

Abstract:

The encounter between opera and cinema dates back to the birth of the motion picture at the dawn of the twentieth century. Yet only recently have the various aspects of the complex and multi-layered relationship between the two media aroused interest among an array of scholars from different disciplines. This involves the integration of film in opera staging, the transformation of operas into films (the so-called opera films) or the appearance of operatic characters or themes in feature-length cinema. The focus of this paper is the exploration of an object that does not fully belong to any of the above-mentioned categories. We are speaking of Michael Sturminger's Casanova Variations (2014), a movie that portrays the encounter of Elisa von der Recke (Veronika Ferres) with the now seventy-three years old Venetian seducer (John Malkovich), whose memories are brought back to life as excerpts from the Mozart-Da Ponte operas. The movie thus brings together opera, theatre, and cinema in ways that are far from being conventional. To tackle the complexity and ambivalence of this object, we will focus on the series: Malkovich-Mozart-Casanova. It contains what seems to be the key to analysing this hybrid object in relation to recent and on-going debates about the relationship between opera and cinema. In sum, our hypothesis is that in Casanova Variations the relationship between opera (emblemized by Mozart) and cinema (embodied by Malkovich) is somehow mediated by the principle of seduction (symbolized by Casanova). The implications of such a hypothesis for both cinema and opera are what this paper aims to discuss.

Keywords: Opera, Cinema, Mozart, Casanova, Malkovich