joins Fialka in stressing the importance of finding new traditions, on the screen of movement in relation to space.

Lorelle establishes a parallel with Maurice Béjart when he considers that the camera, in displacing itself, is able to 'speak' in place of the mime—that the camera's movements can replace those of the actor. This implies, for the mime, an economy of means and expression which are peculiar to film and television.

A new temporal as opposed to spatial relation for the mime is created by the process of film or television montage, thinks Lorelle. Montage breaks the continuity of an action and the mime, as a result, is no longer able to prepare his entrance; he can be revealed to the public already in full action; a film selection which discards non-essential material might catch the mime at the climax

of a sequence.¹ The performance of the mime may henceforth be shown not as a whole but recomposed in segments lifted from the complete performance. This then becomes the equivalent of a theatrical montage. A new type of man of the theatre, a complete craftsman who will be a mime-director-cutter, must be responsible for pantomime in film and television.

For Samy Molcho, the mime from Israel, the body represents the only means of expression of the mime on the stage. In television, however, he too considers that there exists a second instrument of expression, the camera. Molcho has coined the word 'mimovision' to describe the new, independent art from which derives from the stage pantomime but applies to television; it uses the two means of expression: the human body and the camera.

Another distinguished mime, the German Rolf Scharre, draws attention to the danger of the camera's following only part of the body—a point also made in relation to ballet. Pantomime, at least traditionally, is played to the front—'*en face*'—even when the mime appears in profile.

1. cf. Albertazzi, Chapter 7.

15 The future

At the end of this survey of modern and contemporary trends one is tempted to ask whether the two expressions are necessarily synonymous. And, with Wolf-Eberhard von Lewinski, whether the true *avant-garde* is to be found among those 'protesters' who have gone farthest in their addiction to the 'absurd', or among those composers who are seeking to start by going back not to Webern but to Berg or even to Wagner. Can expressionism, asks Lewinski, still reveal an untapped vein? Heinz Joachim seems to reply, indirectly, by pointing to the enrichment which acquaintance with Schönberg and Webern has brought to the new, post-Second-World-War generation, 'an enrichment for their tonal language which equips them to probe hitherto hidden, secret depths of the unconscious and to express the inexpressible'.

We began by studying the influence of the technical media in three different aspects of music theatre: in a work written for the stage, in the transmission through radio, television and film of a work written for the stage; and in a work created specially for these media. Let us sum up from another dimension and consider the impact of these media on the chain of communication which leads from the creative artist via the performer to the public.

Tape has come to be considered as one instrument of the palette which the composer usually has at his disposal. It is now common practice for a piece of 'abstract' music to include a part for tape, 'played' either alone or together with traditional instruments. And one not infrequently experiences the spectacle of a singer singing to the accompaniment of his or her own recorded voice.

We have seen that tape can be used to convey both music made by traditional instruments and sounds produced electronically without the intermediary of a human performer or 'interpreter'.

It is common practice for electronic music and *musique concrète* to be used as background music in films, radio and television and, in fact, in the straight theatre too.

All the more reason, therefore, to exploit its dramatic possibilities in music theatre—whether for the media or for the stage.

Composers today are increasingly seeking new relations between the sound-source and the public. Yannis Xenakis, composer and architect, has disposed his orchestra star-wise in the middle of a hall; and he has built sound and visual elements into pavilions at the Brussels and Montreal exhibitions. Others are reviving the antiphonal conception as it existed at the time of Gabrieli and Monteverdi with instrumental or choral blocks placed in different parts of a church or hall. The considerable improvement in the sound quality of loudspeakers has also permitted composers to experiment with an electronic equivalent of this effect: the placing of loudspeakers all round a hall so that the listeners are bombarded with sound coming from many different quarters. This process, too, is having its influence on some of the latest experiments in music theatre.

We have seen how at least one important trend is leading to a hybrid form of entertainment on the borderline between concert and stage. Some recent works of such *avant-garde* composers as Cage, Berio, Bussotti, Kagel, Ligeti and Stockhausen make of the performance of 'abstract' music—with or without words—a spectacle which, without any stretch of the imagination, can qualify as music theatre. Among their characteristic features are the use of impressionistic or abstract texts or sometimes mere phonetics, and of small groups of instruments with a large proportion of percussion and various types of electronic instruments. In fact, tape is becoming to the 'serious' composer what the electric guitar is to the 'pop' artist.

It is too soon to say whether aleatory music—music which includes a random element determined by chance—is a passing fad or whether it represents the beginning of a new trend in contemporary music. It is certainly another aspect of the kind of entertainment which, starting from

the pure concert form, often verges on abstract music theatre. Here again an analogy exists with jazz, which also has its improvisatory aspect. Probably the most extreme aleatory form of music theatre is represented by *Votre Faust* the 'variable play in the form of an opera', by Henri Pousseur and Michel Butor. The performance was planned to take place at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels in the course of 1967. The authors describe the work as a fantasy, and the public is invited at certain critical points to determine which of several courses the action shall take.

The theatre of the absurd has its counterpart in music theatre and it is only a step from here to the total theatre of a Béjart. Béjart takes choreography as his starting point; others, such as Peter Weiss in his *Marat-Sade* or Peter Brook with *US*, start from the straight theatre.

Music theatre is undergoing similar changes in its visual aspects. Few works of the *avant-garde* use the proscenium arch; they seek, rather, to establish a more direct contact with the public through use of an open stage.

Electronics also play a major role in new conceptions of staging and scene-design. The revolution in the production of Wagner's operas introduced by the composer's grandson, Wieland Wagner, in post-war Bayreuth was based entirely on lighting effects. An almost bare stage, made alive through the most brilliantly inventive lighting which the theatre has ever known are what characterizes the new Bayreuth. Wieland Wagner died in 1967 but his influence on music theatre has already extended far beyond the confines of Bayreuth and the music of Richard Wagner.

Modern inventions and techniques are giving creative artists—composers, authors, choreographers, designers—new means of expression. New instruments will have to be created with which to transmit the new art forms which ensue—new electronic instruments and also new ways of using traditional instruments. And the latter

include all the instruments which have ever existed (it is interesting to see, for instance, how often the harpsichord is incorporated into a modern score) and of course the human voice and the human body. Not the least fascinating aspect of contemporary music theatre is the use of the human voice in entirely new ranges of technique and expression—from a *bel canto* trill to a phonetic whisper. Both here, and in subject matter, there are many examples of Occidental music theatre taking its inspiration from Oriental techniques.

We dare not forget that the modern public demands modern means of expression and that this public, through the technical media, now far outnumbers the public which used to visit the traditional opera house and, fortunately still does so. Never has there been such a great public, albeit largely an invisible one, for music theatre. Therefore we feel, creative artists must be given a chance to become better acquainted with the possibilities offered by the modern techniques and interpretative artists must be helped to learn how to adapt themselves to the new requirements. In order to accomplish this purpose, the writer has taken the initiative of inducing the International Music Council and several other organizations connected with Unesco—the Internationales Musikzentrum Wien, the International Theatre Institute, the International Society for Music Education, and the International Film and Television Council—to create an International Audio-Visual Institute for Music, Dance and Theatre (IMDT). We hope that the IMDT will serve the purpose of helping music theatre today to find the public it needs in order to exist.

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