

SYNOPSIS

DOES OPERA HAVE A FUTURE?

Opera has been expanding into the world during the last hundred years. Quantitatively a success. At the same time the art form is threatened as well from outside factors as from its inside artistic decline.

From the outside: an immense competition for Opera has grown in the form of cinema, TV, electronic media, computer games, artificial intelligence, etc., which all did not yet exist a hundred years ago. Globalisation and the use of the original language, which most audiences do not understand, have contributed to make opera part of a superficial event culture.

From the inside: there are not enough new works which audiences at large understand and accept permanently as part of a standard repertory. A living art form needs such new works for its further development. The popular form of music theatre, though, has split off into the Musical outside the opera houses. Unfortunately Opera has in the roughly 400 years of its existence – contrary to all other dramatic arts - not developed a craft of music-acting, which one would have to master in order to perform this highly complex art. Such a craft exists only for singing, but singing alone is not acting.

These adverse developments have made Opera into a toy for everybody who wants to lay hands on it without any rules or conditions. That raises the question, how long the great majority of non-users of Opera are still willing to grant the necessary millions of subsidies for the tiny minority of Opera-users.

There are many possibilities to improve this dangerous situation. Some are pointed out which could be adopted for a beginning without much difficulty. Others would have to follow.

Nearly all great opera composers have suffered from the imperfections of the institution of Opera as opposed to their works of Opera, and some of their laments are quoted. But in spite of all this, Opera remains fascinating and rewarding because it can do something which all the other arts cannot: through Music it can offer a multidimensional image of the world. This unique property seems to be the best hope for its future.