

Connecting the codes: co-creating a narrative in contemporary multimedial music theatre

Abstract for topic 3: Narrativity of music in intermedial works: (lecture) performance

Music theatre is a genre that constantly challenges itself by positioning continuous innovation at its core practice. As a result, music theatre is a perpetual building site in terms of form, content and method, but precisely due to this constant remodelling and reinventing, it is not easy to find a general, productive *modus operandi* that can be extrapolated from one project to the next.

One of the most difficult tasks of music theatre makers and performers, is the alignment of the individual processes into a collective, mutually inspiring and beneficial working process in order to generate one cohesive narrative. While existing operas have the advantage (and, at the same time, limitation) that the main material is already existent, in music theatre this is a continuous process of and between librettist, dramaturge, composer, director, performer, visual artist... When the individual processes are not aligned with each other, this holds the risk for substantive incompatibilities and discrepancies, resulting from a set of non-compliant dramaturgical codes.

In the research projects 'Rethinking the Gesamtkunstwerk' and 'Connecting the dots', the researchers' goal is to design a model for interdisciplinary / multimedial creation and performance, which respectfully integrates the individual creative processes into a collaborative *modus operandi*, with a special emphasis on the participatively created narrative. The premise of cooperation in a sequentially designed process, with each agent focusing on its own task and responsibility, is replaced by an iterative process of creation, reflection, feedback and experimentation. The collective cohesion within both 'process' and 'product' is strengthened by transcending the constraints of discipline-specific responsibilities, but at the same time the monodisciplinary narrative is also reinforced through mutual inspiration and stepping out of the creative and/or performative comfort zone.

'Holle Haven Revisited', a multimedial performance in sound and vision, is an extended experimental mono-drama: the remaking of the 1921 collection 'Bezette Stad' ('Occupied City') by Dadaist poet Paul van Ostaijen into 'Besmette Stad' ('Infected City'). The creative process of this radically edited canonic piece revolved around co-creation and co-performance by all agents - composer, writer, singer, pianist and video artist -, resulting in three performance formats: an installation, a multimedial performance and a movie.

Researching artists:

Lies Colman, Royal Conservatoire Antwerp (B)

Lies Colman is an internationally performing pianist, soloist, chamber musician, artistic creator and pedagogue. She is artistic director at the Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp, where she coordinates the Master in Music and Education, chairs the theoretical and contextual departments in the Classical Music programme and teaches the courses Artist in Society and the interdisciplinary creative course 'Parnassus'. Her artistic specialty is the romantic to the contemporary era, with a special interest in opera and music theatre, aside from performing and recording more traditional chamber music. With a Master's degree in Music, in Cultural Sciences and in Strategic Management and Leadership, she has a broad view on the arts, society and education, and aims to connect those both on the stage, in projects and in the classroom. Her main research area is that of collaborative artistic practices: working from individual expertise in an (interdisciplinary) creative environment. (www.Liescolman.com)

Gaea Schoeters, RITCS Brussels (B)

Gaea Schoeters writes novels, opera-librettos, screenplays and theatre texts. With composer Annelies Van Parys she made the operas *Private View* (winner FEDORA-prize 2015) and *Usher* (Staatsoper Berlijn/Folkoperan Stockholm, nominated for International Opera Awards 2019). For theatre, she wrote the political satires *Heimat* and *Merci* and translated *Tempest's Hold Your Own* for Het Toneelhuis (premiere 2020). Her work combines experiment with form and social commitment. She loves intertextuality and likes to play with old texts in new contexts, thus generating new meanings. She teaches literary writing at the RITCS and is working on a joint research project with Van Parys on interdisciplinary coherence in music theatre and opera, which will result in a piece for Flanders Symphony Orchestra. She has published several novels and collections of short stories, and writes columns and essays about art, literature, music, gender (in)equality and the linguistics of nationalist politics.

Annelies Van Parys, Royal Conservatoire Brussels (B)

Annelies Van Parys is one of Belgium's leading composers. She writes solo and chamber music as well as big orchestral works, exhibiting a special talent for vocal music and music theatre. Since 2007, as a resident composer at Muziektheater Transparant, she composed music for memorable performances such as *RUHE*, *An Oresteia* and *Private View*, her first coöperation with Schoeters which received four (inter)national awards, amongst which the prestigious Fedora Prize. Also with Schoeters, she worked on *USHER*, which premiered at Staatsoper Berlin (2018) and subsequently played in Folkoperan Stockholm (2019). In 2018 she wrote *A War Requiem* for the Belgian National Orchestra and Collegium Vocale Ghent, with soloists Sophie Karthäuser and Thomas Bauer. Van Parys' artistic research stays in touch with the canonic works of past and present composers. Currently she is writing an orchestra piece for the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra, to be premiered in 2021 under the baton of Pintscher. (www.anneliesvanparys.be)

Els Mondelaers, Royal Conservatoire Antwerp (B)

Belgian mezzo Els Mondelaers received a master degree in Classical Singing with great distinction at the Ghent Conservatory, where she has specialized as a soloist in Contemporary Music as well. Preliminary she obtained her master's in Music Theory and Music Pedagogy at the Lemmens Institute in Leuven. Gradually, she expanded her career as a specialist interpreter of classical contemporary music to that of an all-round performer. New challenges such as music and / or physical improvisation, music creation, acting and moving presented themselves. The world of music theatre, contemporary dance and performance in addition to the contemporary concert venues became her second habitat.

She is appreciated for her personal involvement in projects and her enthusiasm to be challenged in an artistic way. As a guest professor, she was invited by the Royal Conservatorium of Antwerp (BE) and the Academy of Music and Performing Arts Fontys Tilburg (NL). (www.elsmondelaers.com)

Sebastien Van Mallegheem

Sébastien Van Mallegheem graduated from the École supérieure des Arts "Le 75", and this marked the beginning of the development of his very own photographic universe. With bitter compassion, he observes the chaos of mental universes, the fragility of inner worlds, the transience of the human being. His images have won many prizes, and have been published and exhibited worldwide (in Time, Le Monde Magazine, Le Nouvel Observateur, De Standaard, etc.). Sébastien became a photographer out of pure passion, to bear witness to the world around him and to better understand contemporary history.