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Breath, Gravity, Giants, and Death: Puppet-Musical Encounters from Die Zauberflöte to Today

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Breath, Gravity, Giants, and Death:
Puppet-Musical Encounters from *Die Zauberflöte* to Today

A dissertation presented

by

Hayley Alexandra Fenn

to

The Department of Music

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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in the subject of

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Breath, Gravity, Giants, and Death:
Puppet-Musical Encounters from *Die Zauberflöte* to Today

Abstract

Puppets are silent. But they are never apart from sound. In fact, they are immersed in it, entwined with it, inextricable from it. Prevailing definitions of the puppet allow its sounds to go unheard, rendering puppetry a vehicle of primarily visual expression. In this dissertation, by contrast, I redefine puppets musically. For not only does puppet performance generate considerable accidental sound, but intentional sound—voice, sound effects, and music—is crucial to the perception of the puppet as such. While music is the primordial sound that brings the puppet to life, moreover, sensibilities of music-making structure the phenomenology of puppetry. This dissertation argues that puppets are made legible through intentional sound, and that by careful analysis of their entwinement with music—a process that necessarily encompasses both archival and ethnographic methodologies—something we might call the puppet's "inherent musicality" is revealed.

Focusing especially on the puppetry of German-speaking lands, I propose Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (1791) as an originary work in a shared history of puppetry and music. Accordingly, the first half of this dissertation examines the ways in which *Die Zauberflöte* conjures the specter of the puppet in three different settings: in musicological and philosophical discourse (Chapter One), in opera houses (Chapter Two), and in puppet theaters (Chapter Three). Together these chapters not only present the various ways in which puppets proliferate in and around Mozart's last opera, but also lay the critical groundwork for analysing puppet-musical encounters. I introduce the concept of "the performance network" as both a model and methodology for taking account of the various performers, performing objects, performance histories and practices, and performance styles involved in puppet performance—including, most importantly, the puppets themselves and any

musical provision. Negotiating the network produces characteristic aesthetics, which imbue a puppet with its own specific sensibility and a performance with a particular effect: a sense of performative freedom and aesthetic possibility that I describe using the phrase "the poetics of synchronization."

The second half of the dissertation consists of two case studies. In Chapter Four, the performance network(s) of *Marionettentheater*, or marionette opera, are analyzed through the lenses of puppetry's most significant musical parameters: voice, movement, scale (i.e. miniaturization and gigantification), and silence. Chapter Five scrutinizes a single dyad within the broader performance network of the puppetry of the German polymath Richard Teschner (1879–1948): namely the relationship between his unique rod-and-string puppets, on the one hand, and the primary source of music for his plays, the Polyphon, a commercially manufactured quasi-gramophone, on the other. These performing objects embody various material and aesthetic oppositions, and as a pair, they make manifest the mutually constitutive nature of puppetry and music.

In the Epilogue, I reflect on an artistic medium that reverberates throughout this dissertation: cinema. Puppets have long been an essential component of the cinematic toolkit, not least because through the mediating camera lens they can perform feats far beyond the capabilities of human actors. In the stop-motion silhouette animations of Lotte Reiniger (1899–1981), puppets are not only the actors, but the scenery too, navigating a one-of-a-kind performance network that makes concrete in compelling ways the phenomenon of audio-visual synchronization.

Music, in my analysis, emerges as the answer to the question that has long dominated the scholarly literature: what makes a puppet? And my dissertation addresses a related question: why that matters. By revealing the "inherent musicality" of the puppet, I read puppetry back onto music and consider the puppet as an analytic lens for musical performance, musical technologies, and music history. Ultimately, by attending to the sonic capacities, expressions, and affordances of puppetry, I engage the age-old questions of music's ineffability and its capacity to represent.

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NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

INTRODUCTION

Puppetry, Music, History, Me

Scholars of music have become enthralled by matter. Long gone are love letters to music's evanescence. Now we want music in its material guises, as musicking bodies, musical instruments, and all sorts of objects of musical experience, inscription, and revelation, from automata to music boxes, Chladni plates to wax cylinders, earbuds to opera glasses. The precise ways in which a scholar might explore the particular spell of their material enchantment beyond the realm of rhetorical romance with a handful of key words, however, are still being forged. They involve deep engagement with perspectives and methodologies outside one's own field, intense scrutiny of one's own capacities and experience, and a clear concept of what it means to address questions of materiality. What does it look like, for instance, to start from first principles—literally, to make the object under discussion from scratch, from raw materials and with no prior experience?

Let us begin with an attempt to answer this question and to realize an investment in materiality materially: the creation of a marionette. A marionette is a wooden string puppet, a body of matter, an object certainly—and even, for the performer at least, a kind of instrument that is musical in all sorts of ways, which are built into its very fabric. As my marionette takes shape in the pages to follow, we shall zoom out from the creation of singular performing object to the puppet theater shows I have experienced as a spectator and observed from the bridge backstage. These subjective reflections are interwoven with literary evocations of puppetry and scholarly commentaries on puppets and their kin, with the intention of modeling from the outset the analytic webs puppet performance both constructs and demands.

Historical musicologists reading this may be surprised by my radical embrace of both materiality and subjective experience. Rest assured that this dissertation is anchored in a staple of the

Western canon. Indeed, the expansive horizons of this introduction, with reflections wide-ranging, spanning puppet history and traditions, have a clear historical and geo-political focus in the form of an operatic favorite: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. In musicology, this opera has elicited various interpretations that evoke puppets or puppet-related phenomena, and in performance, it frequently attracts staging and costume choices that reflect the same. Moreover, *Zauberflöte* is one of the operas most frequently performed by puppets in puppet theaters, especially in German-speaking lands, and with puppets occupying the main roles, the hermeneutic maneuvers of musicologists are cast in a dramatically new light. Spiraling outwards from Mozart's opera, this dissertation investigates German-speaking puppetry more broadly, especially the theater of string puppets known as *Marionettentheater*. Insights gleaned from puppet shows in the United States and the United Kingdom will enrich these analyses, embodying the truism that it is difficult to contain the puppet—any puppet—to a particular place and time. It is precisely this capacity to refract and resonate across all kinds of borders, both physical and conceptual, that makes the puppet so rich an object for contemplation.

My Marionette

I made a marionette. She's about a foot tall, coming just about up to my knee. She's made of hardwoods, jelutong and limewood, the "perfect balance between strength and weight," so my teacher said.[1] And intermingled with the wood, there's leather, rope, cord and thread, cocktail and kebab sticks, panel pins, screw eyes, and several dabs of glue and filler (more than I would like, truth be told). She's sitting up there right now, on top of the bookcase: slouching a little, with one knee

[1] John Roberts, class instruction, "Carving a Marionette" course at the Little Angel Puppet Theater, London, UK, January 28, 2019.

bent, the other leg lying flat, strangely flat. Her head is cocked to one side. Is she listening? Is she thinking? Or is she helpless? Does her head loll, her chin hovering just above her chest, because it can't do anything else? It's not exactly hanging—in fact, there's a stiffness in this pose, her head a lollipop atop a simple pole—but it has no uplift, no latent striving to raise her stare. Strings would help, but she doesn't have any yet. As a result, she can't really do anything. Although that seems wrong: surely her lack of strings allows her to do whatever she wants? She's got no strings "to hold [her] down," as Pinocchio crows in Disney's 1940 animated classic, "to make [her] fret or make [her] frown."[2] She's not Pinocchio though. She isn't anyone yet. She doesn't have a name. She's she; it's her. She is bare and grainy, chiseled and curvy. She is eager and mournful, ready and waiting. What suggests she's a "she" is her female-sexed body, her rounded, almost bulbous hips and her voluptuous yet rock-steady, quiver-free breasts. But what makes her *her* is really me, what *I* project into and onto the wooden body I see before me.

I pick her up and once again, she surprises me. This happens every time. I guess I'm not used to her yet. She is heavier than she looks, heavier than I expect her to be. Her torso is hollow, but her limbs are sturdy tree trunks scaled right down. She has a certain density or solidity, which seems to me wholly at odds with her "just made" or "not yet finished" appearance. Even though I have watched her emerge, in my hands, out of roughly shorn hunks of wood, it is as though she has existed forever. Her heft is similarly incompatible with the roles I imagine for her. She seems too heavy to be light or funny. I reconsider: her weight makes her appear wise. It's not that she is too heavy for her art; it is that her art is not what I thought it to be. Her weight seems to ground her: it inserts her into the long history of the puppet as an analog for the complexities of the human

[2] Leigh Harline (music) and Ned Washington (lyrics), "I've got no strings," *Pinocchio* (dir. Ben Sharpsteen and Hamilton Luske, 1940).

condition. Indeed, the art of puppetry is one of the oldest there is, with the earliest references to puppets dating back to Ancient Greece.[3] But the very essence of the art form involves the perpetual (re)creation of life: the puppet must be brought forth anew, each and every time, be it for ritual or entertainment, a community's oldest stories or those made up on the spot. My marionette is ancient in her ligneous body and her cast as a performing object. And she is new in these ways as well. Puppets are time-travelers, a characteristic captured by puppet scholar Kenneth Gross when he identifies their "earliness":

> The puppet is both old and young, preserving into later time something that, in historical and developmental terms, is decidedly 'early.' What puppets hold onto is this earliness; they hold within themselves relics of these stranger uses, the sacral and the playful together, surviving into the present in disguise, but speaking out to our embarrassment and our fright.[4]

I am reminded of Riddley Walker, the eponymous hero in Russell Hoban's post-apocalyptic England. Early in the novel, Riddley unearths from the muddy wasteland a blackened Punch.[5] He's not supposed to keep anything he recovers during the scavenges with his team, but he can't resist this haughty figure. Riddley risks his life for his Punch. In Riddley's world, an entirely oral one, where a version of English has been reconstructed through phonemes, historical connections and lateral thinking, puppet shows are the delivery system for religious and political instruction. They masquerade as entertainment, but they are decreeing the laws of a hostile land. They are friend and foe.

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[3] For one of numerous overviews of ancient references to puppetry, see John Mohr Minniear, *Marionette Opera: Its History and Literature.* North Texas State University, PhD dissertation (1971), 1-19. See also Charles Magnin, *Histoire des marionnettes en Europe, depuis l'Antiquité jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1852; 2nd ed., 1862; facsimile reproduction of 2nd ed.: Genève: Slatkine, 1981; Bologna: Arnaldo Forni, 1983); Eileen Blumenthal, *Puppetry A World History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc. Publishers, 2005).

[4] Kenneth Gross, *Puppet: An Essay on Uncanny Life* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 50.

[5] See Russell Hoban, *Riddley Walker* (Bloomsbury: London, 1980, 2012).

For some, my puppet is scary. They flinch when I move her, reposition her, bring her too close to them. Mostly my friends, though, are intrigued—"how did I make her?" they ask—and they usually laugh when I try to bring her to life. She's not stiff. Her limbs are loose, moving smoothly through their range of motion. They don't spasm or flail. She is elegant. She is far from the low-tech, robot-like being I'd imagined; she might almost be impulsive, autonomous, playful. Indeed, puppets can be frivolous things. Playthings. Toy things. Innocent things. In conventional theaters and on the big screen, puppets play the parts of magical or alien creatures. They do things that actors can't do, like fly or collapse, quite literally, in a heap. I'm not convinced that my puppet will ever fly. Or even dance. How could she—as heavy as she is, as serious as she is—ever move with such lightness and determination, somewhere between spontaneity and total control by another? How could a puppeteer bring her to life on a travelling stage without her plummeting to earth? Without her governing her own body, her own movements?

In a bewildering, convoluted essay of 1810 that encapsulates the German Romantic infatuation with the puppet, Heinrich von Kleist highlights the distinction between the marionette and the ballet dancer. One of the participants in Kleist's dialogue, the principal dancer at the opera house describes the way that "marionettes only *glance* the ground, like elves, the momentary halt lends the limbs a new impetus."[6] I wonder whether this will be the fate of my puppet. According to the same witness, dancers, by contrast, use the ground "to *rest* on, to recover from the exertion of the dance."[7] Without her strings, my puppet slumps; she can't help but rest upon the ground. She can't be made to do anything. She isn't really a puppet at all. Without her strings, and without an operator, she is little more than an inanimate object—a kind of eccentric doll. Even the most

[6] Heinrich von Kleist, "The Puppet Theater," in *Heinrich von Kleist Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. David Constantine (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Corporation Inc., 1997), 414.

[7] Ibid., 414.

intricate objects, anthropomorphic or otherwise, only become puppets in certain situations, when they are caught in the midst of an animator and an audience; when they are in motion, no matter how small, subtle, grotesque or playful; when they are engaged by the imagination, the bigger, the better; and crucially, as I argue in this dissertation, when they are enveloped by, responsive to, and creators of music, both sounding and silent.

The Sound of Puppets

Puppets come in all shapes and sizes, and they come to life through a variety of means. Mine will eventually dangle at the end of strings. Others are unwieldy and amorphous, with a concealed cavity for an agile hand, while some float atop strategically positioned sticks, leading a double life on either side of a shadow screen, a silhouette on one side, a colorful figure on the other. These creatures are variously imported into neighboring expressive genres and artistic settings, for they are perfectly suited to the representation of the fantastical, otherworldly, or beastly, both in their material possibilities and in their artistic associations. They are designed and made to order, so their physical disposition—their gait and gestural vocabulary—can quite literally be built into them. And in the guise of puppets, main characters, peripheral roles, extras, even parts of the scenery can engender certain philosophical and aesthetic ideas, about autonomy and control, improvisation and repeatability, poetic potential and mechanicity, life and death; as a result, they can illuminate underlying themes or bring fresh perspectives to stories, old and new. The only shared attribute, the closest to a "universal" characteristic, transcending divisions between traditions or artistic boundaries, is the puppet's material condition of silence.

But if the puppet itself is silent, what about its performance of life? When puppets emerge—through the manipulation of the operator and the imagination of the audience—they are invariably noisy creatures. In fact, puppets are never apart from sound: they are immersed in it, entwined with

it, inextricable from it. Many puppets speak. Punch, for instance, with his swazzle-made voice proclaims, "*That's* the way to do it!" Others sing: Kermit and the Muppets, for example, or the operatic stars of *Marionettentheater* across Germany and Austria. If the puppets themselves aren't making any noise—or rather, don't appear to be making any noise—they inhabit rich and varied sonic environments. Depending on the particular style of puppetry and the nature of their soundscape, different kinds of musicality are exhibited, and different types of audio-visual relationships are forged. Puppets frequently wander into opera and film, disrupting established conventions of voice-body relations, agency and musical meaning. More traditional puppet shows, like Punch and Judy, are accompanied by mechanical and folk instruments—the hurdy-gurdy, the fiddle—which provide aesthetic and material foils to the puppets themselves, creatures somewhere between the automatic and the improvisatory.

Avant-garde styles of puppet performance often incorporate what the founder of the Bread and Puppet Theater, Peter Schumann, describes as "music as music."[8] German-born Schumann founded the Bread and Puppet Theater in 1963. It is a politically motivated puppet troupe, whose aesthetic fuses avant-garde and utilitarian sensibilities.[9] From New York's Lower East Side, the company moved in 1974 to Vermont, where it hosts annual summer festivals well-known for their apprentice program and community spirit. Schumann's style of puppetry reflects the company's grassroots ideology. The puppets are made from found materials and a lot of papier maché, twine and burlap; their signature giant puppets are fit for pageants and processions, but their proportions

[8] Peter Schumann, *The Radicality of the Puppet Theater* (Bread and Puppet Theater: Glover, VT, 1990), 10.

[9] For a brief overview of the company, see John Bell, Steve Abrams, and Max Schumann, "Peter Schumann," *World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts*, 2013, accessed July 23, 2020 https://wepa.unima.org/en/peter-schumann/.

can be distorted. Some are carnivalesque, even grotesque; others are quite mundane, simple, everyday objects brought to life, a bicycle, an umbrella, a musical instrument. Indeed, musical instruments, both traditional and original (many created by Peter Hamburger), feature prominently in Bread and Puppet Theater performances, flooding the stage and challenging the perceived categories of puppet, puppeteer, object, body, music, noise, and silence.

In his pamphlet *The Radicality of the Puppet Theater*, Schumann promotes the puppet theater as a site where music is employed as "sound production in its own right, operating in its own sphere, parallel to and not governed by the visual theater."[10] Schumann's model for audio-visual relations in the puppet theater recalls the Marxist ideals of Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler in their collaborative project *Composing for the Films*. Adorno and Eisler warned against the "duplication" of meaning through the use of music in film, the redundancy produced when music merely reinforces the action on screen, advocating instead for a contrapuntal relationship between action and music, the kind of dynamic where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, where each expressive channel conveys distinct meaning, and where the audience is made to think for themselves.[11] Schumann shares the concerns (and language) of these earlier theorists when he argues that the puppet theater teaches the kind of active listening that is

> diametrically opposed to the modern notion of music as a service tool for the consumer and his vacationing and working habits, a wishy-washy something between Muzak and white noise, meant to stimulate the desired moods in an exhausted brain. It is exactly this service attitude, culminating in the unquestioned *duplicity* of effect of vision and sound, or rather, the misuse of sound for the purposes of vision, which keeps music from acting as music for the benefit of the larger scheme of collaborative production.[12]

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[10] Schumann, *The Radicality of the Puppet Theater*, 10.

[11] Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler, *Composing for the Films* (Continuum: London and New York, 1947, 2005), 13. It is worth mentioning that this understanding has been challenged repeatedly since the emergence of the field of film music studies. See, for example, Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987).

[12] Schumann, *The Radicality of the Puppet*, 10, my emphasis.

In its "modern" guise, then, music is something of whitewash or gloss, an important element in bringing together the component parts of an artistic enterprise, but without any aesthetic value or complexity of its own. Music is wholly subservient to visual images and action, employed solely to reinforce their meaning.[13]

By contrast, Schumann's ideal form of music is characterized by the same kind of simultaneity that defines puppetry, a both-and that renders moot any sense of an audio-visual hierarchy. In Schumann's words:

> If music is the relationship of some and all sounds to each other and the psychic effects of these, but also if music is one of the rare, wholesome utterances of self, where the self is not only bone and brain but an attuned part of a large body of selves, like ourselves and more than ourselves, then the concert stage with its thoroughly specialized clientele is too small a forum for the messages of music.[14]

While music is derived from specific material relations, it is also indiscriminate, ahistorical, a collective production; while music is a physical reality, it is also a subjective experience. There is certainly a rhetorical infusion of universalism here, but I am also reminded once again of Gross' notion of the puppet's "earliness," the sense that it has just been born yet has lived forever. Schumann seems to suggest that music is accumulative, both emotionally and materially, and as such, explodes the hermetic bounds of the concert hall. Music, like puppetry, thrives in a space of collaboration and improvisation.

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[13] In relation to film music, the paradigmatic argument regarding the reinforcement of image-based meaning through musical alignment is that of Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987).

[14] Schumann, *The Radicality of the Puppet*, 10–11.

Coming to Life

How does music work and what does it sound like in Schumann's shows? In 2016, I attend a performance of *The Seditious Conspiracy Theater Presents: A Monument to Oscar López Rivera* at MassArt in Boston. Devised in collaboration with students at MassArt and members of the local community, the show narrates the events that led to the imprisonment in the US of Puerto Rican national Oscar López Rivera. Rivera was arrested for seditious conspiracy in 1981 and sentenced to 55 years in prison. In 1999 President Bill Clinton granted clemency to imprisoned members of the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (FALN) but Rivera refused the offer; for him, parole was tantamount to prison. Fast-forward to February 2016, and as Barack Obama's presidential term draws to a close, the question of Rivera's pardon is back on the table.

The music hits you as you enter the foyer. A row of musicians playing tubas, trombones, horns, clarinets, and all kinds of percussion fills the already narrow room, blaring Dixieland-style jazz amidst giant poster boards emblazoned with hand-painted slogans of freedom and protest. The opening measures of "Caravan" follow me to my seat in the auditorium. A couple of horns are lying on the floor of the stage and hanging stage left is a gong. The final chromatic strains of the Ellington standard leak into the auditorium before the musicians start to parade in. Some of them leave their instruments on the stage as well, to join the two horns already there. The tuba, the clarinet, some cymbals, another horn.

Schumann sets the tone and secures our attention with that most reliable of musical devices, a fanfare. His breath appears endless as he draws a high-pitched buzz from *something*, a shorn-off bottle, a makeshift kind of horn. Then he announces the world's first ever "seditious symphony." A contradiction in terms, surely: acts of sedition go against the established order, while a symphony, whether a musical work or an ensemble, is exactly that: the established order of things. The theater betrays none of the trappings of traditional symphonic music-making: no chairs, no music stands, no

conductor's podium. But at the sound of Schumann's ersatz trumpet, performers enter the stage, pick up instruments from the floor and form two groups, one of cymbals, the other of wind and brass instruments. The "symphony" opens with non-pitched sounds breathed through the wind and brass instruments. Cymbals crash and the groups of players reposition themselves. The process is repeated, but this time, the wind and brass musicians seem to collapse into laughing robots: they jerk around the stage ha-ha-ha-ing. For the final section of the piece, the musicians spread themselves out across the auditorium. Their fanfare-like musical gestures turn into gabbling nonsense syllables. From breath to laughter to quasi-melody to not-quite-speech: a life cycle of sorts, the nascent transformations of raw material into intentional sounds.

Later in the performance, a would-be narrator takes charge. She rings a set of handbells and calls forth the "gentlemen," a group of five performers in white outfits and white masks. The narrator introduces the first scene as the demonstration of breathing, "the original human skill." The gentlemen deliver the presentation with the aid of a mini accordion and a bicycle pump. Four performers play the childhood game "Rock, Paper, Scissors"; the fifth plays a jaunty melody over a tonic-dominant vamp on the accordion. This playful arrangement constitutes the default mode of decision-making for the roles of the gentlemen in their subsequent scenes. The loser of the game collapses to the floor and the bicycle pump is administered. The pump is squeezed, and the collapsed gentleman inflates; he breathes. After a handful of well-spaced depressions, the performer in charge of the device starts to pump more vigorously. Now the collapsed man not only breathes once more, but dances. He rises to his feet, gyrating, his arms and legs jerking, finishing the scene with his arms above his head. The next scene depicts "the first instance of conspiracy." *Con spirare:* to breathe together. The whole process—the game, the bicycle pump, the dancing—is repeated, only this time, the fate of the loser is shared by a chorus. The chorus also collapses, inflates,

breathes, dances. The whole stage breathes and dances together, at the direction of a game, with the input of a human-animated machine.

At first glance, there are no real puppets here, at least none of the anthropomorphic kind, the miniature human figures sculpted from wood, cut from leather, or knitted with wool. There are other things though, other inanimate objects: the bicycle pump, for instance. Under the auspices of "Bread and Puppet," these things, and in fact the entire scene, resonate with the dynamics of puppetry. Schumann's gong animates the ensemble. Schumann hits the gong and the performers react, change course, alter their posture. Is Schumann the master puppeteer of the gong, or is the gong the puppeteer of the human puppets? And what kind of human-instrument relationships does this propose for the ensuing performance? In a comparable way, the gentlemen's game turns them inanimate. The pump, a breathing device, is used to reanimate the collapsed figure. Through play—or at least, the illusion of it—decisions are made, life is extinguished and reborn. Is this game a kind of puppeteer? Are the gentlemen turning themselves into puppets? Music is the engine of the game, and air—breath—fuels that engine.

In the annual *Krippenspiel* (nativity play) at Vienna's *Kabinetttheater*, a similarly broad concept of puppet is explored, and a similarly expansive notion of music. Inspired by Hugo Ball, the founder of the Dada movement, the action of the story is infused with comic abstraction and nonsense episodes. The puppets themselves are relatively basic: stick figures, simple shapes and iconic representations with limited gestural capacities. The puppeteers can control the direction, speed, and fluidity of the puppets' whole-body movements, but anything smaller, fragmented or isolated gestures, is not possible in the visual domain. The nuance of force, energy, direction, and emotion is imbued through sound. Mezzo-soprano and actress Anna C. Hauf stands in the curve of a lidless grand piano throughout the performance. The piano is adorned with various objects including a small candelabra, a mallet, and what look like blocks or trays. A cymbal stands at one end of the

keyboard. Hauf narrates the story, sings songs, performs musical interludes, and provides sound effects—or rather, sonic identities to the characters—using her body, voice and an array of instruments and objects.

In the third scene, "Die Engel und die Sterne" (The Angel and the Stars), Hauf musicalizes an encounter between the star and its shooting tail, turning their attraction into some sort of sexual innuendo. In jerky spurts, the tail approaches the star: psssssssch, sssssszuk, psssssssch, sssssszuk, psssssssch, sssssszuk. Finally, the tail drills itself—because that's what it sounds like—into the starry celestial body. Next on the scene is an angel, who sheds her heavenly wings for those of a fly as Hauf's kazoo sends her to her death and the bang of an inflated paper bag. This scene is proceeded by a musical interlude in which a music box is positioned on the strings of the piano and as Hauf turns the handle, she sings fragments of various nursery rhymes, carols, and Christmas songs. In these sonic experiments with puppetry, sharp distinctions between human and non-human entities, bodies and voices, music and language begin to blur, or even collapse. At the same time, the multivalent reciprocity between puppetry and music comes to the fore.

Musicology's Puppet Relations

Music scholars have been slow to examine puppets specifically, but we are highly attentive to forms adjacent to them, kindred systems, and neighboring audio-visual media. Puppetry intersects with film and the cinematic medium, in the sense that both forms share a particular foregrounding of acousmatic or sourceless sound. In cinema, the acousmatic voice can take on many characters: the omniscient narrator, the villain in disguise, the android controller, the stranger at the end of the telephone, the "wizard" behind the curtain—and these characters often work narratively to control,

to pull strings.[15] Indeed, a redistribution of voices across bodies is necessarily reliant upon a certain obfuscation of labor, of both performers and technologies.[16] And such concealment of the means of effect is familiar in many proto-filmic technologies, such as the phantasmagoria and the panorama. Scholars such as Deirdre Loughridge and Sarah Hibberd have explored the ways in which these technologies, in dialogue with music and sound, construct specific audio-visual experiences in the pre-electrical age.[17] These technologies of visual illusion are understood as articulating a particular stage in the evolution of film, constrained by the technological affordances of the time.

Shadow puppetry has endured for thousands of years, and its original techniques remain largely unchanged. Shadow puppet traditions can be found in countries the world over, although perhaps one of the most immediate reference points for shadow puppetry is that of the Indonesian tradition *Wayang kulit*, where shadow puppets, a fast-talking master puppeteer, known as the *dalang*, and (depending on the specific tradition, e.g. Javanese or Balinese) a gamelan are brought together to

[15] Michel Chion has devised a litany of film sound concepts that are very helpful in thinking through the sonic capacities of puppetry. For a glossary, see Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 221–224. For the most comprehensive discussion of acousmatic voice, see Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). The most comprehensive discussion of acousmatic phenomena overall is Brian Kane's monograph *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[16] Theodor Adorno observes this phenomenon in the music of Richard Wagner in "Phantasmagoria." See Theodor Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 2005). For a recent study that uncovers the ways in which material components of operatic representation are deployed in the pursuit of a pristine aesthetic whole to occlude the labor of performance, see Gundula Kreuzer*, Curtain, Gong, Steam: Wagnerian Technologies of Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018).

[17] For a detailed and insightful prehistory of audio-visual culture, see Deirdre Loughridge, *Haydn's Sunrise, Beethoven's Shadow: Audiovisual Culture and the Emergence of Musical Romanticism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2016). For a recent example of Sarah Hibberd's work on audio-visual media and experience see "Scenography, Spéculomanie, and Spectacle: Pixerécourt's *La citerne* (1809)" in *The Melodramatic Moment: Music and Theatrical Culture 1790-1820*, eds., Katherine G. Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 79–93.

perform re-contextualized interpretations of stories from the Hindu epics, the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Shadow puppetry is another proto-filmic theatrical genre. Indeed, if shadow puppetry can be said to have "progressed," it has done so in the form of animation, and perhaps even the "visual music" of Oscar Fischinger and others.[18] The figures, both abstract and life-like, in these forms of animation are routinely described as "puppets," a label that captures the tangible interaction between the performing objects and the operator in the process of animation, even if such presence is barely, if at all, perceptible in the ultimate "performance."

Finally, there is the question of manipulatable musical objects and musical parts. Musical automata and other musical objects, including musical clocks and music boxes—those puppet-adjacent toys of the Enlightenment—have received considerable attention by scholars including Carolyn Abbate, Annette Richards and Adelheid Voskuhl.[19] Meanwhile, in the "new organology," as outlined by Emily I. Dolan and John Tresch, musical instruments have been appraised not only for their technical and material specifications, but for the relationship(s) they construct with the body, the networks they engender and navigate, be they social, economic, intellectual, politic, or aesthetic.[20]

Puppets are not acousmatic effects in cinema, nor automata, nor instruments. But in dialogue with these phenomena and recent scholarship about them, puppetry's particular relationship with issues of agency, materiality and liveness come to the fore. Moreover, puppets

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[18] For more on Fischinger and his innovations, see William Moritz, *Optical Poetry: The Life and Work of Oskar Fischinger* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004).

[19] See, for example, Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), chapters 2 and 5 in particular; Annette Richards, "Automatic Genius: Mozart and the Mechanical Sublime," *Music and Letters* 80, no.3 (1999): 366-389; and Adelheid Voskuhl, *Androids in the Enlightenment: Mechanics, Artisans, and Cultures of the Self* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[20] Emily I. Dolan and John Tresch, "Towards a New Organology: Instruments of Music and Science," *Osiris*, Vol.28 (2013): 278-298.

offer a reframing of issues familiar in opera studies, in particular voice and embodiment. The singing puppet, for example, makes explicit the relational quality of voice, while through dance, the specification of a puppet's control mechanism raises interesting questions about the nature of collaboration, synchronization, and gesture.[21] A musicological lens reveals the puppet to be a provocative audio-visual performing object, and puppetry as a highly musical art form, where sensibilities of music-making structure the phenomenology of the puppeteer. Many puppeteers who populate the pages of this dissertation are themselves musically skilled, or at least musically inclined: *Marionettenspieler*—the name given in German to puppeteers of marionettes—describe musicality as an essential attribute of the consummate performer.[22] The Viennese artist Richard Teschner (1879–1948) built instruments as well as puppets; and Reiniger and her German contemporaries Oskar Fischinger (1900–1967) and Walter Ruttmann (1887–1941) experimented with concepts of "visual music," a kind of stop-motion graphic score or moving painting in response to music. The music comes first; the puppets second.

This dissertation not only illuminates the myriad ways in which puppetry is entangled with music, but also proposes a redefinition of puppetry: one that includes music as a material form of

[21] For an overview of the current state of voice studies, see Martha Feldman et al, Colloquy: "Why Voice Now?" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68, no.3 (2015): 653-659. Alessandra Campana, Marco Ladd, and I convened an alternative-format panel entitled "Synchronizations" held at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society in San Antonio, TX, in 2019, which explored music-image relations in a variety of media—from silent film to piano rolls, video games to radio—through the lens of synchronization. In his presentation "Synchronization, Music Visualization, Choreomusicality," Daniel Callahan reassesses the concept of "mickey-mousing"—the exact matching (e.g. note-for-step) of music and image movement, often to comic effect—to propose a spectrum of choreographic models. In dance literature, Stephanie Jordan charts the shifting hierarchy of music and dance in ballet discourse and practice, which I find especially helpful in thinking through the audio-visual contract constructed by puppet performance, in her *Moving Music: Dialogues with Music in Twentieth-Century Ballet* (Cecil Court, London: Dance Books, 2000).

[22] A note on terminology: Marionettenspieler is the masculine singular and plural version of the noun; Marionettenspielerin is the feminine singular. I use both, and without italics from here on.

intentional sound alongside voice and sound effects, as performance practice, and as a body of knowledge, rhetorical and discursive, and aesthetic experience. I argue that puppets are made legible, made meaningful, through their relationships with music, and that by careful analysis of the contexts and means of their associations with music, something we might call the puppet's "inherent musicality" is revealed.

Hearing the Wood

Sound was a critical determinant in the very creation of my marionette. I made her under the tutelage of John Roberts, a master puppeteer based in Devon, England, originally from South Africa, who came to puppetry via a career in architecture. He told the class to listen for the clear *whoosh* of a suitably sharp chisel as it grazed the surface of the wood and the fresh *thwack* of a smoothly jointed knee. And when we ventured to examine one of John's own beautiful (if intimidating) marionettes, their arms would rattle against their hollow body and their feet would tap the floor. Pinocchio comes to mind once again—not the version brought to life by Walt Disney, but the original story from 1883 by Carlo Collodi. From the outset, before Pinocchio is even carved, when he is not yet a "he" but simply a block of firewood, there is a voice. The wood itself demonstrates a capacity to produce intentional sound.

The wood that will become Pinocchio is originally deemed by the carpenter Maestro Antonio (known as Maestro Cherry for the red tip of his nose) perfect for the leg of a table. His attempts to prepare the wood, however, are thwarted by some surprising noises:

No sooner had Master Cherry set eyes on the piece of wood than his face beamed with delight; and, rubbing his hands together with satisfaction, he said softly to himself:
'This wood has come at the right moment; it will just do to make the leg of a little table.'

Having said this he immediately took a sharp axe with which to remove the bark and the rough surface. Just, however, as he was going to give the first stroke he remained with his arm suspended in the air, for he heard a very small voice saying imploringly, 'Do not strike me so hard!'[23]

As he presses on rather frightened and extremely confused, Maestro Cherry is met with further pleas for him to stop: when he wields his axe, he causes *someone* pain; when he shapes and polishes with his plane, his tickles *someone* making them laugh. When Geppetto arrives, the future father of Pinocchio, the voice pokes fun at him, provoking a scrap between Geppetto and Cherry.

The true source of the voice goes unidentified throughout these opening scenes of Collodi's story—and, of course, it is not surprising that Cherry and Geppetto don't suspect the wood. For wood cannot actually speak—or cry, or laugh. And in these initial encounters with the wood, the source of the voice is never confirmed. In fact, Collodi suggests that the voice might be a figment of Cherry's imagination. The fact that Geppetto hears it too both bolsters and undermines the wood as the source of the voice: for a disembodied voice requires a collective imagination and an embodied voice needs none.

The reader knows, however, that this voice and its various sonic emissions belong to the wood. We might, in the case of the wood's laughter, imagine that Collodi pressed the actual sounds of planing wood—the grinding and the rushing, the hiccups and the shudders—through the filter of linguistic stylization. But the wood's earlier exclamation, that of the first encounter with the axe, when the wood speaks before Cherry actually touches it: what is happening here? Collodi gives voice to how the wood might feel, not just "verbalizing"—making semantic—the basic sounds of materials, let's say, but creating a persona with a voice. Is this the persona of the firewood block

[23] Carlo Collodi, *The Story of a Puppet; or the Adventures of Pinocchio*, trans. M. A. Murray (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1892), accessed April 8, 2022 https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Story_of_a_Puppet/I

itself, like Kafka's Odradek, exercising what Jane Bennett calls "an impersonal form of vitality"?[24] Or is this persona separate to the block, somehow trapped within it? Is it Pinocchio waiting to get out?

"Body" and voice finally coincide when the firewood block demonstrates its capacity for independent movement. As Cherry, eager to rid himself of the wooden menace, goes to hand it over to Geppetto, the piece of wood attacks its future owner:

> Master Antonio was delighted, and he immediately went to the bench and fetched the piece of wood that had caused him so much fear. But just as he was going to give it to his friend the piece of wood gave a shake, and wriggling violently out of his hands struck with all its force against the dried-up shins of poor Geppetto.[25]

After the earlier tussle around the disembodied slur, another fracas ensues. Movement and voice: these are what philosopher Chiara Cappelletto identifies as the "agencies" of the puppet.[26] And movement and voice, we might say, are united in breath, by breathing, the essential task of the puppet.

Locating the Lifeblood

Well before it resembles the puppet it will become, the block of firewood can move and speak of its own volition, it can solicit both emotional and physical responses in those it encounters, and it can stoke the imagination. While these attributes scare Cherry, they seem to drive Geppetto on, to feed his desire for his puppet. As he carves his marionette, each feature becomes animated as soon as it

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[24] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 7. Franz Kafka, "The Cares of a Family Man" (Die Sorge des Hausvaters), 1919. Franz Kafka, "The Cares of a Family Man" in *On Dolls*, ed., Kenneth Gross (London: Notting Hill Editions, 2012), 63–65.

[25] Collodi, *Pinocchio,* access April 8, 2022 https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Story_of_a_Puppet/II

[26] See Chiara Cappelletto, "The Puppet's Paradox: An Organic Prosthesis," trans. Steve Baker, *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 59-60 (Spring-Autumn 2011): 325-336.

takes shape. The eyes stare; the nose grows; the mouth laughs incessantly. It is as though the wood is transubstantiated into the very material of the eye and the nose and the mouth, and once materially realized, each part cannot help but behave according to its nature. Far from contingent, each part functions without yet a viable whole. The self-sufficiency of isolated individual parts is contrasted by the fragmentation of the would-be body. As philosopher Tzachi Zamir describes it, "the marionette's insolence already surfaces prior to it fully coming to life."[27]

Such insolence, however, does not deter Geppetto—although he can't stand it. He begs the laughing mouth to stop, but he does not cease his carving. He pushes on until Pinocchio can stand on his own two feet and run away from him. Paraphrasing Zamir, as Pinocchio acquires life, it is "sucked" out of Geppetto.[28] Geppetto is bound to Pinocchio; and the marionette, far from possessing autonomous life, acquires that of its maker. Zamir describes the relationship thus:

> Geppetto does not merely carve a puppet, he is reciprocally made—in some sense reciprocally fathered—by it throughout the scene. The deeper paternal connection between Geppetto and his creation is introduced into the novel when the old man experiences the surprising freedom and resistance of matter. The emergence of paternal sentiment within Geppetto is associated with a subliminal apprehension of the self's incapacity to fully govern matter—that which ostensibly is unproblematically owned.[29]

In conjuring this sense of interdependence, Zamir simultaneously reinforces and dismantles the caricature of the all-powerful puppeteer and the helpless puppet. On the one hand, Geppetto is Pinocchio's lifeblood, his maker and his animator; but on the other, Pinocchio acts, both physically and emotionally, of his own accord. And what's more, it is the very material of Pinocchio that is endowed with its own sense of self and *sui generis* energy. This cheeky young boy, careless and

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[27] Tzachi Zamir, "Puppets," *Critical Inquiry* 36, no.3 (Spring 2010), 389.

[28] Ibid., 390.

[29] Ibid., 390.

carefree: this isn't *just* Pinocchio's character, some secondary or subsequent superimposition on top of the essential, material body; it is manifest in his very being, the firewood block, his "flesh and blood," wooden though it is. If anything, Pinocchio attacks his "father," rather than bending to his whim. And so, in a way, Geppetto becomes a puppet, at the mercy of his son, who wreaks havoc with and through his life.

A sense of this inversion seems to be at the center of the 2007 theater adaptation of *Pinocchio* directed by John Tiffany for the National Theater in London. For one critic, Tiffany's vision turns on the question of authenticity: "Pinocchio wants to be 'real,'" writes Susannah Clapp, "but who's to know who is pastiche, fake, authentic?"[30] Making this question palpable, "flesh and fabric, original and imitation are beautifully, disconcertingly entangled"[31]—or reversed. In this realization of the story, the puppet Pinocchio is played by an actor (Joe Idris-Roberts), while the adult humans in his life—Geppetto, Stromboli, the Blue Fairy—are represented by giant puppets. Each one is maneuvered by a team of puppeteers and an actor, a miniature Doppelgänger dressed in exactly the same costume as their gargantuan companion, provides the character's voice.

Etymologically, puppets are small things. But crucially, the worlds they inhabit are small as well. With their operators behind-the-scenes or otherwise obscured, though, puppets do not appear diminutive or out-of-place; they are perfectly scaled to fit their environment. Big puppets, on the other hand, tend to stand out. They're at home in parades and other street art settings. On stage, they're similarly spectacular, but often in an intrusive or disruptive way. Even if the world is scaled-

[30] Susannah Clapp, "Pinocchio review—a familiar fable is brought to captivating life," *The Guardian*, December 17, 2017, accessed August 9, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2017/dec/17/pinocchio-review-unsettling-touching-christmas-fable-national-theatre.

[31] Ibid.

up to meet them, as it is in the NT's *Pinocchio*, giant puppets make humans, on stage and in the audience, look and feel small, and make the puppeteers work very hard indeed. Certain traditions of puppetry conceal the puppeteer, obscuring the puppet's energy source to feed the illusion of its autonomous life. Others, often those involving larger puppets, put the relationship between the puppet and the puppeteer on full-view and so make the labor of performance part of the spectacle. All puppetry is physically demanding, and manipulating something bigger than you, with nuance and care, takes considerable effort. The labor itself is magnified.

In film, by contrast, the labor of the animator is subsumed by the hegemony of the screen. Pinocchio is likely one of the first puppets that springs to mind for many reading this—especially those of us, like me, brought up on Disney films. Besides the considerable differences in plot and characterization, the realization of Pinocchio in the realm of cartoon animation raises further questions about the nature of agency, mediation and liveness in puppetry. Animation, as I mentioned previously, finds its roots in the art of shadow puppetry, descended from Plato's allegory of the cave.[32] The evolution from shadows cast with objects to projections of previously captured images involves a gradual distancing—both spatial and temporal—between the animator and the animated. This opening out of the puppeteer-puppet relationship generates new gestural vocabularies and more expansive audio-visual dynamics, especially with regards to the

[32] From Book VII of Plato's *Republic,* the allegory is presented through a dialogue between Plato's mentor Socrates and Plato's brother Glaucon. Socrates describes a situation in which a group of people are chained to the back wall of a cave, their necks and feet secured in such a way as to prevent them from moving their heads at all. Behind them, a fire blazes, objects are passed in front of the fire, and these cast shadows onto the back wall. For the prisoners, so ingrained is this reality that when they eventually encounter the world outside of the cave, they do not believe what they see; they crave the familiarity of what they already know. For Plato, this scenario parallels that of enlightenment, of the coming-into the realm of purely factual knowledge experienced by the philosopher, whilst testifying to the fundamental ways in which reality is entwined with sensory perception.

synchronization of sound and image. Cartoons, after all, give rise to their own specific kind of audio-visual synchronization, "mickey-mousing," the identical matching of step-for-note. But mickey-mousing is, as many have argued, too close for comfort: it reinforces the artificiality of the medium through the erasure of human touch (and error).[33] Through the lens of puppetry, the human might be restored to animation and a more capacious understanding of the agential relations involved in synchronization illuminated.

The filmic puppet reaches towards that most ubiquitous of all puppets: the metaphorical one. As a metaphor, the puppet proliferates through popular culture and scholarship as a useful short-hand for top-down power relations.[34] In music, we're familiar with the idea of the conductor as puppeteer over their orchestra, or the composer over a conductor, or a performer, or an audience. This image inscribes a certain unidirectionality of power and expression, from (creative) input to (expressive) output, and consequently constructs something of a black box around what actually happens between the puppeteer and the puppet. It is what's *inside* the black box that interests me most. For the site of power is constantly shifting in puppetry, and the nature of that power perpetually transforming. Attending to the material realities, technical workings and performative

[33] For a discussion of the usefulness of "mickey-mousing" (amongst many), see Daniel Goldmark, *Tunes for 'Toons': Music and the Hollywood Cartoon* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2005).

[34] The key example from the world of scholarship is Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, *The Pinocchio Effect: On Making Italians, 1860-1920* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2007). From the realm of politics and journalism, oppositional attempts to rein in Boris Johnson's Brexit agenda—namely, his commitment to Brexit even in the face of "no deal"—could result in what has been described as a "marionette government," a situation where Johnson and his executive can only enact the instructions of parliament. Marissa Fenley brings us into a discussion of subjectivity in the famous Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger film *The Tales of Hoffmann* through an examination of the puppet metaphor in politics. See Marissa Fenley, "When the Puppets Get Together: Looking Like a Subject in The Archers' *The Tales of Hoffmann*," *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol.35 (2019): 276-296.

negotiations of puppetry and their resultant affects, phenomenological and aesthetic, not only reveals the musicality of puppetry, but the puppetry of music. As my dissertation shows, puppetry disrupts easy delineations of subject and object to show how one body—or multiple bodies—can manifest both states at once, through imagination and play, material clashes and performative escapes, shadows, strings, and music.

Carving the Music

When I asked the artistic director at Salzburger Marionettentheater Philippe Brunner about the possibility of lessons in how to manipulate a marionette, he wanted to know whether or not I had a puppet. It would not do to learn with any old puppet; I would need my own. It is possible to buy marionettes ready-made, of course: some puppet theaters sell replicas of their own performing cast, or a carver might be engaged to create a bespoke figure. The marionette theater in Prague sells self-assembly marionette kits, a kind of happy medium. But none of these options felt quite right: Philippe would surely not approve. I needed to make my own puppet, from scratch, even if it was with the supervision of master puppeteer and carver; hence my decision to seek out Roberts and his marionette-making course.

It was not an easy undertaking. Suddenly I was supposed to be a draftsman, a carpenter, and an engineer all in one, and yet I possess none of the required technical skills. I can't draw. I can't really doodle, let alone realize an imagined figure with a pencil on paper, in proportion and to scale. And when this first round of translation is complete, more a process of reverse engineering, you must work the other way: the two-dimensional sketches must be converted back into three dimensions, but now those dimensions are tangible and real, constrained by what is possible, but also stimulated by those parameters. Now you are wielding razor-sharp chisels and heavy mallets at hunks of sawn wood, trying to find the grain, responding to the shape that emerges.

I was supposed to be following a plan, of course. But wood can be quite unpredictable, especially for a novice, and perhaps even more so for me. When working with my hands, I am prone to a lack of precision. Playing the cello, for instance, I have never taken a mathematical approach. I remember watching certain accomplished students of my cello teacher and marveling at the seemingly pre-determined way their fingers navigated the smooth fingerboard. Where I felt my own fingers flounder, sliding around, however shrewdly, to find the center of the note, theirs were focused on a fixed destination, an envisaged fret. Their elbows moved as though along a fixed channel, their wrists straight and secure. I was mesmerized and envious, but I knew that I did not possess the discipline such accuracy and assuredness required.

Building my marionette elicited similar feelings, especially when dealing with the puppet's joints. Mine is a prototypical model. Straightforwardly anthropomorphic, I suppose. A fellow student was intent on something more robotic, another on a pirate mouse. I just wanted mine to be able to walk. The knees of my marionette are formed of rotating mortise and tenon joints. Frequently used by woodworkers to connect two pieces of wood at right angles to one another, the traditional mortise and tenon is a closed structure, strong and stable, so perfect for a knee. To allow the knee to move, the mortise is three-sided ("open") with a "through" tenon. A "stop," a jutting part of the leg, ensures that the knee only rotates so far, to make a straight leg but with no overextension, like that of a human. Her hips imitate a ball and socket, but are much more limited in their rotational compass. A wide-legged stance is a possibility. She couldn't ride a horse like Salzburg's marionette Brünnhilde, who has been especially adapted to mount her stead with aplomb.

The shoulders of my marionette, by contrast, are made of rope. Her wrists too. As a result, her arms can rotate like windmills (depending on the dexterity of the puppeteer in charge) and she has a soft handshake. Her hands are one of my favorite features. Carved from one block of limewood, they started as a pair, holding a ball perhaps. As I sculpted the position of the fingers and

the knuckles emerged, I imagined the stance of a ballerina, where every sinew and tendon, from head to toe to fingertip, is electrified, perfectly poised, and yet vibrating with energy. Finally, this pair of hands are released from one another, the block connecting them sawn through and carved away, hollowed, to reveal what was there all along, the head line, the heart line, the fate line, and the life line.

Analyzing Puppet-Musical Encounters: An Overview

I started with my marionette, because her very being embodies the historical, methodological and critical anchors for my project; and she fuels the imagination. The marionette is central to a long-standing tradition of puppet opera that still thrives today across German-speaking lands in particular. Composers since Haydn have deemed them worthy performers of original works, while Marionettenspieler have long considered these wooden homunculi to be ideal for realizing canonic operas. The meeting of puppetry and opera provides a backdrop to my entire investigation. As Kenneth Gross observes, these art forms share a fundamental proclivity towards material fluctuation, swinging between profoundly felt embodiment and fantastic disembodiment, extreme states that are captured in the primary conceits of the constitutive genres: the puppet's voicelessness and the centrality of voice to opera.[35]

One of the operas performed most frequently in *Marionettentheater* across Germany and Austria is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte.*[36] This opera offers an especially compelling

[35] In his discussion of the relationship between puppetry and opera, Gross builds on Carolyn Abbate's reading of Orpheus' severed head. See Kenneth Gross, *Puppet: An Essay on Uncanny Life* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 78-83. See Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, 2001), 1–10.

[36] A note on terminology: Marionettentheater is the German word for marionette theater. I use the German, without italics from here on, and English variously.

lens onto the topic of puppetry and music: not only is the opera's plot full of creatures and happenings that rely upon some sort of puppet representation, but the music also constructs certain puppet-infused relations as the dynamics between sounds (vocal and instrumental) and their sources are manipulated in various ways. Part 1: *Die Zauberflöte* as Puppet-Musical *Urtext*, therefore, examines the ways in which Mozart's last opera conjures the specter of the puppet in three different settings: in discourse, in the opera house, and in the puppet theater. Chapter One, "Predisposition: An Opera *of* Puppets," focuses on the operatic text itself (the score and the libretto) and surveys musicological and philosophical analyses of *Die Zauberflöte* in order to highlight the embeddedness of puppetry within the very foundations of the opera.

Chapter Two, "Performance: An Opera *with* Puppets," presents analyses of three contemporary productions of *Die Zauberflöte*, each exploring the various strategies adopted by directors and designers when it comes to tackling the opera's staging conundrums. Yuval Sharon's production for Staatsoper Unter den Linden in Berlin relocates the performance to the marionette theatre, attaching heavy-duty ropes to the singers and using pre-recorded speech for the dialogue scenes. Simon McBurney's multimedia production for the English National Opera tests the flexibility of the audio-visual hierarchy juxtaposing onstage performance—including flute solos performed by the orchestra's principal flautist—and the techniques of post-production, such as Foley sound art. Finally, Barrie Kosky's collaboration with the theater group 1927 for Berlin's Komische Oper draws on the aesthetics of silent film to create a hybrid stage picture of animation and live performance.

Reading *Die Zauberflöte* through the lens of puppetry not only affords the transhistorical attentiveness necessary in the study of a primarily oral tradition, but reaches out to styles far beyond marionette opera—from director Julie Taymor's eclectic mix of masks and costumes to the delicate mise-en-scène of the paper theater to the mechanical theater of William Kentridge. Gathering

together these different forms of puppetry underscores the importance of their medium specificity. A broad brushstroke of the puppet aesthetic might resonate with themes of power and control. The specific material attributes of a puppet, however, can not only bring out different dimensions of a character or plot point, but also tell us something new about the nature of musical performance, meaning, and materiality. Through my encounters with puppetry, I have come to understand that the relationship between the puppet and the puppeteer is just one dyad within a whole network of material, technological, performative, and musical relations.

To conclude Part 1, Chapter Three, "Projection: An Opera *for* Puppets," enters the puppet theater itself. Marionette performances of what I identify as the "Enchantment Scene" from the Act I finale of *Die Zauberflöte* provide a frame for the chapter. At the outset of the chapter, these are surface-level descriptions, where the puppet-state of the performers is subordinated to their costuming and choreography. The central sections of the chapter highlight critical themes from the scholarly literature on puppetry that inform my approach, as well as resonant issues in musicology, which focus around questions of materiality and performativity. Drawing these discourses together, I develop my concept of the "performance network," an analytic framework that accounts for the material realities, performing bodies, and characteristic aesthetics involved in and generated by puppet performance. Shaped by and for this network, expressive agency is productively diffuse, while audio-visual relations are fluid and flexible, forged, teased apart and woven anew through manipulations of time, space and movement. These dynamics generate what I call a "poetics of synchronization." Returning to these renderings of the "Enchantment Scene" at the end of the chapter, I reveal the potentiality of meaning the framework of the performance network affords.

Part II: When Puppets Meet Music is comprised of two extended case studies. By delimiting the socio-political scope of my project to German-speaking traditions and experiments with puppets within an expansive historical trajectory from the late eighteenth century to the present day, I call

attention to the channels of cross-cultural exchange and the transhistorical relationships that characterize the art of puppetry. In Chapter Four, therefore, I investigate the nature of marionette vocality by integrating ethnography of contemporary practice with philosophical thought and performance analysis along four puppet-musical analytic lenses: breath and voice; movement; scale (i.e. gigantification and miniaturization); and death—as silence, as dramatic event, as non-puppet. Against the backdrop of Heinrich von Kleist's 1810 essay "Über das Marionettentheater," a meditation onto the paradoxical relationship between grace and consciousness engendered by the marionette, I illuminate the ways in which the marionette's strings manifest its musical identity, its voice. In contradistinction to the determinism they are deemed—in the popular imagination—to impose, I argue that the marionette's strings, as the connective tissue of the performance network, conjure an improvisatory quality that creates the perceptual space for its role as both a vessel for and creator of music.

Chapter Five explores the puppetry of Richard Teschner (1879, Carlsbad, Bohemia Austria-Hungary–1948, Vienna, Austria). Trained in the fine arts and immersed in the puppet-infused culture of Prague and the technical functionality of the Wiener Werkstätte—an artistic collective founded on an understanding of the unity of life and art—Teschner developed an all-encompassing style of puppetry that synthesizes cultural traditions and technologies. His theater, the *Figurenspiegel*, or "figure mirror," a circular proscenium and concave glass screen, provides a "lens" onto the action, which is enriched by projected backdrops and a comprehensive lighting rig to erase the appearance of the puppet mechanisms. Teschner's is a one-of-a-kind performance network, at the heart of which are his puppets and his Polyphon. Inspired by Javanese *Wayang golek*, Teschner's puppets are controlled by a unique combination of rods and internal strings, which permits an acutely nuanced gestural language. The puppets do not speak, for Teschner considered the human voice and the puppet to be fundamentally incompatible; instead, they mime to music provided by a

commercially manufactured music box, the Polyphon. This chapter focuses on the relationship between these two objects, the puppet and the Polyphon, to analyze their mutual constitution in the musical and aesthetic domains and their reciprocal technological enactment of cultural appropriation. Expanding out to consider this multi-faceted reciprocity through the lens of the *Figurenspiegel*, I argue that the broader aesthetic sensibility of Teschner's puppetry has a proto-cinematic quality.

In the Epilogue, we turn to one last case study and this time, we enter the movie theater. The aesthetic of film and cinematic technologies are a constant presence throughout the pages of this dissertation. Questions around acousmatic sound and audio-visual synchronization are predominantly the domain of film music scholars, and yet, such concepts are highly pertinent to many musicological areas of concern and certainly to the art of puppetry. An art-form that straddles the boundaries between puppetry and cinema is that of stop-motion animation, and in this final mapping of a performance network, we explore the techniques of Lotte Reiniger (1899, Berlin, Germany–1981, Dettenhausen, Germany). Descended from shadow puppetry, Reiniger's animations feature silhouette figures with clearly jointed limbs that are photographed, repositioned and photographed again and again, in order that when the photographs are rolled into a film, the characters move in time with a full musical score. Audio-visual relations in Reiniger's films are constructed through the negotiation of a unique performance network, at the heart of which is an object of Reiniger's own invention, the *Tricktisch*, which enables an especially close matching of music and image. To consider what this might mean for the poetics of synchronization, I draw on examples from a provocative bookend to Mozart's last opera, Reiniger's 1935 film *Papageno*, a pairing that demonstrates puppetry's simultaneous defiance of and contingency upon medium specificity, and reasserts the ubiquity of the puppet as both metaphor and object, silent and sounding.

As an oral tradition, puppetry's secrets are spoken by its practitioners and realized in the theater. Therefore, attending to the material realities of puppetry styles—these various "black boxes"—requires intense engagement with the practice of puppetry. I have attended over 80 shows and have spoken with puppeteers with a range of backgrounds. I have, on a handful of occasions, watched performances from backstage—in Vienna and Salzburg—and I have, indeed, made my own marionette. In dialogue with archival materials, philosophical meditations and musicological investigations, these ethnographic encounters have generated something of a portal—to history, to music, and to me.

PART I

Die Zauberflöte as Puppet-Musical *Urtext*

Imagine the scene: A bird-catcher and a princess are on the run. The former is the rescuer of the latter, who is the soon-to-be romantic companion of her liberator's royal comrade. To guide their path, the bird-catcher Papageno plays his panpipes, a feathery 5-note call, and the pair listen out for the prince Tamino's response. They are making progress, getting closer to freedom, and their confidence is growing. But all of a sudden, the guard Monostatos—a Moor, and the overseer of some similarly dark-skinned slaves—appears with his cronies, whom he instructs to bind the fugitives. The princess Pamina is resigned to her fate, but just in the nick of time, Papageno recalls the gift that persuaded him to undertake this mission in the first place: his magic bells. As the slaves approach their bounty armed with restraints, Papageno prepares his bells to play:

Papageno:
Wer viel wagt, gewinnt oft viel!
Komm, du schönes Glockenspiel,
Lass die Glöckchen klingen, klingen,
Dass die Ohren ihnen singen.

Papageno:
Nothing ventured, nothing gained!
Come, you beautiful bells,
Let the little bells ring, ring,
So that their ears sing.

Deferring to a mere musical instrument in this way might seem a curious line of defense. Granted, these bells are supposedly magical, but at this point in the story they have yet to demonstrate their power. Papageno's decision, however, proves to be the correct one. As the bells emit their tinkling tune, Monostatos and his men join in:

Monostatos und Sklaven:
Das klinget so herrlich, das klinget so schön!
Tralla lala la Trallalala!
Nie hab ich so etwas gehört und geseh'n!
Trallalalala Tralla lalala.

Monostatos and the slaves:
That sounds so exquisite, that sounds so beautiful!
Tralla lala la Trallalala!
Never have I heard or seen something of the kind!
Tralla lala la Trallalala.

In most staged productions, the men dance as they sing, skipping childishly from one foot to the other or swinging around through linked arms. As the scene draws to a close, their dancing whirls them offstage, leaving the fugitives behind.

We are in the midst of the Act I finale of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, premiered on September 30th 1791 at Vienna's suburban Theater auf der Wieden. It might take a moment to register what exactly has taken place here: a threatening posse of slaves and prison guards has been rendered impotent by the sonic emissions from a set of bells—or more specifically, by their music. The precise nature of Papageno's involvement in producing the bell's music is obfuscated in a variety of ways, as we shall see; but even if we understand that he does actually play the instrument, the objects that tend to appear onstage in the guise of the bells are rarely endowed with sufficient range and depth to render the music we hear. There is, in a material sense, a fundamental mismatch between the sound and its supposed source.[1] Within the drama, though, these are magical bells, and so not only can they produce music that is seemingly far beyond their capabilities, but they can generate it somehow automatically, autonomously. Most significantly for our discussion here, this music can exert power over human bodies—in this instance, Othered human bodies. In effect, these humans are turned into puppets.

A puppet: diminutive, subservient, passive, unthinking. But puppets can also be the most magical and fantastic of creatures, flying, morphing at will, seemingly in possession of a life of their own. Unsurprisingly, therefore, puppets turn up in productions of *Die Zauberflöte* all the time.[2] The

[1] Carolyn Abbate observes this mismatch and discusses its implications in "Magic Flute, Nocturnal Sun," the second chapter in *In Search of Opera* (Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 2001), 55-106, see especially 77–83.

[2] For a discussion of *Die Zauberflöte*'s puppet-y predisposition, see Martin Nedbal, "Live Marionettes and Divas on the Strings: *Die Zauberflöte*'s Interactions with Puppet Theater," *The Opera Quarterly* 28, nos.1-2 (2012): 20–36. Nedbal's article is a direct response to what he identifies as the infiltration of puppets in productions of Mozart's opera. Nedbal conjures the historical context for the conception of the opera, some of which I also document here, and analyses of three presentations of the opera:

opera's plot is full of creatures and happenings that rely upon some sort of puppet representation, and this was, in part, a consequence of its milieu, its emergence from late-eighteenth-century Vienna's diverse theatrical scene. One visual set piece—the slaying of a serpent in pursuit of Tamino—has obvious links to puppetry, since the magical animal figure has to be managed by operators of some kind. Other scenes merely hint at such affinities. The airborne entrance of the Three Boys, via a vehicle on strings from the catwalk, can evoke marionettes (traditional string puppets), even as it evokes a typical trick in operatic staging going back to Renaissance stage craft: the *deus ex machina*, the god arriving by chariot from above. A case could be made, even more attenuated, for the trials by fire and water, in the sense that they play with the boundary between scenery, costume, and performer. Hence animated and transported bodies are fundamentally necessary in staging these scenes of magical life, even in the most conventional productions.

In the bell-ringing scene in the Act 1 finale, however, there is something more at stake. In this scene of enchantment, we are witness not to puppet-susceptible creatures or puppetry-adjacent relations, but to the more literal emergence of a puppet. What's more, we see a puppet that comes into being explicitly through music. As the bells' music becomes the controlling force, Monostatos and his men not only appear transfixed (their singing and dancing the expression of some sort of hypnotic state), but rather the melody seems to have been injected—programmed, even—directly into their bodies. These beings sing, then, seemingly without thinking, like musical instruments subject to external control, or even musical machines, whose control mechanism is located deeply, disturbingly within them.

The following three chapters, comprising Part One of this dissertation, examine

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Ingmar Bergman's film, Julie Taymor's production for the conventional stage, and the previous repertoire production of the Salzburg Marionette Theater. His reading of the Salzburg production seems to be based on a recorded, as opposed to live, performance and his conclusions tend to reinforce pre-conceived notions of puppetry's stylization and determination. My theory of puppet performance is derived from live performance and aims to capture the perspective of the spectator.

interpretations of this critical moment in *Die Zauberflöte*—where musical sound, via a musical instrument, appears to take control of human bodies—but also other moments like it, whether in musicological discourse, operatic productions, or other forms of puppet expression. *Die Zauberflöte* is particularly well disposed to serve as a bridge between these phenomena. Not only is the story concerned with the nature of the human condition, raising questions around the issues of power, self-knowledge, and representation, but also, as Adeline Mueller has described it, the opera is "treated…as a kind of ready-made myth, available for repurposing, reinscription, and recomposition."[3] In other words, *Die Zauberflöte* is perpetually reworked and reimagined, and has been since its very inception. *Die Zauberflöte* is one of the most frequently performed operas, on the stages of both conventional houses and puppet theaters.[4] For critical analyses of puppetry per se, this omnipresence and continuity is paramount, since traditions of puppetry rely on robust oral transmission, its secrets spoken by practitioners and experienced in the theater. The ubiquity of *Die Zauberflöte* in puppet theaters provides a rich ecosystem in which puppeteers' oral exchange of knowledge thrives, multiplies, and flourishes.

Chapter One examines the operatic text itself, unpacking the various ways in which the enchantment scene has conjured the specter of the puppet in musicological and philosophical analyses of the opera from its premiere to today. Crucially, the interpretations I will discuss rarely venture beyond the hermeneutic: the puppets in these analyses are imagined caricatures of the real thing, and their specific characteristics are generally elided with other puppet-adjacent objects that

[3] Adeline Mueller, "A Note from the Guest Editor," *The Opera Quarterly* 28, Nos.1-2 (2012), 1.

[4] According to Operabase, between the seasons 2004/5 and 2018/19, *Die Zauberflöte* was performed 9631 times worldwide in 1554 productions. Across those 15 seasons, the opera was ranked top, with the highest number of performances, four times. Overall, *Die Zauberflöte* is ranked second after *La Traviata*, which clocked up 10,243 performances during that time. Operabase, accessed September 17, 2019, www.operabase.com/statistics/en. In the puppet theaters I have frequented during my research, *Die Zauberflöte* is the most frequently programmed opera across the board.

have received much more focused musicological attention in recent years, such as automata or music boxes. The way musicologists have traditionally grappled with the figure of the puppet form an important backdrop to the materially grounded intervention of this dissertation, as they allow us to consider what is at stake when this stand-in for the human is simplified or exaggerated.

Interleaved with a critical discussion of these readings are historical interludes that highlight the manifold intersections of puppetry and music. In short, this chapter provides historical and critical context for the analyses that follow. Much of this context emerges from juxtaposition and resonance, inference and experience; for, as a product and creator of popular culture, puppetry's archival trace is faint. In the words of literature scholar Scott Cutler Shershow, puppetry is "oral, ephemeral, and itinerant, functioning at the margins of the economic market and accessible to the broadest possible range of spectators—not only in terms of social class but even in terms of age."[5] Accordingly, the puppet makes its presence felt in the written record most frequently as a metaphor. As Shershow continues, "Even [puppetry's] literal conditions—in which a material icon or figure serves as the vehicle or mouthpiece for some absent and invisible "author"—are a virtually inevitable metaphor for the entwined processes of cultural definition and appropriation."[6] By this account, puppetry possesses something like a recursive quality: once identified as such, a puppet tradition can be (re)appropriated to a variety of ends—metaphorical, philosophical, theatrical—including its own (re)definition.

This discursive groundwork sets the scene for Chapter Two, which explores what happens when the narrative and performance dynamics embedded in *Die Zauberflöte's* text are translated to the opera house in contemporary stagings and interpretations. I examine some of the ways in which

[5] Scott Cutler Shershow, *Puppets and "Popular" Culture* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 3.

[6] Ibid., 2.

directors and designers have explored the full gamut of opera's puppet affinities, from the whimsical to the probing, and how they forge performative and critical connections across histories, genres, and locales. Puppetry is uniquely suited to this task: the capaciousness that underpins puppetry's metaphorical life is reflected theatrically by a porousness between distinct traditions, while its dissemination through oral tradition brings with it transhistorical depth and generates innovative possibility.

Through analyses of recent productions by Yuval Sharon, Simon McBurney, and Barrie Kosky, I tease out key themes in puppet scholarship and their connections to music, music-making, and musical experience, while setting up the cases studies that make up the second half of the dissertation. While Sharon puts his singers on strings to evoke the tradition of marionette opera (Chapter Four), McBurney smoothens the fissures in the operatic text by exposing the technological workings of audio-visual relationships, bringing backstage machinery? onstage, which resonates in certain ways with the quasi-realistic aesthetic conjured by Richard Teschner's hybrid puppet theater (Chapter Five). Finally, Kosky turns his opera house into a movie theater. Through projections, intertitles, and silent film musical fillers, Kosky's singers are almost pinned in place, in ways reminiscent of shadow puppet figures or stop-motion animation, forms of puppetry I explore in a brief Epilogue focussed on the pioneering puppeteer and filmmaker Lotte Reiniger.

Having considered the puppet-y text of *Die Zauberflöte* itself and its puppet-y realizations in the conventional opera house, Chapter Three finally enters the puppet theater itself. Here, every role is performed by a puppet. The enchantment scene from the Act I finale represents a particular challenge in the puppet theater—how to turn certain figures momentarily into 'hyper-puppets', given that every character in the opera is played by a puppet in the first place. To uncover the ways in which this happens and their aesthetic and phenomenological effects, a holistic analytic approach is necessary, one that can account for the shifting convergence of material attributes, perceptual

sensibilities, and intermediate relations intrinsic to puppet performance. This chapter, therefore, lays out my concept of the "performance network," a framework for thinking through and with the myriad components of puppet performance, both human and non-human, material and symbolic. Informed by Bruno Latour's theories of agency and the so-called "new materialism," the performance network model gives voice to the ties between actors, their fluctuations and intensities, and in so doing, illuminates the collaborative and contingent nature of puppet performance.[7]

By anchoring the analyses here within a single work, these chapters map out the musicological terrain for future investigations of puppetry. If we, as musicologists, are most familiar with puppetry as a productive metaphor for certain modes of musical expression, the aim here is to demonstrate the richness of meaning to be gleaned when the metaphorical and discursive are grounded in material, embodied and phenomenological realities. The performance and practice of puppet realizations of *Die Zauberflöte*, therefore, enable us to consider what happens when the idea of the puppet—as manifested in the bell-enchantment scene, as latent in other visual set pieces in the opera—take material form.

Provocative questions emerge as a result of this investigation. For example, if this scene from the Act 1 finale suggests that music has the power to turn doubly subjugated people (black Monostatos and his black-slave minions) into puppets, what happens when these people are *already* puppets? What happens when the "raw material" over which music exerts its power, to use Carolyn Abbate's phrase, is not a human body but a solid wooden one, dangling at the end of invisible strings? How is a shift from autonomy to subjection rendered when the puppet is always subjected to and contingent upon an authority outside of its body? What does this scene tell us, when realized in the puppet theater, about the relationship between voices, bodies, instruments, and machines in

[7] For the foundational text on this topic, see Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Die Zauberflöte specifically and operatic performance more broadly? And what does it tell us about music's capacity to make, represent, or even undo a body? These chapters ultimately conjure the reciprocity between puppetry and music—the possibilities for musical sound and musical thinking to illuminate facets of puppet expression, and vice versa—for the properties of puppetry to generate fresh insights into musical thought, performance, and experience.

I. Predisposition: An Opera of Puppets

Let us take a moment to recall how, exactly, events in Die Zauberflöte unfold to bring about the musical enchantment scene. Papageno, the hero of that moment, is not quite so courageous when he first enters our story. He arrives on the scene after the real hero of the opera, the prince Tamino, has already been saved from the jaws of a monstrous serpent by the Three Ladies, emissaries of the Queen of the Night. Tamino had fainted without seeing his rescuers, and so when Papageno shows up, he mistakes the bird-catcher for his savior. Papageno takes the credit, only to be exposed by the Three Ladies, who seal his lips with a padlock as punishment. Leaving Papageno with only one word, or rather one sound—"hm"—they leave Tamino with a portrait of Pamina, the Queen's daughter, with whom he falls instantly in love. At this point, the mountainous vista parts to reveal the Queen herself, who begs Tamino to rescue Pamina from the clutches of the evil Sarastro. The Ladies enlist Papageno as Tamino's companion (and restore his vocal capacity), and grant them magical gifts to assist in their mission; Tamino receives a golden flute and, after some persuasion, Papageno accepts a set of bells. The unlikely pair is also promised the guidance of Three Boys, young and wise, who will help them along their journey.

Tamino, however, does not go immediately in search of Pamina; rather it is Papageno, who tracks her down in a corner of Sarastro's magnificent palace. While Tamino discovers the larger goal of his mission—which notoriously flips the cast, indeed the entire plot, on its head—Papageno undertakes the rescue mission single-handedly. He finds Pamina's captor, Monostatos, just as he is about to assault her. When Papageno confronts the Moor, they are initially terrified by each other's appearance, which is presented in a comic encounter—for each, the figure he sees is an inexplicable and alien Other, "the devil, no doubt about it." Both flee, but Papageno is the first to return. He introduces himself and shares with Pamina the news of Tamino's love for her. They leave to unite

the princess with her prince—but not before fending off the final attack of Monostatos and his cronies in the enchantment scene.

Hanswurst, Papageno's Forebear

Even with this cursory overview, certain aspects of the opera already emerge as especially susceptible to puppet representation or, in distinct ways, resonant with puppetry's essential attributes. Let's begin with Papageno, whose cultural ancestry brings the popular entertainments of travelling performers to the operatic stage.

Emmanuel Schikaneder (1751–1812), the original Papageno and the opera's librettist, was also the impresario of the Theater auf der Wieden, which had opened just four years prior to the premiere of *Die Zauberflöte*. After initial training as a chorister, Schikaneder began his adult career as a member of a wandering troupe. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, theatrical entertainment in Vienna had been provided exclusively by travelling companies, skilled in extemporized comedy, farce, and other forms of popular amusement, and critical in fostering Viennese adaptations of the character of Hanswurst. Prominent as a sixteenth-century allegorical figure in satire and propaganda, and a regular figure on travelling stages across central Europe, Hanswurst was claimed as an Austrian icon by Johann Anton Stranitzky (1676–1726).[1] Stranitzky was a wandering puppeteer from Styria, a state in the southeast of Austria, and settled in Vienna in 1705, where he encountered the marionette troupe of Johann Baptist Hilverding (c.1670 or 1677–1721).

It is generally acknowledged that Hilverding and Stranitzky embarked upon some sort of working partnership, although the precise division of labor or nature of their collaboration is mostly

[1] Ernst-Frieder Kratochwil, "Hanswurst," trans. Sabine Moran, *World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts*, 2009, accessed September 18, 2019 https://wepa.unima.org/en/hanswurst/.

unknown.[2] We do know that alongside performing as both an actor and a puppeteer, Stranitzky completed his studies in dentistry and established his own marionette theater in Vienna. In John Mohr Minniear's history of marionette opera, Stranitzky's theater stands out as one of the first fixed abodes for puppet performance in German-speaking lands.[3] By 1710, Stranitzky's troupe (possibly bequeathed to him from Hilverding) was installed as the resident company at the Kärtnertortheater, the first permanent home of extemporaneous German-language comedy.[4] As Douglas A. Russell describes it, the "nature of the plays was not that different from the popular fare of the preceding century, except for the fact that a new, specifically Austro-Bavarian, comic type took the place of the *commedia dell'arte* or pickelherring clown."[5] This new figure was Hanswurst, whom Stranitzky made famous on the Kärtnertor stage.

The family tree of Hanswurst is difficult to pin down, although as Russell's mention of the

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[2] John Mohr Minniear mentions these figures only briefly, foregrounding their common identity as puppeteers. See John Mohr Minniear, *Marionette Opera: Its History and Literature* (PhD diss., North Texas State University, 1971), 136. The entry for "Stranitzky" in the *World Encyclopaedia of Puppetry Arts* says that he "teamed up" with Hilverding, a puppeteer and his friend; see "Stranitzky," in *World Encyclopaedia of Puppetry Arts*, trans., Asha Narang Spaak, 2009, accessed November 6, 2019, https://wepa.unima.org/en/joseph-anton-stranitzky/.

[3] Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, 136.

[4] Regarding Hilverding, see Christopher Balme, "Stranitzky, Joseph (1676–1726)" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre and Performance* ed. Dennis Kennedy (Oxford and New. York: Oxford University Press, 2003), accessed November 6, 2019, https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780198601746.001.0001/acref-9780198601746-e-3784. On the Kärtnertortheater, see James van Horn Melton, "School, Stage, Salon: Musical Cultures in Haydn's Vienna," in *Haydn and the Performance of Rhetoric* ed. Tom Beghin and Sander M. Goldberg (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 95.

[5] Douglas A. Russell, ed., *An Anthology of Austria Drama* (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1982), 17. The theater was initially home to an Italian troupe, but the "citizenry rose up and demanded that Stranitzky's native players be given the house" (Russell, 16). For further details about the Kärtnertortheater, see Andrea Harrandt and Michael Jahn, "Kärntnertortheater," *Oesterreichisches Musiklexikon online*, accessed October 11, 2019, https://www.musiklexikon.ac.at/ml/musik_K/Kaerntnertortheater.xml.

commedia dell'arte suggests, the Italian Harlequin is likely a key figure in his ancestry.[6] Stranitzky assigned to his alter-ego a Salzburger heritage, somewhat at odds with his preference for a thick Viennese dialect.[7] Concerned primarily with the satisfaction of his many appetites, Hanswurst tended towards scatological and sexual humor.[8] His appearance echoed that of Harlequin: a multicolored uniform of "a loose red jacket with a fool's ruff, yellow pantaloons held up by red braces, a blue heart embroidered on his chest with the initials H. W., a tufted wig, beard, and heavy eyebrows, and a tall, green pointed hat."[9] Channeling similarly the nimbleness and agility of the *commedia dell'arte* hero, Stranitzky's Hanswurst was highly acrobatic and physical in his humor, which was punctuated by a slapstick, literally a stick split down the middle enabling the two halves to thwack against each other when brandished sharply.[10] According to James van Horn Melton, "Hanswurst's popularity continued to soar after 1741, when the Viennese court granted the Kärtnertor permission to perform comic operas in German."[11] By this time, Stranitzky's raucous peasant had been transformed by Gottfried Prehauser (1699–1769), to whom he passed the baton around 1720.[12] In Prehauser's hands, Hanswurst was no longer a coarse peasant but a more

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[6] The early life of the puppet theater in German-speaking lands is significantly indebted to Italian troupes. See Mohr Minniear, *Marionette Opera,* 20-57.

[7] van Horn Melton, "School, Stage, Salon," 95.

[8] James van Horn Melton, "From Image to Word: Cultural Reform and the Rise of Literate Culture in Eighteenth Century Austria," *The Journal of Modern History* 58, No.1 (March 1986): 106–7; Russell, *An Anthology of Austrian Drama*, 17.

[9] Russell, *An Anthology of Austrian Drama*, 17.

[10] The entry for "Stranitzky" in the *World Encyclopaedia of Puppetry Arts* mentions Stranitzky's "Narrenpritsche" or "fool's marotte," a stick with a carved head, which he apparently bestowed upon Gottfried Prehauser, his successor as Hanswurst. See Note 9.

[11] van Horn Melton, "School, Stage, Salon," 96.

[12] As with Hilverding and Stranitzky, sources are conflicted about the chronology of events between Stranitzky and Prehauser.

amenable and sentimental figure of subservience. Newly softened, Prehauser's Hanswurst was fit to rekindle his romantic relations with Columbine, a compatriot from *commedia dell'arte* tradition.[13]

Despite his immense popularity, Hanswurst was deemed a threat by the establishment to what should be the noble aspirations of German-language theater. The Hanswurst character came under attack as early as the 1720s, in the wake of a polemical reform mission born of the ideas of the North German critic Johann Christoph Gottsched. Improvised comedy was replaced by written scripts upon Maria Theresia's decree in 1752, which helped fix the presentation of Hanswurst. Joseph Freiherr von Sonnenfels, a committed Gottschedian, novelist, jurist, and later Mozart's patron at the Viennese court, took up invective against the character in the 1760s, in his *Der Mann ohne Vorurtheile* and *Briefe über die Wienerische Schaubühne.*[14] Upon his appointment as theater censor in 1770, Sonnenfels used his office to expel the popular figure from the stage, by means of a blanket ban on all extemporaneous performance (without improvised comedy, Hanswurst could not exist).[15] Exiled from the theater, however, Hanswurst lived on as a puppet, and found a cousin in the figure of Kasperl, the character whose name would eventually become the generic label for children's puppet theater in Austria, "Kasperl-Theater."[16]

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[13] Hans-Albrecht Koch, *Das deutsche Singspiel* (Germany: Springer-Verlag, 1974), 66.

[14] For an extended discussion of Sonnenfel's *Briefe* and his involvement in censorship, see Martin Nedbal, *Morality and Viennese Opera in the Age of Mozart and Beethoven* (Routledge: Abingdon and New York, 2017), 28-35.

[15] Melton, "From Image to Word,"121, 93fn.

[16] Kasperl-Theater is the German-speaking equivalent to Punch and Judy shows in England. Kratochwil, "Hanswurst." Hans R. Purschke distinguishes between the ancestral history of the marionette theater and the hand-puppet tradition. Where marionette theater is descendant from Hanswurst through Stranitzky, Johann Laroche's Kasperl, and Franz Graf Pocci's Kasperl Larifari, the hand-puppets are born of medieval knightly games and the figure of Pulcinella. See Purschke, "Die Ahnherren Kasperls" in *Über das Puppenspiel und seine Geschichte* (Frankfurt/M.: Puppen und Masken, 1983). The introduction to Russell's *Anthology of Austrian Drama* gives a helpful overview of theatrical trends and censorship during the period. See Douglas A. Russell (ed.), *An Anthology of Austria Drama* (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1982), 11–35.

Hanswurst was arguably reborn on the theatrical stage in the figure of Papageno. Papageno shares with his predecessor a number of basic attributes: garish attire, an insatiable appetite, and a life in servitude. As he explains in his first encounter with Tamino, Papageno delivers his avian spoils to the Queen of the Night on a daily basis. This broad sense of routine underlines what Hayoung Heidi Lee describes as Papageno's "repetition compulsion."[17] Musical repetition provides much of Papageno's comic appeal. The stuttering "pa"s, simultaneously hesitant and excited, of his final duet with Papagena, for example, generate a vocal excess, a frothiness and exuberance, that reflects the couple's ambitions to procreate immediately. Conversely (yet similarly liable to elicit laughter from the audience), Papageno's padlocked lips can only manage frustrated "hm"s in the Act 1 Quintet. His incapacitation is reinforced by a quirk in Mozart's orchestration: Papageno's vocal line is doubled at pitch by the bassoon. The nasal timbre of Papageno's vocal emissions merges with that of the double-reed instrument to produce what might be called "a form of orchestrational synthesis," where "Papageno's voice is distributed between his body and the orchestra."[18] In other words, where Papageno ends and the orchestra begins becomes rather fuzzy—and this might be only the thin end of the wedge.

Bells and Whistles

Papageno's body-voice complex undergoes more explicit transformations through his interactions with onstage instruments—and it is within such interactions that the unique dimensions of *Die Zauberflöte's* puppet aesthetic are embedded. In the puppet theater, the connections between sounds and their sources are loose, multiple and diffuse. This is because the stars of the show, the puppets

[17] Hayoung Heidi Lee, "Papageno Redux: Repetition and the Rewriting of Character in Sequels to *Die Zauberflöte*," *The Opera Quarterly* 28, nos. 1-2 (2012): 73.

[18] See Emily I. Dolan and Hayley Fenn, "Orchestration" in *The Cambridge Handbook to* The Magic Flute, ed. Jessica Waldoff (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

themselves, are manifestly silent creatures: their wooden, felt, or leather bodies emit no intentional sounds, only accidental ones. For the puppet to be perceived as responsive to sounds in their environment—let alone as creators of those sounds—a whole host of technical and performative negotiations must be undertaken, by the performers, the audience, the puppets themselves and the various other material components of puppet performance, an assemblage I term the "performance network" (on which Chapter Three will elaborate further).

When it comes to the basic welding of a puppet to a sound, the original sound source may be the puppeteer themselves or a live third-party: a speaker, a singer, a musician, or a Foley artist. When these sounds are recorded and replayed in the theater—a frequent occurrence, especially in marionette opera—the real source of the sounds exists already at a remove from the present realm of the performance, a material reality that somewhat paradoxically fixes the flexibility of sound-source relations inherent in all puppet displays. Depending on the style(s) of puppetry and the mode(s) of sound production in a given show, the link between sound and source can be variously loosened, undone, and forged anew. While the attribution of a sound to a source is constantly under threat, it is simultaneously enlivened by such potentiality. The essential sonic attribute of the puppet, we might say, is its tolerance for—and nurturing of—a sense of playfulness and openness in relation to the sources of its sounds. In *Die Zauberflöte*, an operatic text written for conventional performance, the relationships between the onstage instruments, their supposed players and their listeners or otherwise designated recipients are constantly shifting, calling straightforward notions of musical agency and materiality into question.

The magic bells aren't Papageno's only instrument. Before he receives them from the Three Ladies, he already possesses an instrument of his own: a set of panpipes.[19] The earthy, folkish

[19] For more information about the actual instrument of these panpipes, see Dolan and Fenn, "Orchestration," 9–10.

associations of the pipes straightforwardly reinforce Papageno's designation as a *Naturmensch,* while their relative ease of playing gives rise to an especially visceral stage picture. Operatic stages are frequently graced by musical instruments, usually to signal shifts into the diegesis for acts of self-conscious music-making, but they are rarely actually played by their supposed players. Papageno's set of panpipes, however, is an instrument—and a part, consisting only of the 5-note flourish of "Papagenos Ton"—that the onstage performer *can* play.[20] The problem with wind instruments is that they interrupt vocal, and potentially verbal, expression. In order to play the panpipes, the singer must render themselves temporarily mute, and therefore, devoid of language and perhaps too of knowledge, an argument against wind instruments that originates with the contest between Apollo and Marsyas.[21] Crucially, in most productions of *Zauberflöte* (and indeed, as the stage directions indicate, *pfeift von ferne*), we hear Papageno's panpipes before we see him; and later in the opera too, the panpipe call/chirp helps Tamino reunite with his comrade through a process of quasi-echolocation. The panpipes and their sound, in other words, can stand in for Papageno: "Hello, Papageno here," they tweet. Such correspondence between man and instrument imbues the panpipes with a metonymic function that we might say trumps the loss of language, or even negates it.

During his entrance aria, "Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja," Papageno plays his "Ton" eight times per stanza, of which there are three. In his famous theorizing of the "musical erotic," the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard suggests that we tolerate the repetition of this call precisely because it says everything it needs to say:

one does not tire of hearing it again and again, because it is an absolutely adequate expression of

[20] The panpipe's music is notated in Papageno's part, eliding instrumental playing and vocal display.

[21] To highlight but one discussion of the myth, see John Hamilton, *Music, Madness, and Unworking of Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 37–41.

Papageno's life, whose whole life is such an incessant twittering; who, always carefree, chirps on in idleness, and who is happy and satisfied because this is his life-content, happy in his work and happy in his song.[22]

In Papageno and his pipes, idea and expression are perfectly matched so there is no loss of meaning. This is what Kierkegaard calls the "immediate-musical." Language is inherently mediate: the process of linguistic expression requires reflection, a temporal displacement between that represented and the representation. Provided the material is apt for representation in words, the reflective distance assures accuracy or clarity of expression, a stark contrast to the indeterminacy of musical representation. For Kierkegaard, language is "the most concrete of all media" and the essential medium of the spirit.[23]

Music, on the other hand, is an abstract medium. It is vague or indeterminate in its mimetic capacities, a characteristic of music that Kierkegaard considers to be, in a sense, synonymous with its immediate nature. The temporality of music is, for Kierkegaard, only there in "an unessential sense": the fact that music unfolds in time doesn't tell us anything about music other than that it unfolds in time, a fact of the physical nature of sound.[24] According to Kierkegaard, music's meaning is not embedded in its temporal span, but derives from its affective impact in the moment, its immediacy. It is unsurprising, therefore, that Kierkegaard finds Tamino's musical endeavors to be anathema to his personal mission and the opera's ideological trajectory, namely, the acquisition of self-knowledge, which, in Kierkegaard's words, is "a totally unmusical idea." Such a narrative, indeed, demands the reflective processes of language, not the knee-jerk immediacy of music. Papageno's priorities, on the

[22] Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: A Fragment of a Life,* trans. David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 66

[23] Ibid., 43.

[24] Ibid., 45.

other hand, specifically his appetites for food, drink, and women, are governed by a concern for immediate gratification. As such, the pipes are "an absolutely adequate expression of Papageno's life."[25]

Jean Starobinski considers Papageno's thrall to immediate gratification something of a weakness, however. In his analysis of the possession and distribution of power in the opera, Starobinski identifies such immediacy as a distraction from Papageno's potential power. For Starobinski, Papageno wields power physically only in the sense that he captures defenseless birds. In all other regards, Papageno displays little, if any, (self-)control or power. "As a man of nature (*Naturmensch*) incapable of disguising his cowardice, his gluttony, his appetite for girls," Satrobinski writes, "Papageno immediately gives away the *meaning* of his character. In every way, he is the man of spontaneous desire, of instinct, of short-winded and artless thought."[26] Following Kierkegaard, Starobinski invokes the concept of "immediacy," but to characterize Papageno's "absence of extensive power" and his abundance of "spontaneous strength," which "places in bold relief the *mediate* character of the initiatory experience imposed upon Tamino and Pamina."[27] While the panpipes collapse the distance between a sound and its source, the flute reinforces the distance—or at least works within the space—attempting to take on the role of language, but as an act of parsing, as opposed to the naming enacted by the panpipes.

If the panpipes encapsulate Papageno the man, his actions have their own sonic realization. The chime of Papageno's bells is, for Kierkegaard, "the musical expression for his activity, of which

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[25] Ibid., 67.

[26] Jean Starobinski, "A Reading to *The Magic Flute,*" *The Hudson Review* 31, no. 3 (Fall 1978): 410–11, original emphasis.

[27] Ibid., 411, original emphasis.

one can only get an understanding through music."[28] Such radical identification between source and sound is the kind whose dissolution is bemoaned by the philosopher Ernst Bloch in his essay from the 1930s "Magic Rattle, Human Harp." For Bloch, there was a hallowed time when music's substance was coterminous with an instrument's substance and capacity:

> …when the musical note did not appear such a free agent. It was linked quite specifically with the instrument producing it. When first consciously produced, it was wholly attached to its instrument and had no other association. Thus the original rattle rattled as the thing it was; the rattling sound is merely its verb, as it were.[29]

Bloch pinpoints the introduction of panpipes as the moment when music could detach itself from the substance of the instrument and take flight into the symbolic. In Bloch's words:

> The more the musical note developed, the more it parted from this foundation. It surmounted its instrument, so to speak, and now used it as merely a means of assistance. Now the ringing and tinkling broke loose from the ringing brass and the tinkling bell; musicians no longer just "attended on" their instruments but availed themselves of them. This change is marked by the invention of the pan-pipe: the first instrument which did not emit fearsome or muffled sounds in isolation but gave out a well-ordered series of notes. It is at this point that *music* is born, music as a shout of sorrow or pleasure and not as material magically sounding.[30]

In this new landscape of musical materials, therefore, it is the singer *on the operatic stage* who reunites sound and source. In other vocal genres, such as solo song and oratorio, the human voice is another instrument amongst many; but in opera, singers are "instruments on the stage that are physically active and significant once more: not sacred instruments, but ones with a natural emphasis…a kind of human harp."[31]

In the figure of Papageno, adorned with panpipes and bells, we find various configurations

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[28] Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 67.

[29] Ernst Bloch, *Essays on the Philosophy of Music,* trans. Peter Palmer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 140.

[30] Bloch, *Essays*, 140.

[31] Ibid., 143-44.

of sources and sounds. Papageno's "natural" voice is in a certain sense extended by his panpipes: with their sole emission they seem to call out his name, enacting a signifying role. The bells also emit the sound of their substance, their unmediated activity—or at least, we are led to believe that this could be a possibility. As Carolyn Abbate suggests, the bells might also be understood in relation to Papageno's voice, but as a threat to rather than an extension of it. In theory, the bells constitute an onstage instrument Papageno could, unlike his panpipes, play while singing; in Mozart's opera, however, this isn't how it works out. For Papageno sings at the same time as the bells on just one occasion, and very briefly: during their final appearance, when they are engaged at the instruction of the Three Boys to conjure Papagena. On every other occasion, Papageno's singing in fact alternates with the music of the bells, as though the bells have the power to mute his voice. Tracking the evolution of the prop of the bells, Abbate observes their mutant potential: "whatever had been in the box jumped out, assumed the guise of little bells, and started creeping up toward Papageno's face, as if propelled by its symbolic power to shut his mouth."[32] But what kind of instrument can wield such power over its owner? And what does their music do to those who hear it?

The Sound of Magic

From the outset, there is a question mark regarding the bells' autonomy. When Papageno first receives the bells from the Three Ladies, he is unsure of what exactly he is supposed to do with them. Told that he will hear little bells ringing from *inside*—"Darinnen hörst du Glöcken tönen"—he asks, "Werd' ich sie auch wohl spielen können?" ("Will I be able to play them as well?"), as opposed, one assumes, to merely holding the box in which they are housed. Clearly Papageno perceives something that suggests that these ringing bells might not need a player, an external operator to

[32] See Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), 83.

activate their sonic capacities, but rather might be able to ring unaided or somehow play themselves.

The bells' potential sovereignty is seemingly underscored by their provenance. For one of the many enharmonic commas in the opera's plotting is that such a useful magical tool was given to Papageno by the Three Ladies, who (it emerges) are allied with evil. After setting everything up in the opera's early scenes, the Three Ladies largely drop out of the action, and the role of special advisors is picked up by the Three Boys.[33] But in the event of the opera's famous "reversal," to use Karol Berger's term, when the monarchs swap sides—"the wronged mother turns out to be evil, the tyrant turns out to be good"—the Ladies' actions in giving the gifts are not retroactively revealed to have been dangerous or misleading.[34] Quite the opposite, in fact. And the Boys, similarly, fulfil their role as it is originally presented, ensuring the success of the intrepid pair in their quest to find love—despite Papageno's struggles to curb his appetite and his chatter during the trials. There is a sense, then, in which the Three Ladies, by proxy, and the Three Boys quite literally, function as *dei ex machina,* as something or someone intervening, without warning or precedent, in an ostensibly insoluble situation to ensure a happy outcome.[35] And the magic instruments are surely inanimate versions of the same. Through their music, they exert their power.

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[33] In her excavation of the precedents for Mozart's Three Boys, Adeline Mueller highlights the slippage between their designation as "Knaben" and "Genien." I use "Boys" throughout my dissertation, but it is worth clarifying that the roles were played by women (two sopranos and a mezzo-soprano) until 1937 when Arturo Toscanini decided to cast choirboys in his staging for Salzburg. See Adeline Mueller, "Who were the Drei Knaben?" *The Opera Quarterly* 28, nos. 1-2 (2012): 90.

[34] See Karol Berger, *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow: An Essay on the Origins of Musical Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 281.

[35] Mueller puts it well: "They [the Three Boys] act as agents of virtually all the major turns in the plot, leading Tamino to the Temple of Wisdom, arriving just in time to save both Pamina and Papageno from suicide, and facilitating the two reunions required for dramatic closure: Pamina with Tamino, and Papagena with Papageno. Furthermore, they transcend the Singspiel's surface conflict: though ostensibly agents of the Three Ladies, they answer to no authority save perhaps Wisdom itself." Mueller, "Who were the Drei Knaben?" 90.

The bells don't simply ring, however: they play a tune. When we first hear Papageno's bells in Act 1, when he uses them to ward off Monostatos and his men, they play a simple melodic line consisting of arpeggiations of G major's primary chords. A strong sense of 1 beat per measure and the metallic timbre of the "Strumento d'acciaio"—the keyboard instrument, not dissimilar to the celeste, responsible for making the bells' sound—conjures images of music boxes and musical clocks, musical machines familiar to eighteenth-century audiences.[36] In their subsequent appearances—during the Act 2 finale when the Three Boys advise Papageno to use the bells to summon Papagena, and especially as Papageno's "duet partner" in the Act 2 aria, "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen"—the bells play increasingly florid and ornamental music.

The onstage props traditionally used to depict the bells would not actually be able to produce this music. While different productions have Papageno wield all sorts of gadgets, the music is played by a musician offstage, nowadays on a celeste. During one particular performance, Mozart decided to play a trick on Schikaneder's Papageno, which he described in a letter to his wife Constanze from early October 1791:

> […] during Papageno's aria with the glockenspiel I went behind the scene, as I felt a sort of impulse today to play it myself. Well, just for fun, at the point where Schikaneder has a pause, I played an arpeggio. He was startled, looked behind the wings and saw me. When he had his next pause, I played no arpeggio. This time he stopped and refused to go on. I guessed what he was thinking and again played a chord. He then struck the glockenspiel and said '*Shut up*'. Whereupon everyone

[36] Carolyn Abbate observes that the music of the magic bells in this scene is played by a music box in Jonathan Demme's film *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991). During the nineteenth century, the tune had become "a typical 'number' for music boxes, as if," Abbate observes, "musical automata were claiming their own from within the opera" (*In Search of Opera*, 82). The automata and other musical machines of the eighteenth century have gained increasing attention from musicologists in recent years. For a comprehensive social, cultural, and technical study of musical automata in particular, with a focus on the artisanal practices of automata manufacture, see Adelheid Voskuhl, *Androids in the Enlightenment: Mechanics, Artisans, and Cultures of the Self* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). For related discussions of automatic instruments, see Rebecca Cypess, "'It Would Be without Error': Automated Technology and the Pursuit of Correct Performance in the French Enlightenment," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 142, No.1 (2017): 1–29; Jessica Riskin, "Eighteenth-Century Wetware," *Representations* 83 (Summer 2003): 97–125; Annette Richards, "Automatic Genius: Mozart and the Mechanical Sublime," *Music and Letters* 80, no.3 (1999).

laughed. I am inclined to think that this joke taught many of the audience for the first time that Papageno does not play the instrument himself.[37]

At this performance, on this single evening, with a disruption of illusion and a breach in the fourth wall, Mozart amplified any confusion between what was seen and what was heard, creating new kinds of (mis)alignments. This prank took the bells out of Papageno's hands and re-cast them as an *autonomous* self-playing instrument. And in a sense, we might say that the music of the bells is less the sounding of "pure" material, and perhaps more an invocation of the mechanical in music, which, as we witness during the Act 1 finale when the bells take control of the slaves, has a darker side.

The bells perform a similar take-over with Papageno: but where they supplant the voices of the slaves, they suppress Papageno's. In the original production, Schikaneder appears to have mimed on a glockenspiel, a generic term that has persisted in the *Neue-Mozart-Ausgabe*. The names given to the object proffered by the Three Ladies, however, suggest something rather more weird and wonderful: a laughter machine. The autograph score designates the instrument "ein stählnes Gelächter," laughter in steel, while the original libretto called for "eine Machine wie in hölzernes Gelächter," a machine-like wooden laughter.[38] These anthropomorphic names frame the instrument as a vehicle for human expression, as though they produce sounds that might be emitted from a body, from a mouth, indeed; something almost vocal. Through this lens, the bells must surely behave like a wind instrument: impossible for both to sound at the same time, the bells must alternate with the voice of the singer, generating a dynamic of continuation, or even displacement. The enforced separation of voice and bells, Abbate suggests, constructs an equivalence or interchangeability between these two sound sources, which conjures the image of a chimera. Such "rapid oscillation"

[37] Emily Anderson (ed. and trans.), *The Letters of Mozart and His Family,* Third Edition (London: Macmillan Press, 1985), 969.

[38] Cited and discussed in Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, 78.

between the voice and the bells gives rise to "a metamorphic timbre," a sound that captures Papageno's straddling of various agential and aesthetic domains, as being on the brink. When he finally sings *with* the bells, therefore, "there is…a miraculous escape from all machines, from their grip and the needle."[39] Abbate continues:

> The threat of metamorphosis—mutation of human voice into 'laughter in steel'—is laid to rest in the instant that the bells are reduced to accompaniment, something that has no power to replace or arrest human singing. The chimerical half-man half-instrument is split in two, the bells fall permanently silent, while the human voice escapes.[40]

Papageno's Hanswurstian subjugation is undone by his voice as it strives towards the ultimate display of virility: procreation with Papagena.

There is one final point, however, that brings this investigation of Papageno full circle and back to the question of performance practice and pragmatics. Papageno's panpipes were, and are, playable by the performer, a practical reality that expands the performative horizons of the opera, bringing music-making into not only the diegesis, but the real world, and further: into the very body of Papageno. The bells, however, dictate a rather different, more constrictive performance reality, for the sound of the offstage instrument was simply too weak to be heard underneath Papageno's voice, or any other for that matter. In other words, Mozart necessarily had to keep aural conflicts at bay when writing for the bells and so was forced to adopt a practice of alternation. As Abbate observes, this "acoustic fact of life" took on a symbolic power, which could elide the distinction between human voice and metallic percussion instrument, between the natural and the man-made, between human and machine agencies.[41]

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[39] Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, 83.

[40] Ibid., 83.

[41] Ibid., 83.

Tamino and the Deadness of the Flute

Unlike Papageno, Tamino has just one instrument: the magic flute. As with Papageno's panpipes, Tamino's voice is necessarily muted when he plays the flute (although the singer in his role never actually plays that part) and its music is, just like that of the bells, invoked for protective purposes.[42] Yet while the bells, as described above and discussed in more detail below, exert their power over human bodies, the flute is called upon to what might be described as more "natural" ends: to tame wild animals and quell the elements. Furthermore, there is a sense in which Tamino's flute simply enacts the logical outgrowth of its origins, for, as Pamina explains to Tamino before the trials of fire and water, the flute was carved by her father "out of the deepest heart of the thousand-year-old oak, amidst thunder and lightning, storm and tempers." Made of organic material, the flute is a manifestation of the same world over which it exerts power, a relationship that might be read as analogous to that between Papageno and his pipes, whose straightforward diatonicism and unrefined timbre convey their owner's rustic charm into the avian world. And similarly, as with the bells, the flute is also magical, and so assigned a purpose beyond identify affirmation. While Papageno's set of magic bells is a mechanical musical object that can turn people into machines, Tamino's flute channels the very essence of Music (read: Western art music and its attendant characteristics) to overpower the natural world.

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[42] The tenor Benedict Schack premiered the role of Tamino. Known also to play wind instruments, Schack was long thought to have played the onstage flute part in his performances. Indeed, this belief persists in the current entry for *Die Zauberflöte* in *Grove Music Online.* (See Julian Rushton, "Zauberflöte, Die." *Grove Music Online.* 2002, accessed July 21, 2020, https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000907810). Theodore Albrecht, however, argues that this understanding of Schack's role in the opera is based on a misreading of the word "spielen," meaning "to play." See Theodore Albrecht, "Anton Dreyssig (c. 1753/4-1820): Mozart's and Beethoven's *Zauberflötist*" in *Words about Mozart: Essays in Honor of Stanley Sadie*, ed. Dorothea Link and Judith Nagley (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2005), 179-192.



Figure 1.1 Joseph and Peter Schaffer, scenic design for the first act of the 1793 representation of the Magic Flute

In their designs for a 1793 production of the opera, Joseph and Peter Schaffer expanded the natural world to include people, and in so doing, forged an uncomfortable parallelism between animals and racialized humans (see Fig. 1.1). For the scene when Tamino tames the wild animals ("Wie stark ist nicht dean Zauberton"), the Schaffers replaced the animals with eight brown and black anthropoid bodies. Two of the figures appear to be moving on all fours, while the rest of the group hold their arms out loosely just in front of their bodies, the allusion to an ape-like disposition unmistakable. Their joints are not clearly articulated; neither are their faces, with the only distinguishable facial feature a pronounced, bulbous jaw. The figures are covered all over in dark spots, which, upon closer inspection, seem to stand out from their skin, like tufts of hair or fur. The

inscription that appears beneath the image still describes the figures as animals: "Through your playing lovely flute, even wild animals feel joy" ("Holde Flöte durch dein Spielen selbst wilde Thiere fühlen"). The approximation of human and animal qualities in these figures thus becomes a violent insinuation of their apparent inability to access feelings and emotions.

This reductive portrayal of human beings as animals is made even more troubling by the parallelism to the scene in which Papageno "tames" the slaves. In this way, Tamino's flute and Papageno's bells are in the same category of magical devices. Such mirroring even overshadows an essential dramaturgical difference between the two scenes. For while Papageno draws on his bells in an act of resistance, in the hope that the bells will protect himself and the princess, Tamino plays his flute in an act of self-expression, overcome with relief upon discovering that Pamina is alive. The fact that the flute's music beguiles the animals is effectively a byproduct of Tamino's musical reverie. In contrast to Papageno's conscious employment of his magical instrument to save lives, his own included, Tamino unwittingly asserts his superiority by using his flute more simply to express himself, to celebrate. The fact that the flute exerts any power over anything, let alone anyone, when it is called into service for self-reflection (as opposed to self-protection, as in the case of Papageno) might feed the notion that it acts independently, that it is indifferent to those around it.

Some scholars have identified a quality of indifference in the very music of the magic flute, making it unsuited to its task as conduit of incommunicable emotion. As discussed above, Kierkegaard considers Tamino's flute-playing "exceedingly tiresome and sentimental," such is its inaptitude to the task in hand, that of the quest for enlightenment.[43] Unable to convey the protagonist's growing self-knowledge, the immediacy of music serves no purpose here other than to "drive away thought."[44] Marianne Tettlebaum lends greater credence to the flute's music, which she

[43] Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 66.

[44] Ibid., 66.

hears as a "substitute for what is otherwise inexpressible in words"—first Tamino's love for Pamina and relief that she lives, and subsequently, the prospect of coming face-to-face with death as a result of the trials;[45] but it still functions as something of a "time-killer," to use Kierkegaard's phrase.[46] Rather than conveying what Tamino might want to say, in its own way, through music, the flute says its own thing entirely—or even, bespeaks its own being. Thus, of the instrument's first outing, Tettlebaum writes: "The flute's quaint, folksy, even formulaic tune is almost too lighthearted, too "fluty," perhaps, to reflect the depths of human gratitude Tamino wishes to express."[47]

The march that triumphs over the trials of fire and water is, for Tettlebaum, similarly detached from its circumstance, not only "disarmingly cool and aloof," but also fails its brief:

> For a march…music designed to accompany people as they move forward, the piece is rather static, a quality reinforced by the sparse accompaniment, as well as the breathy quality of the flute line.[48]

This sense of stasis is reinforced further, as Abbate observes, by the direct repetition of the trial music: the flute plays exactly the same passage for both the trial by fire and that by water. Building on the interpretation of Aleksandr Ulybyshev, who, in a 1840s survey of Mozart's operas, described the march as "meaningless, as if merely obeying the whistling of a puppeteer," and Igor Stravinsky's description of the music as a "funeral march," Abbate suggests that the improvisatory character of Tamino's music, "a sign of live human agency," is "kidnapped by pure repetition."[49] If the music is the same both times, "was it not, then, a reproduction the first time round as well, the nth repetition

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[45] Marianne Tettlebaum, "Whose Magic Flute?" *Representations* Vol.102 (Spring 2008), 85.

[46] Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 66.

[47] Tettlebaum, "Whose Magic Flute?" 83.

[48] Ibid., 84.

[49] Cited and discussed in Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, 56.

of something that is switched on, and off again as needed?"[50] With the image of a gramophone or similar sound reproduction device in the foreground of her analysis, Abbate invokes another medium through which external control masquerades as autonomous life, namely, the marionette. Here is Abbate's observation in full:

> the March is authorless music, dancing helplessly in red shoes and switched on by a tune not its own, with the marionette theatre right on the surface when what appears to be improvisation, a sign of live human agency, is revealed as mechanical repetition….The flute melody of the March sounds as if Tamino were inventing music on the spot…This very unpredictability, however, the quality of being improvised, is immediately kidnapped by pure repetition: the "improvisation" is repeated *da capo* for the second round, captured and replayed."[51]

This compelling analysis is also a representative example of how puppetry has served a metaphorical function in musicology to date. To be sure, marionette theaters are mechanical environments and their inhabitants mechanical figures, but the resultant aesthetic effect of a marionette performance is rarely mechanical, certainly not to the extent that a marionette's movements could be compared to a gramophone recording on repeat. Here the image of the marionette theater simply provides a shorthand for external control. That Abbate invokes a marionette theater is culturally and historically relevant, as we shall learn more about below, but materially and performatively incidental. What if it weren't?

Marionettentheater **and the** ***Singspiel*** **Tradition**

At the time of *Die Zauberflöte*'s premiere in 1791, permanent string puppet theaters were putting down roots across the Viennese suburbs.[52] As mentioned above, theatrical entertainment had long

[50] Ibid., 57.

[51] Ibid, 56–7.

[52] See Ulrike Sümegi and Michael Freismuth, "Austria," trans. Anne Nguyen, *World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts*, 2011, accessed October 10, 2019, https://wepa.unima.org/en/austria/.

been an itinerant occupation, dominated by travelling showmen often from Italy and England. On the road, puppets were showcased alongside all kinds of other mechanical and phantasmagoric entertainments, as though testament to the puppet's definitional slipperiness (on which more below).[53] As Minniear elucidates in his history of marionette opera, the sustenance of the puppet theater was, in all sorts of ways, entangled with religious and political thinking and events. For example, Minniear observes how the breakout of a "theological war against theatrical representations" in Hamburg in 1680 lead to the desertion of theaters by audiences and then, necessarily, actors—which in turn energized the puppet theaters, as a refuge from both sides of the argument.[54] Pertinent to our investigation here, Minniear describes "a strange custom" that emerged from the "incontestable supremacy" of the puppet theater, as "dispossessed actors" started to "lend their voices to speaking the parts of puppets."[55] When they were able to return to the stage, actors then performed alongside the puppets in *Haupt-und-Staats-actionen*, melodramatic spectacles, often bastardizations or hybridizations of foreign plays, that combined political or military subjects with the buffoonery of Hanswurst and his kin. In these plays, "the living actors filled the parts of the least objectionable characters, while the puppets, who had no fears, did all the rest."[56]

In the latter years of the seventeenth century, puppet shows evolved into courtly entertainment. Prince Nikolaus I of Esterházy can be credited with cementing the nobility's love of

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[53] In the introduction to their volume on nineteenth-century European puppetry, John McCormick and Bennie Pratasik conjure the patchwork of entertainments peddled by travelling showmen, from automata to wax figures to all kinds of puppetry, which leads to all kinds of definitional difficulties. See John McCormick and Bennie Pratasik, *Popular Puppet Theater in Europe, 1800–1914* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1–17, especially 4–7.

[54] Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, 136–7.

[55] Ibid., 136–7.

[56] Ibid., 137.

the puppet theater. A well-known figure in traditional histories of European classical music—as a lover of music himself and an accomplished amateur player of the baryton—the prince was instrumental in the promotion of Franz Joseph Haydn, whom he made Kapellmeister at his court in 1766.[57] It was around this time that Nikolaus I began spending more and more time at his newly renovated palace at Esterháza (now Fertőd in Hungary), which was something of a monument to music and the arts. In 1762, the new theater was inaugurated, in 1768, the opera house, and finally, in 1773, the marionette theater.

In early September of that year, Empress Maria Theresia travelled from her palace in Vienna to the prince's residence in Esterháza.[58] Her visit was commemorated with extravagant musical programming, which included (amongst other things) a performance of a marionette opera.[59] Located directly opposite the main theater, the marionette theater resembled a fairy-tale grotto, replete with shell and mother-of-pearl inlays, and automatic water fountains to greet the visitors. Here, the empress bore witness to what is now the earliest documented performance of a Haydn puppet opera: *Philemon und Baucis*, preceded by its *Vorspiel, Der Götterrath*.[60] According to the *Relation*

[57] The baryton is similar to a bass viol, but with a plucked set of sympathetic strings.

[58] There are no extant records for the theater before 1773 and so the visit of Empress Maria Theresia is usually considered its inaugural event.

[59] For the most recent study of Haydn's involvement in Nikolaus I's marionette theater, see Klaus Pollheimer, *Das Marionettentheater zu Eszterház: das Marionettentheater auf Schloss Eszterház zur Zeit Joseph Haydns und sein Begründer Karl Michael von Pauerspach: ein Beitrag zur Theater- und Musikgeschichte* (Wien: Hollitzer, 2016). The most well-known and comprehensive English-language study is H. C. Robbins Landon's weighty essay for the *Haydn Yearbook* entitled "Haydn's Marionette Operas and the Repertoire of the Marionette Theater at the Esterház Castle.," in *Haydn Yearbook* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1962), 111-199. Extant sources for the marionette opera are relatively scant. Cross-referencing biographies and catalogues, Robbins Landon proposes the list of marionette operas by Haydn in Appendix 1.

[60] According to the anonymous *Beschreibung des Hochfürstlichen Schlosses Esterháß im Königreiche Ungern [sic]*, the theater was quite a sight to behold: "The Marionette Theater is situated *vis-à-vis* from the Opera House, and it is quite large but without boxes and gallery. The whole pit looks like a grotto, in that all the walls, niches and openings are covered with steps, stones and snails; and when it is

des fêtes, a special booklet published for the occasion, the empress "deigned to applaud" [*a daigné donner des appaudissements*] when hearing *Philemon*.[61] Although this performance inaugurated the puppet theater at Esterháza, a full season of its own was not established until 1776, when it was overseen by the director, composer, librettist, and original owner of the prince's puppet theater materials, Karl von Pauersbach.[62]

In the three years that followed, various works were performed by the Esterháza marionettes. Haydn wrote at least six operas for the puppets (see Appendix 1), but as Martin Nedbal has observed, "the interchangeability of puppet and musical theater meant that the same works would be performed both as live and puppet shows."[63] In his study of Haydn's marionette operas and the Esterházy repertoire, H. C. Robbins Landon highlights the problem of labelling, and resultant difficulty in identifying puppet operas. As his research details, a variety of terms may be used to designate a marionette opera, including "Spektakel," "Operette," and "Singspiel."[64] Growing

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lighted, it presents a very curious and striking appearance. The Theatre itself (i.e., the stage) is rather large, and the puppets are very well made and costumes magnificent." From *Bescreibung des Hochfürstlichen Schlosses Esterháß im Königreiche Ungern [sic]*, Pressburg, 1784. Translated in Robbins Landon, "Haydn's Marionette Operas," 118. The entry "Performance Spaces" in *The Cambridge Haydn Encyclopedia* mentions water fountains "activated by entering public" (281). Any information about the grotto-inspired theater are all derived from eye-witness descriptions: "In spite of exhaustive archaeological efforts, however, a recent renovation of the surviving building shell was able to preserve little to nothing of the original marionette theater interior." See Caryl Clark and Sarah Day-O'Connell (eds.), *The Cambridge Haydn Encyclopedia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 281.

[61] *Relation des fêtes données à sa majesté l'impératrice par S. A. Mgr .le prince d'Esterhazy Dans son Château d'Esterhaz Le 1r & 2e 7bre 1773. Vienne De l'Imprimerie de Ghelen*. Cited in Robbins Landon, "Haydn's Marionette Operas," 115.

[62] Following Robbins Landon, Minniear observes that "the idea for a marionette theater [at Esterháza] seems to have gained initial impetus when Karl von Pauersbach sold Prince Nikolays a "Marionetten-Theater" for 200 ducats (1270 Gulden) on July 23, 1772." Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, 162, fn.81.

[63] Nedbal, "Live Marionettes and Divas on the Strings," 23.

[64] Robbins Landon, "Haydn's Marionette," 114–115 in particular.

out of "a variety of predecessors," from "medieval mysteries and church plays" to "tragedies and comedies of travelling troupes," Singspiele are German dramatic stage works, written and performed in the vernacular, with passages of spoken dialogue alternating with musical numbers.[65] Peter Branscombe and Thomas Bauman describe the Viennese tradition thus:

In Vienna the use of German songs, parody and even mixed-language verse, as well as extensive musical sequences, helped to break down the barriers between the various art forms and prepare the ground for the plays with music of the comedians in the Kärntnertortheater who, from the beginning of the second decade of the 18th century, represent the oldest unbroken popular theatrer tradition in the German lands. Theirs are the earliest works that deserve to be labelled 'Singspiel' in its usual sense.[66]

As we have already noted, Hanswurst was at home on the stage of the Kärtnertortheater and echoes of the plucky Salzburger were resurrected in Papageno. *Die Zauberflöte,* undoubtedly the most famous exponent of the Singspiel tradition, is indebted to the comedies of the Kärtnertortheater in other ways as well. As van Horn Melton observes,

Mozart's creations would have been unthinkable without the musical burlesques of Kurz and Prehauser…The serpent that pursues Tamino in the opening scene, the cherub life figures who descend from the clouds to save Pamina, the musical instruments possessing magical properties, all could be found on the Kärtnertor stage of the 1750s.[67]

Like Singspiel and other forms of popular and commercial entertainment, teasing out lines of influence in puppetry can be similarly challenging.[68] Minniear evokes the wider historical

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[65] Peter Branscombe and Thomas Bauman, "Singspiel," *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed October 18, 2019, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/%209781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000007502. John Mohr Minniear also highlights the "jigg" as a predecessor to the Singspiel. See Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, 135.

[66] Ibid.

[67] van Horn Melton, "School, Stage, Salon," 96.

[68] In their introduction to an edited volume on early nineteenth-century melodrama, Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks invokes ideas of circulation, adaptation and transnationalism in order to traces the genre's migrations cultural, class, national, and aesthetic divisions. They write: "Notion of circulate and adaptation provide both a description of events on the ground and a methodology for a more nuanced understanding of the complex international marketplace of early

landscape of the marionette opera, which includes travelling showmen and theatrical troupes, Italian *fantoccini*, and the financial resorts of the *Théâtres de la Foire* in Paris during the eighteenth-century.[69] Unlike other styles of puppet, marionettes have certain architectural requirements that have gone some way towards fixing the tradition, leaving a more durable trace: specifically, an elevated bridge from which the marionettes hang down. Courts and commercial centers were best suited to accommodate these more elaborate performance spaces, which "were brilliantly fitted and equipped with all sorts of technical devices."[70] Of the court theaters, Esterházy is, according to Minniear, "most remarkable and well-known…where marionettes of the utmost perfection of construction and dress were displayed on their own stage in plays and operas designed especially for them."[71] Once a regular season was established, a technical team was employed to ensure the smooth running of the theater, including marionette-makers, decorators, costume makers, and "Machinisten" or puppeteers.[72]

For Esterháza's marionettes, even bespoke architecture did not ensure their place as a permanent fixture: following a fire in the main theater on November 18, 1779, the marionette theater became a replacement venue for mainstream productions, including opera and other events, and its own puppet-focused activities never recovered. Fortunately, the legacy of the theater lived on. So taken with the diminutive performers was the empress that she deemed them suitably

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melodrama as well as the varied expressive multimedia vocabularies employed." See Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks (eds.), *The Melodramatic Moment: Music and Theatrical Culture, 1790–1820* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 12.

[69] Minniear, *Marionette Opera,* 160.

[70] Ibid., 143.

[71] Ibid., v.

[72] Ibid., 168.

magisterial for the occasion of Clemens Wenzel von Sachsen's visit to her own palace Schloss Schönbrunn. Four years after her visit to Eisenstadt, Maria Theresia mirrored Prince Esterházy's commemorative gesture, apparently borrowing the Esterháza troupe for a performance of Karl von Ordonez's parody of Gluck's *Alceste*, with a libretto by Pauersbach; meanwhile, Robbins Landon has determined that the occasion afforded the opportunity for a second marionette opera performance, reported in the *Wiener Diarium* as a "prächtiges Singspiel," namely Haydn's *Hexen-Schabbas*.[73] More than 200 years later, it is the self-declared mission of the Schloss Schönbrunn Marionettentheater to "build on the tradition" established by Maria Theresia.[74]

Goethe and Kleist

While there is little doubt that the marionette theater was a familiar form of entertainment in the eighteenth century—and thus a likely reference point for the early audiences of *Die Zauberflöte*—the historical record is comparably silent on the subject of puppet spectatorship. One prominent contemporary figure known to have been enamored by the miniature stage is Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832). In his autobiography, he describes as a "gift" his grandmother's permission to perform a play with her puppet theater, capable of creating "a new world in an old house."[75] Goethe recalls performing well-rehearsed shows for friends and neighbors until new stories beckoned and the original puppets had to be adapted and freshly costumed for their next role. The tone of his

[73] Robbins Landon, "Haydn's Marionette Operas," 115.

[74] "Auf diese Tradition aufbauend." See "Biographie," *Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn*, accessed January 24, 2018, https://www.marionettentheater.at/theaterbiografie.html.

[75] "Am Weihnachtsabende jedoch setzte sie allen ihren Wohltaten die Krone auf, indem sie uns ein Puppenspiel vorstellen ließ, und so in dem altern Hause eine neue Welt erschuf." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben: Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Erste Band (Stuttgart und Tübingen: Cotta, 1853), 9.

reflections is one of sheer delight and Goethe credits these early experiences with having fostered his inventiveness and imagination, and even having endowed him with technical facility.

Later, in the tenth book of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, when sharing his somewhat vexed feelings about the ideas of the poet and philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), Goethe confesses his growing infatuation and identification with the figure of Faust, a legendary figure, stories about whom were frequently brought to life on puppet stages across German-speaking lands.[76] The paradigmatic Faust play was likely based on the volume entitled "Faust Buch," first published by Frankfurt-based bookseller Johann Spies in 1587, a probable source also for Christopher Marlowe's English adaptation *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*, published circa 1604.[77] Importantly, Minniear cites a puppet performance by the Italian showman Sebastiano da Scio as the catalyst for Faust's proliferation across Europe: so scandalous was the show to Protestant audiences that it was outlawed, which, ironically and yet inevitably, lead to the story's great popularity—and ultimately, with Goethe's realization, its canonization as an important work of German literature.[78]

It is no coincidence, of course, that the story of the sixteenth-century alchemist was told so frequently on puppet stages, for the story trades on the idea that body and soul are separate and separable entities, a fundamental conceit of the puppet theater. Fluid relations between mind and body necessarily call into question one's sense of Self: if these components are interchangeable, how is it possible to know if the particular pairing comprising "I" is correct, or the best it can be? As Goethe describes it:

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[76] There are various possible real-life predecessors to the literary and dramatic Faust. See H.C. MacDowall, "The Faust of the Marionettes," *The Living Age*, 228, No.2953 (Feb 9, 1901), 391.

[77] H.C. MacDowall, "The Faust of the Marionettes," 391.

[78] Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, 137-8.

The other's [Faust's] important puppet fairy tale resonated and echoed in me on many levels. I too had dabbled in all sorts of science and had been warned of its vanity early enough. I had tried out all sorts of trends in my life too, and had always returned more unsatisfied and tormented.[79]

Goethe sees himself in the figure of Faust, who wanders in search of meaning and affirmation, but he also sees something else—a story that straddles both drama and opera.[80]

In correspondence with Johann Peter Eckermann, Goethe was quite specific about his expectations for the performance of his own *Faust:*

It will make an unusual effect on the stage that a drama begins as tragedy and concludes as opera. The first part requires a great tragedian and later in the operatic portion, the roles just be filled with the best singers. The role of Helena cannot be given by one actress alone. Two are required, because it is only rarely that a singer is sufficiently great as a tragic actress. The composer would have to be one who has lived long in Italy so that he could combine German nature and Italian ways. The music would have to be in the character of *Don Giovanni*. Mozart would have been the ideal composer for *Faust*.[81]

According to Minniear, music was likely a prominent part of Faust plays, in an attempt to reflect the "alchemical" associations of the drama.[82] Here, though, Goethe envisages an altogether different kind of entanglement of artistic genres that highlights the potential multiplicity of voice-body

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[79] My translation. "Die bedeutende Puppenspielfabel des andern klang und summte gar vieltönig in mir wieder. Auch ich hatte mich in allem Wissen umhergetrieben, und war früh genug auf die Eitelkeit desselben hingewiesen worden. Ich hatte es auch im Leben auf allerlei Weise versucht, und war immer unbefriedigter und gequälter zurückgekommen." Zeno.org, accessed July 21, 2020, http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Goethe,+Johann+Wolfgang/Autobiographisches/Aus+meinem+Leben.+Dichtung+und+Wahrheit/Zweiter+Teil/Zehntes+Buch.

[80] At the same time that he was writing *Dichtung and Wahrheit*, Goethe was working on "his 1796 novel of the theater" (1), *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. Mary Ann Smart has discusses the ways in which Goethe's novel grapples with the tension between music's material-affective role in the theater and its supposed transcendental qualities. Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), Chapter 1 "In Praise of Overstatement," especially 1–8. It is this kind of fluctuation, between the radically embodied and the overwhelmingly disembodied, that, as Kenneth Gross has observed, that forges a connection between puppetry and opera. See Kenneth Gross, *Puppet: An Essay on Uncanny Life* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 78–83.

[81] Cited in Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, 141. From letters to Eckermann dated January 29 and February 12, 1827, cited by Frederick Sternfeld, "Goethe and Music," Yale University, PhD dissertation (1943).

[82] Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, 141.

relations, in narrative and performance; and furthermore, one that anticipates future retellings of the story by opera composers.

While Goethe's wrestling with the Faustian puppet theater clearly stimulated ideas about the voice and opera, Heinrich von Kleist, probably the most famous exponent of German Romanticism to reflect on the art of puppetry, focused instead on the body and ballet. Kleist's essay "Über das Marionettentheater" was published in four instalments in his literary journal *Berliner Abendblätter*, in December of 1810. In a seemingly chance encounter at a puppet show in the local town square, the narrator discusses the nature of the puppet theater, of string puppets specifically, with Herr C., the recently appointed principal dancer at the ballet. Paradoxical and contradictory statements pile up as the essay unfolds. The marionette is both graceful and mechanical. It works like a barrel organ with a turning handle, automatic and repetitive; it works as "numbers to logarithms or the asymptote to the hyperbola," formulaic but non-representational, not merely mimetic or parallel, but truly artificial.[83] Herr C. even suggests that the marionette is comparable to an amputee with prosthetic limbs, a meeting of nature and technology; they are graceful within the span of their limited movement.

The solution to this apparent tension between the clumsy technical mechanics of the marionette and its apparent grace in performance is to be found, Herr C. suggests, in the particular affordances of the puppet's strings. For Herr C., the puppet possesses an impossible grace, unattainable by the very best of human dancers, as their strings enable a radical actualization of their lack of (self-)consciousness and inhibition. Through its strings, a marionette can play with the limits of gravity, variously defying its weight and succumbing to it with pendulous limbs. Thus, a marionette's strings might be understood as engendering a quality of freedom or independence, a kind of self-sustaining autonomous life derived not from in-built mechanics and engineering, but

[83] Heinrich von Kleist, "The Puppet Theater," in *Heinrich von Kleist Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. David Constantine (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Corporation, Inc.: 1997), 412.

from the real-time negotiation of material attributes.

Such freedom stands somewhat at odds with perceived notions of a puppet's agency. When the puppet is invoked as an aesthetic or dramatic referent, it is precisely because it is deemed to be powerless, to lack any independent agency. Through his accumulation of provocative imagery, however, Kleist seems to capture the paradoxical nature of the puppet, the apparent dissonance between the materiality of the object and its performance, and the aesthetic outcome. In my own reading of marionette performance (elaborated in Chapter Four), I build on Kleist to argue for what might be called "an aesthetic of looseness," a perceptual quality that reconciles the material attributes of the puppet with the surface traits of improvisation and fundamental contingency and collaboration of live puppet performance. Although Kleist's essay was published after the premiere of Mozart's opera, and although Mozart's opera was not written expressly for puppet performance—and although, finally, we are dealing here with a twenty-first century reading of the opera—it is worth registering the compatibility of Abbate's analogies, of the gramophone and the marionette theater, with Kleist's theory.

Automatic Bodies

There is, of course, another eighteenth-century performing object for which the gramophone, and its capacity for mechanical reproduction, is an even more fitting analogy: the automaton. And there is even a precedent for Tamino himself. Indeed, an especially static flute player was presented to the Académie des Sciences in Paris in 1737 by the Swiss inventor and mechanic Jacques de Vaucanson. The particular achievement of Vaucanson's flute player automaton was that it actually breathed. Gaby Wood observes that "almost any other instrument, requiring only physical pressure in order to produce a sound, could be played simply by clockwork," but the idea of a breathing machine, despite the visibility of the bellows to the spectator, "continued to cause a stir well into the

following century."[84] As Wood describes it, the locus of the flute player's uncanniness—the indeterminacy surrounding its source of life—was magnified a year later when Vaucanson exhibited a new automaton that played both the drum and the pipe, the latter at speeds far exceeding those of human ability. While the pipe player was an "improvement" on the human, realizing perfection by surpassing human capacity, the flute player, Wood suggests, was perfect in its replication of human imperfection, passing the Turing test *avant la lettre*.

Enlightenment automata raised all sorts of questions regarding the boundary between human and machine. In her reading of Mozart's Fantasie K.608, "an organ piece for a clock" (Ein Orgelstück für eine Uhr), Annette Richards unpacks the concatenation of musical, engineering and human mechanics encapsulated by the piece to redress the "discomfort of modern writers faced with the extraordinary performance context of so substantial a work."[85] Indeed, the Fantasie was commissioned by Count Deym (alias Müller) for one of the main attractions amongst his vast collection of curiosities, the *Kunstkabinett*: an effigy of Field-Marshal Laudon, a hero of the Battle of Belgrade, encased in a glass coffin and housed in a kind of mausoleum. In this strange and somber setting, Mozart's music resonated every hour.

Like Vaucanson's piper, Mozart's composition far exceeded the limits of human capacity: "with its triple trills and dense textures, [the Fantasie] is impossible for a single organist to play as notated. Its superhuman virtuosity is that of a machine, and indeed it celebrates the wonderful mechanical potential of the organ clock."[86] The clock's mechanism was hidden from view, producing a phantasmagoric effect, a distinct contrast to figurative automata, which tended to display their

[84] Gaby Wood, *Living Dolls: A Magical History of the Quest for Mechanical Life* (London: Faber and Faber, 2020), 22–23.

[85] Richards, "Automatic Genius: Mozart and the Mechanical Sublime," 379.

[86] Ibid., 385.

workings proudly, as though challenging the observer to believe in their realness.[87] The fugal genus of the piece, however, could hardly be straightforwardly cast as the "human" or creative counterpoint to the mechanics of the clock, for the combinatorics intrinsic to the fugue's principle techniques were bound up in their own way with the idea of the mechanical. In other words, the fugue itself is mechanical too. Add to this complex musical amalgam the setting of the quasi-mausoleum and the morbid display of a prized waxwork effigy, and Mozart's piece becomes a model for transcendence, escaping "the circumstances of its commission in a manner that is, paradoxically perhaps, superbly appropriate to that very commission."[88] For Richards, the "automatic genius" of Mozart combined the actual mechanics of the clock with a mechanical musical aesthetic to produce music fitting for reflection on death, when the mechanics of the human body cease to function and the soul is released from the flesh.

In the early 1900s, the German psychiatrist Ernst Jentsch would suggest that such encounters with the slippery space between life and death can arouse a specific kind of feeling, namely an uncanny one. Jentsch observes that the etymology of the German *unheimlich* suggests, on the broadest level, a "lack of orientation."[89] The essential characteristics of a source of uncanny feeling is, Jentsch observes, difficult to determine—what excites the feeling for one person does not for another—and so he focuses on the various psychical and emotional dispositions that might more easily succumb to such sensations. Jentsch does, however, highlight one particular figure or scenario

[87] Simon Schaffer has suggested that the opportunity afforded by figurative automata to make mechanical processes transparent cast them as especially provocative objects on the topics of power and social order. See Simon Schaffer, "Enlightened Automata" in *The Sciences in Enlightened Europe*, eds., William Clark, Jan Golinski and Simon Schaffer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 126–168.

[88] Richards, "Automatic Genius," 388.

[89] Ernst Jentsch, "On the psychology of the uncanny" (1906) trans. Roy Sellars *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 2 no.1 (1997):7-16, here 8.

that tends to stimulate an uncanny feeling. Jentsch writes:

> Among all the psychical uncertainties that can become an original cause of the uncanny feeling, there is one in particular that is able to develop a fairly regular, powerful and very general effect: namely, doubt as to whether an apparently living being is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate—and more precisely, when this doubt only makes itself felt obscurely in one's consciousness.[90]

Waxwork figures, dolls, and automata are the kinds of objects that can unlock feelings of the uncanny due to their simulation of life; for apparently opposite reasons, epileptic fits incite similar feelings due to "the impression of automatic, mechanical processes at work behind the ordinary appearance of mental activity."[91]

The ambiguous nature of agency in these seemingly lively bodies—organic or mechanical, human or non-human—is a characteristic shared by the puppet. The very premise of the puppet is the enlivening of an inanimate object, a fluctuation between life and death, and its fundamentally illusory life is sustained through a dispersal of agency, of the investment—imaginative and performative—of multiple participants. While Jentsch's somewhat anachronistic lens might group puppets with automata, a more historical view helps to highlight the differences. As Adelheid Voskuhl has shown, eighteenth-century automata were regarded quite differently by contemporary audiences: far from unsettling or uncanny, such mechanical curiosities were considered fascinating and wondrous machines, built to perform and in so doing, reinscribe, enlightenment sensibilities.[92] However complex, puppets are rarely mechanical marvels, and their very performance defies rationality. They might be more helpfully thought of as precursors, conceptually, if not (necessarily)

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[90] Ibid., 11.

[91] Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny" (1919), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works* (London: Vintage, 2001), 226.

[92] See Voskuhl, *Androids in the Enlightenment*.

chronologically, to automata, and in that sense, an earlier state too of the uncanny.

In his reworking of Jentsch, Sigmund Freud locates the uncanny in the unsettling feeling that arises from "the return of that which has been repressed, something secretly or strangely familiar."[93] It is a nascent stage of this kind of uncanny, what she terms the "pre-uncanny," that Emily Dolan identifies as the "special status" granted to song in the late Enlightenment. Against a backdrop of "combinatorial prowess," lyrical melody became infused with a folkish sensibility that could come to appear out as "something originary and whole."[94] These musical aesthetics generate a sense of familiarity without an original encounter, and without any necessary Freudian repression. What emerges from this meeting of what we might call the "repetitive" familiar (topics and combinatorics) and something like a "lyrical" familiar, derived from the European memory bank of folk song and sounds of nature, is a kind of aural *déjà vu*. "Song," Dolan argues, "was always already familiar," and as such, "stood at many different thresholds," including the mechanical and the folkish.[95] These ideas seem to coalesce in the enchantment scene: the music of the bells shines with mechanical originality, the singing of the slaves with an intuitive familiarity, and the transformability of song makes puppets of the latter.

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Before finally returning to the enchantment scene itself, then, let us take stock. In the figure of Papageno, we are presented with a Hanswurstian hangover, a character whose physical needs—and their similarly physical expression—always come first, and a figure who is performed by both actors and puppets. The ways in which Papageno is bound up with his onstage instruments reflects this

[93] Emily Dolan, "Mozart, Song, and the Pre-Uncanny" in *Mozart Studies 2,* ed., Simon P. Keefe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 231.

[94] Ibid., 233; 236.

[95] Ibid., 246.

sense of physicality. Papageno's panpipes, his own *a priori* instrument, are an extension and a condensation of himself. Played onstage by the performer of the role and necessarily muting his voice at that moment, they utter a birdlike call, an expression of the bird-catcher's very being. The bells, by contrast, emit sounds potentially of their own making, sounds capable of protecting their owner from harm. But, as Abbate has observed, they also mute his voice—or rather, displace it. As discussed earlier, the panpipes simultaneously mute Papageno's voice while extending his sonic reach or presence. But the bells seemingly suppress Papageno's voice, turning his voice box into a kind of mechanical machine.

The various roles played by Papageno's two instruments are collapsed into one another in Tamino's sole instrument, his magic flute. Tamino's flute, like Papageno's pipes, provides, on occasion, sonic smoke signals, acting as a kind of musical metonym for their player. While Tamino lacks the kind of self-identification with his flute that Papageno has with his panpipes, his flute does become a vehicle for self-expression, a substitution for words when they fail him. And such acts of self-expression can quickly transform into a display of princely power, as wild animals succumb to the lilt of the melody. This distance between musical maker and musical meaning is realized most fully in the trial scene. The flute's music, like that of Papageno's bells, seems authorless, automatic, a far cry from an expression of fear. Rather, the flute puts on a front, maintaining the façade of princely stoicism—or, it simply does what it was made to do: protect the candidates for enlightenment. Tamino's princely instrument, the instrument of self-expression, is also the magic instrument of self-defense and protection, a puppet and an automaton. With these dynamics of subjugation in mind, let us return to where we began.

The Enchantment Scene

When Papageno and Pamina are chased down by Monostatos and the slaves, the bells come to the rescue. Papageno "plays" them and Monostatos and his gang hear their tune, which they cannot help but join, in both voice and body. According to the original libretto, the bodily movements of the singers should reflect the functionality of the music, a march:

> Er schlägt auf sein Instrument, sogleich singt Monostatos und die Sclaven, und gehen unter dem Gesang marschmäßig ab.
>
> [He strikes up his instrument, and immediately Monostatos and his slaves sing, and they exeunt during their singing in a march-like movement.][96]

Peter Branscombe, however, has noted the proliferation of an inauthentic stage direction to "exeunt dancing," and most productions seem to follow suit.[97] Although the dancing rarely constitutes much more than springy alternating steps, it exhibits a dependency and frivolousness that a march or, to use Wye Jaminson Allanbrook's words, "the original *Gebrauchsmusik,*" does not.[98] For Allanbrook, "the goal of the march is to discipline the body, to exert control over a collective, and here, Monostatos and his men are forced "into lockstep like toy soldiers".[99] In such realizations of the scene, the bells are very much in control and Monostatos and his men mere playthings.

For Abbate, this moment is somewhat more radical, as the "raw human material" undergoes

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[96] Transcription of the original libretto by Emanuel Schikander published in 1791, accessed September 1, 2017, http://opera.stanford.edu/Mozart/Zauberflote/akt1.html#auf17.

[97] Peter Branscombe, *W. A. Mozart* Die Zauberflöte (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 54.

[98] Wye Jamison Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart:* Le Nozze di Figaro *and* Don Giovanni (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 45.

[99] David Buch, *Magic Flutes and Enchanted Forests: The Supernatural in Eighteenth-Century Musical Theater* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 355.

an essential transformation. No longer does music command the movement of the body, but it determines its very constitution as she invokes in her description of the scene the images of two prominent eighteenth-century performance objects: the automaton and the marionette. She writes:

> When the mechanical figures march stiffly across the stage and speak stilted marionette speech, metamorphosis takes place in plain sight, as an automaton collective that comes into being out of raw human material. Those dancing slaves recall a typical ornament on automata of the eighteenth century, little moreschi with striped costumes and bells.[100]

In broad terms, as we have seen, both puppets and automata suggest a displacement of control that calls into question the centrality of the human to live performance and the representation of human life. Crucially, though, the technologies involved in their performances and their resultant aesthetic qualities are radically different. Whilst the cams of the automaton are contained within their bodies, allowing the figure to move independently and achieving, as Jessica Riskin and Simon Schaffer have observed, not just the imitation, but the simulation, of human life, the control mechanism of the marionette is outside of its body, connecting it to its human animator.[101] In European cultural thought, as reflections such as Gordon Craig's "The Actor and the Übermarionette" attest, the marionette, a sub-species of puppet, is understood to be entirely subject to the control of the puppeteer, while the automaton is deemed independent from its human creator.[102] By identifying both the automaton *and* the marionette in her characterization of the individual bodies of the slaves, then, Abbate encapsulates the myriad relations at work in this scene and their multi-faceted meanings, within and beyond the opera, though arguably at the cost of genealogical precision.

David Buch pushes his interpretation of the bells' tune in a rather different direction,

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[100] Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, 80-1.

[101] See Jessica Riskin, "Defecating Duck" and Simon Schaffer, "Enlightened Automata."

[102] See Edward Gordon Craig, "The Actor and the Über-Marionette." *The Mask* 1, no.2. (April 1908): 3-15.

forward through history into the metaphysical realm. In the bells' emission, Buch hears a variation on a not-yet-heard march melody and in doing so, invokes later Romantic ideas of the unheard and the invisible.[103] When, after eight measures of the variation, Monostatos and his men sing, what comes out is not the variation they have just heard played by the bells, but what is understood by Buch to be the "original" theme. This seems to suggest that the chorus of slaves listen through the arpeggiation to perform some sort of on-the-spot analysis, although Buch highlights the involuntary nature of the action: "after hearing the variation the enchanted characters magically recognize the theme and sing it out, displaying enchantment purely through musical means."[104] To "magically recognize" recalls Dolan's notion of the pre-uncanny, the idea that something can be new and familiar simultaneously. Following Buch's line of reasoning, the men also seem to hear something we don't—or at least something we would have to work to hear. For this scene to play out as planned, for the bells' music to overpower the slaves, for a puppeteer-puppet relation to be forged, the audience must listen too.[105]

We could thus add a further step to Buch's interpretation and suggest that the music of the bells can be understood as the trigger for another self-playing musical generator: the ears of the recipients. Translations of the last line of Papageno's verse, "Dass die Ohren ihnen singen," vary between the relatively literal—"so that the ears sing," which interprets "ihnen" as an informal construction of the possessive—and a more poetic rendering of Schikander, likely closer to his intention, of "ears filled with sound." The dative "ihnen", however, could suggest that the ears themselves sing to *themselves*; in other words, the ears of Monostatos and his men, under the spell of

[103] Buch, *Magic Flutes and Enchanted Forests*, 315-358; see 344-5 and 355.

[104] Ibid., 345.

[105] As we shall see in later chapters, the phenomenological contract of puppetry involves an entire network of actors and objects, and the audience is a critical, active participant.

the bells' ringing, produce their *own* music, a kind of otoacoustic emission.[106] To be sure, in the eighteenth century, otoacoustic emissions were yet to be discovered—they only became evident with the advent of microphone technology. Buch's reading relies similarly on ideas from the next century, specifically Romantic notions of music's metaphysical nature. Such anachronistic interpretative moves may be beyond the purview of an historical study, but it is exactly this kind of imaginative leap that stage directors take when reimagining an operatic text for a twenty-first century audience—and it is to these contemporary reimaginings of *Die Zauberflöte* that we now turn.

[106] For a recent discussion of this phenomenon, see Peter McMurray, "Meta-aurality: A History of Listening to Listening" in "Colloquy: Discrete/Continuous: Music and Media Theory after Kittler," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 70, no. 1 (2017): 221–256.

II. Performance: An Opera with Puppets

The Staatsoper Unter den Linden is an intimate space. Just three modest tiers frame the orchestra in a relatively shallow curve, a far cry from the six tiers and expansive banks of the Metropolitan Opera or the deep horseshoe of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Cream balustrades and pillars articulate the space, and gold accents highlight the tiers, the proscenium, and the edges of the plush crimson seats. From the first tier, I had a clear view of the orchestra pit. And I had high expectations: this was set to be a puppet-infused performance like nothing I'd ever seen. When the conductor Alondra de la Parra took the podium, I watched her through puppet-tinted lenses. She was poised, her gestures stylized, but also modest somehow, precise, articulate, and small. There was no hint of gratuity or flamboyance, only focus. Critics on opening night had not been kind to her technique—never mind her interpretation of Mozart's hallowed opera.[1] But on this occasion, de la Parra, the orchestra and the singers were settled in.[2] The boos had subsided, and they could concentrate on the performance in hand.

As the gravitas of the Overture's adagio yielded to a racing fugato, the curtain rose on a *mise en abyme* effect: framed by the Staatsoper's proscenium arch was a cartoonish replica of that very same arch. Its columns betrayed an unsteady freehand, quivering with life next to the solidity of those they duplicated, and the supple fabric of the curtains was conjured on the plain sheet with similar shudders of fluid illustration. We had been transported: we were no longer in the opera

[1] See, for example, Shirley Apthorp, "Things fall apart in Berlin Staatsoper's new Zauberflöte," *Financial Times,* February 18 2019, accessed June 7, 2019 https://www.ft.com/content/ae5b3906-3370-11e9-9be1-7dc6e2dfa65e .

[2] I attended performances of Sharon's *Die Zauberflöte* in Berlin on March 12 and December 3 and 5, 2019. This description comes from the first.

house, but a makeshift puppet theater. (It certainly helped, in producing this effect, that we weren't drowning in a colossal auditorium.) Yuval Sharon, the director of this new production, had recast the performance space, and in so doing, redefined the terms of the performance.

With the return of the iconic opening chords signaling the mid-point of the overture, the papery curtain rose on a disturbing sight: amid crisscrossing spotlights was a life-sized, lifeless figure, suspended awkwardly at the end of three neon yellow ropes. This was a puppet at its most rudimentary. Angular and inhuman, a caricature of a puppet, a distillation of the image that proliferates in the cultural imagination, as far as can be imagined from the way real marionettes appear on their stages. As Kleist notes in "Über das Marionettentheater," the strings of the marionette engender a freedom from self-consciousness and consequently, a fluidity of movement and expression that plays with the very limits of gravity.[3] There is no awkwardness; only the materialization of movement at its least inhibited, its most natural.

A puppet needs a puppeteer though, and a scenario, and an audience. This one was all alone backstage—there was no set, and the lighting rig was clearly visible. We could see it, but our gaze was redundant, useless. Without a puppeteer and without a dramatic setting, the figure was not yet susceptible to the audience's investment, nor was it actively feeding such investment. Not yet united with its puppeteer, this puppet was not yet onstage, not yet "alive." The ungainliness simply revealed its material constitution. Gradually, the ropes took on the full weight of the now airborne figure, who seemed to be waking up, coming to life. The figure was male. His body appeared to be encased in a wood-effect body suit, the faux chiseling giving him a muscular physique, while his costume (plasticky red boots and black underpants, and a solid wave of black hair) was reminiscent of the

[3] Heinrich von Kleist, "The Puppet Theater," in *Heinrich von Kleist Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. David Constantine (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Corporation, Inc.: 1997), 411–16.

Japanese manga character Astro Boy. He stretched his limbs, testing his range of movement. As the lighting rig rose into the rafters, a backdrop descended, depicting outlines from a coloring book, replete with impatient scribbles of crayon. This was Paradise, its red apple is both ripe with imminent knowledge (or, in the reckoning of Mozart's time, Enlightenment), while simultaneously empty of flesh, of meaning, a two-dimensional drawing on a piece of construction paper.

This is our introduction to the hero of *Die Zauberflöte,* Tamino: from this moment on, the audience is bombarded with many of the myriad forms of theatrical representation that fall under the umbrella of puppetry. This is not an uncommon feature of puppet shows. Indeed, the style showcased in Sharon's production—namely, marionette theater—has forever been bolstered by numerous other puppet traditions. At the Staatsoper, alongside these giant (human) marionettes, there are mechanical toys and playthings, garish drawings and full-body costumes that evoke cartoonish animations, shadowy hands overgrown to the size of temple columns, and traditional marionettes—one in place of Pamina's portrait and another, the miniature of Papagena to capture Papageno's heart. This kind of snowballing of puppet styles is perhaps only possible because of a strong conceptual essence that unites them all. For the art of puppetry involves, most fundamentally, the manipulation of an object to dramatic ends.

The question of what exactly makes a puppet dominates the literature on puppetry and this dissertation, as I have outlined, proposes musicological solutions. Chapter One took the text(s) of *Die Zauberflöte*—the score, libretto, stage designs, and so on—and attendant discourses as the primary object of analysis, in order to excavate the presence of puppetry in the very fabric of Mozart's opera. Of course, the puppets we encountered in Chapter One were only ever metaphorical specters that haunt the socio-cultural landscape. Scholars have coaxed these figures into rhetorical life to illuminate certain music-dramatic relations embedded within the text. As we have seen, *Die Zauberflöte* thematizes the relationship between sounds and their sources, instantiating

various degrees along the continuum from absolute identification to accidents of happenstance, happy, uncanny or otherwise. Although the metaphor of the puppet can be useful in describing such relations, it can obfuscate as much as it elucidates: any specifics of mechanics, scale, or appearance are overlooked in favor of the pervasive sense of subservience engendered by the idea of the puppet.

This chapter, by contrast, enters the (full-sized) opera house to explore how directors and performers have made *Die Zauberflöte*'s rhetorical puppets real and to consider their critical and interpretative potential. What follows are detailed analyses of three recent productions, which respectively illuminate some of the many ways in which puppets can influence a certain scenario or how the broader sensibility of puppetry can leave aesthetic, performative, and material traces on the fabric of Mozart's work. Let us first consider Sharon's production for Staatsoper Unter den Linden, with which this chapter began.

I

Into the "Puppet" Theater

Back, then, to the dangling form of marionette-Tamino. When Yuval Sharon brings puppetry to *Die Zauberflöte*, he draws out the playful nature of puppets, their kinship with toys and association with childhood. The serpent that Tamino must confront immediately as the opera begins, for instance, is a puppet controlled by three performers shrouded in black—but it is also a child's plaything (see Fig. 2.1). The serpent's yellow segmented body is reminiscent of those jointed toy snakes that seem to move independently when held still by the tail. Its head is of quite a different mold, a mobile building block impressed with a cartoonish drawing of a snake's head, fangs bared, ready to bite. Tamino holds an apple from the same family of building blocks and the backdrop is also a drawing. Indeed, the setting for the serpent's chase is a varied landscape of dense foliage and grassy mounds, a cascading waterfall, aged trees and mountains in the distance. But it is only an outline printed on a

stage flat, black-and-white save for bursts of colorful childish scribbles. The onstage instruments, the flute and the bells, are similarly playful. The flute is a toy rocket with which Tamino taunts Papageno, who seems to desire the brightly colored plaything for himself. Papageno's bells are shiny green baubles of different sizes, which are clipped to his jacket, as they might be to a Christmas tree.



Figure 2.1 Dancers and Julian Prégardien (Tamino) © Monika Rittershaus

Characteristic though this playroom aesthetic is, it is comparable to other similarly puppet-infused productions—Julie Taymor's production for New York's Metropolitan Opera notable among them.[4] But Sharon doesn't always play it safe. There is also some risk-taking—most obviously, the decision to turn the singers themselves into puppets. While Stefan Herheim has been known to clothe his singers in wood-effect body suits and grant them miniature puppet Doppelgängers, Sharon fuses the two ideas: he attaches heavy-duty ropes to the singers themselves, some of whom are similarly clad

[4] This review highlights the eclectic style of Taymor's production: Edward Sava-Segal, "Julie Taymor's *Magic Flute* is still mesmerizing at The Met," *Bachtrack*, October 13, 2017, accessed April 17 2022, https://bachtrack.com/review-magic-flute-taymor-levine-schultz-lewek-metropolitan-opera-new-york-october-2017 .

in faux-wood, and cranks them up into the air.[5] Sharon's vision thus recreates an experience familiar to German audiences: that is, operas performed by actual marionettes, a phenomenon I discuss in detail in Chapter Three.

The central quartet (Tamino, and Pamina, Papageno and Papagena), all on strings, represents the most straightforward relocation of the opera house into the marionette theater. The initial sight of Tamino is highly disconcerting. The awkwardness, the angle of his limbs; he appears captured, restrained, bound up, perhaps because he is resting on the stage, his weight directed into the floor. This is to say, the potential of his strings has been undermined. As Kleist observes, marionettes need only lightly grace the stage to be recharged, a new lease of life coursing through their strings and joints:

> Marionettes only *glance* the ground, like elves, the momentary halt lends the limbs a new impetus; but we use it to *rest* on, to recover from the exertion of the dance: a moment which clearly is not dance at all in itself and which we can do nothing with except get it over with as quickly as possible.[6]

But puppets don't necessarily need or want to fly. As the puppeteer Philip Huber has explained, a puppet should enter the stage authentically, in a way that is true to its character; they certainly shouldn't fly into view unless their character is capable of flight, which probably means they are in some way magical, fantastic, or inhuman.[7] Humans can't fly, of course. And so, when Sharon's singers are hoisted up into the air not only is another performance plane opened up, an opportunity

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[5] For an example of a positive review of Herheim's production, see Mark Berry, "Lohengrin, Staatsoper Unter den Linden," *Boulezian*, 8 April 2009, accessed April 19, 2022 https://boulezian.blogspot.com/2009/04/lohengrin-staatsoper-unter-den-linden-8.html .

[6] Kleist, "The Puppet Theater," 414.

[7] Philip Huber, workshop at 64th American Puppetry Festival, National Puppetry Festival, Concordia Festival, July 18-23, 2017, St. Paul, Minnesota.

for spectacle and extravagance, but the nature of their flight is indicative of their proximity to humanity, or, more specifically, to that defining characteristic of humankind, self-knowledge.

Once the backdrop has descended and Tamino enters the space of performance, the greatest challenge (apart from the strings themselves) seems to be a mandate to affect a Thunderbirds-style wobble. Tamino (Julian Prégardien) appears to do this more effectively, more convincingly than Papageno (played by the actor Florian Teichtmeister rather than a singer, in emulation of the original casting of Emmanuel Schikaneder). In other words, Tamino's gestural vocabulary is rather limited, his movement stilted and, well, wooden. Papageno, on the other hand, moves less self-consciously—more naturally, we might say. There is no resistance to his strings, perhaps no awareness of them. This is unsurprising, of course, because Papageno descends from the stock character Hanswurst, made famous by troupes of travelling showmen, and is thus at home in the puppet theater.[8] His physicality doesn't read like that of a human pretending to be a puppet, because he isn't pretending to be anything at all. This is an essential quality of the marionette (as praised by the theater director Edward Gordon Craig in his 1908 essay "The Actor and the Übermarionette"): it can be only itself. In fact, puppets can be whatever you want them to be, because their character can be built into their very being, so their physical exterior and interior being are coterminous. Giants really can be giants and dwarves really can be dwarves. Humans can transform into frogs or dragons in the flash of an eye, they can really fly, as we know, and they can really die. An individual puppet may not be able to play multiple characters, but multiple puppets can effectively play one character, fully materializing every aspect of their personality, every twitch of corporeality.

[8] Ernst-Frieder Kratochwil, "Hanswurst," trans. Sabin Moran, *World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts*, 2009, accessed September 18, 2019 https://wepa.unima.org/en/hanswurst/ .

Tamino's awkwardness may bespeak less his own self-consciousness than his pre-enlightened state. He has not yet learned how to be in the world and so his body language betrays his sense of dislocation. It makes sense, therefore, that when Tamino and Pamina undertake the trials, they shed their strings, literally, but also figuratively. In Sharon's parallel universe, the trails of fire and water become an extended trial of heteronormativity: cooking a meal together—with the fire of a stove and water from a tap. There is an air of eagerness as Tamino and Pamina, now without their strings, remove their wrist adornments (quasi-handcuffs, necessary to attach the strings) and navigate this supposedly unfamiliar environment. It is immediately evident, however, that they know, instinctively, what to do; they are fulfilling their predetermined roles. The kitchen in which the scene unfolds is a brightly illuminated box set within darkness, no access routes for external control to penetrate, a generic vacuum. In a blatant parody of married life, the pair even aggravate one another: after wiping down the Formica table, Tamino tosses the wet cloth into the sink, just past Pamina, who glares at him, irritated. This scene came under particularly fierce fire in many of the more vehement invectives against the production, so quotidian and banal were the activities of these young lovers against the strains of Mozartian sublime, the juxtaposition verging on the sacrilegious. This romantic pair are at home here, though, they know what they're doing; and they complete the trials successfully, minus their strings.

Not only does Sharon attach strings to his singers, but he gives them new speaking voices. In the puppet theater, voices are provided by the puppeteers behind or underneath the stage, or by additional performers, actors, singers—or, as is the case in many marionette theatres today, by recorded voices. And so, Sharon's singers (with one important exception) do not speak for themselves. Rather, the spoken dialogue is pre-recorded by children, the presumed animators of these various puppets and playthings. Moreover, just like traditional marionettes, Sharon's singers do not lip-sync to these disembodied voices; their mouths are tightly shut. By contrast, Papageno speaks

his own lines onstage, a vocal independence that reinforces his familiarity with the puppet theater environment. As Sharon puts it, Papageno "speaks in the world of puppets with his own voice." [9]

Because Papageno is played by an actor, this vocal identification works on another level too. Teichtmeister (an actor, recall, not a singer) delivers his spoken lines with comic aplomb. But, as might be expected, his singing voice is more tentative, markedly quieter and less mellifluous than his fellow cast members. In a sense, the recorded voices simply ensure the converse—the singers are not required to speak, only to sing. The strings play a provocative role in levelling the playing field, so to speak, of reducing the gap between the voice of the untrained singer and his classically trained cast-mates. Of course, singers on a world-class stage are hardly going to get away with sub-standard singing, but the aerial delivery, quite varied in stability and daring, is challenging to their vocal dexterity. Indeed, reviews of the production are littered with complaints of inadequate singing and the not-unrelated traces of fear across the flying singers' faces. But it is worth remembering that we are no longer in the opera house, but rather the puppet theater. And in that context, it is nothing short of a miracle that the singing voices we hear, imperfections and all, are emitted by the "puppets" in front of us, rather than a sound system embedded in the walls.

This incredible recomposition of voice-body relationships is a kind of magic that both puppetry and opera are capable of performing. In opera, we are accustomed to the ethereal echoes or advancing mob of offstage voices, the subversive power of trouser roles, and the stratospheric vocal displays of coloratura sopranos. In fact, the basic phenomenon of the operatic singing has generated countless mediations on the relationship between body and voice, as scholars and audiences grapple with the seeming dichotomy between this intensely physical act and its potential for transcendence. The (operatic) voice, in other words, is wholly of the body and wholly beyond it,

[9] "Papageno spricht in der Welt aus Marionetten mit seiner eigenen Stimme." Yuval Sharon, "Durch die Augen eines Kindes," Program Booklet, Staatsoper Unter den Linden, 2018, 8.

otherworldly and unknowable. In puppetry, the voice and body are categorically separate. But, as I discuss in Chapter Three, the forging of a voice-body relationship goes far beyond these two components; for a puppet to speak or sing, an entire network of actors, objects, and sounds must be carefully negotiated. And so, when Sharon's "puppets" sing for themselves, the staggering demands made on opera singers and the extreme power dynamics of performance and representation are thrown into relief.

For instance, during one performance I attended, the Queen of the Night ran into trouble.[10] Act I had already flopped for Nicola Proksch. She simply could not maintain the tempo during the coloratura passages of "O zittre nicht," which got slower and slower, creating a lag behind the orchestra that the conductor was unable to bridge. My expectations, therefore, were not high for "Der Hölle Rache" and indeed, the coloratura suffered the same fate. But the voice itself sounded quite different to one we had heard earlier in the performance. What's more, it did not seem to be produced by the person onstage. Proksch's head remained bowed throughout the aria and the few arm gestures she did make seemed somehow disingenuous, as though she were trying to convey someone else's emotional state. And even then, because the Queen's costume was so restrictive and all-encompassing, no bodily movement could be easily discerned. Her body is completely shrouded by her robes, while her arms are later substituted by artificial limbs. It became increasingly clear that the performer onstage was not the one singing, a suspicion that was (almost) confirmed by the Staatsoper when I contacted them to ask about the performance in question. Citing a problem with the aerial equipment, the Staatsoper's representative wrote that "the Queen of the Night didn't fly in the last quintet, but rather sang unseen from offstage, since she normally hangs in a flying gondola

[10] The performance on December 5, 2019.

and is covered from the neck downwards. There would have been no proper costume for the Queen of the Night, and we didn't want to send her onstage in her bathrobe."[11]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this response tactfully avoids mentioning Proksch's struggles with the Queen's coloratura lines in either one of her arias. Only the final quintet from Act II is mentioned explicitly, not "Der Hölle Rache" and neither did I ask directly about his aria, but the act generally. Yet, in a way, the official party line on what happened is irrelevant: what is interesting about this scenario are the potential interpretations it inspires. For instance, one might suspect—as I did—that Proksch was the one singing from somewhere in the wings. Yet my companion at the opera that night, a fellow musicologist, reached a rather different conclusion. When she heard the voice, with its seemingly new timbre, she assumed that it was an entirely different person—that the encased singer in front of us was not Proksch but someone else altogether. It simply hadn't occurred to her that the person onstage would be a body double and that Proksch would sing from the wings. The difference in the Queen's voice between the acts, therefore, must be attributed to the substitution of the singer from Act I. We might characterize my colleague's perspective as primarily operatic, focussed on the primacy of voice amongst opera's raft of aural and visual resources and its inextricable ties to a single body. By contrast, my first thoughts were those of disembodiment and synchresis, of the forging of new voice-body complexes, of body doubles and thrown voices and all the other typical accoutrements of puppetry.[12] My conviction was only emboldened as the coloratura

[11] Personal communication with Carola Toeppel at the Besucherservice of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden, January 14, 2020. ("Das ist korrekt. Wir hatten einen Ausfall der Flugwerke. Daher gab es szenisch kleine Veränderungen: Tamino ist im Terzett zweiter Akt nicht geflogen, sondern aufgetreten. Die Königin der Nacht ist im letzten Quintett nicht geflogen, sondern sang unsichtbar aus dem off, da sie normalerweise in der Fluggondel hängt und von der Gondel halsabwärts verdeckt wird. Es existiert daher für die Königin der Nacht kein richtiges Kostüm, und im Bademantel wollten wir sie nicht auf die Szene schicken.")

[12] Key texts on acousmatic voice include Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) and *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia

slowed down, a technical deficiency that I believed trumped any timbral variations. My perspective on the acoustic conundrum presented that night, then, was significantly influenced by my familiarity with the puppet theater. On a basic level, Sharon's translation to the puppet theater hammers home the artifice of *all* theater. If theatrical representation is fundamentally artificial, the puppet theater is hyper-artificial, using unreal actors. This kind of double negative produces a positive: puppetry wears its artifice on the surface. The potential separation of a voice from its body and its attachment to a new one altogether, therefore, is intrinsic to the art form. That is, from the outset I was comfortable with the idea that a voice can be attached to different bodies, and a body can carry multiple voices.

These different interpretations seem to exemplify the kinds of knowledge generated by encounters with live performance described by Carolyn Abbate. Indeed, there is certainly something of the "drastic" about the Queen of the Night incident at Unter den Linden. Like Tamino, Papageno and their romantic partners, Sharon's Queen of the Night flies through the air. But quite unlike her adversaries, whose harnesses leave their limbs unencumbered, the Queen is encased by a vehicle of levitation. In Act I, when the Queen is at Tamino's (and our) mercy, she is dressed in white. Her head supports a starry crown and ropes are attached to her wrists. Although not yet prosthetic, her arms are rigid, moving sharply, deliberately, within a limited range. By "Der Hölle Rache," however, with its infamous about-face, the Queen has been overcome by darkness, expressed by black robes and oversized, cumbersome, jointless arms, devoid of any suppleness. Hinged at the shoulder only, her arms function on just one plane of movement, assertive but crude, disposed only to stiff jolts and unwieldy gesticulations. What's more, these gigantic cardboard-cutout

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Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

arms are no longer controlled by strings, but seemingly affixed to those of the singer, an exaggeration of her very own body. Movements of these huge arms miss any attempt to align with musical gestures and phrasing, finding their way to their next resting place always behind the beat. On the one hand, such unrefined physicality seems quite at odds with the precision prescribed by the Queen's vocal part. In more supple passages too—the melismatic triplets of "Alle Bande," for instance—such deficient arms seem to make acute angles of the Queen's florid musical lines. On the other, in performance, the limitations of her cyborgian body seem to reflect Abbate's sense of the mechanical threat that encompasses the dark underbelly of Mozart's opera.

From within this suspended encasement, Proksch's voice emanates as a concentrated form of presence. Although she is technically visible onstage, Proksch's shrouded, apparently immobile body presents a considerable challenge to the idea that she would be producing the voice we can hear. Put differently, by restricting her body through costuming and machinery, Sharon forces a phenomenological separation of body and voice, implying an unseen source. The fact that Proksch struggles with the coloratura helpfully accentuates this sense of separation; and indeed, the dislocation of the actual vocal source becomes a tangible reality when the aerial equipment malfunctions and she is forced to sing from the wings. If the timbral alterations to Proksch's voice had raised the possibility of a replacement singer (could she possibly have been demoted mid-performance?), the familiar slowing of the coloratura reconfirmed Proksch as its source, and so my search for her whereabouts intensified: had something serious happened, an accident perhaps? Ironically, her banishment to the wings likely exacerbated the ill-fitting ensemble work—though an offstage singing position was arguably less of a hindrance to rhythmic precision than an airborne one.

Further irony can be found in the Queen of the Night's natural suitability to such in-flight representation. In fact, the Queen of the Night ranks highly on the scale of puppet susceptibility.

The companion production, for example, to Sharon's is August Everding's production from 1994, which features reconstructed stage designs by Karl Friedrich Schinkel for 1816. One of Schinkel's most famous designs is the expansive starry sky against which the Queen of the Night makes her first appearance in a floating crescent moon. In other words, the Queen has long been a creature of flight on stage, and so, like Papageno, the Queen is in some sense at home in the puppet theater, her stratospheric voice effectively separated from her body and her body capable of flight. Of course, Sharon's is not the puppet theater, and his Queen is not really a puppet. Proksch is caught somewhere in the middle, her human body and voice forced into the paradigm of disaggregation constructed by the puppet theater.

Sharon's Queen is not alone, in this respect. Through their metamorphosis into puppets, many of the other characters undergo bodily transformations that are as intricate as the stringing and costuming of the two central couples and their nemesis, the Queen. Such physical alterations fall along a sliding scale of severity, which appears to correspond to both the orientation of a character's moral compass at that stage in the drama and their relative level of autonomy or perceived status. When we first meet Sarastro, for instance, he is in some sort of vice, arms outstretched between two pillars and his body held in place by a metal frame with decorative latticework: a hybrid of Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man and a Jack-in-the box (see Fig.2.2). On top of this, Sarastro is barely in control of himself, relying on two of his slaves to work his extendable sprung arms. At the beginning of Act Two, however, he dons strings, and later, for "In diesen heil'gen Hallen," he sings from the footlights, in front of the curtain, outside of the proscenium, simply clothed, "free." This trajectory from mechanical subservience to physical autonomy parallels the gradual affirmation of Sarastro's goodness, from Pamina's captor to Enlightened leader. It also traces his move from public office to private reflection: Sarastro is at his most puppet-like when appearing in his sovereign role,

embodiment of the state aligned with external contrivance; alone and contemplative, he is disinfected from implants, unencumbered by contraptions.

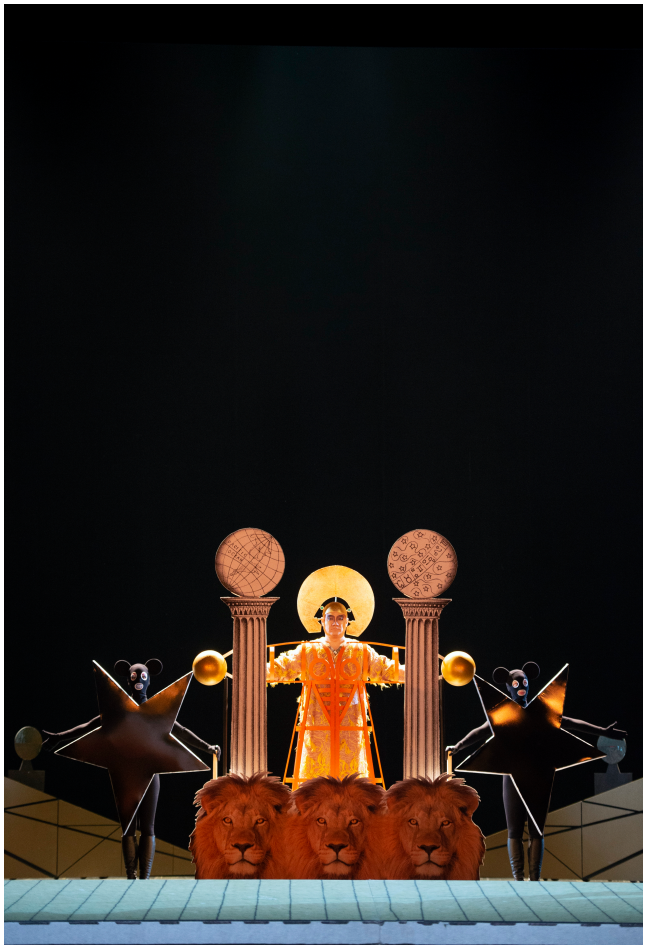


Figure 2.2 Dancers and Kwangchul Youn (Sarastro) © Monika Rittershaus

Many of the bodily distortions created through the process of "puppetization" enter the realm of the grotesque. The Three Ladies, for example, are completely subsumed within one massive body suit, with their three heads matched by three bosoms but only two arms and legs. Cloud-like, they float around, intentional movement almost impossible except for the arms, which can do little more than flail. Of course, in the original opera, the Three Ladies are puppets, metaphorically at least, of the Queen of the Night. And inevitably, the Queen's rival Sarastro has an equivalent "puppet," Monostatos, the head of the slaves and, as designated by the score, a Moor. In

Sharon's production, Monostatos has the appearance of a robot, a technologically reproducible slave, devoid of humanity.[13] The black metallic robot exterior, suggestive of technological prowess, artificial intelligence even, is, however, just that, an outer surface; for Monostatos's physical capacities lie at the opposite end of the technological spectrum, reliant as they are on the wind-up mechanism of a child's toy. This layering of identities—racialized Other, anthropomorphic machine, crude plaything—seems to capture some sense of slavery's horror, its disguises and its deceit, and its frightening endurance across generations.

In the enchantment scene Papageno plays his bells, the shiny green baubles clipped to his outfit, by slapping different parts of his body in order, and Monostatos attempts to copy him, albeit jerkily, as befits his robotic physique. His five cronies are similarly convulsive as they approach a fairground carousel furnished with various animal-shaped transporters, those "tamed" by Tamino just moments before. Monostatos' cronies channel another violent strategy of Western representation: blackface minstrelsy. They are shrouded completely in black, save for white outlines around the eyes and mouth, with giant cut-out shiny black stars stuck to their fronts.[14] In the guise

[13] George Lewis explored the relationship between African-American experience and the concept of the robot in his talk "Black Liveness Matters: Karel Capek meets Blind Tom," George and Joyce Wein Lectures on African and African American Music, Harvard University, 2015. See also Louis Chude-Sokei, *The Sound of Culture: Diaspora and Black Technopoetics* (Middletown CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2015).

[14] The reference to blackface is unmistakable, while the mousey ears and stars seem to invoke the infamous stylings of pop stars such as Miley Cyrus. The critical discourse surrounding Miley Cyrus's performance at the 2013 MTV Video Music Awards unpacks the intersecting themes of cultural appropriation, sex, and capitalism. See Hadley Freeman, "Miley Cryus's twerking routine was cultural appropriation at its worst," *The Guardian*, August 27 2013, accessed August 21, 2019 https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/27/miley-cyrus-twerking-cultural-appropriation ; Sherronda Brown, "Miley Cyrus finally announces the end of her minstrel show, proving once and for all the violence of appropriation," *Black Youth Project*, May 8 2017, accessed August 21, 2019, http://blackyouthproject.com/miley-cyrus-finally-announces-end-minstrel-show-proving-violence-appropriation/ ; Seph Rodney, "Miley Cyrus and Her Minstrel Show," *Hyperallergic,* June 5 2017, accessed August 21, 2019, https://hyperallergic.com/382131/miley-cyrus-and-her-minstrel-show/ .

of playthings, Monostatos and his cronies take up positions on the roundabout alongside these animal-objects. Are the slaves now identified as animals? As objects? Are we to think that these people have now been "tamed"? Although the carousel seems to be a fitting and familiar space for these toy-like creatures, they have entered a quasi-cage, a technological or mechanical space of control. (We might consider this whole scenario a radical update of the designs by of Joseph and Peter Schaffer that we saw in the previous chapter.) In contrast to the high-flying potential of the marionettes, where human bodies might be endowed with superpowers, Monostatos and his cronies are not only earth-bound, but deprived of fundamental human attributes, including identity and autonomy. When these black "puppets" are turned into "black puppets," puppetry's intrinsic negotiation of power relations, in combination with its representational force, makes explicit the brutality of Western depictions of black and other non-white peoples.

The production's direct confrontation with representational violence is reinforced by the production's handling of spoken dialogue. As a singspiel, *Die Zauberflöte* combines sung numbers with spoken text, but, according to Sharon, their interrelation made little sense to him until he saw the opera at the Salzburg Marionette Theater. According to Sharon, the disaggregation of body and voice across puppet, singer and speaker mapped perfectly onto the character's "psychological evolution," as disclosed by the singer, and the story as told by the speaker.[15] Throughout Sharon's production, the speakers are children, who we take to be the puppeteers.[16] (This is not a foregone conclusion—the spoken dialogue at Salzburg is provided by the recorded voices of actors, rather

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[15] Yuval Sharon, "Durch die Augen eines Kindes," Program Booklet, Staatsoper Unter den Linden, 2018, 8.

[16] With the exception of Papageno; Teichtmeister as mentioned previously voices his own dialogue as well as singing his songs.

than the puppeteers.) Just like traditional marionettes, the singer-puppets do not pretend to speak or lip-sync; their mouths remain shut, their lips static. But these child puppeteers have more to say: besides the dialogue, which emanates amidst sound effects and natural sounds from a surround-sound mix, they add some of their own critical commentary. The children discuss the old-fashioned language of the libretto and, as one critic put it, "the no longer understandable 'black man.'"[17] Puppetry has long been valued as a medium through which children can be taught about socially taboo or ethically challenging subjects. But this is not simply some sort of call to innocence, for these children are not quite what they seem.

In the production's final coup de theatre, we return backstage, where a group of children are playing with a puppet theater. And who are they? We might have known all along, for they turn out to be the very characters charged with ensuring that the story of the opera turns out as intended, as pre-ordained: the Three Boys. They always pop up at exactly the right moment, to show Tamino the right path or prevent an imminent suicide, fulfilling their role as deus ex machina. It is these omniscient beings and their friends, the next generation, the heirs of the current state of society and the planet, who struggle to comprehend the representational challenges of the opera. By providing paratextual observations alongside the diegetic dialogue, the disembodied voices of the puppeteers not only remind us of the multifariousness of voice—its capacity to roam amongst bodies and objects, to attach and detach itself as it requires, and to engender multiple perspectives and meanings—but they also model the meta-discursive potential of puppetry. Indeed, puppet shows are

[17] "Kinderstimmen aus dem Off zu Naturgeräuschen in einem Surround-Klang-Mix (Sound-Design: Markus Böhm) leihen den meisten Darstellern für deren Dialoge ihre Stimme, diskutieren aber auch über das Altertümliche der Sprache und über den nicht mehr nachvollziehbaren 'schwarzen Mann.'" Peter P. Pachl, "Aus Kinderaugen-Sicht: Mozarts *Die Zauberflöte* als Neuinszenierung an der Staatsoper Berlin," *Neue Musikzeitung*, February 19 2019, accessed June 5, 2019, https://www.nmz.de/online/aus-kinderaugen-sicht-mozarts-die-zauberfloete-als-neuinszenierung-an-der-staatsoper-berlin .

very often about the condition of being a puppet: the precarious balance of life and death; material capacities and limitations; and the double-bind of their relationship with their puppeteer, both collaborative and contingent. Where puppetry so often functions metaphorically to shed light on the human condition, Sharon attempts to map puppetry directly onto the human condition, materially and experientially, and in so doing achieves something similarly meta-discursive: echoing David J. Levin, his production of Mozart's opera is also about the production of opera in general.[18]

Sharon's vision curried little favor with the critics: the *Financial Times*'s reviewer, for instance, deemed it unworthy of a single star.[19] For many critics, this was yet another *Zauberflöte* for Berlin, whose existing productions already tick both the traditional and *Regietheater* boxes (Everding's staging for the Staatsoper itself and the Kosky/1927 collaboration for the Komische Oper respectively). What's more, this was a production where theatrics and theory supersede the all-important music. The dark side of such experiments, however, draws attention to the staggering demands made on singers and the extreme power dynamics of performance. In Chapter Four we will enter the marionette theater and see what happens when puppets displace the singers altogether. In supplanting the singers whose voices fill the auditorium, actual marionettes materialize wide-ranging—some familiar, others more radical—configurations of body and voice. Sharon's singers, by contrast, are merged with marionettes and other puppet forms, throwing complex issues of agency, liveness, and representation into sharp relief. Indeed, opera might be welcome in the puppet theater, augmenting its already fantastical, otherworldly nature; but when the situation is reversed, and the

[18] See David J. Levin, *Unsettling Opera: Staging Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, and Zemlinsky* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

[19] Shirley Apthorp, "Things fall apart in Berlin Staatsoper's new Zauberflöte," *Financial Times,* February 18 2019, accessed June 7, 2019, https://www.ft.com/content/ae5b3906-3370-11e9-9be1-7dc6e2dfa65e .

puppet theater enters the opera house, it can be—for some, at least—just too much of a reality check.

II

Taking the Cue from the Music

On the night of a performance of Simon McBurney's *Die Zauberflöte*, you would be forgiven for mistaking the London Coliseum for a movie theater, or perhaps a film studio.[20] A large flat screen fills the proscenium, a blank canvas waiting to be activated by projected images and life-giving light. On either side of the screen, and stage, are other kinds of cinematic technologies, those we would usually expect to find in a production studio: an animation stage and a Foley sound booth filled with various sound-making curios and household objects. You can see the orchestra more clearly too: even from the balcony it is possible to see all the players in the modest classical orchestra. The pit has been raised in order to facilitate the performers' smooth passage onto the stage. In this production, there is no strict delineation of the performance space, no barrier between on and offstage, the performers in the spotlight and the pragmatic undertakings behind the scenes. Instead, McBurney seems to have manufactured a kind of liminal space between performance and production, where everything is laid out before the audience, the technologies of performance and the performance of technology. There is almost nothing mysterious here: it is the opposite of phantasmagoria.

[20] A co-production with Dutch National Opera and the International Festival of Lyric Art, Aix-en-Provence, McBurney's production was first seen at the London Coliseum by the English Nation Opera during the 2013/14 season, and revived the first time during the 2015/16 season. I attended a performance of McBurney's production during its second revival by English National Opera at the London Coliseum on April 9, 2019. My notes from the live performance are supplemented with reference to the DVD recording of a 2015 performance by the Dutch National Opera.

For all this stagecraft to be actually *on* the stage of an opera house would be surprising in an ordinary production, but less so when McBurney is at the helm. In 1983 McBurney was a co-founder of Complicité, an international touring theatre company based in London, and the group has become famous for its "distinctive, visually rich stage language, which layers physically beautiful performances and tightly choreographed ensemble work with innovative lighting, sound and video design."[21] Unlike Sharon's production, which overtly transforms the opera house into a puppet theater and his performers, to various degrees, into figures recognizable as puppets, puppets may not be an explicit part of McBurney's toolkit, but his production resonates with the tenets of puppetry nonetheless. The company's multimedia approach to storytelling involves laying bare the constituent parts of the spectacle—performing bodies, objects and sounds—thereby shining a light on the relationships forged between and amongst them. This kind of disaggregation of audio-visual components ensures a compelling dispersion of agency that is similarly characteristic of the art of puppetry.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, *Die Zauberflöte's* onstage instruments embody the kind of complex relations between a source and a sound, an object and possible sonic capacities, a body and a voice, explored through puppetry—and McBurney's vision for these instruments exemplify his aesthetic of transparency. If the magic of the instruments manifests as toy-like, playful, childish in Sharon's production, in McBurney's the instruments' magic is in their authenticity as real instruments. McBurney's magic flute isn't magical because it seems to emit self-generated sound, or because it can take the guise of an ancient wooden pipe, a space shuttle, or a magic wand; it is magical because it is a musical instrument—and musical instruments need musicians. My discussion here will focus on McBurney's flute and his bells, and how they relate to the technical onstage

[21] *Complicité*, accessed April 19, 2022, http://www.complicite.org/ourhistory.php .

environment they inhabit. By digging beneath the veneer of the "Viennese patisserie," as McBurney himself describes the opera, he "reveals the ingredients," a kind of reverse engineering that he hopes will create for his audiences something like the marvel Mozart's audiences felt in the last years of the eighteenth century.[22]

Let us begin with the titular instrument, the magic flute itself. In her 2008 article, Marianne Tettlebaum asks "whose magic flute?" in order to address the question of power in the opera.[23] Because the flute is capable of affecting change—to quote the Act I quintet following the flute's presentation, of increasing "human happiness and contentment" (*Menschenglück und Zufriedenheit*)—it is "not only a powerful instrument but an instrument of power."[24] Therefore, for Tettlebaum, "whoever has the flute…is the source of the power that governs the opera."[25] Highlighting the parallel gestures of bestowing the flute upon Tamino, in Act I from the Queen of the Night via the Three Ladies, and in Act II from Sarastro via the Three Boys, Tettlebaum observes a "doubled gesture" that encapsulates the allegorical nature of the opera, its essential struggle between day and night, good and evil.[26] For Tettlebaum, the search for the flute's player is a question of

[22] "Simon McBurney on Die Zauberföte," *The Metropolitan Opera* channel on You Tube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojx-itMNgxs

[23] Marianne Tettlebaum, "Whose Magic Flute?" *Representations* 102 (2008); 76-93; Tettlebaum follows Rose Rosengard Subotnik in "Whose 'Magic Flute'? Intimations of Reality at the Gates of the Enlightenment," *19th-Century Music*, 15. No. 2 Toward Mozart (1991): 132–150.

[24] Tettlebaum, "Whose Magic Flute?" 76.

[25] Ibid., 76.

[26] Ibid., 77. Tettlebaum is building on Jane Brown's reading of the opera's modes of representation as explicated in her article "The Queen of the Night and the Crisis of Allegory in *The Magic Flute,*" *Goethe Yearbook* 8 (1996): 142–56.

representation: does the flute "stand for some higher power or principle, such as harmony, humanity, or brotherhood? Or is it simply what the title indicates: a magic object?"[27]

Allegory is only one order of representation, however; there is also the question of mimesis. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Tettlebaum suggests that Tamino turns to his flute as a substitute for language, specifically that which cannot be expressed in words, feelings of love and feelings of fear.[28] But its music, she argues, is too self-referential, "too 'fluty,'" too cool and distant for that narrative purpose. Tettlebaum, as we have seen, is not alone in this notion of the flute's independent agency: Abbate and Starobinski tell their own versions of a similar story regarding the flute's affect of automatism.[29] Yet these interpretations tend to focus on flute's musical material—its direct repetition, for example, in the trial scene (Abbate), and its position within the drama (Tettlebaum). By contrast, I am interested primarily in how the instrument is handled onstage, on what the audience sees and on what they can hear.

Provocative in this regard is the theory surrounding the performance of the first Tamino, Benedikt Schack. Schack was a composer and, apparently, an accomplished wind player, which spurned the idea that he had played the part of the magic flute himself in the original production. The source for such a supposition, according to Theodore Albrecht, seems to be a lexicon of Bavarian musicians by Felix Joseph Lipowsky, published in Munich in 1811.[30] The biographical

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[27] Ibid., 79.

[28] Ibid., 83.

[29] Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 56-7; Jean Starobinski, "A Reading of *The Magic Flute*," *Hudson Review* 31, No.3 (Autumn 1978): 409-424;

[30] Theodore Albrecht, "Anton Dreyssig (c. 1753/4-1820): Mozart's and Beethoven's *Zauberflötist*" in *Words about Mozart: Essays in Honor of Stanley Sadie*, ed. Dorothea Link and Judith Nagley (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2005), 179.

summary attributed to Schack describes how he became acquainted with the gamut of wind instruments as part of his training in composition, but nowhere is it suggested that he was proficient, let alone talented, on any one instrument.[31] Albrecht argues, in fact, that the erroneous ascription of the flute part to Schack is derived from a misinterpretation of the word "spielen" (to play), which can mean both to play a musical instrument and to play or act in a dramatic sense, to play the role of Tamino.[32]



Figure 2.3 Rupert Charlesworth in ENO The Magic Flute (2019) © Donald Cooper

[31] Ibid., 180.

[32] Ibid.

McBurney usurps any and all sense of ambiguity around Tamino's role in the flute's musical production. When his Three Ladies present Tamino with the magical gift, they hand over a shining silver flute, of exactly the kind that an orchestral principal might play—and that is precisely who does play it (see Fig. 2.3). As the 2019 Tamino, Rupert Charlesworth, explained to me, the flute initially presented by the Three Ladies is a prop. Attached by invisible strings to the fingers of two actors, the flute seems to float momentarily in mid-air, magical in a highly theatrical sense.[33] When he enters the stage before the flute's first outpouring, he is carrying the prop flute; but just before he proffers the flute to the ENO's principal flautist, Claire Wickes, some sleight-of-hand ingenuity enables him to swap the prop for Wickes' very own instrument.

In most productions, if the flute is onstage, but Tamino isn't actually playing it, he is usually required to mime instead. One particularly intriguing example, worth examining inasmuch as it sets the staging decisions in McBurney's production in stark relief, is Mark Dornford-May's South African revisionist production of the opera. Here Tamino's wooden flute is long enough for him to wear strapped across his back, like an archer on alert.[34] When he draws it up to play for the first time, he is tentative, trying a note or two before fully committing himself. And what does he hear when he "plays" his flute? The stutters of a trumpet. Illuminated by a spotlight, upstage and dead center, the Isango Ensemble's music director, Mandisi Dyantyis, brandishes a shiny trumpet. Tamino is bewildered by the sound at first, an entirely unexpected emission from a wooden flute, but any hesitation quickly dissipates as he starts to "play." He starts dancing almost instantly. Dyantyis'

[33] Personal communication with Rupert Charlesworth, June 6, 2019.

[34] I attended two performances of *Impempe Yomlingo* in November 2019 at the Emerson Cutler Majestic Theater in Boston, MA. I supplemented these experiences with reference to a film, Greg Germain (dir.), *Impempe* Yomling (Windrose, 2010), accessed Janaury 23, 2020, https://video-alexanderstreet-com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/watch/impempe-yomlingo.

melody starts out as something resembling the original Mozartian melody, with improvised embellishments paving the way for something altogether freer. After eight measures, company members enter the stage and four handclaps set the tempo for an isicathamiya-inspired call to Pamina.[35] Over the close harmony of the chorus, marimbas, and percussion, Dyantyis's improvised trumpet line carries loud and clear, something a flute would certainly not be able to achieve. And in the footlights, Tamino continues to mime on his flute, all the time dancing energetically.

A miming "flautist" downstage, performing a version of the role prescribed by the operatic text, and the improvising trumpeter upstage, seemingly invisible behind the "flute player," and, on the raked stage, slightly above him. This set-up seems to cast Dyantyis as a quasi-puppeteer with Tamino the dancing puppet up front, a dynamic that is reinforced by Tamino's surprise at the sound of the flute. Indeed, while the static, seemingly autonomous music of the flute might indicate the instrument's independence from Tamino, the unpredictable, spontaneous, live emanations of this trumpet-flute infer a real-time exertion of power. The mismatch between instrument and sound experienced by Tamino (if by no-one else) might be read as part of what Sheila Boniface Davies and James Q. Davies call the production's "politics of indigenization," or more pointedly as an act of re-appropriation—of exposing the opera's colonial engagement and acknowledging explicitly that what is most prominently on the surface is not always what it seems.[36]

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[35] For information on the singing style of isicathamiya, see Veit Erdmann, *Music, Modernity, and the Global Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Chapter 11, "Fantasies of Home: The Antinomies of Modernity and the Music of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, 199-213.

[36] Sheila Boniface Davies and James Q. Davies, "'So Take This Magic Flute and Blow. It Will Protect Us As We Go:' *Impempe Yomlingo* (2007–11) and South Africa's Ongoing Transition," *The Opera Quarterly* 28, nos. 1–2 (2012): 54–71, here 66. The Isango Ensemble's mission to "Africanize" Mozart's opera, a bastion of European high art, may be understood as a drive towards intercultural openness and exchange, and even a positive project of indigenization; but the general terms of the enterprise—to "Africanize"—generates what Davies and Davies identify, in their fine-grained analysis of the production's reception, as a "pan-African" aesthetic, "evinced in the costumes and the use of the West African djembe and marimba (the later only introduced to South Africa in the

A more tempered reading might see, instead of an inversion of power (an inversion in the sense that the "work" is no longer supreme), a parallel performance, two different versions of the same story. Because there is no overlap of roles or tasks—Tamino mimes on a flute; Dyantyis plays a trumpet—each performance subscribes to its specific tradition. And there is something progressive, radical even, in this juxtaposition, this co-existence in space and time. Even the mismatch between instrument and sound is thrilling, especially in its unhindered display for the audience, who are asked to believe in this particular dispersion of material and agency. But when the audience for this performance by brown- and black-skinned people is overwhelmingly white, as it was at the Emerson Cutler Majestic Theater in Boston, MA, it is hard not to feel uncomfortable. I was disturbed by my apparent awe at the spectacle before me. My own wide-eyed fascination with the ingenuity of the show felt impossible without my intimate knowledge of the opera, the measure against which I was inevitably judging the production. As Davies and Davies write of certain reviews: "One cannot escape the nagging feeling…that the incessant references to the production as "joyful" might suggest the stereotype of happy natives, spontaneously breaking out into natural expressions of song and dance—and that this association has blinded many critics to the more challenging aspects and truly innovative moments."[37] When the Queen of the Night missed the mark in the dense coloratura passages, what were we to think?[38] That it was deliberate? That it was

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1970s)" (65). The jazz trumpet functions similarly as part of the production's network of generic signifiers: "African choruses, dress, and customs are juxtaposed with jazz trumpet, disco ball, and the reimagining of the Three Boys was female spirits the guise of the Supremes, complete with Motown-inspired numbers" (65). Davies and Davies summarize the criticism facing Impempe Yoblingo as "failing to be true to Mozart on one hand, and peddling inauthentic versions of Africanness on the other—not 'African' enough, or only African the tourist-curio sense of the word" (63).

[37] Davies and Davies, "'So Take This Magic Flute and Blow," 66.

[38] The reviews from their previous visit to Boston claim that the singing was note perfect.

substandard? I found myself proposing alternative strategies for realizing the part, such as ululation, betraying not only my own "pan-African" proclivities, but also my allegiance to the Mozartian original.

Nonetheless, as we return to McBurney's production, Isango's vision of the trumpet-flute provides a suggestive foil: the duplication of the flute by the trumpet lays bare the performers' labor, cultural traditions, and multifariousness of power relations. Indeed, McBurney presents his audience with a similar conundrum. But where the role of the flute player is reproduced—refracted as opposed to reflected, we might say—by the Isango ensemble, it is simultaneously divided and shared in McBurney's scenario. The new role, if we can call it that, is made apparent for the first time when Tamino learns that Pamina is still alive and is overcome with relief. At this point, the flautist (Wickes) joins Tamino (Charlesworth) onstage and her worldview changes: "It's exhilarating looking out at the audience from the perspective of the stage," Wickes recollects, in her profile on the ENO website, "you suddenly get a sense of scale which is easy to forget from the pit!"[39] The shift in Wickes' experience of the performance space is described by one critic as a transition for the onstage musicians "from accompanists to participants."[40] The flute part is never an accompaniment though; it is always a solo, purely instrumental. Before the trials, Charlesworth enters the raised pit to deliver the flute to Wickes: has he now become somehow subservient to the stage in that moment, transformed from a performer to a stagehand or other kind of facilitator? More accurately, I would suggest that when Wickes enters the stage, she materializes the source of the music. No longer

[39] "Claire Wickes," *ENO*, accessed April 20, 2022, https://www.eno.org/artists/claire-wickes/ .

[40] Corinne da Fonseca-Wollheim, "Drama Onstage and Off," *The New York Times*, July 4, 2014, accessed April 20, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/05/arts/music/aix-en-provence-festival-presents-mozart-and-handel.html .

invisible, or even imaginary, the musician responsible for producing the flute's music is standing right in front of us.

With Tamino unencumbered by the instrument and any instruction to pretend to play, the gestural scope of the performance is expanded. Tamino's is no longer a solo endeavor; rather a kind of duet unfolds. In the world outside of the opera, it is a dialogue between an instrumentalist and a singer. In the world of the opera, of course, this *is* a solo number, as Tamino is understood as both the singer and the player. By separating out the singing from the playing, the prince from his magical instrument, McBurney's production brings together the nondiegetic and diegetic spheres, the performative and textual worlds, to present a trio, dispersing creative agency across the group that encompasses human and non-human actors: the singer, the flute, and the flute player.

While any notion of the flute as a self-playing instrument—the idea that the music Tamino plays is somehow emitted by the flute itself, in such a way that it bypasses his agency—is entirely undone by McBurney's casting of a real-life flute player, visible for everyone to see, so too is any power, or magic, attributed to "the Music itself." An unseen player feeds into the exaltation of music as immaterial, "out there," beyond the need for human involvement. By revealing the player, by putting her onstage, McBurney makes the musician, her musicianship, and the very making of the music the focus of the spectacle and the locus of magic. While the onstage presence of the flute player can make the flute's numbers within the opera look a lot more like the acts of diegetic music-making that proliferate throughout the operatic world, the virtuosity of the player, their actual playing, ensures it registers as something quite exceptional.

There are several obvious differences between the magic flute and the magic bells. One is a wind instrument, the other percussion—which means that while the owner of the one must choose between singing and playing, the owner of the other can theoretically sing and play at the same time. But perhaps the most important difference, underlying these others, is the material manifestation of

these instruments. In the original text of the opera, the flute is just that—a flute—and while its music might betray markers of automatism, it is presented by the Three Ladies as a musical instrument that Tamino himself should play. The bells, on the other hand, are concealed within a box. It is unclear to Papageno what they are, let alone what he must do with them. But if there was ever any doubt about the bells' need for a player, McBurney dispels every last one. In his production, we see precisely what's inside the box—here, a carry case or briefcase—and indeed, Papageno is able to play its contents.

Not at first, though. For the enchantment scene, Papageno enlists the help of an orchestral player, a percussionist in charge of the triangle at that moment.[41] Papageno opens the case on the edge of the pit and hastily props up some music against the lid. As the bright tinkling of a celeste fills the auditorium, Monostatos' cronies, dressed in orange overalls and black beanie hats (the image of American prison inmates springs to mind), gradually form a circle around their master, holding hands and skipping with glee. The bodies of the cronies and their routine is loose, unarticulated, energy and purpose sapped from them. Although this scene stands out as a moment of heightened choreographic complexity (relative to the rest of the production), emphasizing physically the sudden shift in the psyche of the slaves, here the routine is surpassed by the spectacle of the bells, of seeing the instrument and seeing it played. There's no mystery or uncertainty: the magic bells are a keyboard instrument, and so they require a keyboard player.

Already quite the display, the bells' second outing ups the ante. And so, for "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen," the bird catcher ventures to play his own music on his own homemade instrument. Along the edge of the suspended platform that comprises McBurney's minimalist set, Papageno, played by Thomas Oliemans, arranges a series of eight wine bottles filled with gradated volumes of

[41] In the performance I attended (and throughout the 2019 run), Adam Cigman-Mark played this role.

liquid. He checks their pitches and tweaks them with a quick swig or, as required, a discreet moment of relief. What's not visible to the audience is certainly discernible aurally, thanks to the sound effects provided by the Foley artist Ruth Sullivan in her sound booth stage left. Foley is traditionally part of the post-production stage of filmmaking. The Foley artist is a hidden figure, whose achievements are measured by their successful camouflage within the soundscape: Foley creates "realistic" sounds, reinforcing a pre-conceived, socially constructed sonic perception of the world.[42] As Michel Chion has discussed, realistic film sound doesn't necessarily correspond to what actually sounds in the real world; they are sounds we (the audience) have come to expect through cultural conditioning, or simply accept by virtue of their simultaneous presentation with an image depicting the sound-source.[43] Sullivan's artificial sounds not only reinforce the theatricality of the piece, but also put on display the artificiality of sonic signification, sound's potential to make real or make false.

Papageno's makeshift instrument extends these ideas into the musical realm. After the opening phrase of the aria, Papageno wields his beaters—two leeks!—and apparently "plays" the bells' first response, the articulation and angularity of his gestures intimating a certain intentionality. He turns away during his second phrase, losing interest (and hope), and barely turns around to play the bells' second response, which he does one-handed, with a vague wave of the leeks' feathery ends. To his surprise, the bottles play the "right" notes, the bells' music. Clearly in a state of disbelief, Papageno tests them once more: for the final flourish, he turns away, covers his eyes with one hand, and waves his leek-beaters behind him. Again, the bells' music sounds. Astounded, he

[42] For more on Foley sound practices, see Lucy Fife Donaldson, "'You Have to Feel a Sound for It to Be Effective': Sonic Surfaces in Film and Television," in *The Routledge Companion to Screen Music and Sound*, eds. Miguel Mera, Ronald Sadoff, and Ben Winters (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), 85-95; Matt Lewis, "Ventriloquial Acts: Critical Reflections on the Art of Foley," *The New Soundtrack*, 5, no. 2 (September 2015): 103-120.

[43] To capture the power of sound to attach itself to image, Chion has coined the term "synchresis." See Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, 107-114.

takes up a strong stance in front of the bottles, raising his leek-beaters above his head and taking a deep breath in: apparently, he has magical musical abilities. But before he has a chance to strike the bottles, the real bells sound. "Of course," his body tell us, "my personal celeste player is behind all this." And there he is, at the open carry case positioned on the edge of the stage. We, the audience, had known this all along, of course, but Papageno had apparently forgotten about the bells' musician, or, more accurately, the inseparability of the sound of the bells from the object of the bells—and their player. He starts to believe that the bottles might be the source of the bells' sound. The sound, therefore, must be mobile, separate from the source, and able to attach itself to other objects—which might mean that the beaters are producing the music, an idea that does seem to cross Papageno's mind. Or, conversely, different kinds of instrument can, according to Papageno's belief system, produce the same sounds.

The real *coup de théâtre* comes with the bells' final appearance, when Papageno has truly lost all hope in his mateless, loveless life and is about to end it. Once, twice, three times he plays his call on his panpipes, but receives no answer. They fail, of course, because they are nothing more than an extension of himself, Papageno-as-instrument; his panpipes have no magic powers. It takes the Three Boys to remind Papageno of his bells and their magical capabilities, but much to his dismay, his favored player has by now run off, escaped, in fact—the celeste player could see what was coming and so made every effort, from the audience's point of view, to evade his duties.[44] Papageno is left with no choice: he must play the bells himself. And that he does, to the great thrill and delight of the audience.

[44] This is not how it plays out in the DVD recording. With Papageno already in the throes of his bell-playing, the keyboardist returns from backstage with a cup of tea. No longer needed, he wanders off again.

We might describe McBurney's production as "anti-phantasmagorical": we know precisely who is doing what, where, when. We have seen how this works musically, but this aesthetic of transparency extends to the visual dimensions of the production as well. While the floating platform functions as a boardroom table, a mountain side, and a cave, the "black box" stage acts as a backdrop for live animation. During the overture, live writing ("The Magic Flute," "W. A. Mozart") and drawing (a mountainous landscape) is projected onto the enormous blank screen. Swipes of an eraser are timed with the music to comic effect. To conjure Sarastro's temple, a shelf of books, part of the animator Ben Thompson's creative station, is projected onto the screen. When Thompson slides back the volumes entitled "Reason" and "Nature," their spines dissolve into shadow, as though a passage has been revealed. Suddenly, the books are giant doors, slamming in Tamino's face as they are shunted forward, once again forming a seamless barrier with their literary neighbors, brimming with concealed knowledge. When Tamino seeks the assistance of his trusty flautist to celebrate the news of Pamina's safety, the "duet" unfolds against the projected backdrop of what we imagine to be one of the books having fallen open, the exposed pages evoking those of an encyclopedia. Illustration panels depict a menagerie of wild animals that come life to the strains of the flute, and chalk-drawn animal outlines join them. And finally, when Tamino and Pamina face the trials, the stage is engulfed by projected fire before the intrepid pair find themselves flailing in an effervescent food of watery light.

Die Zauberflöte has long been derided for its incongruity, its erratic scene changes and its eclecticism. McBurney's production unites the odd juxtapositions of Mozart's opera through an aesthetic of transparency.[45] Projected scenery erected and manipulated in full view of the audience

[45] As the critic for the *Wall Street Journal* declared: "It might just be the first completely coherent staging of Mozart's hybrid music/theater/pantomime piece." Paul Levy, "At the ENO, the most magical flute of all," *The Wall Street Journal,* November 23 2013, accessed March 1, 2019, https://www.wsj.com/articles/at-the-eno-the-most-magical-flute-of-all-1384536788 .

enables instantaneous cuts, while live animation facilitates heightened audio-visual synchronization (see Fig.2.4); concurrently, sound effects are produced by an assortment of surprising, but highly familiar, objects and real musical instruments are played onstage by virtuosi. In dismantling the artificiality of performance, McBurney puts the behind-the-scenes in plain sight. The sense of awe, the spectacle itself, is generated by seeing—and knowing—exactly what the performers are doing, and what they're not doing. There is something counterintuitive about such a correlation between transparency and theatrical illusion—the idea that the more that is revealed of the production's technical workings, the more impressive or compelling the show appears.[46] Indeed, McBurney's mediatized production might be a provocative counterpoint to what Gundula Kreuzer terms "Wagnerian technologies," the operatic devices that contrive to produce a glossy, comprehensive exterior—a *Gesamtkunstwerk*—by veiling their inner workings and mechanics.[47] The machinations of McBurney's technologies, by contrast, are laid bare, making everyone palpably aware of the artisanal, crafted, tangible bases of the ephemerality of performance. Such delineation of discrete technologies creates a network where the relationships between component parts are as important—if not more so—than the components themselves.

[46] In the words of one critic, "Perhaps the most striking use of laying bare these component parts is what, ironically, makes this production most visually arresting." Toby L. White, "Mozart Deconstructed: McBurney's Magic Flute," *The Arbuturian*, November 10, 2013, accessed April 21, 2022 , https://www.arbuturian.com/culture/theatre/mcburney-magic-flute .

[47] See Gundula Kreuzer, *Curtain, Gong Steam: Wagnerian Technologies of Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).
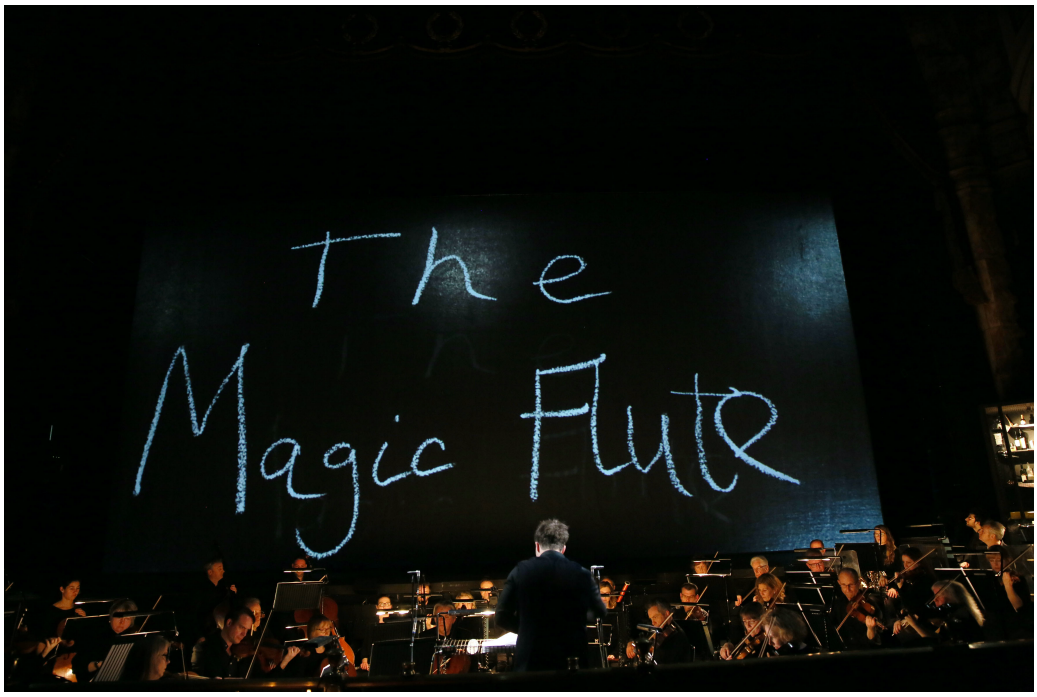


Figure 2.4 Live animation in ENO The Magic Flute (2019) © Donald Cooper

III

Chimerical Creatures

It's a dark, dark night. Silhouetted houses with brightly lit windows of orange and yellow form a backdrop to the fugitives' escape, a seemingly smooth, unimpeded route across long black and white rooftops. Their faces both powdered white, the bird catcher is wearing a dark yellow zoot suit; the princess a black, high-collared dress with white trim and a flapper-style black wig. The pair swing their bent arms determinedly, as though power walking perhaps, and they lift their heels alternately in time with the music. A couple of times they adopt a superman pose—left fist punching the sky, the right arm stretched downward diagonally opposite—as they appear to fly over gaps between buildings. Of course, they are doing no such thing. It is the projected backdrop that is doing all the running, not the fugitive pair. Their simulated movements are performed on the spot, on a narrow

ledge that protrudes from roughly the middle of the backdrop-cum-screen. The cartoonish animation runs horizontally, left to right, across the screen, the images themselves static except for Papageno's cat, Karl-Heinz, whose progress is nimbler and more assured. A final leap and Buster Keaton and Louise Brooks, also known as Papageno and Pamina, settle on a shorter rooftop. In a set like this, there's only one hiding place for the enraged captor: a chimney stack. And indeed, out of a lonely pot on the other side of the void, a Count Orlok-ish Monostatos pops up, stopping the fugitives in their tracks. They, and we, are suddenly aware of an entire barrier of chimney stacks downstage, twelve in all, each guarded by one of Monostatos' wolfish dogs. There is only one way out of this situation: the magic bells.

When Papageno calls upon them, a white valise secured with red straps falls from the sky. The case lands on what can only be described as its back as four slender legs flail in the air before righting the case and retracting inside. Papageno entreats the bells-case to come to the rescue of the bird-catcher and his ward. Upon further coaxing, the lid suddenly bursts open releasing a stream of red bells with arms, legs, and feet wearing red high heels. The bells join hands to form a quasi-chorus line—one critic describes them as a chain of "paper cut-out dolls"—and they bounce across the row of guarded chimney pots, while a further shower of bells drenches Monostatos.[48] The chorus line trails off and the shower evaporates, but the bells have made their mark—physiologically as well as musically. As Monostatos and his cronies join the bells' music with their own melody, a kind of *Urlinie*, they suddenly acquire dancing legs. Their legs are adorned with stockings and suspenders, and like those of the bells, their feet are clad in red high-heeled shoes. As the familiar

[48] Fiona Maddocks, "The Magic Flute at Edinburgh Festival Review—unforgettable and exhausting" Sun 30 Aug 2015, accessed November 5, 2019,https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/aug/30/magic-flute-edinburgh-festival-review-barrie-kosky-1927-komische-oper-berlin .

tune rattles on, the captors, hands firmly on their hips, perform a choreographed on-the-spot routine of knee bends and heel clicks; and at the end of the song, they all retreat inside their chimney pots, leaving Papageno and Pamina to continue their escape to freedom.

Let's rewind—an actual possibility with this version of *Die Zauberflöte*. Conceived by Barrie Kosky, artistic director at the Komische Oper and the British theater group 1927, this *Zauberflöte* makes elaborate use of film technologies; but where McBurney's film-infused production manages to put both the process and the product onstage simultaneously, the Komische Oper's repertory production transforms the auditorium into an old-fashioned movie theater. The flat screen that fills the proscenium remains for the duration of the opera, and yet all kinds of places are visited on this "journey through the dream worlds of Tamino and Pamina."[49] What ensues is a compelling fusion of live performance and animation. The production's entire landscape—in this scene: the rooftops, the chimney pots, the houses in the distance with their glowing windows—are projected animations, betraying the influence of all kinds of artistic styles and techniques. Not only are the surroundings filmic creations, but so too are the magical props, the bells and the flute, and even the bodies of certain characters. As we shall see, Kosky's *Zauberflöte,* like that of Sharon*,* constructs its own kind of performing object, a hybrid of human and projection, body and light.

In the *Zauberflöte* at the Komische Oper, the agendas of Sharon's mechanical puppet theater and McBurney's production studio meet. But where these productions go some way towards revealing their means of production, the particular aesthetic and performative combination of opera and film in the vision of Kosky and 1927 presents a polished exterior, vibrant yet flat, animated yet static. Comprised of an image track, an orchestra, and live onstage performers, Kosky's production

[49] "Man könnte unsere Inszenierung auch als eine Reises durch die Traumwelten von Tamino and Pamina erleben." Interview with Barrie Kosky, Suzanne Andrade and Paul Barritt, "Ein magisches Märchenbuch," Program Booklet, 12

constructs all sorts of intermedial relationships that reverberate with the specter of the puppet. Indeed, interactions between live singers and their animated appendages, instruments, and environments foreground questions of liveness and audio-visual synchronization that might usually be taken for granted in the opera house and the cinema, but whose solutions are endlessly flexible in the puppet theater.

This silent film re-imagining of *Die Zauberflöte* weaves together various historical and aesthetic motivations. The very notion itself—of transforming an opera in a (pseudo-)silent film is, for a start, not as far-fetched as it may seem. Indeed, in the early years of film, opera was a well-spring of inspiration for the new medium: stars of the operatic stage often took central roles in silent film and indeed, entire operas were recreated on the big screen.[50] Moreover, the medium of film, as we have seen with McBurney's realization, affords the opportunity to soften some of the discontinuities of the original opera. This is possible because of the inherent discontinuity of film: its potential for fast scene changes through cuts, the techniques of panning and zoom, and the manipulated gaze accommodate perfectly the jerks of *Die Zauberflöte*'s story, smoothing the cracks between snapshots into a coherent whole.

Even so, the visual language can still be as eclectic and divergent as ever, and therefore, remain strongly reflective of the original work. To get a sense of the style, we might start with the production company's name "1927," named for the year of *The Jazz Singer* and the apparent watershed marking the end of silent film and the age of the "talkie."[51] Yet the precise historical

[50]On the topic of opera and silent film, see, for example, Ditlev Rindom, "Celluoid Diva: Staging Leoncavallo's Zazà in the Cinematic Age," *Journal of the Royal Musical Assosication*, 144, no. 2, (2019): 287-321; Paul Fryer, *The Opera Singer and the Silent Film* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company Ltd, 2005); Michal Grover-Friedlander, ""The phantom of the opera': the lost voice of opera in silent film," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 11, no.2 (1991): 179–192.

[51] Program booklet, 9. As recent scholarship has shown, however, this "moment" was, in fact, a much longer, complex process that spanned technological, philosophical, and commercial concerns.

bounds of the animation palette are more difficult to determine. For some reviewers, they are expansive and exciting, a cascade of whimsical referentiality; for others, they are more constrained, focussed more directly on 1920s Berlin.[52] To keep things moving when there is no explicit action to depict (such as a serpent chasing a prince), the creators of the production have derived from the text of the libretto in order to generate onscreen interest. A good example of is the Three Ladies' entrance trio, where quasi-anatomical hearts appear above the heads of Mrs Schwatz (chat), Mme Klatsch (gossip), Fr. Tratsch (schmooze). As they fight over the prince, Mme Klatsch bursts the others' hearts with her cigarette holder. Larger hearts, reminiscent of thought bubbles in cartoons, then appear as "screens" for silhouette animations of each of their imagined romantic outings with the prince. The hearts then multiply uncontrollably and burst.

To a significant degree, though, what you see in this magical world depends on your points of reference, your personal repository of cultural icons, artistic styles, and film genres. As "astonishing stage images tumble out one after the other,"[53] film noir rubs shoulders with Monty Python, Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* with the more cutesy animation of certain Disney films. There are other visual references too: expressionist art; the Theatrum Mundi, mechanical monkeys and Jacques de Vaucanson's defecating duck; comic-book style "sound" effects; and the styling of certain characters pays homage to well-known figures from film and elsewhere. In Sarastro, one critic sees the French filmmaker Georges Méliès, whose 1902 film *A Trip to the Moon* appears to be a source of

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On the place of *The Jazz Singer* within these developments, see Michael Slowik, *After the Silents: Hollywood Film Music in the Early Sound Era, 1926-1934* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

[52] Anthony Tommasini suggests that the aesthetic variety of the production are brought together in a "unified stylistic milieu: Berlin in the 1920s." See Tommasini, "Review: In 'The Magic Flute,' Mozart meets Nosferatu," *The New York Times*, July 18, 2019, accessed April 21, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/18/arts/music/review-mozart-magic-flute-lincoln-center.html.

[53] Maddocks, "The Magic Flute at Edinburgh Festival Review—unforgettable and exhausting."

inspiration for the production's designer, Paul Barritt, whereas another sees the nineteenth-century English engineering giant Isambard Kingdom Brunel.[54] It doesn't really matter who you think it is: what matters is that both are possible.

Crucially, these kaleidoscopic transformations and mesmerizing stage pictures do not function autonomously. Indeed, these images are much more than an evocative backdrop to the unfolding action; rather, they interact with the singers, and even dictate their movements. In this sense, Kosky's vision shares a lot with Sharon's. Both directors control the bodily movements of their singers. Where Sharon's singers dangle at the end of "strings," at the Komische Oper they balance and tiptoe on narrow ledges; as one critic puts it, "cut-outs revolve to reveal the live singers on promontories of varying precariousness."[55] These tiny, single-use stages restrict the bodies of the singers in concrete ways, keeping the performers in one place, at the peril of considerable injury. In their designated spot within the stage picture, the singers are kept in their place by the images as well. Cartoonish spotlights and iris shots, for example, replicate the effects of theatrical apparatus and cinematic technique, while also evoking the visual aesthetics of silent film. When the characters appear to be moving—across rooftops, for instance, like Papageno and Pamina—it is the scenery, the image track, that scrolls behind the singers, who remain motionless save for stylized gestures added to feed the illusion of a continuous, coherent world. And sometimes—most provocatively, most puppet-like—the real-life bodies of the singers are merged with animated ones. Half-human, half-projection, Tamino races to avoid the jaws of the ensuing serpent in which he succeeds with the

[54] Mark Swed, "Review: Brilliant transformation of 'The Magic Flute,'" November 25, 2013, May 18, 2020, https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-xpm-2013-nov-25-la-et-cm-la-opera-flute-review-20131125-story.html; Guy Dammann, "Shtumming the spiel," *The Spectator*, September 5, 2015, accessed May 18, 2020, https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/shtumming-the-spiel- .

[55] Dammann, "Shtumming the spiel."

help of animated slapstick running legs. We have already seen the bodily take-over enacted by the dancing bells on Monostatos and his dogs (on which more below), but undoubtedly most memorable, of all the production's chimerical creatures, is the Queen of the Night, whose metamorphosis turns her into a giant arachnid.

The Queen of the Night appears right at the top center of the stage. For her transformation, a single pair of legs will not suffice: she must have four. And sometimes she even has wings. As the angel of death, the Queen chases Pamina along a seemingly interminable corridor. As the walls roll past, densely decorated with bones arranged in geometric patterns and skeleton portraits, Pamina runs on the spot (on her own legs this time) like a hamster in a wheel. When the corridor finally runs out and Pamina has nowhere else to go, the Queen sheds her wings, her eight spidery legs appear and her own skeletal body is revealed. With each cry of "Hört," one of her boney arms flings a dagger to the ground, stage left then stage right, appearing to stop Pamina as she attempts to flee. With the final "Hört," the Queen throws two more daggers directly beneath her this time, trapping Pamina in a space no bigger than her body. Finally, the daggers mutate into a cloud of bats, that drown out the scene, turning the screen to black.

In her Act I appearance, the Queen is similarly scary, but this time, rather than daggers, her legs serve the purpose of ensnaring Tamino. As she recounts the "abduction" of Pamina, Tamino watches a cartoon-style version of the story projected "onto" a spider's web that appears between the Queen's legs. A story within the story; an animation within the animation. Throughout the aria, the Queen employs some quasi-semaphore, bony arms forming different shapes and gestures to punctuate her phrases. Her spidery legs move constantly: pincer-like, trapping Tamino in different configurations; scuttling on the spot with nervous energy; quivering with tension.

All the Queen's actions are executed by animated limbs. The singer, Aleksandra Olczyk, is shrouded in a gown, which functions as a black canvas for her projected body.[56] This is by far the most extreme suppression of the body demanded by the production, but all the performers are subject to the film reel's control. As one critic describes it, the technology of the production is like "a corset."[57] The negative space of the screen comes to dominate the stage picture, restricting the movements of the performers. The critic for *The Spectator* observed how singers "who rely on a certain amount of movement and gesture to animate their voices, are here often pinned to the backdrop or held in still poses so that the projectionist can have his way with them."[58] Indeed, the physical demands of the set can have a palpable impact on the singers' voices as well as their bodies. Barritt observes that the height of the platform for Pamina's entrance—where she appears to be standing at the top of a staircase, desperately trying to keep Monostatos' pack of dogs at bay as they strain at their leash—is responsible for a "genuine level of anxiety in the voice!"[59]

The screen exerts its power over the performers in another way as well: by replacing their spoken voices with text. In this silent-film update of the Singspiel, the passages of spoken dialogue are substituted for summative intertitles, stylized gestures, and fortepiano (Hammerklavier) accompaniment. For English audiences—and performances in English—the critic for *The New York*

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[56] I attended performances in Berlin on January 9 and 11, 2020.

[57] "Barrie Kosky inszeniert die Zauberflöte an der Komischen Oper Berlin," *HNA*, November 28, 2012, accessed May 11, 2020, https://www.hna.de/kultur/stummfilm-welt-barrie-kosky-inszeniert-zauberfloete-komischen-oper-berlin-2641763.html .

[58] Guy Dammann, "Shtumming the spiel," *The Spectator*, September 5, 2015 https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/shtumming-the-spiel- Accessed 5.18.2020.

[59] Nathan Skethway "Find out what inspired the groundbreaking imagery of the Komische Oper Berlin's *The Magic Flute*, *Playbill* July 17, 2019 accessed May, 11 2020, https://www.playbill.com/article/find-out-what-inspired-the-groundbreaking-imagery-of-the-komische-oper-berlins-the-magic-flute .

Times considers the intertitles an "inspired solution" to the awkward challenges of the libretto's dialogue.[60] Elsewhere, the effect is considered "chilly," turning the opera into "a hit parade, a concert with dazzling visuals but a lack of heart; it was easy to be impressed, but harder to care."[61] Musically, this is, of course, the most drastic deviation from Mozart, although the choice of music for the pianist is nonetheless apt: the fantasias in D minor KV 397 (1782) and C minor KV 475 (1785). Kosky identifies the "special sense of rhythm" engendered by the designs of Barritt and his creative partner, Suzanne Andrade.[62] According to Kosky, the animations are determined by the music and the text. In this inversion of the audio-visual hierarchy, the animations are more like so-called "visual music," rather than underlined by "Mickey-Mousing" techniques.[63] But it is worth remembering, that once these animations are fixed, the music is dictated by them. With the passages of spoken dialogue—potential scenes of comic improvisation—subsumed under the logic and mechanics of the film reel, the pervasive sense of automatism is complete. To sum up, the film—its projected images and the technologies of exhibition—appears to control the performers.

The reciprocity between film and puppetry is well-known. Since the beginnings of film, puppets have been relied upon to bring to life superhuman, out-of-this-world, and fantastic creatures, while puppeteers have long been influenced by cinematic technologies and techniques, from projected backdrops to scaled replications of a figure to create the illusion of perspective. One particular cause of friction when the two media come into contact is the way in which the recording

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[60] Tommasini, "Review: In 'The Magic Flute,' Mozart Meets Nosferatu."

[61] Zachary Woolf, "The Happy Results of a Speedy Shift," *The New York Times*, November 26, 2013, access May 19, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/26/arts/music/the-magic-flute-at-the-los-angeles-opera.html .

[62] Program Booklet, 10.

[63] These techniques are discussed in more detail in the Epilogue.

technologies of the younger medium impinge upon the basic tenets of its older sibling: for the very life of the puppet is understood as residing, to a significant degree, in the eyes of the beholder—that is those of both the puppeteer and the audience. Behind a camera lens or on the big screen, this relationship is apparently compromised, and so, following a purist logic, the puppet ceases to exist. But what if something altogether new comes into being? What if the meeting of film and puppetry results not in concession, but in creation?

A "media figure" is the theater scholar and playwright Steve Tillis' term for the kinds of non-human performing figures we find in films today: computer-generated imagery (CGI) and stop-motion figures. Like all puppets, media figures share "the crucial trait of presenting characters through a site of signification other than actual living beings."[64] What is distinctive about a media figure, however, is that its performance is only "made possible through technological mediation."[65] In order to better account for the common traits and distinctive attributes of puppets and media figures, Tillis proposes the categories "tangible puppets" and "virtual puppets." "Tangible puppets" embraces the various objects made of wood, leather, felt, and wool, familiar from conventional puppet shows, while virtual puppets are those creations of computer code and pixels. The specific designation of "puppet" is related to their manipulation in real-time.[66] Stop-motion figures, he suggests, are in a category of their own, precisely because they are not manipulated in real-time. Rather, stop-motion figures are tangibly moved "out of time," in the unrecorded time between shots. Their "independent" movement is entirely illusive, emerging only from the projected film.

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[64] Steve Tillis, "The Art of Puppetry in the Age of Media Production" in John Bell (ed), *Puppets, Masks, and Performing Objects* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001), 173.

[65] Ibid.," 172.

[66] Tillis is not especially invested in this parameter as a defining of the puppet, though; he considers it more relevant to the puppeteer. See Ibid., 179-180.

The singers in Kosky's production are clearly not puppets, nor are they viewed from either side of a camera. However, their pre-determined, materially fixed positions onstage and the externally enforced structuring of their movements invites us to think of them as puppets. Barritt, in fact, says as much; in an interview for Animations Online, he reflects that:

> …critics of the kind of work we make would say that, through the use of animation, we also reduce the importance of the 'live' element and that we reduce our performers to mere puppets within the animated world. This is of course entirely true! And is actually the point of what we have, albeit in an organic and haphazard way, achieved. We have ultimately arrived at a cross between film and theatre.[67]

While the film's control over the performers might render them puppets, the additional layers of bodily modification undergone by some of the singers might be more fully accounted for by the concept of the "media figure." While living beings are undeniably instrumental to the presentation of each character, their bodily presence might be significantly obscured, and even displaced, by projected images. Crucially, the animations themselves only come to life through technological mediation, so there is multiplication of mediation here, a kind of fractal, if you will, where the complete figure is a large-scale repetition of (some of) its parts.

In the case of the Queen of the Night, the figure is comprised of a singer, her head the only visible part, and a whole host of virtual bodies. The casting of the Queen as neither fully human nor fully technological, rather a complex mixture of both, also reflects her role in the Janus-faced plot of the opera. But what of her voice? On the one hand, the Queen's voice escapes the bounds of her encasement and distinguishes itself as "natural" and a marker of three-dimensionality against the flatness of her technologically produced body and its surroundings. On the other, the refinement of her voice, especially the coloratura, betrays its own kind of *techne.*[68] Moreover, the music more

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[67] Helen Babbs, "The Theatre Film Hybrid—An Interview with Paul Barritt," *Animations Online,* accessed May 20, 2020, http://www.puppetcentre.org.uk/animations-online/features/theatre-film-hybrid/

[68] This reading is indebted to Abbate, *In Search of Opera*, 88-94.

broadly, as discussed above, must obey the film: the entire stage picture is dictated not by the conductor, the orchestra and the singers, but by the designer, the animator, and the projectionist.

If the Queen of the Night is an essentially chimerical creature, what is to be made of Monostatos and his pack of dogs in the Enchantment Scene? Recall: the bells-cum-chorus line bounce across the row of canine guards and shower down on Monostatos as the first eight measures of their ornamental melody rings out. When Monostatos and his dogs join with their own melody, they start dancing too. Their dancing legs, though, are not their own, but those of the bells. The chimney stacks from which the brigade of guards looms are suddenly swapped for the legs of the bells, which perform a perfectly synchronized routine of alternating knee bends and heel-to-toe points. Importantly, the guards' torsos remain frozen throughout, their arms akimbo. These bells—themselves half-instrument, half-human in their animated make-up—demonstrate their power not only through the hypnotic effect of their music, but also by their physical possession of the guards' bodies.

Whether we can read this particular kind of takeover as anything other than theatrical spectacle is debatable. By recasting the encounter between Papageno and Monostatos earlier in the opera as a cat-and-dog fight, the problematic identity politics at work in that scene are largely eliminated; and here, in the Enchantment Scene, the effect is mainly comical. The whimsy of the production does, of course, chime with the fairy-tale dimensions of the opera, and as many critics have observed, the stream-of-consciousness style of the animations glosses over the various ideological currents at work in the opera. As one critic describes it, the medium of film keeps "Mozart's characters at an arms-length distance…and as a result, we don't really empathize with them."[69]

[69] Richard S. Ginell, "*Magic Flute* waxes a bit too loony as silent-movie toon," *Classical Voice North America*, November 28, 2013, accessed May 20, 2020,

Perhaps there is something to be said for the depiction of female power. While the bells are coded as female through their fashion footwear and accessories, Tamino's "flute" is represented explicitly by a female figure. Both are idealized versions of the feminine—a chorus-line of bell-girls and a Tinkerbell-esque fairy respectively—and in a sense, this reinforces the reductive image of the female espoused by much of operatic history, and more broadly, the equation of the arts with femininity. In this reading, these feminized instruments serve as tools for their male masters. On the other hand, by portraying these instruments of magical power as visions of the feminine that need no external input or animation, autonomous beings that can overpower nature, the production seems to recalibrate the outdated gender politics of the opera—the idea that the pursuit of enlightenment is available only to men, that women are merely a distraction.

Where puppetry brings the inanimate to life in the moment, film turns what is already alive into a state of *in*animation, capturing a series of still-life images that, when unfurled continuously and in order are given life once more (and again and again after that). And this brings us to a particular irony of these chimerical creatures: the liveliness of the animation has the effect of deadening the performers, draining the life out of them. This is made even more palpable by the fact that there are few moments of repose in this production. The animation is near-continuous, which can be challenging for the spectator at times, not to mention highly restrictive for the musicians. While the creative process is, according to Barritt and Andrade, symbiotic, in performance, this complex intermingling of film and opera, projected animations and live singers only has one available path: from media server through the projector via the conductor and her orchestra, and onto the screen and the singers. There is no feedback loop, no flexibility in performance. Visual and aural misalignments, where performers miss their mark and fall outside of

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https://classicalvoiceamerica.org/2013/11/28/magic-flute-waxes-bit-too-loony-as-silent-movie-toon/.

a projected spotlight or, worse, when the singers and orchestra lose one another, become important markers of liveness, of human skill and fallibility.

The Lens of Puppetry

As we did in Chapter One, let us return once more to the enchantment scene. With the metaphorical puppet embedded in the very fabric of this scene, realizations in the theater can draw out puppetry's various facets in all sorts of ways, conjuring literal and conceptual puppets, and exploring ideas around (the occlusion of) agency, acousmatic sound, gestural expression, and material manipulation. Having now outlined the unique approaches in each of Sharon, McBurney and Kosky's productions, what (if anything) can be said to unite them?

While McBurney's production may not give us recognizable puppets, its aesthetic of transparency shines a light on the figure of the puppeteer. On one level, McBurney's production gives us the most straightforward presentation of the operatic text. The men hear the bells and their bodies go limp. Their movements are loose, their dance whimsical. Their sudden impotence is exacerbated by the exuberance of the onstage keyboard performance. Indeed, this focus on the instrument and its player is what makes McBurney's production distinctive. The fact that Monostatos and his men are not marked racially (or in any other way, as they are in the Sharon and Kosky's productions) further hones the attention on the musician. In this scenario, it is the player of the bells that stands out from the crowd, that is marked as different from those around him: he can cross the boundary between the pit and the stage, and so can interact with characters within the diegesis, almost becoming one himself. In showcasing the manipulation of the instrument, the player behind the creation of the bells' music, McBurney's production extinguishes any potential ambiguity surrounding the sound and its source; rather, by laying bare the machinations of the

theater, the production highlights the embodied labor of music-making and the (magical) efficacy of the music itself.

Monostatos and the slaves are the focus of the enchantment scenes in both Sharon and Kosky's productions. Both realizations depict figures more instantly perceivable as puppets, although their means of creation are quite different. The Moorish designation of Monostatos and his men is envisioned as in some way non-human: Sharon's slaves are robotic toy things and Kosky's are human-sized dogs with their owner Monostatos, a vampire. Already marked as "different" before the bells wield their power, the submission of these figures is depicted through further degrees of dehumanization. The bodily encasements and distortions of Sharon's performers already determine their movements both tangibly and dramatically. So, when the bells' music takes over these mechanical toys, there is only really one way to go: their movements become more jerky, hyper-robotic. In keeping with the playroom aesthetic and the childish perspective on the action, the movements of these figures are simply, unthinkingly exaggerated.

Kosky's performers are also physically limited, less through costuming though and more through the dictates of the projection technologies. Confined to ledges and pinned in place, the performers' bodies merge with the projection screen. When the bells exert their influence over the guards, they do so through an apparent bodily take-over: their dancing legs are fused with the heads and torsos of the dogs. These hybrid figures are a combination of a performing body and projected animation, variously and simultaneously lively and motionless, active and passive, human and non-human. And indeed, these productions run the gamut of material manipulation in performance. Sharon's makeshift puppet theater and Kosky's ersatz cinema might be understood to occupy positions at either end of the spectrum. While both productions turn their performers into puppets, Sharon's are intensely corporeal, concrete and manual, whereas Kosky's puppets emerge fleetingly from the evanescent life of the digital, technological effects and varied forms of remote control. In

exposing the workings of theatrical illusion, McBurney's production highlights the reciprocal and combinatorial relationships between digital and manual technologies and the performers themselves. As the performance appears to unfold behind the scenes, the audience become participants, knitting together the various components of the performance to create a unified whole.

This chapter has brought the lens of puppetry to the opera house, to productions of an opera we are coming to understand as predisposed to all kinds of puppet representation, from the highly figurative to the subtlety affective. Whatever the nature of the puppet aesthetic at work, these analyses have dealt with live performers and live voices, which do all sorts to cut across conceptual and material binaries. Any allusion to puppetry, therefore, has been forced to work, in some sense, in reverse: from the animate to the inanimate. In the next chapter, we will explore the meeting of puppetry and opera from the other direction, where inanimate performing objects and recorded voices are brought together and made to appear like live performers. In the puppet theater, as we shall see, the enchantment scene turns these newly "live" performers back into puppets, or perhaps into an entirely new kind of performing object.

III. Projection: An Opera for Puppets

The Enchantment Scene: Four Ways

i. Salzburg

Monostatos and his cronies appear in brightly colored garb. Gold trim spirals down the legs of their harem pants, red for Monostatos, the leader of the gang, and green for his underlings. Feathery gold skirts, reminiscent of the pa`u worn for Hawaiian hula dance, festoon their waists. Matching ruched sleeves cover their arms, while a collar, like the Usekh collars of the ancient Egyptian elite, connects the two. Their torsos are apparently bare, made of brown cloth to match their painted faces, hands and feet—and if you look close enough, you can see that their mouths are lipstick red. They wear single hooped gold earrings and the chains they carry—to bind the fugitives—take on the guise of jewelry too.

When Papageno shakes his miniature *Schellenbaum*, Monostatos and his cronies take up a somewhat awkward pose. Their right knees are not quite on the floor, their left legs are stretched straight out in front, a cross between genuflection and a hamstring stretch. Balanced thus, the figures soften their knees on every beat, pulsing with latent momentum. After four measures of the bells' melody, the men hold their arms out and start to sway gently, alternating sides with every downbeat. When they begin to sing, they also begin to dance. In a kind of slow can-can, the slaves kick alternate legs on the downbeats of four measures. Papageno steps from foot to foot as well, either mimicking the slaves or demonstrating for them. During the refrain of vocables, "Tralla lala la Trallalala," the slaves' skipping speeds up, stepping on every half measure, as they turn 180 degrees. A wave of the hands and a shallow bounce bring the phrase to an end. On the subsequent repetitions of the refrain, the faster high kicks are replaced by a more distinctive move: with their

arms held out in a broad upward curve, the figures pivot in a wide sweep around their left leg and stamp their right foot repeatedly. Their cadential gesture is enhanced to match: the group now rise into the air—a lift rather than a jump—fluttering their hands and feet. At the final cadence, the slaves scarper, stage right.

ii. Lindau

When Papageno realizes that he needs his bells, he doesn't have to look far: they are standing right next to him. Perched on stalky legs and adorned with white fluffy wings, the "body" of the bells is a cylindrical silver pot. When they are called upon to play, the lid of the pot shoots up to reveal the bells dangling and jingling within. They appear to exert their magical power even before they begin to play—or perhaps it is the birdcatcher who is in command. Because as Papageno sings to the bells, calling upon them to intervene, Monostatos and his three cronies are already in lockstep, succumbing to the rhythmic order even as they approach the fugitives. Indeed, the bells' avian appearance suggests that they are destined for Papageno, an extension of him, either as his bounty or his offspring. As the lid pops up and the bells begin to play, the spindly legs that bear the bells start to dance, stepping simply from side to side. Monostatos and his men match these steps. All it takes for the bells to execute their rescue is for these tantalizing legs to sidle off painlessly into the wings: the slaves seemingly cannot help but follow.

iii. Berlin

Monostatos has just two cronies and they stand perfectly to attention. In fact, they do not move a muscle. Standing shoulder-to-shoulder, one is slightly shorter than the other. Both figures are wide-eyed with gaping, red-lipped mouths and they wear long tunics with embellished collars. Their outer arms wave up and down, the only means of enlivening their two-dimensional state. Monostatos

himself is a loose-limbed, pot-bellied figure with pronounced facial features and bared teeth. Predominantly red, with marbled gold and purple, his costume is comprised of an open waistcoat with diaphanous sleeves, harem pants and a keffiyeh-style head covering. When the bells play, they spin in midair—no player, no input at all, it seems. And when Monostatos succumbs to their music, he bounces in time, not on his feet, but rather—on his head. No hands, no support, nothing else at all, but directly on his head.

iv. Vienna

Monastatos wears a dusty pink jacket, reminiscent of Raj and concierge attire, with harem-style cream pants. His face, in complexion and expression, and his disproportionate body betray the influence of blackface minstrelsy. Replicas of their master, Monostatos' cronies—seven of them in total, six small figures and one taller one heading up the group—enter the scene stage left in single file. When Papageno rings the magic bells, the group begins to dance, the same kind of alternating step dance as that of the Salzburg posse, but there is no variation at all: this is their only move. The group exits backwards, in reverse so to speak, with bouncing steps landing on the first beat of each measure.

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These versions of the enchantment scene unfold on the stages of Marionettentheater across Germany and Austria; but these descriptions barely scratch the surface of what these puppet realizations might tell us—about Mozart's opera and opera writ large, about performance, and about music. We have seen already how certain precepts of puppetry are embedded within the text(s) of *Die Zauberflöte* and the ways in which puppetry functions metaphorically in discourse around the opera. We have also explored how productions of the opera call forth the specter of the puppet through the presence of actual puppets and puppet-adjacent things, as well as multimedia technologies and other theatrical contrivances that play with the more essential attributes of the

puppet. In this chapter, finally, we enter the puppet theater and confront what can happen when real puppets play *all* of the parts. But first, we must map out the theoretical landscape.

The first part of this chapter highlights key ideas and debates from the scholarship on puppetry, central to which is the question of how a puppet comes into being in the first place—in other words, how to define a puppet. This is a question that motivates much of the literature, as scholars endeavor to mark out the boundaries of the art form. And yet, it is precisely because puppetry is distinguished by an elemental core that the borders between this art form and its neighbouring art practices and traditions—from masks to mime to stop-motion animation—are so productively porous. With the spinning out of styles and techniques, the possibilities for the specter of the puppet multiply, while the performative and material distinctions between them are magnified.

The next major section considers the discourses of performativity and materiality within musicology and more specifically within the subfield of opera studies. As inanimate performing objects, when puppets sing opera—or when they dance to music, or when they simply inhabit a musical soundscape—they propose new concepts of vocality and gesture, challenging traditional understandings of audio-visual synchronization and providing a provocative foil to other kinds of musical objects, from musical instruments to music boxes. Structured around four truisms of puppetry, this section teases out the critical strands from musicological discourses that inform my approach to the study and analysis of puppet-musical encounters. My efforts here are, in large part, intended to carve out a space for puppets within the discipline of musicology, identifying mentors and allies in the study of (musical) performance and (musical) performing objects.

With the discursive terrain thus mapped out, I present my analytic concept of the "performance network." Echoing the methodological intent of Actor-Network Theory, the performance network is both an approach and a framework, which aims to track the material and

symbolic relations at work in any puppet-musical encounter. The end of the chapter returns to the various realizations of the enchantment scene described above to illuminate the particular aesthetic, experiential, and representational effects generated by different instantiations of the performance network and its performative and imaginative negotiation.

I
Three Makes One

Scholarship on puppetry is dominated by the question of definition: what makes a puppet? This drive to define is hardly surprising given the ease with which the *idea* of the puppet is invoked in a wide diversity of settings—and indeed, the *actual* thing knows no bounds. Puppets are everywhere—on the street, in the square, and on the promenade; in the theatre and the opera house; on the big screen and the small; in the toy box and on the games console. Because of this, their meaning can easily become diluted. This is an especially urgent issue for practitioners, tasked with preserving the cultural heritage of their tradition or securing funding for more ambitious projects that reach beyond children's theater or other primarily commercial enterprises. The ubiquity of the puppet is therefore a double-edged sword, both its downfall and the source of its appeal. For the puppet's compelling malleability means that they can be whatever we want them to be: disconcerting playthings, household appliances, utensils of the everyday, but also feats of engineering, curious artefacts and exquisite works of art. They can even be digital or computer-generated. Indeed, puppets of all these kinds and more have been called upon to help tell the story of *The Magic Flute* across countless productions (as we saw in Chapter Two). These descriptors, however, are all focused on the object itself, when a puppet as such only emerges with the performative coalescence of multiple component parts.

The most basic theoretical model for a puppet comprises three elements: an inanimate

object, an animator and an audience (see Fig.3.1). The terms in this model are, necessarily, broadly construed, so scholars refine them according to their specialist tradition or object of analysis, often by drawing attention to a specific parameter of performance, such as the ratio of puppet(s) to puppeteer(s), the distance between the puppet and the puppeteer and the mode or mechanism of negotiating that space, the visibility or concealment of the puppeteer(s), and the roles or activities of the spectator.[1]

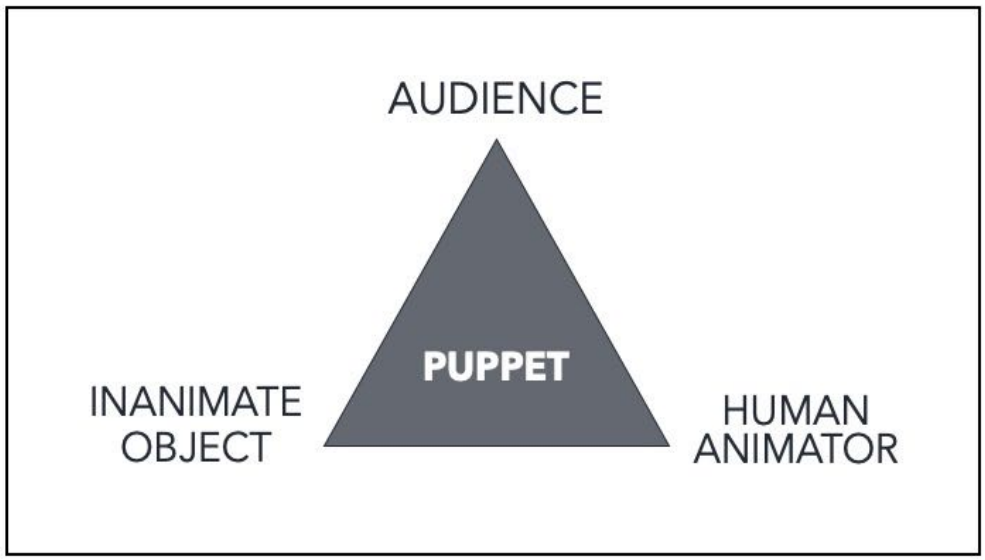


Figure 3.1 The Tripartite Model of the Puppet

Let us consider some examples from the North American puppeteering community. The puppeteer and puppetry historian Paul McPharlin, one of the most prominent figures of twentieth

[1] Stephen Kaplin, "A Puppet Tree: A Model for the Field of Puppet Theater," in *Puppets, Masks, and Performing Objects*, ed., John Bell. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001), 18–25; Claudia Orenstein, "Thinking Inside the Box: Meditations on the Miniature," *Theater* 39, no. 3 (2009): 144-171; Steve Tillis, "The Art of Puppetry in the Age of Media Production," in *Puppets, Masks, and Performing Objects*, ed., John Bell (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 172–185; Margaret Williams, "Including the Audience: The Idea of the 'the Puppet' and the Real Spectator," *Australasian Drama Studies* 51 (October 2007): 119–132.

century puppetry, defines the puppet as "a theatrical figure moved under human control."[2] Within the designation of the "figure" as "theatrical," McPharlin implies an audience, while the "human control" exerted over the "figure" invokes more explicitly the operator or animator. If McPharlin emphasizes the puppet-puppeteer dyad above those involving the spectator, the puppeteer Bil Baird provides what might be described as a more neutral definition that outlines explicitly all three components: "a puppet is an inanimate figure that is made to move by a human effort before an audience."[3] In describing the operator's input as effortful, Baird highlights the challenge of translating the puppeteer's human sensibility into an inanimate object, and also of negotiating the potential resistance of the object itself. This is already much more expansive than McPharlin's overdetermined sense of top-down control, although the involvement of the audience remains essentially receptive. Finally, the theater scholar Eileen Blumenthal broadens the model even further, suggesting that "whenever someone endows an inanimate object with life force and casts it in a scenario, a puppet is born."[4] While the performing bodies, human and otherwise, lose specificity in Blumenthal's paradigm, it shines a spotlight on the mode and quality of the object's animation. If the "someone" can be anyone, it can be the audience, who play as important a role in bringing the puppet to life as the puppeteer, through the engagement of their imagination. To endow an object with a life force does not seem to preclude intangible interactions, but what exactly is the nature of this life force? Blumenthal's notion that "a puppet is *born*" should give us a clue.

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[2] Paul McPharlin, *The Puppet Theater in America: A History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), 1.

[3] Bil Baird, *The Art of the Puppet* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 13.

[4] Eileen Blumenthal, *Puppetry: A World History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc. Publishers, 2005), 11.

The Importance of Breath

"An actor has to work to die. A puppet has to work to live".[5] For Basil Jones, co-founder of the Handspring Puppet Company (behind the West End hit *War Horse*), this oft-invoked sentiment is the "Ur-narrative" of the puppet. Where an actor may take for granted her possession of autonomous life and can therefore concentrate her energies on the depiction of a character or on the telling of a story, a puppet is perpetually on the brink of death, of slipping back into a state of inanimate objecthood, devoid of a life force. With the "Ur-narrative" of the puppet being "the quest for life itself," not only do mundane activities subsume everyday life, but they become matters of life and death.[6] These quotidian tasks, what Jones calls "micro movements," sitting in a chair or standing up, "reaching for a cup just beyond one's grasp, or avoiding the clash of spectacles when kissing a friend," can appear to the observer, despite their functionality, like momentous achievements, tasks of "epic proportions."[7] The most critical micro movement by far, the one most subtle and yet most deeply felt and of utmost importance to the attainment of the puppet's life, is the impulse of breath.

How a puppet is made to breathe varies widely. For many, only the subtlest of gestures is needed to encourage the perception of breath, the tweak of a marionette's string, the twitch of a hand puppet's digital limbs. Few are made with specific breathing mechanisms, but when they are, it is a complicated affair. Joey, the star of *War Horse*, for example, is a full-scale horse, operated by

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[5] Quoting puppeteer Dan Hurlin. Joan Acocella, "Forgotten Futurist Puppet Shows," *The New Yorker*, July 11 and 18 2016.

[6] Basil Jones, "Puppetry, Authorship, and the *Ur*-Narrative" in *The Routledge Companion to Puppetry and Material Performance*, eds. Dassia N. Posner, Claudia Orenstein and John Bell (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 62.

[7] Basil Jones, "Puppetry and Authorship" in *Handspring Puppet Company*, ed. Jane Taylor (Parkwood, SA and New York, USA: David Kurt Publishing and Handspring Puppet Company, 2009), 256. Available at http://www.handspringpuppet.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Handspring-12_14Oct_LR.pdf

three puppeteers—one guides the muzzle and the other two are stationed inside, one at the front, on at the back, each in control of a pair of legs. Jones and his co-founder Adrian Kohler were forced to rethink the natural physiology of the horse to ensure that their audience could perceive its breathing. Rather than creating an expanding chest for the puppet, which would simulate most accurately the breathing of a real horse but likely go undetected by the audience, Kohler designed the chest to move up and down in a central channel. This mechanism required the puppeteers to "breath with their knees." The up-down, as Jones puts it, is "anti-naturalistic," but "it feels like real breath," and that is more important.[8]

Most puppets are devoid of such elaborate "life mechanisms."[9] The illusion of breathing is generated primarily, therefore, by the puppeteer—and a musical sensibility is considered indispensable. For instance, the puppeteer and movement director Kate Brehm tends to think of puppet manipulation as an overtly rhythmic enterprise. According to Brehm, a puppet's life is dependent on the musicality of its movement. Where dancers tend to be count-orientated, Brehm observes that puppeteers prefer to play with the space between the counts, creating internal fluctuations through acceleration and deceleration.[10] The resultant undulations, Brehm believes,

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[8] Adrian Kohler and Basil Jones, "Handspring Puppet Co.: The Genius Puppetry behind War Horse," filmed March 2011, TED video, accessed January 24, 2016, https://www.ted.com/talks/handspring_puppet_co_the_genius_puppetry_behind_war_horse?language=en#t-781780 .

[9] Droz's famous 18th-century harpsichord-playing automaton, as discussed by Adelheid Voskuhl, appeared to breathe due to her "life mechanism." Voskuhl writes: "The life mechanism is one of the most complicated in the automaton, not only because of the variety of effects that it is in charge of, but also because it is designed to run for one and a half hours. In a demonstration, the life mechanism can be started first to 'prepare' the audience: the musician starts moving her head, eyes, and chest long before she starts playing the harpsichord. These preparatory motions are slow and regular, and they convey the rather captivating impression that the automaton is waking up and preparing her audience for the concert" (140). See Voskuhl, *Androids in the Enlightenment: Mechanics, Artisans, and Cultures of the Self*,128-169.

[10] Conversation with the author, Cambridge MA, September 24, 2019.

constitute what other puppeteers call "breath"—and musicians, I suggest, would call rubato.

When puppets give explicitly musical performances, moreover—when they perform the roles in an opera, for instance—the puppeteer must mediate the relationship between the puppet and the musician, on record or live in person. "We found that when we worked with opera singers," Kohler recalls, "that the way to make the puppet match the singing was for us to learn exactly where they breathed…so the impulse of their in-breath was reflected in the puppet."[11] Bernhard Leismüller, the principal puppeteer at Lindauer Marionettenoper, also highlights the necessity for the puppeteer in marionette opera to understand exactly how the singer approaches their part, to learn—in his words—when they breathe and where there is an emphasis.[12] At the Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn, the co-principal Christine Hierzer-Reidler is prone to make such emphases felt through her own breathing. Indeed, she contributes all sorts of noises, whooshes, hisses and other exaggerations of breathing sounds to her performance backstage. Although rarely heard in the auditorium, Hierzer-Reidler's active reembodiment of breath behind-the-scenes helps make palpable the breath of the puppet onstage.

While the manifestation of a puppet's breath through movement requires a musical sensibility, its manifestation through sound might best be realized by a musical instrument. A compelling example can be found in the 2010 play *Or You Could Kiss Me*, a collaboration between the playwright and director Neil Bartlett, and Jones and Kohler of the Handspring Puppet Company, with two three-quarter life-sized wooden puppets in the main roles. In a backstage rehearsal video entitled "Choreographing Breath," a group of puppeteers works through different everyday tasks—

[11] "Choreographing Breath," National Theater, accessed January 24, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AiFGATFzgfU

[12] "Wann atmen er? Wann gibt es eine Betonung?" Email communication with the author, October 23, 2017.

moving, sleeping, and drinking—with one of the puppets, whose character is suffering from emphysema, a disease of the air sacs in the lungs that causes extreme shortness of breath. In one sequence, this depleted figure, whose chiseled face shows the strain of every thought and movement, is returning home from the hospital in a wheelchair. With blankets draped around his shoulders and across his lap, the harrowed figure sits deliberately, his feet firmly planted on the chairs' rests, his shoulders not hunched but angled determinedly. Such stillness makes the breath the story. As Jones observes, the muted quality of the gestures, of the puppet and the puppeteers, isolates the breathing, turning something small into something huge. While the puppeteers heave and pant with the puppet, the texture and color of the breath is provided primarily by an accordion, itself an instrument of air.[13] The puppet's short inhalations are depicted sonically by unpitched but clearly articulated discharges from the accordion, an uncanny match for the effort of his body, as though they are the very lungs of the figure.

When the puppet finally manages to pour himself a much-needed drink, the accordion underscores his relief with a pitched tone, a transformation of air into substance. Echoing Jones' observation regarding the perceptual shift in scale that occurs when something as small as breath sustains the focus of attention, Bartlett suggests that the accordion's changed acoustic presence acts like the zoom lens on a camera:

> As soon as you get that bigger sound…you know that's not a person breathing, it's a musical instrument. You go from a long shot straight into a close-up when you go into a note for the first time. It's the ridiculous power of music. Suddenly this becomes vastly meaningful, which is what we want.[14]

Across this scene, the accordion appears to take on multiple guises. The instrument functions

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[13] The bellows of the instrument, colloquially known as a "squeezebox," generate a kind of breath that flows across brass or steel reeds.

[14] "Choreographing Breath."

initially as a proxy for the lungs of the figure. In this sense, the accordion is enveloped within the imagined organic entity proposed by the puppet performance. In a sense, then, the instrument-as-body part provides natural sounds. In reality though, the accordion is a mechanical device, and so, if it is perceived to function from within the scene, it might be understood as a source of what is described in film theoretical parlance as diegetic sound, sound from within the narrative world of the performance. When the breathy exhalations of the accordion are transformed into musical sound, the instrument becomes external to the body and the scene, and so more a commentator on the action than a participant in it. To continue the analogy with cinematic sound, the accordion's music may, then, be designated non-diegetic, external to the narrative world of the performance. Transecting all these readings are questions of objecthood and subjectivity: the breath of the figure provided by the accordion is simultaneously organic and mechanical, realistic and aesthetic; it brings the figure to life and sculpts the emotional response of the spectator. When the music of the accordion blossoms, the instrument and its sound, already anchored in and entwined with the body of the puppet, grow to envelop the entire scene. The music is the glue that binds the actors and objects together, and it also constructs an affective perspective.

Ultimately, a musical instrument can work entirely alone to sustain the life of a puppet. In a final example, the puppet is sleeping. He wakes abruptly, choking on his shortness of breath. As the puppet strains against the coughs, the puppeteers themselves gasp and splutter, while the accordion "breaks up the breathing" with shorter, irregular hisses and desperate, explosive cluster chords. The puppeteers settle the puppet back into a regular breathing pattern with gentle pulses of the torso and head. But when these operators retreat, leaving the wooden figure alone in his bed, the only source of life is sonic. Bartlett asks the musician Marcus Tilt for "bigger, bolder, and dirtier" gestures, remarking that the breathing "can't be too dirty. Do you see...what incredible boldness of gesture they can take? So…be really emphatic with the breathing, they take it, because they're so

emphatic."[15] Puppets can but only be emphatic: nothing is superfluous or extravagant. Every gesture is strenuous, the more subtle, often all the more physically demanding. This particular puppet, with its exposed joints and sinews, the unpolished creases of its wooden visage, seems to have walked straight off the draftsman's page. With a veritable pack of puppeteers and its own pair of lungs in the shape of an accordion, the physical disposition of this puppet is both intricately detailed and robust, its breath colorfully fragile and unfailingly reliable.

Being Themselves While Being Other

The notion of a puppet's emphatic disposition combines Jones' concept of "micro movements" with the literalism that pervades the art of puppetry. Indeed, the entrenched association between puppets and fairy tales, fantasy and other magical settings is counterbalanced by all sorts of inward-looking concerns, both prosaic and existential—the limitations of their bodies, their "interpersonal" relationships, the meaning and fragility of life. In a certain sense, then, puppets are self-obsessed, an inevitable consequence of their constant striving for life, and so, puppet shows often play with the very condition of being a puppet. When familiar stories are retold with puppets though, new meanings come to light as the simplest of undertakings become almost insurmountable, both physically and psychologically.

This kind of existential crisis is especially familiar from ventriloquist shows. Ventriloquism was originally a purely acoustic phenomenon, known in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as "distance ventriloquism," where the voices of lone performers were thrown from the stage "into far corners of the room, beneath the earth."[16] In the mid-nineteenth century, a puppet was recruited

[15] Ibid.

[16] Carolyn Abbate, "Ventriloquism" in *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Views from the Outside: A Centennial Commemoration of Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968)*, ed. Irving Lavin (Princeton, NJ: Institute for Advanced

as the recipient canvas for the thrown voice. With two performers now onstage, the ventriloquist and her dummy, the authority of voice can play out in disturbing ways, explored in numerous horror movies and stand-up comedy settings. In a puppet slam event at the Puppet Showplace Theater in Boston, MA, for example, the emcee glove puppet Audrey Duck doesn't seem entirely happy with her lot: she contemplates a change of direction into shadow puppetry (when held in profile, she realizes that she already is one) and is distracted by her lack of ears and slight speech impediment. As she witters on about how much she loves words, she loses her voice—or rather, her ventriloquist takes it away. Painfully aware that she is not in command of her own body—let alone voice—Audrey wonders who she really is and what she might be. In a pithy articulation of how the puppet's existential crisis might connect with music, Audrey declares, in response to a musical interlude from a guitarist, "I wish I could be music." Such a desire might seem purely fanciful, but in a sense, it reflects the precarity of the puppet state. More significantly, though, Audrey's aspiration bespeaks the malleability of the puppet, and more provocatively, the idea that such transformation can cross medium-specific lines. Put differently, Audrey understands music and puppetry to occupy the same material plane as one another.

Audrey might be distressed by her loss of voice, but, of course, she is intrinsically voiceless—and yet she can bear all sorts of voices, performatively and phenomenologically. Her voice is simultaneously her own and her owner's. Different kinds of puppets will possess a voice in quite different ways. Some have moveable mouths, like Audrey, and so can be made to perform a basic kind of lip-synching. Sometimes the puppeteer provides the puppet's voice; other times, a separate voice actor is cast in that role. Kenneth Gross observes that modification—distortion, stylization, or some kind of striping back—is often necessary in order to make the voice "fit" the

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Study, Princeton, 1995), 306.

body of the puppet.[17] In performances with larger bunraku-style puppets—figures controlled by multiple puppeteers—the voice actor or singer fixes their gaze upon the puppet, their own eyes fixed on the glassy eyes of the puppet, somehow seeing their voice into the puppet.[18] Then there are times when the voices of the puppets are pre-recorded. Indeed, one particularly compelling, if disconcerting demonstration of a puppet's vocal prowess is marionette opera. More often than not in theaters today, the singers' voices, and the accompanying music, are provided by recordings. The welding of puppet and voice in marionette opera, then, involves the real-time drawing together of live and non-live expressive channels (a process that will be unpacked in detail in Chapter Four).

The standard repertoire for marionette opera also provides a lens onto the question of the puppet's essential condition. *Die Zauberflöte* tops the bill of most theaters with *Don Giovanni* its main rival. Other Mozartian favorites such as *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* are also popular, along with *Il barbiere di Siviglia, Der Fledermaus,* and *Hänsel und Gretel*. Despite the mixture of genres, including Singspiel, opera buffa and operetta, these pieces share much in terms of narrative and dramatic content, from mistaken identities to sorcery, magic, and other supernatural occurrences. *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* might be deemed an exception in this regard as the opera stages an explicit power struggle: a quartet of youthful Europeans, held captive by a presumed despot, Pasha Selim, and his servant Osmin to whom they were sold by pirate, hatch plans to escape. While Osmin is a wholly comic character, there is something more mysterious about the Pasha, who resists temptation to exact revenge on his enemy's son, shedding his presumed despotism in favor of benevolence. Marionettes can realize these qualities in unique ways, a mesmerizing looseness of

[17] Gross, *Pupppet*, 67–68.

[18] This focus of attention was especially striking to me in the Handspring Puppet Company's production of Monteverdi's *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse*, directed by William Kentridge. See Appendix 2 for more details.

demeanor at one end of the spectrum versus a radical stillness at the other, and myriad other dispositions in-between. They also complicate questions of power by staging multiple dynamics simultaneously. In an opera infused with so-called "Turkish" musical elements, descended from Janissary bands, but mollified for Western ears, the heavy-handedness of European representations of the "Other" can be critiqued and nuanced through the enactment of marionettes.

Questions of representation are invariably fraught, even more so when encumbered by the cultural baggage of puppetry. The operatic kernel of the enchantment scene presents the "puppetization" of racialized bodies, a minority group that is already subjugated because of their skin color and then doubly so when incapacitated by the magic bells and their music. The musical material, moreover, turns this scene into an exhibition of control over black bodies by white European cultural products, not even white bodies—as it is a machine that wields its power, shrouded in mystery, as though domination has been outsourced. Related to this is the complicated question of cultural appropriation. Diverse puppet traditions exist all over the world and many technical and stylistic traits cross national borders and cultural divisions. Moreover, puppeteers create their own original forms of puppetry by combining serendipitous encounters and culturally divergent techniques, as exemplified by the figures of Richard Teschner and Lotte Reiniger. The socio-cultural status of puppetry, however, can vary considerably, often resulting in an erasure of specificity.

In his production of *Madama Butterfly,* for instance, Anthony Minghella casts a bunraku-style puppet in the role of Cio-Cio-San's son, Dolore. On one level, this casting choice is motivated by practicality: for the role of a child, and a silent one at that, a puppet circumvents issues of reliability and acting skill. In a straightforward reading of the character, the puppet brings out his helplessness, while the focused attention and care of the puppeteers seems to model a kind of heartfelt empathy for the audience. More critically, the puppet and his entourage, three puppeteers dressed all in black,

might be read as a gesture towards authenticity, an attempt to destabilize the hegemony of Puccini's European opera by asserting a genuinely Japanese tradition. Dig a little deeper and the child's concrete puppet status might be understood to make even more palpable the oppressive treatment of his mother, a puppet in a metaphorical sense as her life is governed by a largely unseen agent. Indeed, there is a sense in which Dolore's representation by a puppet attempts to acknowledge the opacity of Japanese culture and experience from a Western perspective, to capture the lack of understanding of those they have subjugated. While such magnanimous readings are possible, they are underpinned by the troubling encounter of exoticism and puppetry. Indeed, in an already overtly exoticist opera, the casting of a puppet, a contingent figure, at the mercy of external control, reinforces the subjugation of the appropriated culture.

While an actor must recreate their role for each performance, the puppet for Dolores is a puppet for no-one else. This points to something important about the puppet's capacity to represent. Puppets rarely have to "get into character": not only their appearance, but their physical disposition, their gestural vocabulary and range of movement is built directly into them. In this sense, their representational, and performative, capacity is predetermined. In her work on the Japanese *awaji ningyō* tradition, Jane Marie Law identifies five perspectives on the appeal of puppets, including the idea that "puppets are more convincing because they remain what they are – they do not 'represent' their part and then revert to someone else when they walk off stage."[19] As Law observes, there is no circumscribed representational moment in puppetry: rather, there is an absolute identification between the object of the puppet and its character. In the Salzburg Marionette Theater's production of *Les contes des Hoffmann*, for example, the flapping servant in Act I, Andres, has a nervous tic, which involves his right leg jerking upwards at the end of a phrase, an exclamation

[19] Jane Marie Law, *Puppets of Nostalgia: The Life, Death, and Rebirth of the Japanese Awaji Ningyo Tradition* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 22–23.

point on the physical plane. Accordingly, the leg is fixed with an extra string. Similarly, in their *Die Zauberflöte*, there are two Queens of the Night, one with legs and one without—one for each act. The Act 2 Queen doesn't need any legs because she barely touches the floor of the stage during "Der Hölle Rache:" she floats mid-air and at times, her flight path tracks her vocal line, a commanding presence in the sky, both vocally and physically. And as we have already seen in the vignettes of marionette opera with which this chapter began, the material manifestations of the imagined Other in the puppet bodies of Monostatos and his cronies reproduce problematic, if not violent, forms of domination.

The Return of the Object

No matter the dexterity of the puppeteer nor the intricacy of the object, without an audience, there can be no puppet. For the life of the puppet lies, to a significant degree, in the eyes of the beholder. Recall the discussion of breath above; when reflecting on their work with opera singers, Kohler suggests that a perceived absence of breath results in the deterioration or retreat of the puppet:

> We found when we worked with opera singers that the way to make the puppet match the singing was for us to learn exactly where they breathed…so the impulse of their in-breath was reflected in the puppet. And that lead us on to realizing actually that if the audience doesn't see the puppet breathing, isn't aware that there is breath in the figure, they hold their breath for the puppet And after a while you get tired of doing that, so the image of the figure dissolves to a degree, so that the breath, anyway, for [sic] as a manner of keeping the puppet alive is very important.[20]

In his theory of the aesthetics of puppet theater, Steve Tillis addresses what he considers an overemphasis on animation and the work of the puppeteer, focusing instead on how their work is received by the audience, specifically whether or not the object's movements encourage "the imagination of life".[21] In Tillis' formulation, however, the imagination of life cannot entirely displace

[20] Adrian Kohler. Transcribed from "Choreographing Breath" (June 2011). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AiFGATFzgfU accessed January 22, 2016,

[21] Steve Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics of the Puppet: Puppetry as a Theatrical Act* (New York: Greenwood,

the reality of the inanimate object: both aspects of the puppet must co-exist. His concept of "double vision" undercuts the notion that the puppet emerges when the inanimate object undergoes the transition through animation, suggesting instead that the art of puppetry can tolerate and sustain a both/and sensibility: it is both an object and alive. Yet as Margaret Williams points out, Tillis assumes an ideal audience. If the puppet comes into being only through this mode of dual perception, "does it cease to exist," Williams asks, "if some in the audience succumb to total illusion or become too aware of theatrical convention?"[22] In other words, are we still watching a puppet if they appear to possess too much life or, conversely, appear to possess too little and so become wholly instrumental? As she pushes back against such dualistic theories of puppet spectatorship, ones formulated "in terms of illusion—belief in a puppet's magical 'life'—and distancing—awareness of its object-ness," Williams suggests that puppetry's "greatest resource is the enigmatic and protean quality of materiality."[23]

In their definitions of a puppet, McPharlin and Baird both describe the object of the puppet as a "figure"; but in her conception of the model, Blumenthal stipulates, as the material component, an "inanimate object." This supposition encourages the idea that a puppet need not be an anthropomorphic creature, but perhaps something altogether more abstract. Indeed, puppet performance need not depict quasi-living things, nor unfold a dramatic narrative, nor rely on unseen manipulators: a puppet can be a household object or a pile of trash; a puppet show can be abstract or non-representational; a puppeteer might appear in front of the audience or sit behind a computer console. The Polish puppet historian and theoretician Henryk Jurkowski draws a distinction between

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1992), 23.

[22] Margaret Williams, "Including the Audience," 124.

[23] Ibid., 123 and 127.

"synthetic" and "plastic" conceptions of puppet theater: in the former, the puppet displaces the human actor; in the latter, the puppet is a "vehicle of visual art.[24]" Jurkowski's categorization opens up the possibility of abstract or non-representational puppetry, such as the abstract music visualizations of Basil Twist, which involve water, cloth, and various lighting effects.

The many distinct traditions that exist under the umbrella term "puppetry" construct any number of human-object relations through the variation of two material parameters as identified by puppeteer and scholar Stephen Kaplin: "distance"—the physical distance between the object and its animator, which is determined by the object's control mechanism—and "ratio"—the number of animators required to manipulate the object.[25] In conceiving of his "puppet tree" (imagine a Tree of Life-style diagram), whose branches extend from masks to stage machinery to digital puppetry, Kaplin demonstrates the porousness of the boundaries between the material components of theatrical representation and their respective traditions, thereby suggesting a single continuum of visual and performing arts based on object manipulation. By taking the representational dimension out of the puppet equation, questions of object manipulation, interaction, and tangibility come to the fore. Through this lens, a theatrical prop might be considered a puppet—as long as the audience buys into it.

Let us take stock briefly. We have seen that a puppet begins with three terms: an inanimate object, an operator, and an audience. Each of these components are subject to huge variation: the material attributes of the object, the number of puppeteers, and the expectations of the audience, to name but a few. These are, to some degree, determined by the particular tradition of puppetry, but the art of puppetry more broadly is characterized by artisanal ingenuity and experimentation, and so

[24] Henryk Jurkowski, *Aspects of the Puppet Theater*, 2nd edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 84.

[25] Kaplin, "A Puppet Tree," 22-25.

the possibilities for invention know no bounds. And neither does the ultimate model for the life of the puppet. Indeed, the original tripartite model can be expanded to incorporate any number of agents and objects, including musicians, their instruments, and playback technologies. Thus puppet performance is a site of dense interpersonal and intermedial interactions, all of which are subject to the capriciousness of the live event. The puppet's life is contingent upon moment-to-moment expression and investment. Moreover, the live event is synonymous with the puppet as such, with the emergence of a perceptibly live figure from an inanimate object. The next section illuminates the ways in which these topics—materiality, liveness, and performativity —have been explored in musicology.

II

Truism #1: A puppet is an object.

From those at the very center of musical enterprises to those on the periphery, objects of all kinds have attracted considerable musicological attention in recent years as part of the so-called "material turn" that has swept across the humanities. In its broadest conception, the study of musical materiality is the study of relationships between musical sounds and their material sources—bodies, instruments, records, trinkets, and everything in-between. From the array of objects attractive to musicologists, puppets are conspicuous by their absence, and yet they relate to their would-be kin in a variety of ways.

Musical instruments, for instance, have recently been the focus of various material lenses in music studies.[26] Yet many puppeteers, of marionettes in particular, draw an analogy between playing

[26] For an example of recent thinking in the field of organology, see Emily I. Dolan and John Tresch, "Towards a New Organology: Instruments of Music and Science," *Osiris*, Vol.28 (2013): 278-298.

a puppet and playing a musical instrument. Broadly speaking, both objects precipitate performance. With their affective potential built into their very fabric, both are independently aesthetic objects. Both objects are mediators, forging relationships between maker and performer, performer and audience, and myriad others depending on their context. A crucial difference comes, however, in the moment of performance, when the musical instrument need only succumb to one such relationship to perform their task, to produce music, while the puppet's endeavors are contingent upon the simultaneous mediation of multiple relationships. Indeed, when puppets and musical instruments encounter one another in performance, they form relationships of their own. In street puppet theater, for instance, the crude actions of a glove puppet might be read against the repetitive motion of the hurdy-gurdy, while the seamlessness of the puppeteer and the puppet engineered through the glove might be reflected by the use of the swazzle, an instrument held in the mouth for vocal distortion. As we shall see, in puppet opera, the strings of the marionette shimmer to produce a kind of 'visual timbre" analogous to the strings of the violin.

Puppets are relatives of other kinds of musicologically-attractive objects also. Puppet shows have long featured within a broader showcase of travelling entertainers—jugglers, magicians, and the like—and popular entertainments, such as magic lantern shows, panorama, and diorama.[27] Like the puppeteer behind-the-scenes, the technologies, mechanical and embodied, involved in bringing these spectacles to life were often concealed from the audience. By contrast, the workings of Enlightenment automata were frequently laid bare in exhibition, the mechanical ingenuity

[27] Dierdre Loughridge illuminates a prehistory to the technologies we tend to associate with audiovisual culture today (film, television, video games) by attending to the optical technologies of the peepshow and magic lantern shows, magnifying glass sand telescopes in *Haydn's Sunrise, Beethoven's Shadow*: A*udiovisual Culture and the Emergence of Musical Romanticism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2016). See also Errki Huhtamo, *Illusions in Motion: Media Archaeology of the Moving Panorama and Related Spectacles* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016).

responsible for the figure's lifelike actions less the *source* of the spectacle than the spectacle itself.[28] As another kind of inanimate performing object, an automaton might seem the most comfortable of musicological bedfellows for the puppet. As we have seen, they function in similar ways as metaphors for musical activities and aesthetics and are used somewhat interchangeably in scholarship. But the "performance" of an automaton, unlike that of a puppet, is entirely independent of direct human facilitation, encoded as it is within the object's cogs and gears.[29] The performances of such devices, moreover, are completely repeatable, like the emissions of music boxes or even the gramophone, while others are algorithmic, like the musical dice games ("Musikalisches Würfelspiel") of C. P. E. Bach and others. While the puppet might nestle in amongst these various objects and media technologies, highlighting another instance of music's material basis, it can also strain against them.

The puppet is likely most familiar to musicologists from its appearances in opera houses, and indeed, opera houses are an especially rich source of musical materials. Opera involves all kinds of objects: musical instruments and sound technologies (for example, amplification equipment); costumes, wigs, and make-up; props and other performing objects (such as puppets); the myriad components of the *mise en scène*, from scenery to choreography; various technologies of theatrical exhibition, both traditional and unorthodox: all of this, and more, turns what is written down in opera into something tangible, temporal, real. Even in text-based enquiries, the score and libretto are

[28] See Adelheid Voskuhl, *Androids in the Enlightenment: Mechanics, Artisans, and Cultures of the Self* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). This dynamic was present also in early cinema, what Tom Gunning has designated "the cinema of attraction," where exhibition itself is the spectacle. See Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle*, 8, 3-4 (1986): 63-70.

[29] On a story that explores the interrelations of automata (artificial intelligence) and musical performance, see Emily I. Dolan, "E.T.A. Hoffmann and the Ethereal Technologies of 'Nature Music,'" *Eighteenth-Century Music*, 5, no.1 (2008): 7–26.

usually supplemented by other kinds of manuals for performance, including stage designs and directions.[30] That the spectacle of opera involves so much stuff is hardly new information, nor is it specific to opera today: the early musico-dramatic experiments, those that constituted opera's birth, in the years around 1600 in Italy, were "beyond extravagant," bursting with the latest technologies.[31] But while "materiality has always mattered to opera," to recall Laura Tunbridge's memorably pithy phrasing, it has only recently mattered to opera scholars. As Tunbridge writes:

> Production details were granted a degree of intellectual respectability on being included in critical editions. But is has only been relatively recently that such materials have begun to be interpreted as more than documentation of practicalities; as a means to breathe life into texts, to detect how their hearts once beat.[32]

This image—of such documents coming (back) to life, of their lungs filling with air and their hearts beating—is not just an irresistible metaphor; it also reflects the framework of new materialist thought that recasts objects on the same plane as humans, redistributing concepts of agency and representation across both animate and inanimate bodies, and thereby, opening the floodgates to what kinds of things might be susceptible to a materialist lens.

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[30] For example, Sarah Hibberd reconstructs experiences of spectatorship—in genres including French Grand Opera and melodrama—by putting the details of the *livrets de mise en scène* (French staging manuals), stage machinery and theatrical environment in dialogue with philosophy of aesthetics. See Sarah Hibberd, *French Grand Opera and the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Meanwhile, Alessandra Campana argues that the *disposizioni sceniche* of later Italian opera are both producer and product of opera's mediatization: "as intermediaries between the author(s) and subsequent performances, these manuals allow opera to approximate an autonomous product, a reproducible commodity." See Campana, *Opera and Modern Spectatorship in Late Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1–4.

[31] Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, *A History of Opera: The Last 400 Years* (London: Penguin, 2012), 39. As an example of materially-focused and -engaged scholarship, Bonnie Gordon positions one of the earliest operas, Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (1607), within a history of technology, reading the singing body of the castrato on a continuum with the onstage musical instruments and orchestral instrumental effects. See Bonnie Gordon, "Orfeo's Machines," *Opera Quarterly* 24, nos. 3–4 (2011): 200–222.

[32] Laura Tunbridge, "Review Article: Opera and Materiality," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 26, no.3, (2014) 290.

When the capacious lens of materiality is trained on a musical genre that is inherently sprawling and all-encompassing—as Jonathan Sterne puts it, "by definition, the essential part of opera is the whole thing"—a clear materialist agenda is especially important.[33] Sterne cautions against an *a priori* definition of operatic materiality, but rather entreats scholars to state clearly the parameters of their materialist lens, which should be derived from the particular material configuration under discussion.[34] For materiality today, in opera studies and musicology more broadly, can mean grappling with any and all kinds of things involved in or related to music-making as part of a rich material cultural history; examining the embodied production and reception of music by (differently configured) bodies and sensoria, musical determinations and constructions of the body, and the ways in which bodies interact with instruments to create hybrid organisms and prosthetic human-object relationships; and tracing musical happenings through Marxist labyrinths of obscured labor and commodification, feminist ecologies, Deleuzian assemblages, and Latourian networks.[35]

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[33] Jonathan Sterne, "Afterward" in *Technology and the Diva: Sopranos Opera, and Media from Romanticism to the Digital Age,* ed. Karen Henson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 162.

[34] Ibid., 160.

[35] New materialist thought is increasingly influential on musicological endeavors. See, for example, Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010). "In addition to Dolan and Tresch's organological advocacy and Loughridge's excavations of historical media formations already cited, see Nicholas Mathew, "Interesting Haydn: On Attention's Materials," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 71, no.3 (2018): 655–701. On the material contingencies and possibilities of the voice, see Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015). For explorations of music's making of bodies, see Peter Szendy, *Phantom Limbs: On Musical Bodies,* trans. Will Bishop (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016) and James Q. Davies, *Romantic Anatomies of Performance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014). On the questions of interfaces—and many others—see Roger Moseley, *Keys to Play: Music as a Ludic Medium from Apollo to Nintendo* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016). For reflections on the constructedness of film sound and its relationship to objects, see Carolyn Abbate, "Sound Object Lessons," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 69, no. 3 (2016): 793–829.

What is new about operatic materiality, then, is that everything involved in the operatic event is encompassed by the concept. Not only are inanimate objects, stage machinery and theatrical technologies encompassed within the scope of materialist thought and analysis, but performing bodies too shed light on and betray music's material traces. Axel Englund has observed this entanglement of performative and materialist ventures. While an increased attention to technology in opera studies, for example, "can be construed partly as a reaction against the liveness often fetishized by performative aesthetics," it is also indicative of an investment in materiality.[36] As Englund elaborates:

> while recent work on staging has attended in detail to its physical substrates, work on voice has attempted to look beyond inherited tropes and symbolic values to catch a glimpse of the concrete physical phenomenon. As a resistance to the anthropocentric bias inherent in performative perspectives, typically giving the human body pride of place, this tendency is also indicative of an increased sensitivity to posthumanist perspectives, which regard the singing body as one node among many in music's network of vibrant materials.[37]

In reading bodies and objects against, through and with each other, their connections, the channels and voids between them, come into focus, the porousness of (any potential) divisions itself becomes meaningful. It's a slippage of a kind. And the object of the puppet embodies this very slippage. On the one hand, the figure of the puppet conflates the performing body and the materials of performance. On the other, the puppet, as a disaggregated entity, sustained by relationships with multiple other bodies and objects, highlights the separation of materiality and performance, especially when engaged in musical performance.

Truism #2: A puppet is a live performer.

Real-time manipulation is a defining feature of puppetry. There are all kinds of obstacles to the

[36] Axel Englund, "A Note from the Guest Editor," *The Opera Quarterly*, 35, nos. 1–2, (2019), 4.

[37] Ibid., 4.

analysis of live performance, not least the practical challenge of taking notes in a darkened auditorium. But there are critical and interpretative challenges too. Traditional analytic tools require a stable, static, unchanging object, which can masquerade as unmediated, as seemingly objective. The paradigmatic example in musicology is the score. In puppet performance, the figures in the main roles are, in certain important ways, unchanging: the puppet embodies the craftsmanship of its maker and its material attributes dictate in all sorts of ways interactions with its (to-be-determined) operators. But while the object of the puppet might endure through time, its life accumulates only moment by moment.

The musicological tendency to shrink from live performance was famously critiqued by Carolyn Abbate in her 2004 essay "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?"[38] Abbate argues that musical texts and musical codes are drowning out the original "object of absorption," live performance itself, the love of which (presumably) motivates musicologists to do what they do. Because live performance is slippery, evasive, and highly contingent, its analysis necessarily requires a subjective stance, a form of knowledge production Abbate labels as "drastic." The designation of a spectator's mode of engagement as either drastic or gnostic, Abbate argues, depends on the locus of their attention during a live performance; or, perhaps more accurately, the kind of attention a particular performance inspires. Is the spectator's attention trained on the performance or the work? The singers or the characters? Importantly, Abbate cautions against the straight-forward equation of drastic and gnostic with the opposition "music in practice and music in theory." Rather, following the philosopher Vladimir Jankélévitch, for Abbate the drastic connotes

> desperation and peril, involving a category of knowledge that flows from drastic actions or experiences and not from verbally mediated reasoning. Gnostic as its antithesis implies not just knowledge per se but making the opaque transparent, knowledge based on semiosis and disclosed

[38] Carolyn Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" *Critical Inquiry* 30 (Spring 2004), 505–536.

secrets, reserved for the elite and hidden from others.[39]

Live musical performance is risky, therefore, not only for the performer, but also for the scholar.[40] Critical attention to musical performance is derived from critical attention to musical experience—in Abbate's words, "this I who isn't going to forget, must be willing to walk onstage once what counts is the live performance that once took place, experienced only by those present."[41] Grappling with the fluctuating object of live musical performance, then, puts not only the performer(s) in the spotlight, but the audience member-cum-author as well.

Risk-taking can payoff in various ways. In a memorable example, Abbate describes her experience of witnessing an indisposed Ben Heppner battle on through the Prize Song of *Die Meistersinger* in full knowledge (both his and hers) that his voice will repeatedly fail to produce satisfactory, let alone pleasing, top notes. Heppner's unwavering commitment to his performance task, Abbate suggests, resembles an act of heroism, as he faces the musical dangers before him, those shocking top notes, over and over again. In this performance, Ben Heppner the singer was the focus of attention; "the performance drowned out the work."[42] But at a second performance three days later, Heppner's character, Walter, came to the fore. Heppner had now recovered his voice, and Abbate's newly acquired "drastic knowledge" opened up the possibility of an acute gnostic experience: her deep knowledge of *Die Meistersinger,* Wagner reception history, and music philosophy produced an "optical hallucination," where "stage figures appeared not as they were, in Technicolor

[39] Ibid., 510.

[40] Ibid., 506.

[41] Ibid., 536.

[42] Ibid., 535.

Germanic finery, but shrouded in black with white faces and tragic eyes under bright white lights."[43] For Abbate, because her "drastic attitude had prevailed" in the earlier performance, at the second performance, her attention was radically re-invested in the opera itself and its web of contextual associations and interpretative possibilities, which conspired to stimulate what Abbate calls a "gnostic mentality." This time, the work drowned out the performance.

The portal opened up by Heppner's original failure highlights the tension between performer and character. When the puppet is the performer, it can appear to be free from this duality. The modernist theater practitioner Edward Gordon Craig, for example, considered the puppet to be the ideal performer such is its emotional vacuity and inherent lack of ego.[44] Unlike the actor, whose personality might interfere with her assigned role, the puppet gives itself over completely to its character. So when things go wrong, when the puppeteer blunders or the puppet malfunctions, this total identification between the puppet-as-performer and the puppet-as-character comes under threat, in a way comparable, to a certain extent, to failures in the opera house.

Indeed, when something goes wrong in the puppet theater, the object of the puppet is usually involved. The idea that the failure of the object draws attention to its material presence is well-known. When an object serves its intended purpose, the object itself is transparent, because our focus is on its output, the fulfilment of its purpose. When the object falls short of its purpose, however, it is no longer transparent, but rather a visceral "thing."[45] The thing serves no external purpose, but is a body of matter and meaning unto itself. Translated to the puppet theater, the emergence of the "thing" means the evaporation of the puppet as such: if the puppet comes into

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[43] Ibid., 535.

[44] See Edward Gordon Craig, "The Actor and the Über-Marionette," *The Mask* 1, no.2. (April 1908): 3-15.

[45] The idea of the "thing" is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

being through the integration of three component parts (inanimate object, operator, audience) then the failure of the puppet equates to the collapse of the model and the return of the object void of purpose.

The "failure" of the puppet, however, is also a crucial sign of its independent agency: puppeteers speak compellingly about working with the puppet, responding to its weight and force, attributes that might be carefully planned and measured in the process of making, but behave quite unpredictably in the event of performance. As John Bell and his collaborators reflect:

> One of the most recurrent refrains uttered by nearly anyone who has ever held a puppet is that the puppet is unruly, that it wants to do things that differ from what we would impose upon it, and that we can best bring out its life if we listen to it.[46]

Less an unravelling of relationships, then, moments of failure in the puppet theater reaffirm the dispersion of creative agency across myriad bodies and objects entailed by puppet performance. Of course, the fundamental relationships that generate the life of a puppet can also be compromised by other factors—for example, if the performance context is injudiciously relocated, or the perspective of the spectator is mediated by, say, a camera lens. The camera has been said to create a "tongue-and-teeth-problem" for opera singers; for puppets, it might be something like a "hands-and-strings-problem."[47] In both cases, the camera discloses the workings, the labor, of the performers.

Hard-and-fast limits on what constitutes live performance have been long been contested, and the idea that live performance might encompasses various technologies and media is by now cemented into the foundations of performance studies.[48] While a desire to affirm opera's freedom

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[46] Dassia N. Posner, Claudia Orenstein, and John Bell (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Puppetry and Material Performance* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2014), 6.

[47] See Melina Esse, "Don't Look Now: Opera, Liveness, and the Televisual," *The Opera Quarterly* 26, no.1 (2010): 81–95.

[48] What constitutes live performance and live spectatorship, "liveness," is ever-changing thanks to

from technological mediation might persist, scholars repeatedly demonstrate that there has never been such a thing.[49] The rise of site-specific productions by companies such as On Site Opera (New York) and Silent Opera (London) and the proliferation of opera on screens, big, small, and hand-held, evidence opera's contemporary entanglement with media and technology, let alone the mediatization of opera within the house, through the use of projections of various kinds and even digital participation.[50]

Such possibilities for opera's (re)presentation could, indeed, feed into David J. Levin's notion of opera's "unsettledness," the idea that the open-ended possibilities of opera stagings feed into and reflect the epistemological changeability of opera as an art form. But his insistence that video recordings of opera have no lesser hold on "strangeness, transcendence, or materiality" than live performances is more a question of pragmatics than aesthetics or experience. Indeed, for Levin, both live performance and video recording are subject to processes of mediation, and so he takes

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constant technological innovation, and the debate in performance studies (and beyond) is, therefore, necessarily on-going. For the texts that first ignited the spark, see Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993) and Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999). In a sentence: Phelan argues for the ephemerality of live performance, its immediacy and intensity of presence, while Auslander's concept of mediatized liveness embraces the different kinds of possible presences structured by all sorts of technologies and media. As I complete these pages in the era of Covid-19, the desirability, cost, and varieties of liveness are taking on whole new meanings. When I will next see a puppet performance in a theater—whether I will ever see one again—is currently unclear, and I can't help but wonder how certain parts of this dissertation might have differed if I had been undertaking my research with access only to recordings. For a reflection of where the debates around media and technology stand in opera studies, see Christopher Morris, "The Deadness of Live Opera" in *Performing Arts in Transition: Moving Between Media*, eds., Susanne Foellmer, Maria Katharina Schmidt and Cornelia Schmitz (Abingdon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 126–139.

[49] See Karen Henson (ed.), *Technology and the Diva*.

[50] For some recent reflections on the relationships between opera, the screen, and digital media, see Gundula Kreuzer, "Operatic Configurations in the Digital Age," *The Opera Quarterly*, 35, nos. 1–2 (2019): 130–134; Christopher Morris, "Digital Diva: Opera on Video," *The Opera Quarterly* 26, no.1 (2010): 96–119; Jaõa Pedro Cachopo, "The Aura of Opera Reproduced: Fantasies and Traps in the Age of the Cinecast," *The Opera Quarterly*, 34, no. 4 (2018): 266–283.

umbrage with what he describes as Abbate's "either/or-ification" between the "material, present event" and the "abstract work."[51] Crucially, though, Levin is primarily interested in untangling the dramaturgical complexities of production, the *mise en scène* and stage movement, and less the experience of live performance. For him, video recordings simply permit repeated viewings and hearings, allowing us to "be absorbed and attempt to delineate the terms of absorption."[52]

Truism #3: A puppet is an emergent entity.

In his search for new analytic approaches to opera performance, Clemens Risi turns to a concept that might be said to bridge the seeming divide between Abbate and Levin: performativity. The concept of performativity played a significant role in underpinning the discipline-wide reorientation towards critical theoretical readings of music and opera of the early 1990s. Descended from J. L. Austin's notion of "speech acts" through its application by Judith Butler to gender and issues of identity, performativity is the idea that language not only describes the world around us, but has the power to affect change, to "function as a form of social action."[53] To consider what opera *does* when

[51] David J. Levin, *Unsettling Opera: Staging Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, and Zemlinsky* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 9. In my reading of Abbate, there is a compelling entanglement of the drastic and the gnostic that leads to highly subjective, but deeply situated readings, which embrace varied forms of knowledge and experience. Without her intimate knowledge with the score of *Die Meistersinger*, the intensity would surely manifest quite differently, more excruciating ("when will this end?" perhaps) or more puzzling ("is this what's supposed to happen?"). Either way, part of her point is that this very act of scholarly engagement with live performance is drastic, risky, exposing.

[52] Levin, *Unsettling Opera*, 11. An added benefit of this focus on video recordings is that the analytic enterprise itself is sharable and the results testable; indeed, Levin explicitly states accessibility for his readers as a motivation for this research stipulation.

[53] Jillian R. Cavanaugh, "Performativity," Oxford Bibliographies, last modified March 10, 2015, accessed January 18, 2020, https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199766567/obo-9780199766567-0114.xml . The foundational texts on performativity are J. L. Austin's William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in1955 published as *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962) and Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

it depicts the demise of yet another consumptive/heartbroken/violated woman or the bloody wielding of power over an exotic Other, or when male roles are written for female performers or when two high-voiced characters fall in love, is to look beyond the bounds of the so-called "work" to its historical, social, cultural, and political context. As this kind of critical attentiveness derived new theoretical lenses (anthropological, philosophical, postcolonial, feminist, deconstructionist, hermeneutic, and so on), certain time-worn conventions of opera were subject to thought-provoking, socially oriented reassessment.[54] What opera can do on the page, even if those pages are supplemented with vast contextual detail, is quite different, however, to what opera can do in performance.

Proceeding from the understanding that "the performative dimension of opera" is "the transitional, ephemeral, and reciprocal process between performing actors/singers and recipients," Clemens Risi identifies three key analytic parameters: voice, temporality, and perception.[55] In a sense, Risi takes would-be conventional analytic perspectives on opera and runs them through the performativity mill to put each one on a material and perceptual footing. Where a score-based analysis might draw out a voice's melodic patterns, registral shifts, interactions with the orchestra or other textural features, Risi's approach to voice homes in on the bodily contingency of and embodied reactions to vocal production and performance. Building on Roland Barthes' observations

[54] For some formative examples, see Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices*: *Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1993); Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood and Gary C. Thomas (eds.), *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (New York: Routledge, 1994) and Ruth A. Solie (ed.), *Musicology and Difference* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[55] Clemens Risi, "Opera in Performance—In Search of New Analytical Approaches," *The Opera Quarterly,* 27, no. 1–2 (2012): 283–295, here 283. See also Risi, "Opera in Performance: "Regietheater" and the Performative Turn," trans., Jake Fraser, *The Opera Quarterly,* 35, no.1–2 (2019): 7–19.

about the "coenesthetic" nature of voice, Risi suggests that "voice becomes a kind of drug to which one becomes addicted. The prospect of hearing a particular voice creates concrete expectations of satisfying corporeal needs."[56] When expectations of mastery and artistic bravura are exceeded, or when they are nowhere near met, when things go wrong (as in the case of Ben Heppner described above) or when convention is deliberately ignored or usurped (as is central to the modus operandi of *Regietheater*), audiences will react with their bodies and voices. The sensory experience of voice is then mutually constitutive. The experience of voice, especially when dealing with canonic repertoire, is structured in no small measure by repetition, memory, and expectation, which leads us to the next parameter: audio-visual temporality.

What concerns Risi here are the various ways in which the stage picture—and everything that comprises it, including music—structures different temporal experiences for the audience. In the case of Heiner Müller's *Tristan und Isolde* for Bayreuth in 1993, for example, an accelerating musical climax is juxtaposed by slow-motion choreography. Such tensions draw our attention to the very unfolding of the performance. Risi writes:

> If our analytic focus is no longer directed solely at the work of art as a stable entity, but also at its processuality, execution, and "eventness" (*Ereignishaftigkeit*), then *time* becomes one of the defining dimensions distinguishing the performative. The experience of time presents itself as the paradigm of performance perception, which comes about via the interplay of memory, experience, and expectation.[57]

With a temporal analytic lens trained on a musical work, we might make observations about the organization of musical material, harmonic rhythm, or changes in tempi, many of which rely on a non-linear or holistic perspective, the ability to know the end before the middle, for example. Although live performance unfolds linearly, it involves multiple temporal planes that can play with

[56] Risi "Opera in Performance," 286.

[57] Ibid., 289.

and against each other, and coalesce in the perception of the spectator. Hence the final parameter: "perception as active participation."[58]

While this third factor undergirds the first two—vocal (non-)conformity/(mis)alignment is determined in no small measure by the perceiver, as are manipulations of audio-visual temporal relationships—it is also meant quite literally: the role of the spectator as a participant in the performance. Risi describes the embodied reactions of audience members to Calixto Bietio's 2004 staging of Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dam Serail* for the Komische Oper Berlin, in particular the graphic staging of "Martern aller Arten." The audience's outcries—what Risi describes as "reactions of self-defense against what was being perceived as an attack upon one's own body"—forced Maria Bengtsson to sing "for her life, for her survival, not only as Konstanze…but also as a singer faced with an out-of-control audience whose shouts and protestations were drowning her out."[59] This sensory feedback loop expands the material world of the opera, transforming the audience from bystanders into protesters, and highlighting the dynamic composite of character, singer, and woman.

As we have seen, the puppet—and puppet performance—is a similarly dynamic composite. Indeed, Risi's analytic approaches for illuminating the performative dimensions of opera provide a compelling model for the analysis of puppet performance. The relationship between a puppet and a voice is materially rich, highly contingent, and subjective; the (imagined) life of a puppet relies on temporal fluctuations, which accommodate the transmission and processing of affective labor and shifting concentrations of agency; and finally, the spectator plays a crucial role in every aspect of performance, not only perceiving but generating the life of the puppet. More broadly, Risi's performative lens attempts to take account of all kinds of bodies involved in the event of

[58] Ibid., 290.

[59] Ibid., 292.

performance, those onstage and those in the auditorium, as well as the trappings of production (the mise-en-scène and dramaturgy), crucial for the analysis of puppetry.

Truism #4: A puppet remains.

While the concept of "opera as event" has opened up pathways into "multiple materialities," it has also created, as Tunbridge puts it, "a sanction for re-entering the archive."[60] Materiality there means papery deposits, photographic fragments, detailed but illegible annotations and scribbles of childish imaginations, memorabilia and talismanic remnants of celebrities and their fans. For some, this kind of materially-motivated pursuit is constitutive less of a critical material lens and more of the fetishization of objects and tactile encounters. Such unearthings run the risk of falling into the category of the "quirk," an object or anecdote, some historical detail, that produces, as Nicholas Mathew and Mary Ann Smart describe, "not wonder or contemplative silence but chat."[61] According to Mathew and Smart, this is a recent trend in musicology, which involves the mobilization of tall stories and curios often as some kind of point d'appui, driven more by narrative than analytic logic. Following Sianne Ngai's aesthetic categories, Mathew and Smart suggest that the quirk is interesting in a mundane and mutable kind of way, that allows it to appear relevant to many different contexts and discourses.[62]

But what on the surface might appear an unambiguously useful rhetorical tool can be discursively limiting. Emily I. Dolan observes that "the turn to music's materiality risks being

[60] Tunbridge, "Opera and Materiality," 292.

[61] Nicholas Mathew and Mary Ann Smart, "Elephants in the Music Room: The Future of Quirk Historicism," *Representations*, 132, no.1 (2015), 63.

[62] See Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2012), 15, 110-15.

antidialogical."[63] As much as objects might be able to "function as conduits for ideas to pass between disciplines," quirk objects shut down conversation.[64] While the object is highly adaptable to all sorts of contexts, for the quirk to work, it must be fixed in place by interdisciplinary scaffolding. Quirks are also historiographically limiting, as their marginality gives way to in generality. As Mathew and Smart put it, quirks produce

> the sort of estrangement that underscores the irretrievable otherness of the past and allows us to approach the experience of others, but at the same time that estrangement provides an aesthetic stimulation that threatens to override the ethical dictates of ethnography.[65]

While quirks might ostensibly rectify historiographical suppression, their oft radical re-contextualizations perpetuate their status as all-purpose ventriloquists' dummies. A possible antidote: "to write openly about what moves us musically, rather than displacing our musical attractions onto nearby objects."[66] The current musicological attraction to relational models of society enables the writing of quirk objects into granular historical webs that illuminate the sustaining power of "mild aesthetic experiences."[67] The absorbing intricacies and mundane repetitions of quotidian musical interest provide a necessary counterpoint to discourses of exceptionalism, standout achievements and enlightening failures.

At first glance, the puppet is the quintessential quirk. First, the broader art form of puppetry has no obvious disciplinary home. Theater and literary scholars, folklorists and philosophers: all are attracted to puppetry, both as a physical object and as a rhetorical force. Indeed, reduced to its

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[63] Emily I. Dolan, "Musicology in the Garden," *Representations* 132, no.1 (Fall 2015), 89.

[64] Ibid., 89.

[65] Mathew and Smart, "Elephants in the Music Room," 64–65.

[66] Ibid., 72.

[67] Ibid., 73.

essential power dynamic, the puppet is ubiquitous as a metaphor: it models its very own adaptability. It is ubiquitous historically also, as an itinerant form of popular culture; its popularity today, what some critics are calling a "puppet renaissance," is hard not to read as a reaction against the increasing ephemerality of life in the digital age, a newly urgent attraction to the tangible, the crafted, the hand- and home-made. Moreover, its artisanal material specificity ensures the uniqueness of each and every one: puppets are made to order, purpose built. All kinds of physical quirks are built into a puppet in order to realize fully their assigned character. In the context of discourses about music specifically, the puppet might be deemed especially quirky: not only is it silent, but it is solid, wholly inorganic, immediately mechanical, accessible, and potently unambiguous, all the things Music, famously, is not.

The puppet's cultural proliferation, I would suggest, however, makes the puppet far from quirky. In musicology, the puppet is a highly intelligible relative of all kinds of musical objects, with historical connections forged through philosophical motivations and creative impulses. Such embeddedness is indicative of the puppet's profound embodiment of history and tradition, practice and performance, which ultimately eclipses its potential quirkiness. As this chapter illuminates, and the subsequent chapters elaborate, an individual puppet brings with it considerable baggage, because, most importantly, a puppet extends far beyond the limits of the object. While the object is essential to the puppet, the puppet as such only emerges through processes of live performance.

Instead of the notion of the quirk, then, I propose the work of the performance studies scholar Rebecca Schneider to capture better the puppet's archival trace, its persistence as an object and its transience as a performer. In her 2001 essay, "Performance Remains," Schneider argues that the equation of performance with disappearance, espoused by scholars such as Peggy Phelan, is the

outgrowth of "the logic of the archive."[68] Archives house documents and objects, the things that remain, those that can be saved and catalogued, and accessed only by the few, while "performance appears to challenge object status and seems to refuse the archive its privileged 'saveable' original."[69] But, as Schneider observes, performance has its own kinds of remains, often deposited in marginalized or minority cultures and practices of "orature, storytelling, visitation, improvisation, or embodied ritual."[70] Schneider writes: "performance becomes itself through messy and eruptive reappearance, *challenging, via the performative trace, any neat antinomy between appearance and disappearance, or presence and absence*—the ritual repetitions that mark performance as simultaneously indiscreet, non-original, relentlessly citational, and remaining."[71]

Remains are what is left of a body after a change of state, from alive to dead. Resonant with the character of remains, then, is Scheider's description of performance that is live as "undecidably 'livingdead.'"[72] This offhand proposal comes at the end of a thought experiment that explores the notion of a "patinal live."[73] For live performance to acquire a patina would, by definition, mean that it has stabilized, indeed solidified, into something with an impressionable surface. Put differently, the live performance must reach a finished state. Schneider considers the work of discourse and

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[68] Rebecca Schneider, "Performance Remains," *Performance Research*, 6, no.2 (2001), 100.

[69] Ibid., 101.

[70] Ibid., 102.

[71] Schneider, "Performance Remains," 103, my emphasis.

[72] Rebecca Schneider, "What Happened: or, Finishing Live," *Representations*, 136 Special Issues: Time Zones: Durational Art and Its Contexts (Fall 2016), 109. Schneider (98) and the work of Tavia Nyong'o on the Occupy movements in London and New York through which demonstrators grappled with "undead time, the zombie time of austerity and financial chaos" (Nyong'o, 139). See Tavia Nyong'o, "The Scene of Occupation," *TDR (1988–),* 56, no.4, Precarity and Performance: Special Consortium Issue (Winter 2012): 136–149.

[73] Rebecca Schneider, "What Happened," 97.

materiality in the animation and sedimentation of live performance. Schneider's co-joining of "living" and "dead" is inspired by philosopher Erin Manning, who captures the "complexities of intra-action" in the tango, in particular the fluidity of leader/follower designations, with the term "leadingfollowing."[74] By collapsing the binary to make "livingdead," the interval between the terms comes into play, unsettling any straightforward assumptions of causality or chronology. "Dead" is no longer final, but a state of being that accrues and grows, that creates "remains."[75]

The puppet is the very embodiment of the "livingdead."[76] There is, of course, the fundamental characterization of puppet's existence as the sustained negotiation of the line between life and death; but in other ways too, the term "livingdead" is fitting for the puppet. The puppet is an emergent entity anchored in and around an inanimate object. Built into the fabric of the lifeless object is the conventional wisdom of generations and the idiosyncrasies of a singular character, the trademarks of an apprenticeship and the choreography of a moment. These objects materialize oral traditions and give rise to repeat performances. As part of the broader model of the puppet, comprised of three essential elements, the object is the part that remains, long after the performance and always on standby for the next. Translated into the sonic sphere, puppets might be considered "soundingsilent." This construct reflects the meeting of the puppeteer's musical sensibility and the object's intrinsic silence; it reflects the ways in which the silent object is made to speak, sing, and dance, and the ways it inhabits a sounding environment. When recorded music is used in puppet performance, a potential analogy emerges: both complicate relationships between sounds and their

[74] Ibid., 98.

[75] Schneider observes that "the predominant art historical attitude toward performance might overlook different ways of accessing history offered by performance"; see Ibid., 101.

[76] I am reminded of Benjamin Piekut and Jason Stanyek's formulation of "deadness" as a condition, rather than an antonym, of liveness; see Stanyek and Piekut, "Deadness: Technologies of the Intermundane," *TDR*, 54, no.1 (Spring 2010): 14–38.

sources; sound is inscribed within both objects. A recording is musical action frozen in time, while the puppet might be understood as musical action incarnate.

III

Network Thinking and Synchronization

To reconcile the silence of the puppet with its seemingly profound musical capacities and varied interactions with music, the attendant discourses in philosophy and theater studies, and the resonant ideas in musicology with the insights of puppeteers, lived experiences as an audience member and the analytic lens of a musicologist, I am drawn to the model of a network. On one level, my concept of a "performance network" is a straightforward expansion of the puppetry's essential core.[77] In prevailing definitions, as discussed above, the puppet's life is sustained by a tripartite model consisting of an inanimate object, a human animator, and an audience. Sounds of any kind—sound effects, voices, music—are absent from this framework. Yet puppet performance is rarely silent; to the contrary, in many traditions, music is essential. Musical texts, instruments, recordings, playback technologies, the acoustic space, and performance environment, all contribute to the life of the puppet and the effects of the performance. Each network is nuanced in all sorts of ways according to the size, prestige, and associations of the theater, the size and skill level of the company, the demographics of the audience—and, of course, the provision of music. Following the kinds of observations made of opera's eventness, then, the paradigm of the network aims to take account of each one of the components involved in a specific puppet performance.[78]

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[77] Abbate uses the phrase "performance network" to refer to a similarly fundamental model of musical performance: the composer, the score, the performer, and the audience. *In Search of Opera* explores the various ways in which this model is challenged by questions of agency and materiality, in particular the threat of automatism.

[78] In their reading of Honoré de Blazac's 1837 story "Gambara," Dolan and Tresch similarly write of an "expanded conception of the elements that go into the production of the opera's effects and

The performance and its effects, however, emerge from the negotiation of the network, which brings the connections *between* the components to the fore. Connections can be material or symbolic, physical or practice-based. To trace these connections requires a procedural analytic mode. The model of the performance network, therefore, follows in the footsteps of Actor-Network Theory, which, despite its name, it not a theory. Nor is it a topology. Rather, in the words of Benjamin Piekut, ANT is "a methodology":

> It does not go looking for network-shaped things, but rather attempts to register the effects of anything that acts in a given situation, regardless of whether that actor is human, technological, discursive, or material….it constructs no coherent, universal, or totalizing stronghold. Instead, it offers a repertoire of questions and terms that are adaptable, variable, and open to new sites and situations.[79]

The connections between the elements transform a collection of material objects and human actors into "actants," Bruno Latour's term to denote both human and non-human actors within a network. An actant quite simply effects a change. As Piekut describes it,

> ANT puts forward a weak claim about agency. Something makes a difference. What is it? This minimal notion of agency fosters uncertainty about what an actor might be. From this position of uncertainty, one investigates empirically in order to specify the nature of this agency.[80]

This concept of agency both deepens and widens the performance network. Some pathways are forged from moment to moment, while others reach into the annals of history. For example, the object of the puppet might itself be comprised of different materials and joints, including the

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affects: the entire concrete assemblage of score-instrument-performer-alcohol-hall-audience is needed to bring about the transubstantiation of mere sounds into the grandeur and beauty of "ideal" music. The carefully controlled conditions of Gambara's fictional performance reflect a new conception of the opera—that is, French grand opera—as a gigantic, unified machine. This is the machinic assemblage of which Meyerbeer was the first true maestro." See "A Sublime Invasion: Meyerbeer, Balzac, and the Opera Machine," *The. Opera Quarterly*, 27, no.1 (2011); 4–31.

[79] Benjamin Piekut, "Actor-Networks in Music History: Clarifications and Critiques," *Twentieth-Century Music*, 11, no.2 (2014), 193.

[80] Ibid., 196.

control mechanism, which will dictate the nature of the physical relationship between the puppet and the puppeteer as well as the kind of investment required by the audience. Zooming out, these concrete material connections embody the historical lineage of the object and the artisanal relationships to other practitioners. In other words, the network paradigm not only attends to the material realities of performance, but also takes account of defining attributes of the tradition more broadly.

Interactions between the components of each network generate characteristic aesthetic effects, and these processes constitute what I call a "poetics of synchronization." By invoking the concept of synchronization, to an extent I align my analytical concerns with those of film music scholars, for whom the default standard of synchronized sound is a necessary prerequisite for many of their inquiries.[81] Yet puppet performance involves multiple sensory channels, and such disaggregation challenges conventional understandings of audio-visual synchronization. As a flat, relational system, in which the incorporated nodes and connective tissues are inextricably entwined, the performance network is characterized by a diffuseness of agency and audio-visual fluidity. When expressive agency traverses an entire network of performing bodies, technologies, and objects, synchronization effects are not fixed but emergent, constructing diverse and flexible relationships between sound and image. My concept of a "poetics of synchronization" captures the relationships of simultaneity and alignment inherent in audio-visual media, while accounting for the multiple perspectives and shifts of agential concentration engendered by puppet performance.

A Performance Network of Marionette Opera

To put this analytic framework into practice, the marionette theater will serve as our test case

[81] Chion's concept of "syncresis," for example, would be impossible without a default of synchronization between image and soundtrack. See Chion, *Audio-Vision*, 63-4.

(Chapter Four explores marionette opera and constructions of the voice-body complex in detail). The marionette, a jointed puppet controlled by strings, looms large in the Austro-German cultural imagination. The marionette, specifically, is the kind of puppet that stimulated Heinrich von Kleist's reflections on the relationship between self-consciousness and beauty.[82] And today, hundreds, if not thousands, of this kind of puppet perform on miniature stages across Germany and Austria. The examples with which this chapter opened are all descriptions of marionette performances of *Die Zauberflöte's* Enchantment Scene (for details of the theaters and performances, see Tables 3.1 and 3.2; for two additional theaters, see Appendix 2).

Table 3.1 Marionettentheater: Basic Information

Theater	**Salzburger Marionettentheater**	**Lindauer Marionettenoper**	**Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn**	**Preußsches Marionettentheater**
Location details	Hotel Mirabel, Schwarzstraße, Salzburg	Fischergasse, Lindau in Bodensee	Hofratskat, Schloss Schönbrunn, Vienna	Sophienstraße, Berlin
Year founded	1913 (moved to current venue in 1971)	2000	1994	1982
Founder	Anton Aicher	Bernhard Leismüller	Christine Hierzer-Riedler and Werner Hierzer	Harald Preuß
Principal Marionettenspieler/ Artistic Director	Philippe Brunner	Bernhard Leismüller	Christine Hierzer-Riedler and Werner Hierzer	Harald Preuß
Ensemble	10–11 Marionettenspieler	16 Marionettenspieler	15 Marionettenspieler	3–4 Marionettenspieler
Auditorium	350 seats	98 seats	88 seats	c. 28 seats
No. of performances attended	11	4	14	4

[82] It is also the kind of puppet, a Kasperl figure specifically, that so fascinates the titular character in Theodor Storm's 1874 novella *Pole Poppenspäler*. Pole himself is apparently based on the puppeteer Johann Georg Geisselbrecht (1762–c.1826), one of most famous puppeteers of his time.

Table 3.2 Production Details for *Die Zauberflöte*

Theater	**Salzburger Marionettentheater**	**Lindauer Marionettenoper**	**Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn**	**Preußsches Marionettentheater**
Premiere	1952 (on DVD; not the production in repertoire)	August 5, 2000	-	-
Recording Details	Ference Fricsay and the RIAS Symphonie-Orchester Berlin (1956) RIAS-Kammerchor, Berliner Motettenchor	Michale Halász and the Failoni Orchestra Budapest Hungarian Festival Chorus	Michale Halász and the Failoni Orchestra Budapest Hungarian Festival Chorus	Otmar Suitner and the Staatskapelle Dresden (1970)
Director/ Producer	Géza Rech	Ralf Hechelmann	Prof. Gerhard Tötschinger	Wolfgang Kammerer/ Harald Preuß
Sets	Günter Schneider-Siemssen	Bettina Hummitzsche and Bernhard Leismüller	Erika Ebner and Werner Hierzer	Jürgen Kunze
Costumes	Friedl Aicher	-	Christine Hierzer-Riedler and Erika Edner	-
Lighting	-	-	-	Ralf Zimmermann
Other	-	Puppenköpfe: Sebastian Demmel Figuren: Bernhard Leismüller	Music editing: Werner Hierzer Sound-music production: Walter Till	Ausstattung: Barbara and Günter Weinhold Ton: Bodo Strecke

In German-speaking lands, marionettes are distinguished from other puppets first and foremost by their strings. Marionettes, it is generally acknowledged, are more technically demanding than most other puppets due to the complexity of their mechanism, and indeed, there is a special name for those puppeteers of string puppets: "Marionettenspieler," translated literally as "marionette player." Some insist on this explicit designation; others are less prescriptive. As Christine Hierzer-Reidler, one of the co-principals at the Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn in Vienna, explained to me, "Puppenspieler" would suggest an altogether different form of puppetry, the kind, as she demonstrated by opening and closing her hand like a yapping mouth, more commonly known as "Handpuppen," or glove puppetry.[83] This desire to differentiate perpetuates the elite aura around

[83] Christine Hierzer-Reidler, Conversation with the author, Vienna, Austria, June 18, 2016.

the marionette theater, a tradition that strives towards the condition of human theater. The archetypal marionette is a humanoid figure, and the skill of the Marionettenspieler lies in their ability to channel realistic expression into the puppet. According to the historian Hans R. Purschke, the strings of the marionette engender a separation from their operators that allows the construction of a coherent, self-contained world of their own; rather than "a show of the player through the puppet," the marionette theater presents "a show of the puppet."[84] Thus marionette performance is an analogue for human theater. Already it is clear that the essential tripartite model is insufficient for marionette opera: the strings are not only a defining attribute of the puppet, but they are integral to the characteristic aesthetic of the performance.

The marionette's strings connect the puppet to their puppeteer, who usually performs from a bridge above the stage and behind the proscenium, out of view of the audience. Although they may manipulate the strings directly for certain specialist moves, the Marionettenspieler usually controls the puppet via a wooden control mechanism to which the strings are attached. Amongst German-speaking practitioners, this contraption is often named the "Spielkreuz" (playing cross). The strings not only fix the distance between the marionette and the Marionettenspieler, but they also introduce a temporal relationship as the gesture of the puppeteer will not be felt immediately in the puppet. While part of the skill of the Marionettenspieler is to compensate for this lag, the strings engender a distinct agency of their own. As Chapter Four discusses in detail, the flexibility of the strings means that the Marionettenspieler can never know for absolute certain what the marionette might do unexpectedly, how they might respond to the manipulation of the Spielkreuz. The Marionettenspieler, therefore, must engage in a reciprocal relationship with their puppet.

From the perspective of the audience, the crucial third term in puppetry's core

[84] "Das Handpuppenspiel ist ein Spiel des Spielers *durch* die Puppe….Marionettentheater ist ein Spiel *der* Puppe." Purschke, "Das ABC des Handpuppenspiels," 13.

phenomenological contract, this necessary reciprocity manifests as an aesthetic of spontaneity and possibility, which is reinforced by various other components of the network. Not only is the puppeteer hidden from view, leaning from the bridge above the stage, but the strings are often also obscured, thanks to well-designed lighting and intricate backstage choreography amongst the puppeteers, who will perform minor acrobatics to ensure the continuity of movement in the puppet. The perception of the marionette as to some degree autonomous also depends very much on the spectator's position in the auditorium, which, in turn, depends on the quality of the space. And its size. The particular motivations of an individual audience member—their personal experiences of live performance, the reasons for their visit, their socio-economic situation even—will, of course, also play a part in their imaginative investment in the performance.

In my own research, certain moments in certain productions in certain theaters at certain times, have become, in my memory and experience, emblematic of a particular company's style. This is an important and inescapable aspect of analysis of live performance, and one from which I do not wish to shy away here. The collaborative nature of live puppetry makes demands on me as an audience member and my imaginative investment is crucial to the life of a particular puppet at a particular moment in time. Where practicalities have allowed, I have returned to theaters and productions multiple times. These repeat visits have, in certain ways, sharpened my interpretative lens; while in others, layers of experience and reflection have clouded my view.[85] The model of the performance network both accommodates and mitigates these kinds of biases as it acknowledges

[85] Alessandra Campana has proposed a critical mode of "hindsight" to explore the "interval" between the live performance and the scholarly act of interpreting in writing as in itself generative and "live," and the scholar herself as a performer. As she writes, "reporting on opera is a kind of witnessing, which seems the product by claiming its irretrievability (while there is arguably little that cannot be retrieved of today's opera performances)." See Campana, "2059: A Utopian Turning Back," *The Opera Quarterly* 35, no.1–2 (2019): 118–129.

the ways in which concentrations of agency shift and fluctuate.

The connections afforded by the strings are not only material but symbolic too. We might imagine the marionette's strings reverberating with the emissions of the sound system. In performances of marionette opera today, the musical component is rarely live, but provided by a recording, featuring singers, instrumentalists, and sometimes actors for spoken dialogue. The sonic emissions of the recording are one of the main connective tissues in the network, as they shape interactions between actors and objects. In a sense, then, the provision of music in the marionette theater walks a line between a certain pre-determined notion of the unity and longevity of a "work" and a kind of originality, the limitlessness of possibilities derived from found (recorded) materials. In some theaters, cuts in the recording are left without polish, jarring shifts in acoustic space, tonality, and timbre ensuring that the music wears its constructedness on its surface. Although not live, this grittiness betrays the hand of the engineer, a version of presence.

In another vein, a veneer of integrity and coherence may be reinforced by the deployment of the music. In other words, the fixity of the music might engender a certain degree of control over the performance, enveloping the entire network within a unified aesthetic. In Vienna, for example, the performance commences with a start button, which triggers all music and lighting. This regime might infer a sequential unfolding of events, from the music emitted by the sound system through the puppeteers and the puppets and out to the audience. However, recorded music allows performers to internalize micro-timings, and thereby anticipate the execution of their gestures accordingly.[86] There is no room for the puppeteers to hesitate or improvise. But even when the synchronization between the puppet and the music casts the wooden figure as the producer of those

[86] For discussions of the particular aesthetics cultivated by dancing to recorded music, see Stephanie Jordan, *Moving Music: Dialogues with Music in Twentieth-Century Ballet* (London: Dance Books, 2000) and Mary Simonson, *Body Knowledge: Performance, Intermediality, and American Entertainment at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

sounds, as a musician or singer, even in moments of close-matching sound-to-step, or "Mickey-mousing;" even then, the strings infuse the performance with a unique aesthetic quality—and that particular quality depends on all of the other parts of the network.

Our performance network for marionette opera is now at least a ten-part configuration: a marionette; a Marionettenspieler; unique backstage architecture, often involving a bridge; the audience; the auditorium; the recording, including singers and instrumentalists; the sound system; the technologies of theatrical presentation, including lighting rigs, scenery, props, and other stage machinery; and two primary convective tissues: the music and the strings (see Fig. 3.2). Together they determine the actions of the human participants—from the individual manipulations of the Spielkreuz by a puppeteer to the collaborative operations amongst a puppeteering group and the larger backstage choreography, and the audiences' mode of engagement and perception—and their respective and variable temporalities.

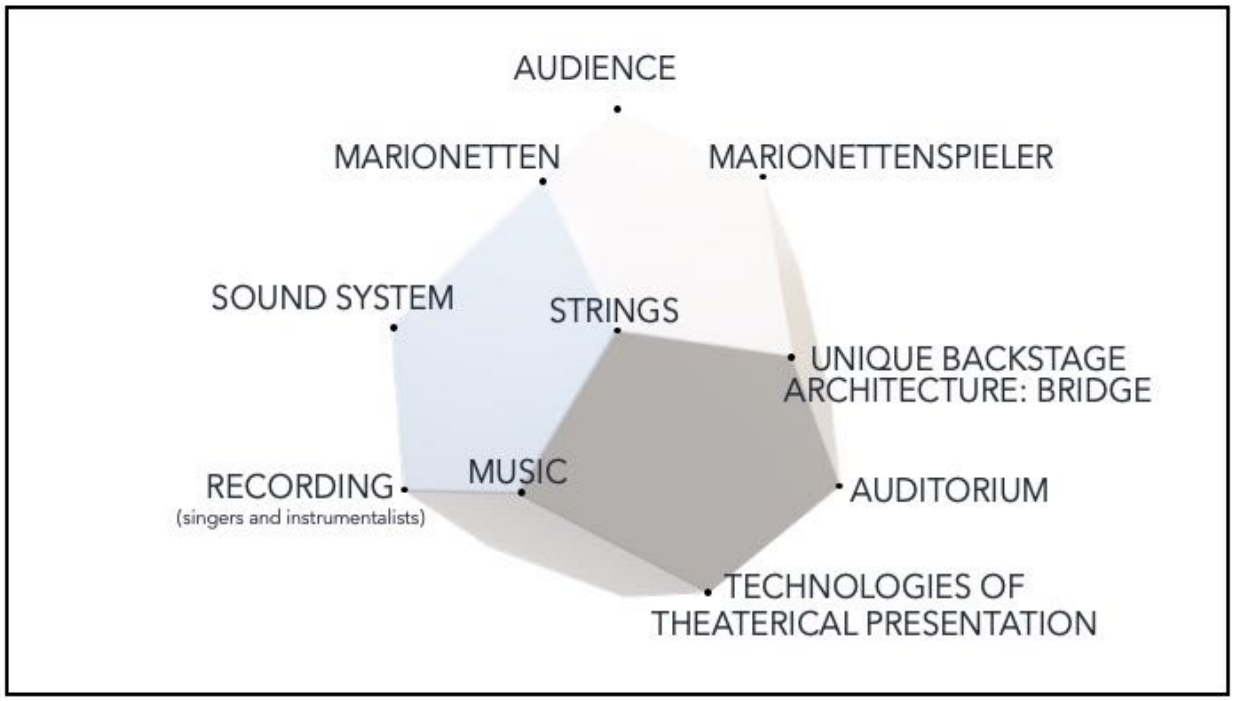


Figure 3.2 A Performance Network of Marionette Opera

This is still a somewhat abstract realization of the network, a template that gives voice to generalizations rather than specifics. Each moment engenders its own network, and the components and affects will be determined anew each time. An individual instantiation of the performance network may reach across to another—a puppeteer might relocate, a technique might be replicated—while each and every instantiation is woven into the historical and philosophical fabric of the tradition. The performance network as an analytic framework can highlight what is shared and what is distinctive. Let us return to the four performances of the enchantment scene evoked at the beginning of this chapter and explore the kinds of interpretations the framework of the performance network might offer.

The Enchantment Scene: Four Interpretations

i. Salzburg

The Salzburger Marionettentheater is internationally renowned, influential, and ambitious. Since its founding in 1913, the company has toured more than 270 times at home and abroad and has attracted many famous artists and theater practitioners. In the 1950s, for example, renowned German set designer Günther Schneider-Siemssen joined the team. The marionette theater proved to be something of a testing ground for Schneider-Siemssen, who, after his first major engagement as the chief stage designer for the Salzburg Landestheater in 1951, was in great demand as a designer for various enterprises, especially opera, the world over. It was Schneider-Siemssen who introduced the revolving stage to the Salzburger Marionettentheater and experimented with scenic techniques, such as holography. More recently, the company has collaborated with: Andreas Schiff on a minimalist production of Debussy's ballet score *"La boîte à joujoux"* for the Ittingen Festival; and in 2019 with the Stiftung Mozarteum, director Doug Fitch, and composer Florian Willeitner on an original work *Pùnkitititi! (Breakfast Included)* for Mozartwoche 2020, which combined Mozartian

musical fragments, a solo mime artist, and various kinds of puppetry and object manipulation to explore issues of self-belief and self-doubt.

Like many companies across Europe, the Salzburg Marionette Theater has a "puppet family" as its backbone, the Aichers.[87] Anton Aicher (1859–1930) betrayed early signs of a talent for carving and was highly influenced by the renowned player of Kasperltheater Josef Leonhard Schmid in Munich. A graduate of the Vienna Academy of Art, Aicher took up a teaching post in Salzburg, where he recruited his students in sculpture to assist in his construction of a marionette theater. Aicher gave Mozart's *Bastien und Bastienne* as the first public performance of the Salzburger Marionettentheater on February 27, 1913. Anton's youngest son Hermann took the reins when he received the theater as a gift for his wedding in 1926. It was under his purview that the company moved to its current home, a conversion of the former Mirabell Hotel between the Mozarteum and the Landestheater, in 1971.[88]

The theater boasts an extensive foyer, with a well-stocked merchandise stall, including a range of DVDs; of the theaters I have visited, Salzburg is the only company to commission video recordings of their productions. The auditorium is similarly spectacular, with a huge candelabra and ornate stuccos and frescoes, and can comfortably seat 350 visitors (see Fig. 3.3). Performances are supplemented by subtitles in multiple languages, which are projected in blocks onto panels on either side of the stage.[89] The company is currently comprised of eleven Marionettenspieler, each of whom have other responsibilities beyond performing, including costume designer, puppet repairer,

[87] On puppet families, see John McCormick and Bennie Prastasik, *Popular Puppet Theater in Europe, 1800–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 30.

[88] For more historical information, see "Das Theater," *Salzburger Marionettentheater*, accessed May 12, 2020, https://www.marionetten.at/das-theater/.

[89] The text usually summarizes the action/scene, rather than translate every line.



Figure 3.3 The Auditorium at the Salzburger Marionettentheater



Figure 3.4 Backstage at the Salzburger Marionettentheater

and so on.[90] Adjoining the spacious backstage area, which is brimming with props, scenery, and other theatrical contraptions, are an array of workshops where new marionettes are brought to life (see Fig. 3.4).

Hermann's daughter Gretl, who died suddenly in 2012, brought the Aicher reign to an end. According to Salzburg's own souvenir book, one of Gretl's "chief concerns was to present marionette performance as an art and to have it recognised as such."[91] In pursuit of this goal, Gretl instigated various collaborative projects with the Salzburg Festival and the Salzburger Landestheater, including, with the latter, an abridged version of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, which was received with great acclaim. Indeed, such "high art" ambitions are fitting for Aicher's puppets, which are exquisite objects in their own right, distinguished by their small stature, just 20–30cm tall, and fine features. A particular innovation of Aicher's that has spread far and wide is a smaller Spielkreuz, or guide cross ("Führungskreuz"[92]). Aicher's mechanism not only gives the Marionettenspieler more precision in executing their moves, but also allows them to get closer together on the bridge, thereby expanding choreographic possibilities—as evidenced in their realization of the enchantment scene.
When Salzburg's Monostatos and his cronies succumb to the power of the bells, the dance they perform is the most intricate of those I have seen across puppet theaters and conventional opera houses. Even without this broader context, the scene is marked within the Salzburg production by

[90] "The Ensemble," *Salzburger Marionettentheater*, accessed May 12, 2020, https://www.marionetten.at/das-ensemble/. The website lists other positions in the theater, including managing director and box office manager. When I first started attending performances in Salzburg, I came into contact with Edouard Funck, a puppeteer and costume designer/maker. He is no longer listed as an ensemble member, having left the company in September 2017 to take a job designing a show in Berlin. He returned in May 2109 and seems to play with them sporadically now. I saw him perform most recently in *Pùnkitititi! (Breakfast Included)* for Mozartwoche 2020.

[91] Salzburger Marionettentheater Souvenir Book, 11.

[92] See "Das Theater," accessed May 12, 2020, https://www.marionetten.at/das-theater/

the varied choreography. The routine is evocative of various folk and ethnic dances: the Slavic squat dance; Punjabi bhangra; there's something of flamenco about the stamping too. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, the appearance of these figures is a heady mix of non- European dress and caricatures of blackness that serve to reinforce the slaves' undifferentiated Otherness; and like the costuming, the choreographic references are vague and jumbled, any specificity largely dependent on the cultural knowledge of the spectator.

The disposition of the marionette adds a further layer of representational complexity to this sketchy visual composite. While certain parts of the routine—precarious balances and slow lifts—lean into the suppleness of the strings, the defining material attribute of the marionette, in this routine, every gesture is suffused with a quality of looseness. The tension between the elasticity of the movements and their precise execution is amplified by performance *in unison* of multiple figures, made possible in no small measure by the size of the company and performance space backstage. The result is, to a certain extent, predictable, an uncomplicated, uncritical amalgamation of representational impulses that follow imperialism in European high art—and the performers are aware of the problems. Edouard Funck, a Marionettenspieler and costume designer at Salzburg, informed me that the theater has received complaints about these figures and he was thinking through possible alternatives, with an eye to something like authenticity, that would streamline their styling.[93] The managing director of the theater, Barbara Heuberger, also highlighted the need for a "solution" to the enduring challenges of this scene, which she describes as an "embarrassing bastard cliché" ("peinlichen Basröcken Klischee"). Heuberger somewhat excuses the scene as realized in the Salzburg production as dated, of a different time, but still acknowledges that it is highly "offensive"

[93] Edouard Funck, Conversation with the author, Salzburg, Austria, October 5, 2017.

("Es ist so 50ger Jahrstil und beleidigend").[94] Ultimately, it is work-in-progress.

ii. Lindau

The much younger theater of the Lindauer Marionettenoper is located within the building of the Stadttheater on the island of Lindau in Lake Constance on the Swiss-German border.[95] Founded in 2000, the artistic director Bernhard Leismüller heads up a team of sixteen Marionettenspieler.[96] Leismüller trained at Salzburg and somewhat unsurprisingly, his theater is modelled very closely on the practices and designs of that theater—from the circular, rotating stage, to the smaller control mechanism of the marionettes. And Leismüller is similarly adventurous too: alongside the familiar favorites are productions of seeming outliers, Bizet's *Carmen* and Verdi's *La Traviata*. At first glance, the mix of social transgression and carnal desire may seem quite distant from the magical elements that tend to characterize operas predisposed to puppetry; but when a marionette Carmen, adorned with exoticist tropes of her Romani heritage, escapes her fetters through song and dance, for example, or a wooden Violetta, no longer playful and promiscuous, gasps her last farewell, the resonance with puppetry is profound. Not only does the existential side of the puppet come to the fore, but the acute burden of representation is made distinctly palpable by the sculpting of a singular inanimate body.

The imaginative realization of the magic bells at Lindau is a more playful exploration of the

[94] Barbara Heuberger, Email correspondence with the author, September 1, 2017.

[95] The history on their website refers to the founding of the company in 2000, but the date of the move from a "makeshift arrangement" ("das Provisorium") to a permanent stage in the Stadttheater Lindau is not given. See "Unsere Geschichte," *Lindauer Marionettenoper*, accessed February 2, 2018, https://www.marionettenoper.de

[96] When I visited the theater in 2017, the program booklet stated that there were 11 members in the company. The website now gives the figure of 16. See "Puppenspieler," *Lindauer Marionettenoper*, accessed May 12, 2020, https://www.marionettenoper.de/ueber-uns/backstage/puppenspieler/

condition of the puppet. The representation of Monostatos and his three cronies is comparatively nuanced with greater individuation of appearance and no parodic gestures, and so the focus falls on the bells, the star of this scene. The agential ambiguity embedded in the opera's text—Papageno's confusion regarding his role in playing the bells; the apparent power of the bells' music over Monostatos and his cronies—is uniquely realized by Lindau's manifestation of the bells (see Fig. 3.5). The bells' legs, in particular, ensure their independence from Papageno—they can walk off stage of their own accord, as they appear to do before the end of the Act 1 quintet—while simultaneously mirroring the physicality of their owner's prey. Indeed, the bells have the appearance of some sort of exotic bird, perhaps even Papageno's offspring. Depictions of the bird catcher often present him as an oversized bird—undoubtedly an effective bird-catching technique. At Lindau, Papageno is particularly bird-like, which casts the bells as something of a miniature version of their owner. Crucially, though, the bells are no longer a prop, but rather a discrete marionette. Like all of the performers onstage, all of the other marionettes, the bells do not produce their own sounds, but materialize the imagined source of the music emitted by the sound system. Conversely, if the magic bells are a musical instrument-turned-marionette, their fellow marionettes might be understood themselves as musical instruments.



Figure 3.5 The Bells of the Lindauer Marionettenoper

iii. Berlin

The Preußsches Marionettentheater near the Hackescher Markt in Berlin draws little attention to itself amongst residential and shop fronts on Sophienstraße. If you didn't know it was there, you probably wouldn't notice it, and the operational set-up doesn't really allow for spontaneous spectators. In fact, to attend a show, it is necessary to book in advance over the telephone or send an email up to two days before the performance. This clandestine atmosphere, a sense that only local, insider knowledge grants access to the theater, is reinforced by the intimacy of the theater space and the jovial familiarity of the performers. The street entrance leads immediately into the tiny auditorium, such as it is, with four rows of mis-matched chairs and benches, enough for just 27 or 28 patrons, while the theater's founder Harold Preuß usually introduces performances in a free-flowing style littered with funny anecdotes. The theater resembles a fairground booth (see Fig. 3.6). Accordingly, there is no bridge backstage; instead, just a couple of Marionettenspieler stand behind a black backdrop and perform with shorter strings for their rather large marionettes (see Fig. 3.7). The repertory is modest, a handful of operas and children's plays, but the performance schedule is supplemented with guest companies.



Figure 3.6 Preußsches Marionettentheater

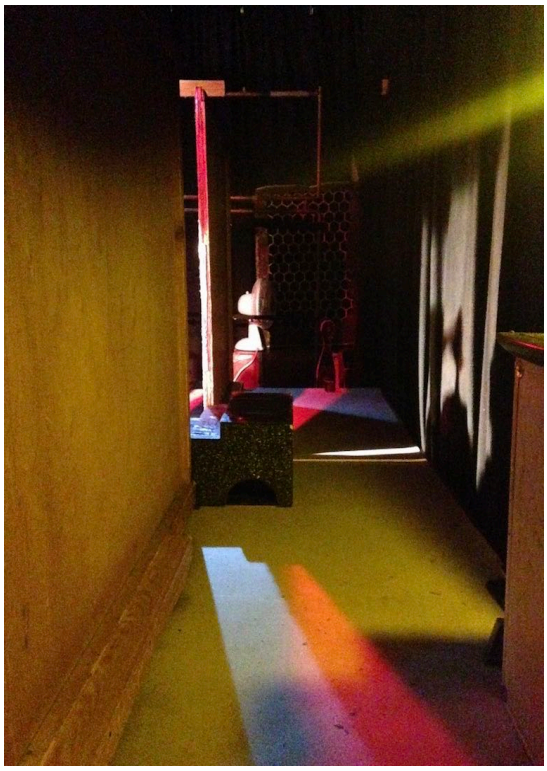


Figure 3.7 Backstage without a bridge at the Preußsches Marionettentheater

The marionettes at the Preußsches Marionettentheater are inclined to dance whenever the opportunity arises. Papageno enters in style, for example, with a complex routine along the apron of the tiny stage. For greater stability and accuracy, the marionette's strings are supplemented by a rod (in German, "Stab") attached to the head, and without a bridge, the hands of the Marionettenspieler frequently dip below the proscenium as they realize the choreography. If not dancing, the marionettes are usually bouncing or pulsing in time with the music: perhaps because of the limited floor space, the vertical is an important choreographic plane. But this liveliness also reflects and feeds into the company's apparent emphasis on slapstick and comedy. In the context of almost perpetual motion, how, then, to depict not the response of a body to music but the musical takeover of a body? Answer: to dance the impossible.

Monostatos is a virtuoso here, performing tricks far beyond the capabilities of human

performers. In contrast, Monostatos' pair of slaves remain planted to the spot. They are frozen; not even enlivened by the energy of strings. While Monostatos pushes beyond the extremities of even the Salzburg choreography, these figures are flat, almost two-dimensional. Indeed, when they turn around, the audience is greeted not with their backs but with two other figures: the white-skinned armored men. To a certain extent, this is a pragmatic solution to limited resources: these statuettes help conjure the effect of a chorus without making demands on the puppeteers. Furthermore, the status of both the slaves and the armoured men is one of subservience. But while their unified objectification, in a sense, works, the stark juxtaposition of the black and white figures is jarring, especially when contrasted with the hysterical physicality of Monostatos. Indeed, Monostatos and his cronies occupy opposite ends of the gestural spectrum, but both are reduced to inhuman objects.

iv. Vienna

Opened in 1994, the Schloss Schönbrunn Marionettentheater is located in one of the redeveloped outhouses of the summer palace in the district of Heitzing, Vienna. The theater is a family business, headed up by the principal Marionettenspieler, Christine and her husband Werner Hierzer. Christine and Werner left the Salzburger Marionettentheater where they met to set out on their own. They performed as a travelling company until an opportunity arose at Schloss Schönbrunn, which had been taken over by a new organization looking to renovate and expand the dilapidated tourist attraction. A children's museum was suggested, thus paving the way for a marionette theater.[97] The theater's integration within the fabric of a palace with its own heritage of puppetry is reflected in their updated vision of *Die Zauberflöte*, which references locations within the palace's grounds, the

[97] Christine Hierzer-Riedler, Conversation with the author, Vienna, Austria, June 20, 2016.

Roman ruins, the zoological gardens, and the park. And indeed, as part of the tourist trail in Vienna, the company performs several pieces specifically with children in mind, including a newly devised musical about a famed resident of Schönbrunn, Empress Elisabeth of Austria, also known as "Sisi."

The auditorium can seat 80 visitors, with the back three rows separated from the rest of the seating area by columns (see Fig. 3.8). It is not a particularly large space, but the proscenium, with its traditional red curtain, eye-catching red surround and the theater's logo embossed in gold, add a sense of grandeur. There is a more rustic feel to the foyer area and exhibition space, however, although the hundreds of marionettes stored in glass-fronted cabinets as they await their stage time are testament to Christine and Werner's wealth of experience, both at home and on tour, and the ever-growing company reflects their nurturing style and approach to the tradition. Indeed, since 2016, the company has attracted several new performers and, according to the theater's website—also impressively updated in the last half decade—currently stands at fifteen Marionettenspieler.[98] The theater's relatively modest quarters, however, do not leave much room backstage for many Marionettenspieler on its two bridges (front and back; see Fig. 3.9). *Die Zauberflöte*, for example, involves just five Marionettenspieler. Thus, a single "part" encompasses multiple roles, many marionettes, and various changes of scenery, the combination of which can be modified to accommodate different levels of experience.

Christine introduces each performance from the apron of the stage with the help of a wooden companion. She describes the process of making a marionette, the basic training of the Marionettenspieler, and the magical potential of Marionettentheater. While Christine is seemingly the more public facing of the two artistic directors, both she and Werner run the theater, design the

[98] From my observations, Christine appears to work non-stop and is particularly vocal about innovating and staying up to date. Other members of the company have "day jobs," working part-time as Marionettenspieler.



Figure 3.8 The Proscenium and Stage of the Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn



Figure 3.9 The bridges at the Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn

costumes, and perform the most demanding roles in shows. Werner designs the sets and is principally responsible for music, lighting, and other technical aspects of the performances.[99] Thanks to the hospitality and generosity of Christine and Werner, I have viewed a number of performances (including some rehearsals) from the front bridge. This vantage point offers an invaluable perspective on the intricate choreographies and intimate gestures of marionette performance.

At the Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn, the enchantment scene is marked by its straight lines and reverse maneuvers. These are not the kinds of configurations and gestures that feed the realistic expression sought by and through marionette opera. The default embodied sensibility of the marionette—its wobbliness, its fluctuation between subtlety and exaggeration—that reads as originary and strangely realistic seems to evaporate when the bells take hold. What happens in this moment is something other than a performance in unison; the figures appear to move as one. In other words, Monastatos and his cronies move too exactly, too perfectly. These figures are *over*-synchronized.

There is a pragmatic rationale behind this scene. In order for the company of five Marionettenspieler to puppet ten marionettes—Papageno, Pamina, Monostatos, and the seven slaves—they have to be inventive. Three cronies are affixed to a frame, which allows control by one Marionettenspieler. One is now in control of three; one Marionettenspieler, one white artist, is in control of three black slave marionettes. Crucially, it is *easier* for the Marionettenspieler to control multiple marionettes with the use of the frame than it is for her to manipulate a single puppet. And yet, within the aesthetic world of the marionette theater, such acute synchronization reads as a more disciplined and controlled puppeteering technique.

[99] The intricacies of the divisions of labor are not fully known to me. Table 3.1 presents information I have gleaned primarily from the theater's website, but this perception is based largely on my observations.

Somewhat paradoxically then, this is puppetry at its crudest *and* at its most technological. On the one hand, the mechanical movements of the marionettes play into the cultural stereotype of puppetry: that of extreme control of the puppet by the puppeteer. That stereotype, however, foregrounds a one-to-one relationship, one being subjugated by one figure of authority, one puppet to one puppeteer. The frame technology used for this scene in the Viennese production is, in fact, crucial to the depiction of operatic choruses throughout the marionette world.[100] And to a certain extent, this technological pragmatism, in subverting ingrained cultural expectations, attests to the innovative potential of marionette artistry. On the other hand, though, the technology of the frame reinscribes an all too real and unsettling image: that of the master and his slaves. Individuals are subsumed by the collective, which is further reduced by the frame, turning three into one, quite literally. Pragmatics aside, the marked aesthetic difference of this moment falls in line with a history of musical and dramatic representation of black and brown characters as mechanical, something other than human, something out of control in need of control. Not only is the feedback-loop, the independence engendered by the marionettes' strings, null and void, but the intense concentration of agency within the network afforded by the frame reads back onto the human condition in violent rather than creative ways.

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Ultimately, the varied foci and discrepancies between these final analyses reflect not only authorial biases, derived in no small measure from the mundane influence of travel plans and performance schedules, but also the available documentary evidence of the life of the particular

[100]For example, such frames are used for spectacular chorus scenes in productions at the Lindauer Marionettenoper. For an overview of other trick and transformation puppets, see John McCormick, "Trick and Transformation Puppets," *World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts*, 2013, accessed May 5, 2022, https://wepa.unima.org/en/trick-and-transformation-puppets/ .

theater.[101] Puppetry leaves little archival trace beyond the self-recording and promotion undertaken by the practitioners themselves, and indeed, amongst this small sample of theaters across Germany and Austria, at least one has considerably bolstered its historical narrative by updating its online presence. But puppetry is first and foremost an oral tradition and as such, it is in the performance itself—the spaces, the personnel, the content, the objects, the style—that histories are told. From the size of the theater and its construction of scalic relations, to the number of Marionettenspieler in a company and the resultant impact on directorial (including musical and choreographic) choices, possibilities for synchronization, and puppet-to-puppeteer relationships, the material realities and pragmatics of puppet performance are importantly entwined with aesthetic effects and experience. This is, of course, true of any and all performing arts; but there is something about the disaggregation of material components in puppet performance, and the resultant explosion of possible human-object relationships proposed and explored by the art form, that brings the risks and contingencies of expression and representation to the fore. In puppetry, creative agency is dispersed across human and non-human bodies so that everything is engaged, everyone is complicit, and anything is possible. The concept of the performance network provides a methodology for building robust aesthetic readings of specific puppet performances, each one from the ground up, putting the materials first, those of the performers, the audience, and, most crucially, the stuff in the spotlight, the puppet.

[101] The theaters' websites are invaluable resources in this regard, but their depth is, inevitably, limited by the resources of the theater/company. It is worth noting that the websites for the Salzburger Marionettentheater and Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn were reformatted and elaborately updated during the outbreak of Covid-19, which closed the theaters temporarily.

PART II

When Puppets Meet Music

The puppets of this dissertation have already met music, namely Mozart's last opera, *Die Zauberflöte*. And our puppets to date have spanned the gamut, from rhetorical and symbolic, to human mimicry and filmic, to hand and string. In our study so far, we have considered the ways in which the puppet—and its kin—functions metaphorically in musicological discourse, and how the art of puppetry can provide a source of inspiration for human-made theatre. We have also already started to explore the ways in which actual puppets interact with music, specifically their potential to manifest specific interpretations of an operatic scene that stages certain fundamental tenets of puppetry: the separation of source and sound, and the wielding of power by a superior being over an inferior one. Now we will (largely) draw the curtains on *Die Zauberflöte,* and the enchantment scene in particular, to explore encounters between puppets and more diverse musical phenomena, music that might not seem readily pre-disposed to puppet interaction, as well as musical objects that exhibit certain puppet-like attributes and musical practices that betray a puppet-infused sensibility.

In the following two chapters, we will uncover the myriad roles music can play in relation to two contrasting puppet species and their theaters: marionettes and the rod puppets of Richard Teschner. At first glance, this pair articulate a number of dualities fundamental to puppetry: strings vs. rod, tradition vs. singular vision, singing vs. silent. As the analytic lens of the performance network reveals, they also share certain important features, including the architecture involved in performance, the negotiation of recorded or otherwise non-live music, and the importance of movement and gesture to the task of expressive communication. The technologies and aesthetics of cinema are evident in both examples and it is to this world that turn to on the Epilogue with some reflections on the stop-motion silhouette animation of Lotte Reiniger.

IV. "Singing" Puppets
The Aesthetics of Voice in Marionette Opera

Voice-Objects

Opera houses are full of stuff. The orchestra pit teems with musical instruments, sometimes spilling into the boxes on either side of the stage or into the wings unseen; program booklets extoll the virtuosity of the performers and capture three hours of music drama in a page or two of text; audience members fiddle with opera glasses, bringing the stage "nearer" in an instant; and, of course, on stage, there are all sorts of things to help bring the story to life: from palaces and pyramids to rainbow bridges and airplanes, from Orpheus's lyre to Mime's tarnhelm, and indeed, Tamino's magic flute.[1] Under ordinary circumstances, all this stuff is understood as secondary to the singers—they, after all, are the ones whom we are there to see and hear. Stuff serves primarily to frame the singers, to give their actions a context and impetus, and ultimately, make the sounds they produce from their laboring bodies the object of our attention. This chapter examines what happens when a certain kind of object displaces singers from their usual spots center-stage, becoming themselves the focus of our attention. The object in question: the marionette.

Marionettes have been singing opera for centuries. The earliest recorded puppet operas—those that have made their mark in the archive—are those by Haydn, which inspired a tradition in the Viennese palace of Schloss Schönbrunn that continues to thrive today. And the operas to appear most frequently on puppet stages—alongside *Die Zauberflöte*, other Mozartian favorites *Don Giovanni* and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*,

[1] For a more general summary of opera studies' investment in the so-called "material turn," see Laura Tunbridge, "Review Article: Opera and Materiality," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 26, no. 3 (2014): 289–99.

and occasionally some Wagner—are those whose plots comprise a compelling mixture of magic and mischief, making them an attractive proposition for puppet representation. We could just leave it at that. Puppets are fantastical creatures, simultaneously alive and "dead," so why wouldn't they perform stories with vengeful statues, magical potions, and cunning disguises?

This is only one side of the story, though, the logical outgrowth of the broader attraction of puppetry to opera. Through this lens, puppetry makes sense; it appears to "fit" opera. But puppets do much more than realize the magical stories already there in certain operas; through their negotiation of the line between singer and object, they bring their own kind of magic to all operatic expression. And even when they are deployed to fantastical ends, the convincing fulfilment of their roles requires a collaborative mode that contemporary stereotypes of puppetry tend to erase. This other side of the story—the ways in which puppets appear *not* to "fit" opera—is the concern of this chapter: the very essence of a hybrid art form that sees silent performing objects playing the starring roles that are traditionally filled by highly trained classical singers.

A Phenomenological Paradox

When marionettes sing opera, *they* of course sing nothing at all. According to received wisdom, a puppet's vocality resides, therefore, in its capacity to materialize what Steven Connor terms a "vocalic body," a plausible body conjured up by a listener when they experience a sourceless or disembodied voice.[2] Factually mute, the puppet is imagined to be vociferous: the singing voice, wherever it is coming from, becomes ,in the experience of the audience, that of the puppet, part of the puppet's identity, while remaining the possession of the singer. In a sense, this inherent conundrum of marionette opera is another layer of Steve Tillis' "double vision," the lens that

[2] Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 35.

enables the spectator to accept both the life of the puppet and its material deadness simultaneously.[3] Here, we might call this "double audition": we know that the puppet is silent, but we believe that it sings.

Yet the proposition of marionette opera—mute wooden bodies giving virtuosic vocal performances—involves a very particular clash of vocal paradigms that forces a reconsideration of the materially- and temporally-constrained mapping of human voice onto the puppet that speaks directly to musicological questions concerning the voice-body complex. Marionette opera forces us to ask certain questions: What happens to opera's acoustic signature when it is performed, not by human actors, but by marionettes?[4] What are the properties of puppets that allow them to "sing"? More specifically: How do the material constitution and corporeal disposition of a puppet bear the expressive and representational weight of voice? How do puppeteers confront this aesthetic, acoustic, and philosophical conundrum in their practice? And, in a sense most crucially, how do we—audiences, scholars—tolerate, entertain, even thrive in, this meeting of seeming "opposites"? For while it is true that in marionette opera aural displays of extreme vocal capacity are pitted against its absence or lack in the form of silent puppets, in actuality there are many more actors and objects involved in negotiating this encounter. Indeed, when marionettes wander into staples of the operatic canon, specific human singers—with their fully embodied voices in recognizable bodies—are displaced by a multi-part "performance network" involving several distinct media and material objects.

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[3] Steve Tillis, *Toward an Aesthetics of the Puppet: Puppetry as a Theatrical Act* (New York: Greenwood, 1992), 159.

[4] Michal Grover-Friedlander, for instance, considers singing the essential quality of opera: "I adopt a view of the operatic as a phenomenon in which meaning is engendered in singing; and, through singing, the nature and significance of that very capacity is revealed. I join Abbate, Cavell, Starobinski, Poizat, and others in positioning the singing voice above all other constituents as what is essential to opera." See Grover-Friedlander, *Operatic Afterlives (*New York: Zone Books, 2011), 16.

As I outlined in Chapter Three, the performance network for marionette opera can be understood to encompass the marionette; an unseen puppeteer; a unique backstage architecture; a recorded singer, a sound system, the various technologies of theatrical presentation (including lighting rigs, scenery, props, and other stage machinery), the environment of the theater, and, of course, the audience. By tracing paths through this network in the pages that follow, I will illuminate the mechanisms that enable operatic voices to become perceptibly attached to marionettes, these lip-less, throat-less, silently solid figurines.

The discussion in this chapter builds significantly on my braided examination of *Die Zauberflöte* from multiple perspectives in the preceding three chapters, specifically enriched with ethnographic reportage of my experiences of around 40 marionette performances at theaters in Bamberg, Berlin, Lindau, Munich, Salzburg, and Vienna. In Chapter Three, I analyzed the way four of these theaters realized the enchantment scene in *Die Zauberflöte*, and so we have already been introduced to some of the quirks of these performance venues. My analyses in this chapter, however, build on the model and approach of the performance network and explore different manifestations of the "poetics of synchronization."

While some of these theaters share a very similar network, the ways in which other networks diverge from one another are significant: for it is in these deviations that the material source of each network's characteristic aesthetic effect resides. By attending to the individual specifications of particular networks, lines of influence are consolidated, while idiosyncrasies and innovations are thrown into relief. Conversations with Marionettenspieler inform my readings, and, where necessary, I have made use of video recordings to supplement the live marionette performances.[5] The practices of Marionettenspieler, their puppets and their theaters together construct what Carolyn Abbate calls

[5] I discuss the challenges and distortions of filmed marionette performance in more detail below.

"vernacular philosophy," an artisanal enterprise through which central philosophical questions are addressed: from boundaries of the Self and the nature of voice to the relationship between language and gesture and the fine line between life and death.[6]

In exploring the ways in which marionette performance grapples with the complexity of voice, I adopt four critical lenses from the field of puppetry: *breath*, the representation and perception of breath across the performance network; *gravity*, the control mechanisms and physical language of marionette opera centered around the strings; *giants*, the scalic relations constructed by the network; and finally *death*, when the puppet overwhelms or withdraws from itself, retreats to its "natural" state, its "pure" materiality. As we shall see, at times and in certain ways, puppets employ the techniques of human singers and adopt a kind of corporal disposition, but they also have at their disposal a distinctive arsenal of their own. It all begins with breath.

I.

Breath; or the Impulse of Life

"We know everything. We know how to breathe."[7] Breath, as we learned in Chapter Three, is fundamental to the illusion of puppetry. With the default condition of the puppet one of deadness, its life is under constant threat—so every breath counts. Each one is an effort; each one pregnant with uncertainty: will there be another? Or will life dissolve into deadness once again? How to conjure breath in the puppet depends on its material attributes and those of the network within which it operates, as well as questions of characterization and style, and the overall aesthetic agenda

[6] For Abbate, "'vernacular philosophy' … means that what artisans, composers, engineers, or technicians ae doing while producing popular entertainments represents an engagement with problems that are also causing perplexities upstairs in conventional philosophy, and hence that their actions are also worth our attention" (797). See Carolyn Abbate, "Sound Object Lessons." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 69, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 793–829.

[7] Christine Hierzer-Riedler, Conversation with the author, Vienna, Austria, June 18, 2016.

of the performance. Because breathing registers on different planes of representation, the strategies for breathing life into the puppet span a range of modalities, including gestural, visible, tangible, and aural.

Certain material attributes of marionettes make their performance of breathing particularly challenging to the puppeteer. For a start, the marionette has a solid wooden body. Some styles of puppet have more flexible or expansive bodies that can be made to swell and soften with the movement of air. With multiple puppeteers, specific parts of a bunraku-style puppet's body can be manipulated in isolation to draw out its suppleness. The marionette's wooden body, however, is not tied to the ground, but supported by the air. Indeed, the strings of the marionette (its defining feature) provide a constant source of energy, accommodating the demands of all kinds of choreographic configurations, a life-giving source even without a puppeteer at the other end. With the uplift of the strings, the bodily fluctuations of breath are intimated by the movements of the joints: balletic arms and giving knees imbue the figure with a kind of buoyancy suggestive of functioning lungs.

In the case of marionette *opera*, though, there is also an overwhelming sonic manifestation of breath: the singing voice itself. This aestheticized breath of the (usually absent) operatic singer resonates throughout the network not only acoustically, but also phenomenologically, structuring the movements of the Marionettenspieler and the perception of the audience, and even, one imagines, materially, as the strings of the marionette vibrate in sympathy with the singer's well-exercised vocal cords. All of these elements coalesce in the creation of a diva marionette, perhaps most readily in the production of vibrato.

Virtuosic Hyperrealism

At Schloss Schönbrunn, the co-principal Marionettenspielerin Christine Hierzer-Riedler realizes the

climax of the Queen of the Night's coloratura in her act II aria "Der Hölle Rache" with a distinctive form of vibrato: an intense shake of the head, reminiscent of the tremor of a strained muscle.[8] More often than not, this head-wobbling vibrato elicits a ripple of laughter from the audience.[9] Within the professional world of musical performance, vibrato is a marker of instrumental or vocal virtuosity.[10] Beyond that specialist domain, however, and especially in caricatures of operatic singing, vibrato's rapid pitch oscillation comes to represent the exaggerated, hyperbolic world of opera. A puppet is similarly hyperbolical: it embodies a stark mixture of certain universal human traits and acute markers of personality. But more immediately palpable is the puppet's association with childhood, a symbol of play and discovery rather than discipline and virtuosity. When a puppet is made to appear the producer of vibrato, then, we experience simultaneously a comedic clash of cultural references and an impressive, perhaps even satisfying, fusion of high and low, vocal virtuosity and choreographic dexterity.

How does this vibrato appear backstage, in the hands of the Marionettenspieler rather than the head of the marionette? In the puppet theater, there is always at least one other performer at work beside, behind or above the object onstage, and at least one other kind of performance unfolding. Indeed, what manifests in the puppet as a pronounced shake or tremor is produced by only the slightest movements of Christine's hands.[11] Watching the Marionettenspieler at work, one

[8] I attend my first performance of *Die Zauberflöte* at Schloss Schönbrunn Marionettentheater on June 17, 2016. For more information on performances I have attended, see Appendix 3.

[9] This is especially the case in abridged versions of the opera aimed at children.

[10] David Milsom, "Vibrato," *The Oxford Companion to Music*, accessed April 20, 2020, https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199579037.001.0001/acref-9780199579037-e-7129.

[11] I watched the Marionettenspieler perform from backstage on five occasions. For more information, see Appendix 3.

might speak of a kind of sign language or semaphore to describe the Marionettenspieler's intimate manipulations of the Spielkreuz. There is an almost symbolic relationship between the gestures of the Marionettenspieler and those of the marionette. Unlike certain other kinds of puppetry, such as glove puppetry or even some aspects of shadow puppetry, where there is a strong identification between the actions of the puppeteer and those of the puppet, the actions of the Marionettenspieler are not mapped directly onto the marionette in a parallel real-time performance. Rather, we might conceive of the kinaesthetic energy transferred from one performer to another as a kind of transduction, where the original signal of the puppeteer is converted into the gestural vocabulary of the puppet.

While Christine animates the Queen, her colleagues tend to the stage picture. For "Der Hölle Rache," the Queen rises from the ground in a dress of shimmering fabric, the excesses of which are draped in deep swags behind the starry figure by three other Marionettenspieler. While forming a spectacular backdrop, these seemingly superfluous gatherings might also be conceived as the Queen's wings, engulfing the stage and encroaching on Pamina. In material terms, then, the marionette is both the singer and the scenery, occupying, and ultimately dominating, both the stage and the bridge to a maximal extent—and of course, this material instantiation of all-consuming power reflects the drama of the number perfectly, as the Queen threatens her daughter with disownment should she fail to execute her mother's wishes. While her physical presence blurs the distinction between performing figure and performance object, the Queen's head-wobbling vibrato encapsulates the inextricable relationship between puppet, puppeteer, and music.

What is likely most jarring about this moment, and what produces the comedic effect, is the hyperrealistic attempt to translate the oral/aural experience of vibrato into bodily gesture. In the opera house, vibrato rarely registers visually—in fact, such evidence of the singer's physical labor is

generally considered undesirable.[12] Conversely, in the marionette theater, the physical labor of the performance—namely the manipulations of the puppeteer—is, by design, concealed from the audience. The task for the Marionettenspieler is, then, the exact opposite of that of the opera singer: rather than disguising physical effort and bodily strain, they must make their work felt in the figure of the marionette. Vibrato, as a distinct aural signifier of operatic voice, is apt to be translated into the body of the marionette in one way or another, and one such example is the head-wobble. We (the audience) know that it is not the marionette, who is responsible for the vocal pyrotechnics we can hear, but the virtuosic dexterity of the Marionettenspieler is trying very hard to convince us otherwise.

Throughout the Schloss Schönbrunn production as a whole, vibrato is used sparingly, with greater emphasis placed on choreography and blocking. Moreover, this overt gesture of vocality as the pinnacle of the Queen's brainwashing strategy stands in contrast to her desperate entreaty to Tamino in Act 1. For her first appearance, the Queen's physical vocabulary is limited to those of the human domain: she walks around the stage, her voice emerging from her arms, her hips, and crucially, her knees. In this scene, the Queen is connected to the earth. By act II, she has no legs: an entirely different marionette performs "Der Holle Räche," one whose expression occupies a vertical, rather than horizontal, plane. In this context, the Queen's head-wobbling vibrato, a patent bodily gesture, stands out as an explicit effort to make the body onstage the plausible source of the voice emitted through the sound system.

[12] For a discussion of what's desirable when operatic performance is captured on film, see Emanuele Senici, "Porn Style? Space and Time in Live Opera Videos," *The Opera Quarterly*, Vol.26, 1 (Winter 2010): 63–80.

In Search of a Body

Steven Connor calls this plausible source the "vocalic body."[13] In his cultural history of ventriloquism, Connor observes that "human beings in many different cultural settings find the experience of a sourceless sound uncomfortable, and the experience of a sourceless voice intolerable."[14] Following film theorist Rick Altman's logic of the "sound hermeneutic," the disembodied voice must belong to a legitimate source, an identifiable body that could feasibly produce the voice we hear.[15] According to this schema, as Connor observes, the voice appears subordinate to the body, a product, rather than a producer, of its source. Connor argues, however, that experientially, the opposite is true: "When animated by the ventriloquist's voice, the dummy, like the cartoon character given voice, appears to have a much wider range of gestures, facial expressions, and tonalities than it does when it is silent."[16] In a sense, then, a voice can mold a body, color and energize it; a voice can vectorize a body, giving it direction and purpose; a voice can give a body a past and a future, as well as a present.

Crucially, the horizon of possibilities for the kind of vocalic body a listener might conjure when grappling with a disembodied voice is much more constrained than we (and Connor) might

[13] Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 35.

[14] Ibid.

[15] In his 1980 article "Moving Lips: Cinema as Ventriloquism," Altman destabilizes the audio-visual hierarchy by interrogating the efficacy of the *image* rather than that of sound, as was typically the case in mid-century film theory. As he writes, "*[t]he image, in terms of sound, always has the basic nature of a question*. Fundamental to the cinema experience, therefore, is a process—which we might call the *sound hermeneutic*—whereby the sound asks *where*? and the image responds *here*!" (74). See Rick Altman, "Moving Lips: Cinema as Ventriloquism." *Yale French Studies*, No .60, Cinema/Sound (1980): 67–79. See also by the same author, *Sound Theory Sound Practice* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 252.

[16] Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 35.

like to think.[17] Although Connor suggests that the "vocalic body" can take any form, one which may, importantly, "contradict, compete with, replace, or even reshape the actual, visible body of the speaker," voice, identity, and vocal identity have long been upheld as categories with solid foundations and tightly constructed walls. What Nina Sun Eidsheim calls the "acousmatic question"—the "who is this?" provoked by a disembodied voice—is predicated, she observes, on the assumption that concepts of voice and personhood are of "an a priori stable nature," and moreover, that the former discloses the latter, that voice provides "a cue to interiority, essence, and unmediated identity."[18] In other words, certain kinds of voice can be and are thought of as markers of/for certain kinds of people, an essentialist mode of thought that sustains prejudice and discrimination.

Recent work in musicology has done much to debunk notions of vocal essentialism by attending to the materialities of voice, its contextuality, relationality and contingency.[19] The body has been put squarely back in the frame, not to ground or fix relations with or to (the) voice, but to deconstruct essentialist notions of voice-body correspondence. Opera scholars have turned their attention to the materialities of performance, both human and non-human, animate and inanimate, while scholars of voice more broadly have widened the lens to theorize the vocalities of differently

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[17] Brain Kane explores philosophical responses to the "phonographic voice," the particular kind of acousmatic voice created by recording technologies. Kane argues that Edison's invention precipitates a "concatenated sequence of responses, wherein each philosopher introduces a new kind of voice in relation to the last" (185), from Husserl's phenomenological voice through Dolar's Lacanian psychoanalytic voice. See Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 180–222.
[18] Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music* (Durham. And London: Duke University Press, 2019), 2.

[19] Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 35. For an overview of the current debates in voice studies, see Martha Feldman et al, "Colloquy: Why Voice Now?" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68, no .3 (2015), 653–85. For a philosophical examination of the embodied nature of voice, see Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005).

configured bodies and sensoria, and the materiality of vocal production. Eidsheim advocates for the understanding of voice as culturally constructed with three "interrelated correctives:"

> Voice is not singular; it is collective.
> Voice is not innate; it is cultural.
> Voice's source is not the singer; it is the listener.[20]

Conceiving of voice as the product of multiple, diffuse, dispersed entities and experiences undoes top-down models of vocal possession, fidelity, and authenticity; instead, all kinds of voices can emerge from and amongst all kinds of bodies.

Reconciling Body and Voice

In puppetry, there is no need to conjure a body for a disembodied voice; it is already supplied by the puppet. The audience is presented with a sounding disembodied voice, which must be welded to a fully present, if non-human, vocalic body. In one sense, the constraints of imagination are lifted here: the vocalic body is right there, onstage. All one must do as the spectator or listener is suspend their disbelief and fuse the two, body and voice, together. In another sense, however, the limits of imagination may be palpably challenged, forcing the audience to confront their pre-conceived notions of voice-body relations. Kenneth Gross observes that voices are often modified to match the bodies of puppets, but no such adjustments are made here.[21] In fact, the technical set up of many theaters and the adaptations to the recordings tend to exaggerate the gap. What the marionette theater proposes is that an operatic voice and a wooden body can be experientially whole. It also, however, suggests that the wooden body onstage and the operatic voice on the sound system are different, co-constitutive data streams: they do not need to be welded to one another, but can

[20] Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound*, 9.

[21] Kenneth Gross, *Puppet: An Essay on Uncanny Life* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 67.

communicate concurrently, to varying degrees of mutual implication and synchronization.

When the singer is live, there are, from the point of view of the audience, two bodies—the puppet's and the singer's—and one sounding voice. Even without the additional body, which poses a challenge to the original, a surrogate-in-waiting, the voice can seem quite separate from its body, as it reaches stratospheric heights or pierces through an eighty-piece orchestra. Indeed, so powerful is the operatic voice that it seems to exceed the limits of the laboring body from which it emanates. For scholars such as Mladen Dolar, the default status of voice is one of disembodiment, which the pyrotechnics of the operatic voice only makes more evident.[22] But, of course, there are only pyrotechnics when the fuse is ignited. This kind of fluctuation between the earthly and the transcendent, the material and the disembodied, is where Gross locates the affinity between puppetry and opera: "[o]pera…with its extreme, heightened use of voice—voice that seems to carry its life so far outside the singer's body, yet takes the body within itself—…lends itself to translation into the puppet theater."[23] Puppets make manifest this oscillation between desperate carnality and profound ephemerality in various ways, from their fundamental condition as subject to external control, their lives dependent on the investment of others, their radical separation from voice, and the fantastical physicality of their performance—the overdetermined quiver of vibrato, the spectacular flight of voice, and the breathy shimmering of strings.

The relationship between the sounding voice (and the singer's body) and the puppet's body is negotiated not only by the audience, but, of course, also by the puppeteer. There is always another body behind-the-scenes, and it is through their ears as well that the body and voice of the puppet

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[22] See Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

[23] In his discussion of the relationship between puppetry and opera, Gross builds on Abbate's reading of Orpheus' severed head. See Gross, *Puppet*, 78–83; Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), 1–10.

are united. While this climatic moment at Schloss Schönbrunn locates the execution of vibrato in the head, a lighter vibrato is often rendered by a more diffuse bodily shimmer. At Lindau, for example, the Queen of the Night moves her head minutely and almost constantly, often concluding phrases with an eloquent nod.[24] During the triplets of the line "alle Bande," she sways gently, but rhythmically, hands clasped in front of her. Scholars have observed how the melismatic writing stretches the syllables of "alle Bande" beyond all recognition.[25] The solidity of the marionette seems to ground this breakdown in communication. While the principal Marionettenspieler, Bernhard Leismüller, observes a fine line between dancing and naturalistic movement, which is best negotiated, he suggests, by attending to the portrayal of breath, there is also something important about the line of focus and attention, about the gaze of the puppet.[26] If puppets are looking, it is possible that they are listening too.

The idea that the puppet might be listening, of course, goes hand-in-hand, following Eidsheim, with the idea that the puppet might be singing; for the acknowledgement of a voice's source lies not with the singer but the listener.[27] When a puppet's attention is directed towards another, they become listeners. The "listening" of one can make a "singer" of another. For the finale of Act I at the Münchner Marionettentheater, for example, Sarastro enters the stage with two of this entourage to be greeted by a waiting Papageno and Pamina. With Sarastro in the middle, each

[24] Performance at Lindauer Marionettenoper on September 17, 2017.

[25] For a recent discussion from the field of music theory, see James Hepokoski, "Shattering the Bonds of Nature: The Queen of the Night Invades Enemy Territory," Eighty-second Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society and Thirty-ninth Annual Meeting of the Society for Music Theory, 3–6 November 2016, Vancouver.

[26] Bernhard Leismüller, Conversation with the author, Lindau, Germany, October 1, 2017.

[27] Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound*, 9. Kane proposes the notion of "acousmatic listening," where the relationship between a sound and its source is determined by the listener. For an overview his proposition, see Kane, *Sound Unseen*, 7–9.

of his henchmen either side of the stage, and Pamina and Papageno filling the space between the figure stage left and their leader centerstage, all five marionettes are stationary save for the vibrancy of their strings. As the dialogue between Sarastro and Pamina unfolds, emphatic gestures of the hands and head underlining their words, Papageno's gaze shifts from one to the other, and occasionally to the floor.[28] Not only is the non-singing Papageno kept alive by these subtle gestures, but they also keep his companion and her guardian singing, as he appears to be listening to their song.

Such micro-gestures are critical to the visual discourse and workings of the marionette theater. Depending on the size of the production and of the company, one or another marionette may be momentarily hung from the bridge on a hook, while some other puppet or prop is gathered up or a complicated maneuver executed by several puppeteers working together. Suspended at the end of their strings, marionettes are never completely devoid of energy, and the slightest tweak of a string can elicit a breath. At the Bamberger Marionettentheater, the marionettes are so small that their gestural vocabulary is, in a sense, quite limited. In *Der fliegende Holländer*, for example, the cries that articulate the beginning of each verse of Senta's ballad need only the slightest intentional tug on a string to translate the full acoustic force of her story into the visual realm, her left arm extended upwards, or both hands laid out in front of her; her natural disposition, at the end of her strings, seems to marry her body to the voice we hear without much additional signification. The action of the scene is more like a stage picture, quivering with the breath of the strings and their manipulation.

[28] Münchner Marionettentheater, *Die. Zauberflöte,* accessed April 20, 2020 https://vimeo.com/399438172 . I first developed this insight during the performance I attended on August 6th 2016. In that particular performance, Papageno appeared to be "pestering" one of Sarastro's henchmen, which reminded me of the whispering and tittering of the Three Ladies at Schloss Schönbrunn, of their reactions to the other figures on stage. In displaying their reactions, they imbue those figures with voice (and agency).

Contractions and Contours



Figure 4.1 The Queen of the Night at Berlin's Preußsches Marionettentheater

Uniting the finesse of operatic singing with the deeper mechanics of voice, the Marionettenspieler at Berlin's Preußsches Marionettentheater convey the expertise of breath control with a sharp jerk of the marionette's jointed midriff. Together with refined head and hand gestures, the Queen of the Night articulates the highest notes of her coloratura with a part of her body that might, provocatively, be labelled the diaphragm (see Fig. 4.1). The Berlin Marionettenspieler identified the marionette's lack of moving lips as a particular motivation for finding alternative means of embodying (or re-embodying) voice—even though, as Dolar has discussed, a visible, recognizable aperture does not necessarily resolve the mystery of vocal origin, possession, or creation.[29] The diaphragm, unseen by definition, can be imagined into existence where the static mouth is non-negotiable. When the voice, at its height of coloratura, seems at its furthest remove from the

[29] Conversation with the author, Berlin, Germany, August 9, 2017; Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 70.

marionette's body, the source of vocal presence itself is located right within the body's imaginary depths.

In the Preußsches Marionettentheater's realization of the Queen of the Night, such intensely physical evocations of singing are combined with those more whimsical and frivolous, those that only a marionette can perform: the flight of song. Despite the relatively compact size of the stage, certain beats within the coloratura are accented by the Queen's shooting upward into the rafters. As the puppeteer Edouard Funck at the Salzburg Marionettenspieler observes, marionettes can rationalize the fantastic; they make believable the unbelievable, because we (the audience) accept that they can do things that humans cannot.[30] For example, they can fly in patterns that chart the melodic contour of their song, and indeed, "Der Hölle Rache" offers a perfect opportunity for the marionette to transcend its dramatic character to become a visualization of voice itself, the sound of the singing rather than the act of singing.

At Salzburg, the Queen of the Night hovers magically above the stage for much of the aria. She appears at times perched within the curve of a crescent moon; at others she sweeps across the stage. In contrast to this general expression of soaring vocal lines, there are moments of more direct mapping of vocal contour to gesture. The shorter and sharper the phrase, indeed, the closer the synchronization between music and movement. For example, the rising gesture of "Hört! Hört! Hört!" outlining a first-inversion B flat major triad with half notes separated by rests of the same

[30] Edouard Funck, Conversation with the author, Salzburg, Austria, July 7, 2016. On the notion of the fantastic, Tzvetan Todorov's differentiation between the "fantastic uncanny" and the "fantastic marvelous" is especially applicable to marionettes, who appear to embody both states. There is an otherworldliness to the marionette realm: marionettes are human analogs, who live in a miniaturized real world, and so are "fantastic uncanny." But their superhuman performance of life—in other words, their vocal and gestural aesthetics—struggles to be explained according to the laws of the real work, and so they are "fantastic marvelous." To put this dichotomy in musical terms, we might say that marionettes perform and are performed by music. See Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), 41–57.

length, is usually realized with "jumps" of increasing height. In a sense, the range of the puppet's movement reinforces the elemental disembodiment of voice: this mode of visualization, in other words, makes the voice all the more transcendent. In opposition to her nemeses, whose bodies are earth-bound, their gestural voices vibrating through their strings, the Queen of the Night's voice remains separate to her body: they are parallel channels of expression, separate but mutually-reinforcing.

In her study of gesture in nineteenth century opera, Mary Ann Smart uncovers the varied possibilities for mimetic music, beyond a sense of one-to-one correspondence or direct mapping between music and bodily gesture and towards more fluid relationships between body, voice, and music. Of particular relevance to a discussion of puppet vocality is Smart's unpacking of the musico-dramatic treatment of Kundry from Wagner's *Parsifal* (1882), whose muteness sets in gradually over the course of the opera leaving her silent by the third act, in relation to the archetypal mute heroine Fenella from Daniel François Esprit Auber's *La muette de Portici* of 1828, the first so-called French grand opera.

Fenella's muteness is remedied, we might say, with stage directions derived from explicit emotional states and short, energetic musical motives with "clear linguistic concepts and direct physical energy."[31] In other words, Fenella relies on various analogues for conventional speech. By contrast, Kundry's capacity to "speak," broadly conceived, changes in parallel with her transformation from "cackling, quivering hag…to a beautiful young enchantress…to the silent penitent."[32] Where Kundry expresses herself with her body, there is no referential or symbolic

[31] Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2004), 203.

[32] Ibid., 191.

quality: her gestures are "a communicative end in themselves."[33] In terms of Wagner's musical rendering of Kundry, Smart observes a trajectory reflective of her redemption, from the highly gestural, as conveyed by Kundry's leitmotiv—an "orchestral explosion," whose "contour is mimetic of one of her most characteristic movements: rushing across the stage…then throwing herself precipitously on the ground"—to bodily erasure through letimotivic saturation. With the "space previously occupied by mimesis now filled with leitmotivs," the audience become puppets of a kind. Because of the discursive quality of leitmotivs, Smart suggests, their referential and transformative capacities, the audience are at their mercy, flung into the past and back to the future in a measure or two.

Mimetic music can have the same kind of effect on the characters on stage. Smart observes that "for Wagner the close matching of music to movement conveys not physical vitality or charisma, as in Auber or Verdi, but instead indicates that a character is half-conscious, in a state verging on trance."[34] Indeed, the close matching of movement to music is often similarly detrimental to the life of the puppet, the problem being that if a puppet is already in a state of non-consciousness, their straightforward mapping of music into the visual domain reinforces their subservience—and worse, makes them redundant. That said, the dexterity required of the performer behind the scenes to manipulate a puppet, especially the strings of a marionette, to ensure close synchronization in considerable, and the effect spectacular. The puppet can be vitalized by music, then, as much as it can be drained by it. What is important is the flexibility and variety of possible audio-visual relations.

[33] Ibid., 203.

[34] Ibid., 179.

"World-Breath," Network Breath

The breath of the puppet is not wholly imaginary, nor predominantly a question of representation: rather, real breath and actual breathing feed the illusion. While the audience needs to see the puppet breathe or else risk their losing their own breath, the puppeteer must translate their breathing into movement and gesture. The breath of the singer has been captured on record as the sound of vibrating vocal cords, and the ensemble of accompanying musicians is structured through breath. Media theorist Friedrich Kittler asserts the special status of breath in the fabric of the Wagnerian music drama. At the climax of the Liebestod, Isolde cries:

In dem wogenden Schwall,	In the surging torrent,
In dem tönenden Schall,	In the sound of sound, drowning
In des Welt-Atems	In the world-breath
wehendem Alle—	blowing all—
ertrinken,	drowning,
versinken—	sinking—
unbewusst—	unconsciously—
höchste Lust!	highest desire!

For Kittler, this is "no metaphor."[35] Rather, the term "world-breath" has a specific referent: the orchestra. "As drill, as power, and as instrumental unit," Kittler suggests that the entity of the orchestra mines, stores, and transmits data and in so doing, "holds all of Wagner's innovations together."[36] Perhaps "analogy" is more fitting, as Kittler idealizes breath as the medium of reciprocity across data-streams, the material substance that entwines music with drama, drama with music.[37] According to Kittler, "two art genres with different sensory fields could not simply be glued

[35] Friedrich Kittler, "World-Breath: On Wagner's Media Technology" in *Opera Through Other Eyes*, edited by David J. Levin (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 233.

[36] Ibid., 233; 234.

[37] See Gundula Kreuzer, "Kittler's Wagner (with a dose of Ernst)," in Colloquy:

together" in the creation of the music-drama.[38] Rather, they needed to be rendered inextricable from one another, dependent upon one another, a new whole. For Kittler,

> none of the traditional data streams, not meaningful words, eye contact, or psychological affects, could guarantee this reciprocal motivation of different sensory fields. One and only one phenomenon is capable of popping up simultaneously in text and score, in drama and music. All of us (except the Wagner experts) know what it is—breathing.[39]

Breath can be everywhere at once and all parts can breathe together like a circuit in parallel; in another sense, though, breath, is a kind of source material that is transformed as it passes through the circuit in series. Here breath takes the form of language: "The text is fed into the throat of a singer, the output of this throat is fed into an amplifier named orchestra, the output of this orchestra is fed into a light show, and the whole thing, finally, is fed into the nervous system of the audience."[40] Kittler's concern with the transmission of language across what he calls "discourse networks" merges here: as language traverses this chain of relations, it loses its semantic specificity while gaining in expressive power, sheer data, hitting the audience as pure sensory experience.[41] In either case, breathing is somehow a body-less task: it is description in a libretto; the aestheticization of breath in song. In its ideal state, breath traverses the entire network, it performs the task of the music-drama, of "Wagner's media technology."

Puppet shows are, in many ways, *Gesamtkunstwerke* in miniature: they synthesize multiple

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"Discrete/Continuous: Music and Media after Kittler," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 70, no.1 (2017): 228–233.

[38] Kittler, "World-Breath," 218.

[39] Ibid., 218.

[40] Ibid., 233.

[41] In German, "Aufschreibesysteme," more accurately translated as "writing-down systems." See Friedrich Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990; orig. 1985).

expressive forms into a single data-stream. And Kittler's model of breath is useful here: different orders of breath and breathing, the substance and action, its presence and its trace, animate the performance network, connecting its components, forging converse, contingent relations. But the performance network of marionette opera cannot be sustained by idealized breath, by breath that hardly registers visually, that barely impinges on or is betrayed by the body; rather puppetry needs live breath, breath that fails and coughs and splutters when bodies get in the way, while trying to recede, breath that is felt, heard, and seen.

II.

Gravity; or How Puppets Work

While the nature of breath in puppetry traverses material, philosophical, and representational planes, what determines a marionette's distinct relationship with gravity has a specific and concrete origin. The marionette, etymologically "little, little Mary," is a wooden, jointed puppet controlled from above. In his *Dictionary of Puppetry*, A. R. Philpott states that it is this top-down relationship between the puppeteer and the puppet that is distinctive about the marionette, rather than the specific control device or method.[42] The term "marionette" would include, then, the heavy armored puppets of the *Opera dei Pupi* in Sicily, which are controlled primarily by an iron rod fixed to the head, and the hybrid mechanism of both strings and rods of the south Indian tradition of *bommalatam* ("doll/puppet dance"), whereby the puppeteer wears a cane or iron hoop around their head, which is attached to the puppet by strings.[43] In German-speaking lands, the top-down relationship between a marionette and its puppeteer is engineered by the strings.

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[42] A. R. Philpott, *Dictionary of Puppetry* (London: Macdonald, 1969), 147.

[43] Kathy Foley and Dadi Pudumjee, "India," *World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts,* accessed May 13, 2020, https://wepa.unima.org/en/india/ .

A marionette can have any number of strings. The more complex and diverse the expressive vocabulary and bodily movements of the puppet, the greater the number of strings needed; and distinctive movements or gestures might require specialist strings. The standard arrangement involves somewhere between seven and nine strings, with one attached to each limb (at the hands and knees), two to the head (one either side), and strings for the shoulders and base of the "spine." Additional wires are often used for the head to enable more nuanced gestures, while in Berlin, the strings are supplemented with a rod or *Stab* attached to the head, which permits more direct, if unrefined, movement of the entire body. Much depends on the size of the theater and the puppets themselves. In Bamberg, the tiny marionettes need only four or five strings as the physical scope of their Lilliputian limbs is so drastically reduced. Modifications can still be made though. For example, the Dutchman receives extra strings in order to expand the range of his head movements, "to lower and raise his head so that he can look during the prayer of his monologue to the violet-lit sky."[44] In their bid to realize pirouettes, high leg kicks, and elegant splits, ballerina marionettes have many more strings, as many as 18 at Schloss Schönbrunn and 23 in Lindau.

An important facet of the strings is their role in dictating the distance between the marionette and its puppeteer. Although, at times, the Marionettenspieler will circumvent the Spielkreuz to manipulate the strings directly, the full length of the strings usually separates the performer backstage and the performing object onstage. Traditionally, a marionette's strings are about two meters in length. Not only do the strings enable the puppeteer to remain completely unseen, but viewed from the seats of a marionette theater, strings become almost invisible—often with the help of well-chosen scenery and subtle lighting techniques, which are similarly effective in

[44] "Der bleiche Mann ist die komplexeste Figur: versehen mit mehr Fäden als jede andere Figur, kann er den Kopf senken und heben, auf dass er im Gebet seines Monologs zum violett erleuchteten Himmel schauen kann." Frank Piontek, "*Der fliegende Holländer: Großes Theater auf kleine Bühne," Der Opernfreund*, January 28, 2018, accessed June 18, 2018, https://www.deropernfreund.de/bamberg-6.html .

casting life-giving shadows across wooden visages, conjuring the possibility of life in the imagination of the audience. Visible or not, the presence of strings is always felt: the strings of the marionette dictate the mode of its manipulation, which requires an unbroken connection between the puppet and the puppeteer throughout the performance, limiting the field of movement onstage. Moreover, the strings imbue the marionette with its peculiar sensibility.

Kleist's Pendula

In what is undoubtedly the most famous meditation on Marionettentheater, Heinrich von Kleist (1777–1811) puts the puppet's strings at the center of his attention. "Über das Marionettentheater" was published in the *Berliner Abendblätter* over four instalments in December 1810, shortly before Kleist's death. On the broadest level, the essay invokes the image of the marionette theater as an analogy for the nature of the human condition (after the Fall, according to Judeo-Christian tradition), perpetuating the metaphorical efficacy of the puppet in philosophical discussions. Within this topic, Kleist focuses his analytic lens on the seemingly paradoxical relationship between beauty and consciousness, reading the marionette's strings as the material instantiation of the line between artifice and intuition.[45] While I have touched on Kleist's essay already at various points, it is worth expanding this discussion here.

Kleist's essay unfolds in three parts, taking the form of a dialogue between the anonymous narrator (presumably Kleist himself) and Herr C., the recently appointed first dancer at the Opera in the town of M. Having observed Herr C. at the puppet theater several times, the narrator engages the dancer in conversation, for he is surprised that an "entertainment of the common people"

[45] Heinrich von Kleist, "The Puppet Theater," in *Heinrich von Kleist Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. David Constantine (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Corporation, Inc.: 1997), 411–16.

would appeal to such an accomplished performer. Herr C. explains that the marionette is a model performer, more graceful than a human dancer because its material constitution—especially its strings—means that the puppet lacks all inhibition and self-consciousness. Many have observed the implausibility of this hypothesis, in no small measure due to the conflicting details in Herr C.'s understanding of a marionette's mechanics.[46] These seeming incompatibilities, however, might be understood to give voice to the complexity of the performance network, its multi-perspectival nature and the fluctuation of agency.

In part one of the essay, Herr C. sings the praises of the marionette as a dancer of incomparable grace. Fundamentally, this grace emerges from the material and operative combination of the marionette's suspension from strings and the "feel" of the puppeteer. But Herr C. admits that there is a mysterious side to this interaction, a possible collapsing together of "souls." For the puppet to dance, so must the puppeteer, and this involves intricate and subtle manipulations of the hands. And yet, so says Herr C., the marionette is a fundamentally mechanical figure, whose operation is suited to the monotonous motions of an organ grinder. Somewhere between the two perhaps—the coterminous dancing souls and the rotating handle—Herr C. invokes the prosthetic leg, both an extension of the body and a mechanical instrument. In the face of all these

[46] For example, Helmut J. Schneider asks: "How can, to mention the most obvious point, a marionette, or a trained fencing bear for that matter, serve as the unsurpassed model of grace and utopian bliss? If anything, the wooden puppet with its clattering limbs, suspended from numerous strings and controlled by an invisible puppeteer ("Maschinist," as the text calls him), symbolizes the exact opposite of the redeeming values of beauty and freedom addressed in the aesthetic concept of graceful human body movements" (209). See Helmut J. Schneider, "Deconstruction of the Hermeneutical Body: Kleist and the Discourse of Classical Aesthetics" in *Body and Text in the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Veronic Kelly and Dorothea von Mücke (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1994), 209-26. Similarly, Paul de Man writes: "C's credentials guarantee from the start that he will have the last word, although the proposition he is made to defend—that mechanical puppets are more graceful than live dancers—is, at first sight, paradoxical to the point of absurdity" (270). See Paul De Man, "Aesthetic Formalization: Kleist's *Über das Marionettentheater*" in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984): 263-290.

contradictions, the narrator steps in to offer a complementary anecdote about the loss of innocence he observes when a young man sees himself in a mirror and instantly succumbs to physical inhibition. Herr C. concludes the conversation by describing his experience of fencing with a bear, no less. According to Herr C., the bear successfully parried each of his thrusts, and, what is more, did not flinch at his feints. For, in the words of Herr C., "in the same measure as reflection in the organic world becomes darker and feebler, grace there emerges in ever greater radiance and supremacy."[47]

Together, these stories suggest that self-knowledge—originating in the Fall from grace of Adam and Eve—impedes the gracefulness of bodily expression. It is only through an apparent lack or deficiency of consciousness that beauty, in the form of graceful movement of the highest order, can be achieved. The marionette (and the fencing bear) is cast as a counterpart to God, where a complete lack of self-consciousness comes full circle to reach complete and absolute self-knowledge and omnipotence rendering the question of consciousness entirely moot. The marionette, in other words, is posited as an ideal, akin to a god, a standard that humans will only achieve if they shed the consciousness they acquired in the Fall: "grace will be more purely present in the human frame that has either no consciousness or an infinite amount of it, which is to say either in a marionette or in a god." Devoid of self-knowledge or determination, the marionette can but only surrender to the will of the puppeteer, an idea that was especially appealing to Richard Wagner, that most notorious of nineteenth-century auteurs.

The Cliché of Control

Wagner betrays his envy of the puppeteer in "On Actors and Singers," in which he describes his

[47] Kleist, "On the Puppet Theater," 416.

search for the perfect mime, a label encompassing actor, singer, and conductor. The problem, according to Wagner, is that performers have too great a bearing on the outcome of a performance, to the extent that "a good performance will disguise the worthlessness of a dramatic work, whereas an excellent stage-poem can produce no effect when badly rendered by incompetent performers."[48] The consequence of this overinvestment in performers, Wagner complains, is that the artistic worth of a piece (or better, its designation as Art) relies upon those who bring it "back to life," rather than those who begot it in the first place.

As Eduard Hanslick puts it in his virulent "consideration" of Wagner's essay, "anyone with a nose can already discern in the murmuring of the breeze, the advent of the *Deus ex machina*."[49] Indeed, attributing the deficiencies of German theatre to the influence of foreign styles, Wagner calls for a return to history, not only that recorded in books, but also that which can be found on the street. There you will find Hanslick's *Deus ex machina*, Wagner's solution: the puppet theatre. Here, for Wagner, is the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in miniature:

> …it was from a chance encounter with one of these street-shows, that I lately gained a last ray of hope for the German Folk's productive spirit… Here was the improviser poet, manager, and actor all in one, and through his magic his poor dolls took life before me with all the truth of sempiternal native characters. He could grip us by the selfsame situation as often as he pleased, perpetually surprising with its each recurrence. And his action centered in a notable being, a being strung to the Daemonic, that German "Kasperl" who rises from the calmly gluttonous 'Hans Wurst'...[50]

The puppeteer is responsible for the poetry, the theatrical machinations, the direction, and the

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[48] Richard Wagner, "[On] Actors and Singers" in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, Vol. 5, trans. by William Ashton Ellis (London, Keagan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1895), 160.

[49] Eduard Hanslick, "Richard Wagner *On Actors and Singers*" in *The Musical World*, from the *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung*, December 7, 1872.

[50] Wagner, "[On] Actors and Singers," 181–2. Wagner invokes the image of the puppet in his earlier essay "Opera and Drama." Again, he is unconvinced by its dramatic potential. See Wagner, "Opera and Drama" in *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, Vol. 2, trans. William Ashton Ellis (London, Keagan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1900), 64-5.

acting. And it is only through this totalizing power that, according to Wagner, "his poor dolls" are brought to life; the objects themselves hold no potential, no life.

For the modernist theater director Gordon Craig, it is exactly this vacuity that makes the puppet a superior vehicle for dramatic art. In his 1908 manifesto, Craig advocates for the "Über-marionette": a hazy concept, admittedly, which seems to encapsulate both a theatrical state, a trance, for which the actor should aim, and the image of the "modern" puppet, before (and beyond) its degradation into popular culture. For Craig, an audience should not applaud a display of emotion, but the performance of a character, and therefore, an actor must achieve total control over their body, like that of a puppet. Unlike the actor, the puppet cannot help but perform its assigned character—this is important in the Marionettentheater as marionettes are rarely used interchangeably between roles.[51] Craig laments the situation of the theater, where "there has never been an actor who reached such a state of mechanical perfection that his body was *absolutely* the slave of his mind."[52]

Such expressions of adoration for the puppet have, of course, their own specific motivations, which are served well by reductive paradigms of puppetry. If the puppet functions culturally as a shorthand for submission and subservience, and the puppet master for omnipotence and maximal control, the strings of the marionette drastically complicate matters. Let us return once more to Kleist's puppet theater, this time focusing on the technical workings of the marionette. In idealizing the material realities of puppet performance to explore grander philosophical questions, Kleist's analysis betrays technical inconsistencies that have led many puppeteers to dismiss his ideas out of hand. Most problematic is the implied collapse between the refined dexterity demanded by a

[51] See Edward Gordon Craig, "The Actor and the Über-Marionette." *The Mask* 1, no. 2. (April 1908).

[52] Ibid.," 7.

marionette's strings and the unskilled turning of a barrel organ's handle. A more generous reading, however, might consider such contradictions as reflection of the puppet's double life, as performing object and as metaphor—or, indeed, caricature. For the complexities of practice are simplified when realized in the rhetorical domain. By overlaying interactive modes and interfaces, Kleist captures this conflict, and in so doing, evokes the nuanced relationship between mechanical control and aesthetic expression engendered by the marionette.

Herr C. explains that because the strings of a marionette are affixed only to certain joints, portions of each limb are left to the weight of gravity. They become pendula, following the curved line of movement dictated by momentum. Yet their strings also defy gravity: unlike the human dancer who must rest on the ground, for the marionette, the floor is a springboard. Their very life is in their strings. In this way, the marionette is both inert and vibrant, or, as Kleist would have it, unaffected—for affectation is determined by the forced displacement of the center of gravity. For Kleist, marionettes exhibit a profound gracefulness of movement that bespeaks their unequivocal lack of inhibition and a bodily disposition that always pushes at the limits of anthropomorphic expression.

Kleist's perplexing essay has attracted, unsurprisingly, considerable critical commentary. For some, the figure of the marionette becomes a template for argumentation.[53] Lucia Ruprecht and

[53] Paul de Man, for example, argues that the disarticulated body of the marionette is reflected in Kleist's formalist aesthetic. See De Man, "Aesthetic Formalization," 267. Stefani Engelstein notes Kleist's use of the term *Gliedermann* to refer to the marionette, which "positions them firmly within a dangerous constellation of discourses. Literally limb- or joint-man, the two primary meanings at the time of composition [of Kleist's essay]—a jointed model used by artists and a soldier—raise issues of both spectacle and injury" (230). See Stefani Engelstein, "Out on a Limb: Military Medicine, Heinrich von Kleist, and the Disarticulated Body", *German Studies Review* 23, no. 2 (2000): 225-44. Helmut J. Schneider explores the ways in which the related motifs of standing and falling permeate Kleist's rhetoric to produce "patterns of movement" ("Standing and Falling in Heinrich von Kleist," 502-18.) These metaphors of dance and movement conjure a physical body, and while literal repetition might be possible on the page, the embodied repetition required to establish rhetorical tropes produces fluctuations and improvisation: see Edgar Landgraf, "Improvisation, Agency, Autonomy: Heinrich von Kleist and the Modern Predicament" in *Improvisation as Art: Conceptual*

Chiara Cappelletto, however, move beyond the affective contour of rhetorical gestures to take Kleist's interpretative insights seriously. Ruprecht's historical approach attempts to contextualize Kleist's reflections on the marionette theater within his knowledge and experience of actual ballet, arguing that the uniqueness of Kleist's insights emerges in dialogue with live performance and experience.[54] For Cappelletto, Kleist's attention to the quality of a marionette's movement eschews the entrenched association of passivity with puppetry. Accordingly, man is "inherently incapable of realizing his medial place" in the world, while the puppet is an inherently intermedial entity: "the puppet offers not only the rhetorical force as a metaphor, but also the pathetic force as a performing object whose sphere of activity includes theater and playtime".[55] Thus, Cappelletto proposes the puppet as a "schema of action—not of posturing: it does not place itself in the order of "as if," of imitation, of reproduction, of fiction."[56] Rather, the puppet is a "potentiality of movement," the richness of which defies its subjunctive or mimetic status. In short, a puppet is not a prosthetic, an appendage, or an analog. For Cappelletto, a puppet is a theatrical entity, for whom movement is its "first agency."[57] And the puppet's movement is determined by its material.

Challenges, Historical Perspectives (New York and London: Continuum, 2011), 109-140. In his analysis of "Über das Marionettentheater" and Kleist's 1808 play *Der zerbrochene Krug*, for example, Block Jr. considers one of the central themes—the fine line between "artless grace and graceful artistry"—in relation to romantic theater practices, asking, for example "how does one appear graceful and free as one assume a role and 'enacts' a pre-existing script?" (66) See Edwin Block Jr., "Heinrich von Kleist: On the Puppet Theater," *The Broken Jug*, and Tensions in the Romantic Theatrical Paradigm," *European Romantic Review* 14 (2003): 65–79.

[54] See Lucia Ruprecht, "Heinrich von Kleist and the Mechanics of Grace" in *Dances of the Self in Heinrich on Kleist, E.T.A.Hoffmann and Heinrich Heine* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006), 19-55.

[55] Cappelletto, "The Puppet's Paradox," 325.

[56] Ibid., 327-8.

[57] Ibid., 335.

The Freedom of Strings

At the end of their strings, marionettes possess a unique kind of physicality. Strings imbue their puppet with buoyancy and lightness, the possibility of super-human movement, of bounding leaps and even flight. The Salzburg production of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *The Sound of Music* is something of a showcase for the imaginative potential of the marionette. The shows opens on a mountain peak represented by a swathe of undulating green fabric with Maria herself erupting from the summit. Her descent, you might imagine, is evocative of surfing, and she pivots around her feet, swinging her body at impossible angles. The show-stopping "Do, a deer" sees Maria and her posse of proteges quite literally swinging from the rafters in all sorts of wild configurations, while the choreography for "16, going on 17" revolves around a bicycle, on which Liesl and Rolf balance precariously. The finale of "The Lonely Goatherd" presents the entire Von Trapp family as puppeteers themselves, each one with their own miniature marionette.



Figure 4.2 Strings backstage at the Salzburger Marionettentheater

Choreography in opera is usually a different order of complexity, motivated by vocal relations more than musical qualities. Papageno's entrance aria often involves some kind of dance routine, reflective of the folkish character of the strophic number as much as the character of the birdcatcher himself; the Act I quintet of Tamino, Papageno, and the Three Ladies is often treated similarly.[58] In his analysis of the Salzburg production, for example, Nedbal argues that eighteenth-century theatrical practices and aesthetics are revived through the privileging of gesture and the careful synchronization of movement and music, observing the deployment of "emblematic movements that summarize the meaning of the text".[59] He describes the choreography of the opening couplet of the Queen's act II aria ("Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen/Tod und Verzweiflung flammet um mich her!") thus:

> the puppeteer reflects [the Queen's focus on herself] by turning the puppet towards the audience, as if the Queen is staring into the distance in her self-obsessed rage. The turn is the only movement the puppet performs: it remains static for the rest of the couplet, as would a singer in the opera seria tradition.[60]

Nedbal's suggestion that the marionette is "static" for the remainder of the couple undermines its essential means of movement. Even in numbers such as Tamino's "Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön" for example, when the choreography across different Marionettentheater is consistently limited to minimal arm gestures and manipulations of the head, Tamino's feet, and sometimes knees, planted firmly on the stage, there are no moments of immobility. For marionettes are never really

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[58] The productions at Schloss Schönbrunn and the Preußches Marionettentheater feature particularly animated performances by Papageno, his rhythmic movements often reinforced by audible taps of his feet on the stage floor.

[59] Martin Nedbal, "Live Marionettes and Divas on the Strings: *Die Zauberflöte*'s Interactions with Puppet Theater." *The Opera Quarterly* 28, no. 1-2 (2012), 26. It seems that Nedbal's observations are based on the 1994 film production, rather than the updated production currently in repertory at the theater.

[60] Ibid., 26.

static, they are always doing *something*: they are hanging from their strings.

Strings make an aesthetic impact of their own due to their inherent materiality, without the marionette necessarily *doing* anything. When a marionette hangs from the bridge—as opposed to resting on the stage—the vitality of their strings is most readily apparent: the strings engender a spontaneity of movement that reads as improvised, a far cry from the aforementioned rhetoric of intense control (or lack thereof). Concerning the challenges of more densely choreographed action versus subtler gestures, Christine suggests that it all comes down to the notion of "feel".[61] The marionette artist—much like the musician, an analogy invoked by the puppetering community at large—must feel the music in the absolute present; in other words, they must experience the music as if they are creating it without false anticipation or delayed reaction; they must be the creators of the music. And so too must be the marionettes. A linear conception of the performance network would fail here; the circuit must be understood to be *not* in series, but in parallel: Marionettenspieler do not breathe life *into* the puppet, but rather breathe life *with* the puppet. In this sense, and through the vibrancy of its strings, the marionette is both dangly appendage to and vitally independent from the Marionettenspieler, which, to the audience, reads as authorial, in the moment.

Stillness in the marionette theater is, in fact, particularly difficult to achieve as the puppeteer must constantly work against the vibrant of the puppet's strings. In *Les contes d'Hoffmann,* Salzburg's Philippe Brunner plays the villains (Coppélius, Dr. Miracle, and Dappertutto), all of whom betray a quite unnerving composure, a distinctive slowness. This villainous lento is exemplified by Dappertutto's complete on-the-spot revolution and Dr. Miracle's hypnosis of Crespel in the third act. In this latter example, the villain holds his arms out straight in front of him, absolutely still, as Crespel's body contorts, collapses, revives and collapses once more, the contrast in bodily

[61] Christine Hierzer-Riedler, Conversations with the author, Vienna, Austria, June 2016.

dispositions reinforcing the performance of control, both behind-the-scenes and within the narrative. Slower tempi, scenes of stillness, and moments of repose are, according to Brunner, critical to the life of the puppet. To paraphrase Brunner, it is better to do too little than too much when it comes to playing marionettes. For the marionette (and the puppet writ large) comes into being through both material *and* temporal relations. It takes time for the puppet to transmit emotional energy to the audience, and for an audience to process the data and reciprocate with their own emotional energy, "seeing" life into the puppet, breathing with and through it.[62]

Indeed, the strings are not unidirectional, transmitting energy only down from the bridge to the puppet onstage; the weight of the puppet at the end of the strings, the physical disposition that is built directly into its body, succumbs to and resists the directions of the puppeteer variously. Strings are supple. A string can be wound up in a spiral or coiled around a peg; it can bend around corners and trace any number of paths. It is this flexibility of movement that imbues the puppet with a quality of spontaneity, a sense of nervous anticipation about what will happen next. Strings are connectors also: through knotting they can join things, and themselves, together. Knots are importantly different to what anthropologist Tim Ingold identifies as the "dominant metaphors" of joining, namely "block, chain, and container."[63] According to Ingold, these images "lead us to imagine a world comprised of rigid elements (or blocks) that are linked externally (or en*chained)* side-to-side or end-to-end," a world that equates "joining with *articulation*."[64] In a knot, by contrast, the joining occurs on the inside and in the midst of things, "while their ends are on the loose, rooting for other lines to tangle with."[65] In the marionette theater, knots are the very source of life, joining

[62] Philippe Brunner, Conversation with the author via Skype, June 27, 2018.

[63] Tim Ingold, *The Life of Lines* (London: Routledge, 2015), 22.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

wood to eyelet to string; without them, the marionette would have no connection to their puppeteer, a significant part of their life-source.

While the length of the strings can amplify their fluidity, it can also exacerbate the risk of unwanted knotting and entanglement. When the strings of a marionette become entwined, the life-giving vibrancy of the strings is instantly drained and the marionette stops breathing; or perhaps it truly comes to life. Puppeteer and scholar John Bell describes the sense of

> playing with a certain *lack* of control, and experimenting with the different possibilities of the puppet while constantly being aware of how the puppet's structure determines movement. In this process, accidental moves and unforeseen possibilities are key, because in those moments the desires of the object can be discerned.[66]

The agency of the object comes to the fore, most commonly, when things go "wrong," when the strings become entangled and limbs end up sticking out at awkward angles. Bell suggests otherwise. Through his lens, the strings ensure that the marionette's potentiality always extends beyond the control of the puppeteer. As they can never know for absolute certain what the marionette might do, how they might respond to their manipulation of the Spielkreuz, the Marionettenspieler must engage in a reciprocal relationship with their puppet, one which produces an aesthetic of improvisation and possibility.

III.

Giants; or the Questions of Scale

As we reach the third of our puppet-musical "elements," let us take stock. In musical terms, we might consider the breath as the raw material, as notes on the page, as a sweep of a bow, the input, both symbolic and physical. With "gravity," we progress a conceptual step, molding raw material into

[66] John Bell, "Playing with a lack of control" in *The Puppet Show*, curated by Ingrid Schaffner and Carin Kuoni (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008), 17, my emphasis. It is worth noting that Bell isn't discussing stringed puppets specifically--what's (accidentally) possible depends on the kind of puppet.

a structure. As the force of attraction that holds objects in place, the idea of gravity relates to the organization of musical material. Giants—and their inverse, miniatures—are creatures of relativity. Musically speaking, then, "giants" concern the manipulation of musical material through techniques of augmentation and diminution, making bigger and making smaller. Expanded to encompass music and puppetry, "breath" concerns the substance of puppet-musical encounter, the material and motion that unifies the two, "gravity" the relationships (structural, choreographic) between music and puppetry, and "giants," fundamental questions of perspective and the scalic effects. In this section, we will consider the ways in which the marionette theater plays with perception and correlation in the creation of operatic vistas and the construction of operatic voices.

A Density of Detail

When we think of puppets, we tend to think small. Puppets inhabit worlds of reduced dimensions, sometimes delicate, at other times crude, occasionally claustrophobic. Smallness in itself, as author Steven Millhauser describes, "compels no necessary wonder."[67] What stimulates marvel is the reduction of authentic dimensions, a "discrepancy" in size as a "form of distortion."[68] In other words, a familiar thing made strange, in this case, made miniature. Some puppets are, indeed, miniatures, minute replicas of a much larger original. Marionettes are such creatures. The wonder of the miniature resides in the perseveration of detail, such that its density increases, or makes things "verbose" to echo Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space.*[69] Observing the patience and skill of the miniaturists of the Middle Ages, Bachelard declares that the "miniature is easier to tell than to do,"

[67] Steven Millhauser, "The Fascination of the Miniature," *Grand Street,* 2, no.4 (1983), 128.

[68] Ibid., 129.

[69] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 160.

an idea expanded by literary critic and poet Susan Stewart in her discussion of miniature books and the embodied feats such detail signifies.[70] Indeed, the detail of the miniature is graspable, literally holdable, yet dissolves into the invisible realm.

We imagine puppets to be controlled to varying degrees by their full-human-size operators from behind-the-scenes. The operators, however, are not always hidden; in some traditions, puppeteers appear, either in full-view or in disguise, alongside their diminutive companions. And even when the animators are screened from view during the performance, there is often a big reveal at the end: puppets and their puppeteers next to one another. And all of a sudden, we are in the presence of giants. In the marionette theater, this moment reinforces the puppets as inhabitants of their own world, one where they are suitably sized to fit their environment, and the puppeteers as gigantic outsiders, too big for the world of the stage.

In other instances, companies employ puppets that are giants themselves. Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theater, for example, promotes activism through puppetry, repurposing everyday objects and discarded materials as instruments of puppet representation. Its puppet parades feature unwieldy yet awe-inspiring figures, waving over the heads of the community troupe of puppeteers, enveloping them in their shadow. Phelim McDermott's 2007 production of *Satyagraha* (English National Opera/Metropolitan Opera) features all sorts of puppets, many of which are gigantic in scale. Some subsume their puppeteers within papier maché skins; others roam around mid-air, held aloft by their puppeteers on stilts. In contrast to these ad hoc puppets, the theatrical group Royal de Luxe, based in Nantes, France, specialize in giant marionettes. The height of several stories, these gargantuan puppets hang from cranes. Like a colony of worker arts, numerous puppeteers crawl all over the bodies of their wards, manipulating isolated parts to make a whole.

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[70] Ibid., 159. See Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collections* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 37–69.

Giants are, in a way, the opposite of miniatures, an enlargement of original dimensions. Through gigantification, the density of details can reduce, if nothing new comes to light, or, as the microphone made audible the footfall of ants, elusive details might be revealed.[71] Gigantification also, as Millhauser observes, "changes the shape of original detail. The object has ceased to be itself, by becoming more of itself."[72] Stewart observes how the hand holding the miniature is "no longer in proportion with its world; instead our hand becomes a form of undifferentiated landscape, the body a kind of background."[73] The hand, in its encounter with the miniature thing, is suddenly gigantic, extending beyond the horizon of comprehension; no longer a hand, it is an infinite, unknowable mass. And as "unknowledge," the gigantic is experiential, a sensation as opposed to an idea. Stewart sums up the distinction thus: "Whereas the miniature represents closure, interiority, the domestic, and the overly cultural, the gigantic represents infinity, exteriority, the public, and the overly natural."[74]

Puppets in Perspective

A giant puppet shrinks its puppeteer; it transforms her from a god, an all-powerful overseer, into a homunculus, the brain of the operation. The reverse is also true, of course: as noted above, from the perspective of the miniature puppet, puppeteers are always gigantic. So too are the audience members. There is, however, a crucial distance between the world of the puppet and the world of the audience—and in the case of the marionette theater, between the puppet onstage and the

[71] Abbate, "Sound Object Lessons," 808-10.

[72] Millhauser, "The Fascination of the Miniature," 130.

[73] Stewart, *On Longing*, 70.

[74] Ibid., 70.

unseen puppeteer also—across which the sensitivity of such relations of scale cannot traverse. If the marionette theater is a miniature world, the human world around it is not gigantic, but the authentic source of miniaturization. Moreover, this source might itself be predicated on a specific time, place, and perspective: for the marionette theater recreates in material terms the experience of watching human performance from afar, from the very back of the opera house, "from the gods," as they say. From this distance, faces, let alone mouths, are barely visible; even physical gestures can be blurry. The audience must trust, to some extent, that the voice they hear belongs to the body on stage—and of course, that is not always the case.[75] The marionette theater brings this lack of visual clarity into focus, so to speak, and challenges the spectator to unite body and voice. In this sense, the puppets do not necessarily appear "in miniature," because they do not present a comparative perspective. Rather, they materialize a particular one.

Put simply, there is no intrinsic quality of giganticism or miniaturization: for the condition (or process) to be felt, it is the relationship that needs to be put on display, that between the referent and the scaled correspondent. A well-observed phenomenon affirms this point. Encounters with puppets backstage often elicit surprise insofar as they invariably appear much smaller than they do onstage. Schloss Schönbrunn's Christine suggests that this mental distortion is more of an exaggeration of the relationships onstage than a uniform enlargement.[76] In other words, the taller marionettes appear taller onstage and the smaller marionettes appear to be smaller. The ratio of internal puppet relations is stretched. One explanation is that the coherence of the world within the theatrical frame creates an "optical illusion."[77] If everything within that parameter—figures, props,

[75] As is the case when voices are heard from offstage, for example.

[76] Christine Hierzer-Riedler, Conversation with the author, Vienna, Austria, June 18, 2016.

[77] "Die Bühnenbauten und sämtliche Requisiten sind der Größe der Puppen angepasst. Da das Auge keine Vergleichsmöglichkeiten hat, unterliegt der Zuschauer einer optischen Täuschung. Würde man beispielsweise eine Wasserflasche auf die Bühne stellen, wären die wahren Größenverhältnisse

scenery—is scaled consistently, the world on show can grow—proportionally or relationally—in the mind of the viewer.[78] Because the audience resides in a different world to that of the puppets, because they are spectators of another world separate to their own, there is no point of comparison. And the true size of puppets can only really be felt from that perspective.

Too, Too Small

Kenneth Gross uses the formulation "little big" to capture the ambiguity of scale enacted by the puppet theater, the sense that size fluctuates depending not only on perspective, but also on questions of style, story, and poetics.[79] He observes that:

> puppet worlds are rarely perfect miniatures, keeping a consistent, scientific, or dollhouse-like reduction of scale. If puppet stages are diagrams of the real, they are dramatic and idiosyncratic diagrams; proportion and number are there subject to other laws. The small puppets may not be shrunken wholes, but fractions or fragments of some larger object that take the place of that object—a finger, a head, or a nose. And then the shrinking down of human form in the puppet can lead to a total cutting free of scale and relation.[80]

Such loosening of scalic restraints gives rise to unique puppetical possibilities within the domain of anthropomorphic expression—an eavesdropping character might have disproportionally large ears, while a miserly one has tiny hands, for instance—as well as different conceptions of the puppet theater.

Marionette theater is not only a world of humanoid puppets, however. *Pùnkitititi! (Breakfast*

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schnell klar." "The stage structures and all props are adapted to the size of the dolls. Since the eye has no possibilities of comparison, the viewer is subject to an optical illusion. If, for example, a water bottle were placed on the stage, the true proportions would quickly become clear." Lindauer Marionettenoper Program Booklet.

[78] Kenneth Gross makes this observation in *Puppet,* 40.

[79] Ibid., 39–50.

[80] Ibid., 42.

Included), the most recent addition to the repertoire at the Salzburg Marionette Theater, for example, sees hat stands and suitcases, kettles and vases all appear to move independently at the end of their strings. As the entire stage picture comes to life, the puppet theater sheds its bond to that of the human. Indeed, for Henryk Jurkowski, the puppet theater sees the emancipation of the plastic element within so-called actors' theater, a fundamentally synthetic art form.[81] The plasticity of the puppet theater, Jurkowski suggests, proposes puppetry as the language of fine art, but at different times and in different places, the puppet theater has been a "loyal copy and substitute" of the actors' theater and the puppet itself as a version of the human.[82] But the casting of characters in plastic terms ensures that the puppet is of a completely different order to the human; the puppet does not replace, but "opposes the human."[83] The puppet theater's "natural function," therefore, is primarily as a "vehicle of visual art".[84]

In the tiny world of the Bamberger Marionettentheater, the synthetic and the plastic potential of the puppet theater are fused through miniaturization. As the founder Klaus Loose observes of the 17cm tall Bamberg marionettes:

> Like all puppets, they lack entirely the possibility of physical expression compared to humans, and their limits are also narrowly drawn in comparison to Kleist's Gliedermann [articulated or jointed man] and his light-footed colleagues (just think of the wonderfully agile figures on the Salzburg marionette stage). Their gestures are very economical, they have to be economical, so as not to arouse ridicule. It is not possible to get their legs up and running like larger marionettes—they move across the stage in a way one might describe as 'gliding' or 'scurrying.'[85]

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[81] Henryk Jurkowski, *Aspects of the Puppet Theater*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 76.

[82] Ibid., 78.

[83] Ibid., 84.

[84] Ibid., 80.

[85] Klaus Loose, *Das Bamberger Marionettentheater…es war wie der Fund einer blauen Mauritius* (Bamberg: Heinrichs-Verlag GmbH, 1997, 2005), 9.

No puppet has the full range of human movement: they have their own range of movement, sometimes pushing beyond human capacities à la Kleist, at others withdrawing from them. Much depends on their size. The Bamberg marionettes are miniatures, certainly, but they are so small, they hit the wall of functionality. This can be interpreted in two ways: om the one hand, while the body is fully miniaturized, its range of movement is stopped short by those very reduced dimensions of the body. Movement, in this case, is limited rather than miniaturized. On the other hand, the Bamberg marionettes have undergone a complete miniaturization: not only is their physical being a shrunken version of the human body, but their physical vocabulary is correspondingly reduced. As a result, the substance of their performance is shifted from the subtleties of body language to holistic bodily movements, adding texture and contour to the scenes on display. As we shall see, the puppets are really components of the real source of miniaturization: namely, the scenes themselves.

Between Performance and Exhibition

Bamberg's antique theater is a kind of hybrid, something "between paper theatre and the wandering marionette theater."[86] The paper theatre rose in popularity during the Biedermeier period. Each theatre began its life as a craft kit, with two-dimensional scaffolding, scenery, and performers all laid out flat in a box. The designs were often based on operatic enterprises of the time (*Der Freischütz* was a particular favorite amongst collectors) and once constructed—and, for the avid theatre-builder, personalized with extra decorations and prop—the theatres were sites of miniature, home-spun opera.

Like the paper theater, the Bamberger Marionettentheater attempts to recreate historical productions, which means that the marionettes are rather subservient to the overall stage picture.

[86] Ibid., 12.

Because the marionettes do not need a bridge, the stage itself is distinguished by its "lanes" [*Gassen*] (see Fig. 4.3).[87] Either side of each lane—stage left and stage right—holds a narrow decorative panel, some of which are connected across the top to form an arch. As the "lanes" build up, not only are the side views of the stage obscured from point of the view of the audience—allowing the Marionettenspieler to get on with the task in hand unseen—but the audience's perspective is channeled deep into the *mise-en-scène*.[88]

The gaps between the lanes have been repurposed to an additional end: to create chorus scenes (see Fig. 4.4). Just two puppeteers and a lighting technician perform *Der fliegende Holländer*, so other ingenious technique as used to contrive choruses. Attached to planks that slide into the "alleys" are miniature statues of spinning girls and sailors. These statues can twist in their spots—presumably quite rhythmically, although not here. Chorus-cum-scenery, the manipulations of these figures, according to the current principal Marionettenspieler, Maira Sebald, helped create the illusion of singing. The twists, in other words, are breaths, signs of life injected by the music, the grounded equivalent to the vibrancy injected by the hanging strings of the main characters. Together, the marionettes and the statues, create stage pictures, *tableaux vivants*, which shimmer with the life of the strings and the energy of the twists—enlivened, we might say, but not acted.

As Bernhard Leismüller describes it, the theatre at Bamberg is beautiful, "but nothing happens" [*aber nichts passiert*].[89] The sense of "nothing happening" works on multiple planes: it is not only a question of stillness, but also, as we have seen, slowness. Echoing Brunner's remarks, the American marionette artist Philip Huber suggests that still movements are often more powerful than

[87] Ibid., 14.

[88] Ibid., 14.

[89] Bernhard Liesmüller, Conversation with the author, Lindau, Germany, October 2, 2017.



Figures 4.3 The "lanes" and backdrop of the Bamberger Marionettentheater



Figures 4.4 The chorus of the "lanes" of the Bamberger Marionettentheater

the action movements.[90] With the decrease in density of activity, the vital materiality of the strings can be felt, and time and space are opened up for the mental participation of the spectator. In this regard, the performance is invisible.

But in reality, the performance is just out of sight, backstage—and again, it might not look like much is happening. This is more a performance of endurance than gymnastics. After a performance of *Der fliegende Holländer*, Sebald commented on the physical strain of the performance.[91] For the most minute of movements require the utmost delicacy. Stewart observes a distinction between a miniature book and miniature writing. The wonder of micrographia lies not in the image it produces, but in the bodily discipline or skill required to produce it:

> Minute writing experiments with the limits of bodily skill in writing: the remarkableness of minute writing depends upon the contrast between the physical and abstract features of the mark. Nearly invisible, the mark continues to signify; it is a signification which is increased rather than diminished by its minuteness.[92]

The gestures of the Bamberg marionettes can be too small to see clearly, almost invisible in fact. The potential invisibility of these gestures signposts two other nodes of supposed invisibility: the unseen puppeteers and the "double vision" of the audience, where the performance takes place, ultimately, in their imagination. Even the most minute of gestures, however, anchor the music in the visible domain. The very presence of the puppets and their (however limited) movement bring the musicians of the recording back to life, a vibrant visualization of historical performance. The gestures of the marionettes might be so small at times as to be quite difficult to discern, but the inherent vibrancy of the strings in a constant. At the Bamberger Marionettentheater, then, we might

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[90] Philip Huber, "Choreographing for Variety Marionettes" Workshop, Puppeteers for America Festival 2017, St Paul, MN, July 19, 2017. Huber suggests that what's important is that the audience can always tell that the brain of the puppet is working. The idea that marionettes should move constantly is a fallacy.

[91] Maria Sebald, Email correspondence with the author, June 12, 2018.

[92] Stewart, *On Longing,* 38.

talk not so much of performance, but of exhibition.

Up Close and Human

While small puppets need not be shrunken wholes, giants need not to be enlarged ones. A giant comes into being when the scaled world is invaded by outsized bodies or objects. At Schloss Schönbrunn, wine is delivered to Papageno by a giant hand. The hand is human, the gloved appendage of one of the puppeteers, reaching down from the bridge. Entering into the world of the marionettes on stage, all scaled proportionally, the arm appears, to quote Gross, "shockingly outsized."[93] Such detachment of parts from their organic whole can render them new wholes, as puppets in and of themselves.[94] If no longer a discreet element of a human-sized body—from the perspective of the marionette, a part of a giant—the arm might be recalibrated to fit within the scalic dimensions of Papageno's world. Suddenly it can be perceived as a kind of delivery vehicle, a pneumatic lever, fit for a puppet.

There is, however, a sure-fire way to create giants in the marionette theater: by putting human actors on the stage. This is something of a trademark at the Salzburger Marionettentheater. In *The Sound of Music*, the Mother Abbess is played by one of the puppeteers in costume. The marionette Maria seeks guidance from the Abbess, who sits calmly at the side of the stage, breaking the bounds of the proscenium. When the Abbess delivers her advice in "Climb Every Mountain," she, mirroring the capacity of her puppet interlocutor, does not herself sing, nor does she lip-sync or open her mouth in anyway. But unlike the marionette, whose lips are permanently frozen shut, the giant Abbess withholds an action of which (we assume) she is, at least to some degree, capable.

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[93] Gross, *Puppet*, 41.

[94] On the potential of a hand to become a puppet, see Sergei Obtraztsov, *My Profession* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Fredonia Books, 2001), 184-91.

The Mother Abbess, then, is not a human actor encroaching on the world of the marionettes, but a gigantic marionette, an explosion of proportional representation. On one level, the Abbess' gigantic presence underlines, quite straightforwardly, her wisdom and elevated status within the structure of the convent. As a meta-theaterical experiment, however, her larger-than-life performance provides an important mirror to that of the marionettes who populate her world. Indeed, this juxtaposition of different non-singing "singing" performers highlights the breadth of expressive possibilities available to the marionette. The marionette Maria, perfectly at home in the hills, can bend and sway with their undulations; she can fly and float, swing and settle; she can even retreat into the distance with smaller replicas of herself.[95] Maria is, in short, a rounded, multi-faceted character, in spite and because of her miniaturized dimensions. The Abbess can do little more than sit.

Human actors take on multiple roles in Salzburg's abridged version of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Two actors, Christiani Wetter and Tim Oberließen, perform alongside a cast of marionettes. The performance takes place in a modified theater: the apron is extended further beyond the proscenium and the front of the stage is stepped to give the actors easy access.[96] These spatial alterations help to delineate the performative roles of the actors. First, they fulfil the function of narrators, explicating missing chunks of the drama, often with the addition of witty contemporary updates. Although narrations are not delivered exclusively from the lower ground in front of the stage, the fact that the frame of the performance encompasses offstage, or "extra diegetic," space makes explicit the multiple layers of theatrical presentation. Indeed, this production's reliance on narration might be interpreted as an exaggeration of Wagner's own propensity towards

[95] Productions at Salzburg and Lindau use this technique quite extensively: they use varying sizes of the same figure to create the illusion of depth/distance.

[96] I have not been able to attend a live performance of this production. These observations are based on the DVD recording produced in 2012.

the dramatic device.[97]

Second, the actors provide speaking voices for the marionettes when they are not singing. As the tetralogy was reduced to a fraction of its original length, its story had to be told more quickly than singing and music allows. Part of the process of adaptation involved replacing musical scenes with spoken ones, for which quotations from and paraphrases of the libretto were stitched together. This reduced version of the opera creates an at times disorienting acoustic experience. The voices of certain characters are comprised of two originals: that of the recorded singer captured on the 1964 Decca recording by Georg Solti; and the speaking voice of the live actor. Not only must the marionette embody both voice—one present, the other electronically mediated, one unencumbered by non-verbal information, the other entwined with an orchestra—but the audience must adapt quickly to the acoustic discrepancies in source, quality, and volume this disaggregation of character and voice presents. The dynamic between marionettes and actors proposed here is quite different to that of Maria and the Mother Abbess. Where the Abbess is tantamount to a magnification of the marionettes around her, the actors here are co-joined with the marionettes through their voices.

In their third role as performers of specific parts, however, the actors in *The Ring* do replicate the behavior of the Mother Abbess, inhabiting the voice of the recorded singer through gesture. Most predictably, the actors play the giants, Fafner and Fasolt see Fig. 4.5). They also play Hunding, Sieglinde's husband, Gunther, the King of the Gibichungs, and his sister, Gutrune. Such casting decisions bring out any latent comedy in the opera—or perhaps, more accurately, the make-believe quality of the story—while also working pragmatically to varying degrees. The giants, of course, are actually giants when performed by human actors on a marionette stage. Clad in utility coveralls and eye masks, the builders Fafner and Fasolt can literally pick Freia up with one hand and

[97] For a recent discussion of Wagner's attraction to narrative, see Nina Penner, *Storytelling in Opera and Musical Theater* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020), 44–49.

carry her off as ransom. As mortals, Hunding and the Gibichungs are also suited to human representation, while their particular interactions with marionette characters work variously to reinforce or undercut dramatic and meta-theatrical constructs of power and agency. The predetermined outcome of the dual between Hunding and Siegmund, for example, is made more acutely palpable through the size differential of the characters; and so, when Brünnhilde intervenes, the extent of her own power, her act of defiance, is amplified.



Figure 4.5 Giant negotiations in the Salzburger Marionettentheater

When Siegfried, Brünnhilde, Gunther and Gutrune become embroiled in a web of love potions and confusion, there is not only an awkwardness—somewhere between grotesque and comic—in the human-puppet "romantic" pairings, but the interactions between the characters require constant recalibration as the human actors shift from narrating the story to gesturing Gibichungs to vocalizing heroic marionettes.[98] When Siegfried colludes with Gunther (a shot in close-up), their

[98] The camerawork both helps and hinders the forging of associations between body and voice.

bodily differences are cast in relief. And yet, the consistency of the recording, the gestural similarities of both characters (Siegfried copies Gunther's gestures: a panning arm across the horizon; both hands circling as though sizing up a ball) and the physical closeness of their bodies (Siegfried stands on Gunther's shoulders and sits on his knee) work to elide any disparity between their voice-body connections: both and either are possible.

In the end, we come full circle: the actor Oberließen must play Siegfried disguised as Gunther. To achieve this, he appears on stage as a giant marionette, replete with black strings, and a Post-it note stuck to his forehead with "tarn kappe" scrawled across it. As he confronts Brünnhilde, Siegfried-as-Gunther's movements are initially stiff and stylized, and he holds his hands in a fixed position, two fingers straight and rigid, the rest in a fist. Gradually, his movements become bigger and looser as he fights Brünnhilde for the ring. Although his gestures are not dissimilar to those of Brünnhilde as she tries to escape his clutches, performed by larger limbs, subtlety and specificity evaporates. This is reverse effect of miniaturization: scaled up, gestures lose definition.

Wagnerian Ideals?

It is well-known that Wagner was repeatedly disappointed by the realities of performance. In an oft-cited quotation from the diary of Cosima Wagner, he came up with an alternative solution to the problem of inadequate performers when confronted with the prospect of staging *Parsifal*—namely, entirely invisible performances:

> Oh, I hate the thought of all those costumes and grease paint! When I think that characters like Kundry will now have to be dressed up, those dreadful artists' balls immediately spring to my mind. Having created the invisible orchestra, I now feel like inventing the invisible theatre![99]

[99] Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack (eds.), *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, 1878-1883, trans. Geoffrey Skelton (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 23 September 1878; 2: 154.

Little more than a throwaway remark, this comment underscores what has become received wisdom regarding the trajectory of Wagner's aesthetic project: over the course of Wagner's *oeuvre*, the focus of the drama progresses from mimetic to metaphysical; from earthly to transcendental; or, using the language Wagner invokes above, from the visible to the *in*visible.

The invisible orchestra together with the darkened auditorium at Bayreuth are the most famous instantiations of what Theodor W. Adorno famously posited as phantasmagorical, as technologies for occluding the means of theatrical production.[100] Musically, Adorno suggests, phantasmagorical effects are achieved through abundant chromaticism, diminution, and orchestral color, where the relationship between the source and its sound is loosened through timbral alchemy. These were all ways that the invisible substance of sound might shed—or at least be distanced from—its material casing.

Real phantasmagoria were magic lantern shows featuring ghoulish and horrifying figures that would appear to the audience as if from nowhere, and they were cut from the same cloth as shadow puppet shows. Both were popular forms of entertainment, performed by travelling showmen, and, to different degrees, the effects of both are predicated on the concealment of the means of production, the projection devices and the puppeteer. But unlike phantasmagoria, where the machinery creating the spectacle obfuscates the role of the manipulator behind-the-scenes, the direct contact between the puppet and the puppeteer, the performer onstage and the performer backstage, always imbues the performance with the humanity of production. Certain kinds of puppetry, the marionette theater amongst them, engender both visible and invisible modes of performance simultaneously: the performances behind-the-scenes and in the imagination of the spectators; disembodied voices; the material presence of the puppet.

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[100] See Theodor W. Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone. (London and New York: Verso, 2005).

As we have seen, the puppet theater appealed to Wagner, less because of the potential for the perceived autonomy of the spectacle and more because of the puppeteer's overarching control of the entire performance. In his attempts to exercise total control and give his imagined worlds a wrinkle-free exterior, Wagner introduced all sorts of unprecedented technologies for performance, sometimes on an industrial scale.[101] But time and again, such technologies would disclose their presence, failing to live up to Wagner's vast theatrical illusion. Perhaps the Salzburger Marionettentheater's *Ring* bridges the gap between the idealized versions of phantasmagoria and the puppet show, between total illusion and total control. In casting human performers alongside wooden ones, certain aspects of Wagner's vision are represented in straight-forwardly material terms: the giants are actually giants, for instance. But manipulations of scale create frictions too: gestures become overwhelmingly visible, for instance, or tantalizingly obscured, larger-than-life or too small to believe in. When wooden and fleshy bodies are put side-by-side onstage, their contrasting physical dispositions are thrown into relief, while the challenge for the spectator of uniting bodies onstage with the recorded voices on the sound system multiply exponentially. Ultimately, all these tensions reassert the independence and mutual implication of the performance's expressive channels. With the workings of theatrical production laid bare, the illusion can, in fact, be realized to its fullest extent.

IV.

Death; or Objects, Accidents, and Running Out of Breath

If breathing is a struggle for any puppet, dying, by contrast, is easy. And a dead puppet is also

[101] For example, Wagner's abundant use of steam in *The Ring* brought about the installation of "two locomotive boilers in a machine house near the theatre, which delivered water vapor to a repository in the substage" (192). See Gundula Kreuzer, "*Wagner-Dampf*: Steam in *Der Ring der Nibelungen* and Operatic Production," *The Opera Quarterly* 27, no. 2–3 (2012): 179–218.

profoundly real. While the life of the puppet emerges intermittently through the elaborations of performance, a magical enlivening of lifeless matter, the death of the puppet is a constant, a kind of non-performance, the very material being of the puppet. Death scenes, then, are a double-edged sword for the puppet. On the one hand, the default state of the puppet is death, so dying comes quite naturally. On the other, the death of a puppet equates to a profound failure of the performance network. According to the phenomenological contract of puppetry proposed here, there is no puppet without a functioning network. A dead puppet is, in a sense, not a puppet, although strictly this depends on the nature of the puppet and the style of puppetry.

Dying For Real

Let us consider an example: the death of Violetta at the end of Verdi's *La traviata*. Based on the play *La Dame aux camélias* by Alexandre Duma *fils*, this opera of 1853 is credited in opera historiography with heralding a new concept of operatic realism.[102] This is hardly the kind of opera one usually sees on the stage of the puppet theater. The Lindauer Marionettenoper's synopsis of the opera, however, brings out potential affinities with puppetry:

> Three people. Three lifestyles. The superficial world of high society. Violetta Valery. The naive world of romantic love. Alfredo Germont. The solid world of the middle classes. Giorgio Germont. Three people, who shed their skin, discover themselves anew. Three people, who manage to break through the surface. Three people, who open themselves up, make themselves vulnerable. Alfredo has nothing to lose, because he is young. Violetta has nothing to lose, because she is terminally ill. The father has everything to lose. His reputation, his son, the happiness of his daughter. Yet he also opens himself up. He sees the person behind the courtesan Violetta and recognizes the superficiality of his own bourgeois morality.[103]

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[102] For a discussion of the ways in which music might be seen to participate in *La Traviata*'s sense of realism, see Roger Parker, "Verdi and *La Traviata*: Two Routes to Realism," in *La Traviata Giuseppe Verdi*, series ed. Gary Kahn (Surrey: Alma Classics Ltd, 2013), 25–37.

[103] "La Traviata," *Lindauer Marionettenoper,* accessed May 9, 2020, https://www.marionettenoper.de/repertoire/la-traviata/ .

This description juxtaposes the opera's three central characters in such a way that the puppet, with its unique capacity for precise material replication and nuance, might appear, rather counter-intuitively, the perfect performer for these roles. Moreover, the evocation of superficiality and surface appearance—and the related ideas of interiority and inner essence—resonate with the puppet's extreme exteriorization and disaggregated nature.

As Verdi's opera unfolds on Lindau's stage, the set disintegrates, mirroring the demise of the female lead—and indeed, failing Violetta also changes physically. By the time she delivers her farewell aria, "Addio del passato," her face is drawn and shadowy, her hair bedraggled. She manages the first line on her feet, but by the second, she is exhausted. She languishes awkwardly on a broken chair, the once vibrant blue upholstery now ripped and fraying at the braiding, her breathing audible all the while.[104] She falls to the floor as her melody breakdowns, the oboe obbligato easing the burden that she wishes Alfredo might share. With her entreaty to God, Violetta channels what little energy she has left to draw herself across the floor. She hauls herself up and leans over the mattress, heaving. As many have discussed, *La traviata*'s musical fabric is dominated by the waltz, another facet of the opera's realism. Not only does the dance idiom provide an appropriate soundscape for the diegetic scenes of Parisian social life, but the particular intimacy of the waltz—a fast-paced dance that requires the couples' bodies to be pressed up against each other as one—was one aspect of the opera's scandalous nature. Far from frantic, the lilting melody of "Addio del passato" is an expiring memory of a previous life, and delivered by a figure who is quite literally struggling to live: the sense that her time is nearly over is uncomfortably real.

[104] 1981 Decca recording National Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Richard Bonynge with Joan Sutherland, Luciano Pavarotti and Matteo Manuguerra in the principal roles.

Dancing to Death

Dancing in the marionette theater treads a fine line between vibrancy and stupor. While the complexity of the routine can showcase the virtuosity of marionette performance, it can also produce an overdetermined aesthetic effect. To guard against this kind of audio-visual rigidity, Brunner advises that the puppet should move with awareness of the music, moving across the beat as opposed to with or against it.[105] Indeed, such arbitrary synchronization—for example, walking in time with a beat—is highly undesirable for the marionette, unless, of course, it is dancing. The spectacular choreography in Salzburg's *The Sound of Music*, the fantastical potential of marionettes is realized without impinging on the believability of the drama. In their *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, the "Ride of the Valkyries" becomes an elaborate dance sequence, somewhere between the emergency instructions delivered by flight attendants and the Can-Can. Somewhat surprisingly, the Valkyries' dance ends up providing comic relief through intertextual associations.

The Lindauer Marionettenoper has another opera in its repertory that both strives towards a heightened sense of realism and in which dance plays a prominent role, namely Georges Bizet's *Carmen*. While a thread of magic runs through the opera—a trait that many puppet-disposed works possess—it takes the shape of a preoccupation with Fate and the heroine's grisly demise, which at first appears less susceptible to puppet representation. Indeed, Carmen joins the ranks of countless heroines fated to die, an operatic trope that has two well-established contrasting interpretations: on the one hand, opera kills its heroines, time and again, making a spectacle of the suffering female body. On the other, opera gives its heroines a way out through voice: it is with their voices that operatic women can forge an identity, express their desires, and overcome the limitations of their body to reach, endure even, across time and space.[106]

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[105] Philippe Brunner, Conversation with the author via Skype, June 27, 2018.

[106] See Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (London and New York:

Like many sacrificed heroines, Carmen is an outsider, a status announced in various ways by her famous entrance aria—the Habanera. During a break from work, Carmen is hounded by a gaggle of admirers, desperate to know if she will ever return their love. The Habanera establishes what will emerge during the course of the opera as Carmen's standard practice: she sings and dances to express herself, a performance within the performance of the opera. In this particular number, she describes love as a game, a game with more than a hint of violence; and, as Susan McClary notes, through the slippery chromatic melody, the irresistible swaying rhythm, and the opportunities for her audience to participate in her song with choral interjections, Carmen seduces her audience—the one on stage, and indeed, the one seated in the auditorium.[107]

With a puppet playing Carmen, however, both readings—of oppression and empowerment—are given a kind of material instantiation that sheds new light on these enduring questions of performance and representation. First, oppression. The Carmen envisaged by the Lindauer Marionettenoper has black wavy hair, thick black eyeliner beneath her almond-shaped eyes, tanned skin, red lips, and a red skirt, shot through with glittery thread, and very many layers of petticoat. There is no mistaking her appearance for anything other than a caricature of Romani peoples, a representation of the ethnic Other as constructed by the Western imagination—a so-called "gypsy." Importantly, in the puppet theater, the subjugation Carmen suffers at the hands of Western modes of representation is further reinforced by the subjugation she endures as a helpless, powerless puppet. Indeed, puppet Carmen is hardly a seductive dancer—her gyrations are apt to

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I.B. Tauris Publishers Ltd, 1997), first published in 1979, 1988 by The University of Minnesota Press, and Carolyn Abbate, "Opera, or the Envoicing of Women" in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) 225–258.

[107] See Susan McClary, *Georges Bizet Carmen* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

elicit titters amongst audience members, a sign not only of the physical awkwardness of puppet lovemaking, but also the discomfort of witnessing the scene. If Carmen as a character is a quintessential product of operatic exoticism, then Carmen the character-puppet is, we might say, doubly stereotyped, doubly subjugated.

Second, empowerment. Within the world of the opera, Carmen the puppet is performing for other puppets, and amongst her peers, she is a highly accomplished performer. That she dances at all is an act of virtuosity. For the simplest of actions are huge achievements when performed by puppets: walking in a straight line, picking up a glass, simply breathing. Nothing is done lightly; everything is a performance involving an intense act of collaboration across the entire network. In contrast to such highly performative moments of diegetic song and dance, the scene of Carmen's death is quite understated. There is no dramatic tussle. Don José advances, his dagger protruding, and after a moment, Carmen simply sinks into her strings and slowly to the floor.

A Puppet's After-life

A puppet dies when it reverts to an inanimate object, and as Margaret Williams has observed, there are "very different kinds" of reversion.[108] The figurative or human-like puppet, the kinds of puppet populating this chapter, can play the part of a dying character and, indeed, perform the act itself. The reversion of a figurative puppet, like a marionette, to an inanimate state does not completely dissolve its character. Williams discusses a solo marionette performance by the French puppeteer Philippe Genty, in which the figure of Pierrot "discovers" his strings and proceeds to cut them one by one, thereby detaching himself from his puppeteer and his "life."[109] The marionette's act of

[108] Margaret Williams, "The Death of 'the Puppet" in *The Routledge Companion to Puppetry and Material Performance*, eds. Dassia N. Posner, Claudia Orenstein, and John Bell (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 20.

[109] Ibid., 18.

seeming free will serves to assert the exact opposite: that it has none. The piece ends as the puppeteer scoops up the lifeless figure and carries it offstage. When a characterful figure "dies," the reversion to an inanimate state is usually more affective or qualitative than material. Even with the string mechanism completely severed, the body of Pierrot "retains that 'after-life' that lingers around any figure with which an audience has emotionally identified."[110] Indeed, it can seem that the performance of death reinforces the puppet's "lifelikeness."[111]

The potential for reversion to an inanimate object and the complete erasure of whatever life there once was increases in inverse proportion to the figuration of the puppet. In another piece by another French puppeteer Yves Joly, two-dimensional animated drawings tell a story of two lovers, who die at the hand of a pair of scissors and a flame, destroying "any semblance of human form to empathize with, the figures reduced to a formless materiality that it is impossible to revive and re-personalize."[112] A final example by Gyula Molnár presents a series of "little suicides" (*Piccoli Suicidi*) in which objects and food items enact heartbreak and unrequited love, meeting their inevitable demise as they fulfil or fail in their purpose: dissolving in water or spilling hot coffee. In this example, as Williams describes it, "'death' is expressed as a transition from one form of materiality

[110] Ibid., 18.

[111] Dassia N. Posner, "Life-Death and Disobedient Obedience: Russian Modernity Redefinitions of the Puppet" in *The Routledge Companion to Puppetry and Material Performance*, ed. Dassia N. Posner, Claudia Orenstein, and John Bell (London and New York: Routledge, 2014, 2015), 139. Posner explores the development of theory from practice in the early twentieth century writings of Iulia Slonimskaia and Nina Simonovich-Efimova, "the first artist-intellectuals to stage professional puppet productions in Russia" (130). The concept of "life-death" captures the precocity of a puppet's life. Slonimskaia, for example, is careful to make a distinction between dead and lifeless: "Dead implies that the life—the unpredictable nature—has been removed, something potentially desirable in dealing with live actors, while liveness infers that the puppet simply awaits animation. This gives it the ability to bridge life and death, the souled and the soulless" (137).

[112] Williams, "The Death of 'the Puppet,'" 19.

to another, bypassing the human form altogether."[113] On the one hand, then, the death of the puppet reinforces the instability of the equation between a particular material object and a specific emotional entity or character. The object itself can be substituted or radically altered and yet an affective connection between states can still endure—and be registered by the spectator as death—due to the operations of the performance network. On the other, the object of the puppet can retain its character—and its specific illusion of life—far beyond the bounds of a single performance, in the form of revivals.

The Salzburger Marionettentheater premiered *Les contes d'Hoffmann* in 1985, but it slipped out of their repertory around 2005. The production was never a regular part of their performance schedule, which, Brunner suggests, might be attributed to the combined effect of the foreign language (the company performs the opera in its original French) and the demands of the stage design. He knew he would need to strip things back, not only to appeal to new audiences, but also to realize successfully this "perfect opera" with the resources of a smaller company.[114] In April 2019, *Hoffmann* was revived with all of its original marionettes, including a rather special Olympia. A revival of a conventional opera cannot rely on the same sort of material consistency, of both sound and object, that is possible in the marionette theater. While it is certainly not uncommon for singers to revive specific roles, the personnel of an entire cast will rarely, if ever, stay exactly the same; and in any case, in the intervening time between runs, voices and bodies may have changed in any number of ways. The focus of conventional revivals will focus, therefore, on the style of the production, the scenery and costumes, distinctive effects and stage machinery. Not so the case in the marionette theater. The concept of the revival can permeate the entire enterprise. Here, in addition to props and scenery, we find the bodies and voices of the performer-characters

[113] Ibid., 21.

[114] Philippe Brunner, Conversation with the author, Salzburg, Austria, June 8, 2019.

profoundly unchanged.

These revived puppets do not possess the kind of after-life described by Williams, which is, in large part, sustained by the spectator; the materials of Salzburg's *Hoffmann* were in storage since their last performance over a decade ago, the palpable lives of the puppet, therefore, suspended. However, this production of *Hoffmann*, an opera whose very content and structure thematize the idea of revival, might be said to realize what Michal Grover-Friedlander has dubbed an "operatic afterlife." Grover-Friedland determines that an operatic afterlife is brought forth when "a breach occurs and we find dissociation between the character's life trajectory and his or her singing."[115] In other words, singing itself is severed from operatic body that creates it; it can find or make a new one, or many, or none. "In this alternate space of opera," Grover-Friedlander suggests that the singing itself "overtakes character" and becomes its own self-sustaining entity: "singing animates itself, breathing life into itself to suspend its end, unfolding a realm between life and death where death and non-death are undifferentiated."[116] With its essential performance a struggle between life and death, the puppet is perhaps uniquely positioned to explore the self-sustaining power of the operatic voice. Let us return to Salzburg for a final illumination of the vocal aesthetics of the marionette theater and the themes of death, revival, and autonomy that coalesce around the figure of Olympia during a specific performance in June 2019.[117]

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[115] Grover-Friedlander, *Operatic Afterlives,* 18.

[116] Ibid., 20. Grover-Friedlander is careful to distinguish her concept of the "afterlife" from any attempt to preserve voice through recordings. I invoke her concept her as an analogy for the liminality of the puppet's condition, in particular, the disaggregation of its material and aesthetic constitution.

[117] I attended performances of this production at Salzburg on June 7 and 8, 2019.

Reviving Olympia

Olympia is the object of Hoffmann's affections in the first of the three lovesick daydreams depicted in the opera. Each daydream is a fantastical reimagining of Hoffmann's "real-life" quandary, namely his unrequited love for Stella. In one of the daydreams, the villain Coppélius uses some nifty trick spectacles to dupe Hoffmann into falling for the automaton Olympia, Spalanzani's most recent invention. Each story involves four main characters besides the romantic hero: the female love interest, her male guardian, a servant to that guardian, and the villain. These roles can, in theory, be performed by the same singer in each episode, although the other members of the love triangle around Hoffmann—the unattainable female and the cut-throat rival—are most important to the integrity of the piece. This kind of musico-dramatic concentration can be uniquely realized in the puppet theater, as one puppet body can bear multiple voices, while multiple bodies can materialize just one voice.

Salzburg's recording of choice proposes this latter scenario. On Richard Bonynge's 1968 recording for Decca, Joan Sutherland plays Hoffmann's lovers, Gabriel Bacquier the villains, Hughes Cuénod the subservient males, and Placido Domingo Hoffman, while the guardian figure is sung by multiple individuals. The marionettes for these central roles, therefore, are a nuanced synthesis of replication and individuation. The sculptor Edmund Pointner made copies of the head of each primary role to reflect the consistency of the voice-body complex, while their distinct character traits are conveyed through costuming. The villains, for example, all share a long, squared jaw, a sweeping scar across their right eyebrow, deep-set eyes (although variously bulging and the pupils a pin prick), and an aquiline nose. While Coppélius's coat opens out to reveal sequestered eyeballs and magical glasses, a vision against a holographic backdrop of psychedelic eyes, and Dappertutto's chest shines (thanks to some embedded LED lights) with the reflections of his victims, Dr. Miracle's get-up is the least ostentatious, more befitting his profession.



Figure 4.6 Olympia at the Salzburger Marionettentheater

Olympia similarly shares a head with her corresponding female characters. Her individuation, however, penetrates much deeper than her costuming. In fact, she was originally conceived as three separate puppets: one controlled from below, to eliminate possible sightings of the strings and therefore, more completely obscure her workings in line with her narrative automatism (see Fig. 4.6); one that breaks apart when she is destroyed; and another that is incomplete, just half of her body.

The creation of multiple puppets for a single character is not an uncommon occurrence in the puppet theater; it allows the nuances of a character's physicality to be fully realized. In the case of Olympia, the need to distinguish her physicality is especially crucial, as her encounter with Hoffmann (in the opera; Nathaniel in the original story) turns on this very point: while the crowd of party goers at Olympia's demonstration witness the performance of a wondrous machine, Hoffmann, with the help of his bewitched eyeglasses, is spellbound by a human performance.

The original Olympia appears in one of E.T.A. Hoffmann's most famous stories, "Der Sandman," which is used as a model example in early theories of the uncanny.[118] Sigmund Freud's well-known excavation of the uncanny focuses on the Sandman himself, a mysterious figure who is said to collect the eyes of children, and who Freud suggests embodies his theory of the castration complex.[119] In his identification of the Sandman as the locus of uncanny effects, however, Freud built on the work of Ernst Jentsch, who was more interested in automata—like Olympia, who generate a certain "intellectual uncertainty" in the spectator. As discussed in Chapter One, Jentsch determined that feelings of uncanniness are derived from doubts surrounding the agency of a being or object, "a doubt as to the animate or inanimate nature of things—or, expressed more precisely, as to their animated state as understood by man's traditional view"[120] Jentsch also identifies the feelings of horror when encountering the remains of the dead as "thoughts of latent animate state" lie in

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[118] Bell describes Hoffmann as a prominent figure in the development of "performing object theory." See John Bell, "Playing with the Eternal Uncanny: The Persistent Life of Lifeless Objects" in *The Routledge Companion to Puppetry and Material Performance*, eds. Dassia N. Posner, Claudia Orenstein, and John Bell (London and and New York: Routledge, 2014), 52, fn 2.

[119] Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny" (1919), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works* (London: Vintage, 2001), 217-256.

[120] Ernst Jentsch, "On the psychology of the uncanny" (1906), trans. Roy Sellars, *Angelaki* 2.1 (1995), 6, accessed August 1, 2019, http://www.art3idea.psu.edu/locus/Jentsch_uncanny.pdf .

such close proximity to such entities.[121] Puppets, like automata, call into question perceptions of autonomous activity and mechanical contingency, and so the depiction of Olympia in the puppet theater—and Hoffmann's infatuation with her—presents a similar conundrum for puppet realization as that of *Die Zauberflöte*'s enchantment scene. In a whole world inhabited by uncanny objects, how is Olympia supposed to stand out from the crowd?

It takes a moment to comprehend Olympia's presence on stage. Her seeming freedom of movement is highly disconcerting in the marionette theatre: even when strings are entirely obscured from view, there seems, for me at least, to be a (subconscious) awareness of the need for routes of tangible contact between the puppet and the puppeteer. As Olympia traverses the full extent of the stage, therefore, without a visible trench for rods or a dexterous hand, let alone evidence of stringy reins, it becomes clear that she is moving independently of direct human touch. We are again reminded of a truism of the puppet theater: that a puppet can be whatever you want it to be. So, the mechanical doll Olympia could be just that, a mechanical doll. And not only that, but fit with a remote control, she can move around seemingly unaided.

With a remote-controlled Olympia center stage and Cochenille playing a miniature harp beside her, the automaton's showcase aria "Les oiseaux dans la charmille" (nicknamed "The Doll Song") realizes its full effect. The intricacy and precision of the choreography ensure that Olympia comes across as both a virtuoso singer (for Hoffmann) and a crazed machine (for the rest of us). She starts big and bold, single turns in each direction, single arm lifts, single nods. But as the coloratura cranks up, so does she, arms moving independently of one another, smaller gestures with the right, larger with the left, as she spins round and round. Offenbach's musical wind-down, the repeated top B flats followed by the slurry chromatic descent, is matched perfectly by sharp backwards flicks of her head—as if the note is stuck in her throat and she needs the Heimlich

[121] Ibid., 15.

maneuver to get it out—and her chin sliding down to her chest.

All three of Hoffmann's fantasy lovers thematize the possession and use of voice. At the extreme end is Antonia, who ultimately sings herself to death, while Giulietta, as Brunner pointed out to me, complains that talking to poets gives her a sore throat—and this revelation comes just moments before her demise. In the case of Olympia, it is her vocal mastery that is intended by Spalanzani to demonstrate his own mastery of artificial life. The voice of all three characters is that of Sutherland, captured on record. If the Decca recording captures voices of the past to allow repeated listenings across time, the puppet theater captures bodies, not just those of the puppets, into whom appearance, gait, gestural vocabulary and idiosyncrasies can be built, but also those of the puppeteers, in whose bodies the complex backstage choreography and delicate manipulation of the strings is inscribed. This production teases out the unique power of the puppet to revive and be revived through music. The "record" of the puppet theater, then, combines the materiality of sound recording with the embodied knowledge of oral tradition, creating an expressive medium that is uniquely live, while compellingly repeatable. Perhaps the puppet theater is better thought of as a living museum, then, where voices of the past can be brought to life, time and again, not only acoustically, but in an audio-visual setting that imbues them, upon each repetition, with a new sense of liveness and magic.

Malfunction or Materiality?

For the puppet, death can mean many things: the destiny of a particular character; an overwrought performance; and the shedding of character to emphasize the raw materiality of the puppet-body. Sometimes the performance network short-circuits, however, and then a different kind of death might occur. Or rather, a different kind of life. In the marionette theater, a failure of the network sees a complete reconfiguration, from a flat, relational system to a linear chain of reactions. Feedback from the marionette to the puppeteer simply has nowhere else to go, and so appears to

accumulate in a rigid limb sticking up and out at an awkward angle or, perhaps less disturbingly, accidental levitation or flailing arms. When a marionette gets tied up in its strings or those of others, it must wait to be whisked up into the hands of the puppeteer and have the knots untied. In these moments, the material presence of the marionette appears to exceed its character; and if a puppet is inseparable from its character—if a puppet *is* its character—then such moments seize its life, render it dead.

While this reading emphasizes the absence of character, an alternative, the inverse perhaps, might foreground the enhanced presence of materiality. When the network malfunctions, the performing object, caught in a web of strings, its joints overextended, its body contorted, is no longer performing (as in representing an idea) but being (as in representing itself). Our attention is suddenly reoriented towards the hollowed wooden torso and head, a collection of carved limbs, various fastenings, and now, of course, the strings, all arranged in humanly form, but uniquely suspended in a scene decidedly non-human, decidedly puppet. With this exposure of the object's "essential nature" and "its presencing" as a release from mediation, the puppet is "what we can *thing*."[122]

The "thing" is, in the words of Bill Brown, "audaciously ambiguous;" it hovers "over the threshold between the nameable and unnameable, the figurable and unfigurable, the identifiable and the unidentifiable."[123] He goes on, and I quote here at length:

> You could imagine things…as what is excessive in objects, as what exceeds their mere materialization as objects or their mere utilization as objects—their force as a sensuous presence or as a metaphysical presence, the magic by which objects become values, fetishes, idols, and totems.

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[122] Martin Heidegger, "The Thing" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 172.

[123] Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no.1, Things (2001), 5. Michael Taussig, in the same issue, meditates on the role of death as the "harbinger and index of the thing world" the paradoxical outcome that "death awakens life in things" (305). See Michael Taussig, "Dying is an Art, like Everything Else," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no.1, Things (2001): 305–316

> Temporalized as the before and after of the object, thingness amounts to a latency (the not yet formed or the not yet formable) and to an excess (what remains physically or metaphysically irreducible to objects). But this temporality obscures the all-at-onceness, the simultaneity, of the object/thing dialectic and the fact that, all at once, *the thing seems to name the object just as it is even as it names some thing else.*[124]

Brown's description of the nature of things resonates provocatively with the petrified puppet-thing, what was a moment ago a puppet-performer, a character in a story, is now the wood and cloth of its original making, the raw materials and their textures. While the character of the puppet may have vanished, the entity can still captivate, perhaps now more than ever. What will happen next?

Salzburg's Olympia is not always a model machine. Sometimes she seems to have ideas of her own—but these are always choreographed. At one point she slides off into the wings, pushing Spalanzani's guests with her. At other times, her outstretched arms seem like those of a zombie. But then there are times when unforeseen things happen. Later in the act, Hoffmann dances with Olympia. During the first performance I attended, Olympia essentially carried them both around the stage until Hoffmann disembarked. Coppélius stepped in to put an end to the whole affair, tearing the machine apart, revealing Olympia for what she really is. On the second night, though: disaster! When he came to dismount, Hoffmann's strings became tangled in Olympia's arms and he couldn't let go of her. As he struggled, the scene became more tense. Coppélius wasn't able to destroy her, but she was no longer working in any case. The curtain went down on the miserable pair, Olympia defunct and Hoffman prostrate. And when the curtain rose again the next act, they were still there, stage left, Hoffmann clinging to Olympia's skirt. It is in moments like these that a new realm of possibility opens up, when the drastic takes over and puppets turn out to be real. Puppeteer Edouard Funck and I were both struck by the aptness of the scene: Hoffmann doesn't want to let Olympia go, and so he doesn't. She is his desire—and his strings made sure we all knew it. As the backdrop

[124] Brown, "Thing Theory," 5.

rippled with Venetian waters, the pair moved off slowly for some surgery backstage before Hoffmann could return for his Giulietta.

In the discourse of puppetry, such moments attest to the puppet's own power, its agency. While John Bell describes puppetry as "playing with a lack of control," Dassia N. Posner talks of the "disobedient obedience" of the puppet, a term encapsulating the idea of "puppet choreography as a collaborative discovery" and the corresponding need for the puppeteer to "learn not to control but to listen to puppets, material objects with minds of their own."[125] These moments, where the puppet seems to assert itself, are the exceptions that prove the rule: for it is the shifting perspectives and fluctuating concentrations of agency afforded by the performance network that generate a poetics of synchronization, a quality of movement and perception capable of reconfiguring all sorts of musical and performative relations.

Marionettes, Muteness, Movement, Music

Some say that marionette opera is a poor man's opera, that audiences attend marionette performances to see opera with a cheaper price tag. This proposition reinforces the hierarchical relationship between the two art forms, the lowly popular entertainment of puppet theater and the high art mastery of opera. To test this hypothesis would require a sociological approach, analyzing the economics of marionette opera, its commercial viability, and its audience demographic, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation. No-one I have encountered, though, seems to be under any illusion that they are going to experience as audience members, or perform as puppeteers, "real" opera; they are all there for the marionettes. The question to ask, therefore, is less "what does opera do for marionette theater?" but more "what does marionette theater do for opera?" Marionette opera reconstructs the essential paradox of opera—that characters sing through their lives instead

[125] Posner, "Life-Death and Disobedient Obedience," 131

of speaking—in its own terms. Marionettes don't actually sing, but they really do move—in all sorts of ways, both humanly and puppet-like, earthly and magical.

Through the materiality of their strings, the manipulation of scale and perspective, the possibility for replication, innovation, and thingification, and the structural and representational qualities of breath and breathing, a marionette *can* sing—but it resists the standard conception of puppet vocality, whereby the puppet is filled up with the voice of another. Rather, a marionette's voice emerges from a fluid assemblage of material and symbolic relations, which expands the concept of singing to incorporate listening and moving. Indeed, such is the richness of movement potential available to the marionette that it appears both enlivened by and generative of music. I call this their "inherent musicality." This form of musicality traverses sensory planes—it is sonic, visual, and tangible—and is ultimately made possible by their fundamental muteness, a muteness that allows them to appear as both vessel and creator, listener and singer. To capture the interwovenness of technological-specificity, aesthetic possibility, performance practice, and philosophy engendered by marionette performance, we might consider the phrase "highly strung vocality." On the one hand, "highly strung" connotes tension, pent-up energy, the latent creative energy of the marionette; but on the other, as reins from above, it engenders a looseness and flexibility between the components of the performance network—a "poetics of synchronization"—that can generate a range of aesthetic effects, from the most violent vibrato to a sudden shudder of breathlessness.

A final thought regarding representation: that puppets could be the antidote to the necessary suspension of disbelief demanded by opera, that they might infuse opera with something true, may seem highly improbable; but when marionettes perform opera they make palpable the complicity of performance and the power and dangers that holds. As Carmen seduced Don José at Lindau, I winced. Others tittered. It was uncomfortable. The audience's imagination, their investment in the life of the puppet, is a crucial component of the network, and in this performance, the struggle felt

real. A scene of seduction was turned into something almost grotesque, forcing the question: why was I watching? In the relative safety of the theater, a space of play and experimentation, I was confronted with my own past experiences in conventional opera houses of being seduced by human performers, cast in the white-washed role of ethnic Other. When translated to the marionette theater, the burden of Carmen's performance lies heavy in the hands of the puppeteers, the sensibilities of the audience, the voices of the recording, the histories of opera and puppetry.

V. POLYPHONIC PUPPETS

Muteness and Music in Richard Teschner's *Figurenspiegel*

A Palace for Puppets

Vienna, December 2017. Scurrying through the darkened colonnades of the iconic Staatsoper and skirting around the steps of the Albertina, I arrive at Palais Lobkowitz, a baroque palace with its own distinct history of housing musical performances. As an amateur musician and a lively patron of the arts and music in Vienna and Bohemia, Prince Franz Joseph Maxmilian von Lobkowitz—the former owner of the palace—kept his own orchestra and arranged regular concerts. Indeed, he became the dedicatee (after Napoleon) of Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 3, which received its initial private performances in the palace's Festsaal.[1] But it is a rather different spectacle that I am about to attend tonight, and in a rather more intimate and surprising performance space. Since 1991, the palace has housed the collections of the Österreichisches Theatermuseum, and on this winter evening, ticket holders make their way through the building's impressive portal, climb the red-carpeted staircase with its classical marble columns, and enter the quarters of one of the museum's most prized collections: the exquisite puppets of the creative polymath and artisan Richard Teschner (1879–1948).[2]

Hailing from Carlsbad in Bohemia, Teschner came to Vienna via Prague, a city with a strong tradition of puppetry, and indeed, it was in the Czech capital that he first started experimenting with the art form. He received training in the fine arts in Prague, and also studied for a brief spell in Vienna, this time the applied arts at the Wiener Kunstgewerbeschule. Unhampered by divisions

[1] For further information, see the website for the Theater Museum, "Das Palais," accessed August 4, 2020, https://www.theatermuseum.at/de/vor-dem-vorhang/das-palais/.

[2] Alongside Teschner's estate, the museum's extensive collections include stage design models and paper theaters, costumes and theatrical props, over 700,000 photographs, from portraits of the 1840s to documentation of the Salzburg Festival, posters and other graphic materials.

between the fine arts and the arts and crafts tradition, Teschner was drawn to the technical and tactile activities of craftsmen. In the words of one reporter, Teschner was the "king of hobbyists"; [3] for another, a kind of "Hoffmanesque Doctor Miracle."[4] And for his biographer, the art critic Arthur Roessler, he was nothing short of "a magician."[5] Evoking said magic, Roessler reels off Teschner's innumerable talents:

a painter in oil, tempera, watercolor and pastel; graphic artist on metal, stone, glass and wood, that is: he is an etcher, lithographer and woodcut artist; he is also a sculptor in every material suitable for plastic design, such as ore, stone, clay and wood; he is a modeler and founder, blacksmith, chiseler and engraver; gemstone cutter and printer; carpenter and lute maker; costume tailor and wig maker; stage designer and lighting technician; mechanic and film operator; tapestry weaver and interior designer and—as if added extras—still a poet, musician, biologist, chemist, astronomer, astrologer, occultist, art collector, a connoisseur, and appreciative of lost and foreign cultures, reviving the old and exploring the new, and many other things.[6]

Such wide-ranging facility is not uncommon amongst puppeteers: in marionette theatres today Marionettenspieler do much besides the manipulation of the puppet itself, moving scenery and cuing the lights during the performance, for instance, as well as designing and carving their puppets, sewing, and painting behind the scenes. What is remarkable here is that this dizzying list of skills and attributes is focused in just one figure. Indeed, Teschner exploded the bounds of puppet-

[3] W. D., "Teschners neues Marionettentheater," *Neue Feier Presse*, November 12, 1932.

[4] c. m., "Irrwelt, die ein Wiener Künstler erschuf." *Neues Wiener Journal,* November 18, 1933.

[5] Arthur Roessler, *Richard Teschner* (Gerlach and Wildling, 1947), 17.

[6] Ibid., 21–22. "Nun: Teschner ist Maler in Öl, Tempera, Aquarell und Pastell; Graphiker auf Metall, Stein, Glas und Holz, das heißt: er ist Radierer, Lithograph und Holzschnittkünstler; er ist außerdem Bildhauer in jedem für plastische Gestaltung tauglichem Stoff, wie Erz, Stein, Ton und Holz; er ist Modelleur und Gießer, Schmied, Ziseleur und Graveur; Edelsteinschleifer und Drucker; Tischler und Lautenbauer; Kostümschneider und Perückenmacher; Bühnenkonstrukteur und Beleuchtungstechniker; Mechaniker und Filmoperateur; Gobelinweber und Architekt von Innenräumen und – so "nebenbei" – noch Dichter, Musiker, Biologe, Chemiker, Astronom, Astrolog, Occultist, Kunstsammler, Kenner und Schätzer verschollener und entlegener Kulturen, Wiederbeleber und Neuentdecker und mancherlei anderes noch." Translated by Stephanie Probst.

specific facility, acquiring expert skill in numerous artistic and artisanal domains. His ambition was to create not simply his own version of this popular form of entertainment, but rather his own innovative art form, born of mixed media practices, material alchemy, and cross-cultural encounters, an ambition evidenced by the dazzling wares of the glass cabinets that line the walls of the make-shift auditorium.

By all accounts, the evening's museum setting does well to reflect the original performance space, Teschner's studio. Teschner settled in Vienna permanently in 1909, where he lived and worked until his death. In Vienna's 18th district, where Gersthofer Straße meets Messerschmidtgasse, Teschner's atelier was a kind of "small museum of strange and magical works of art."[7] The myriad fascinating objects included "Indian idols, Japanese dolls, barbarian masks…magical amulets," "a small Japanese wooden elephant, … old clocks. … and mystical-erotic figures cared out of colored stone."[8] From 1912, small audiences of invited guests were welcomed to the studio, artistically-discerning individuals—which is to say, the kinds of people in Teschner's social circle. In the Gersthofer atelier, one might have glimpsed Secessionist artists, associates of the Wiener Werkstätte, filmmakers and novelists, from Gustav Klimt to Max Reinhardt, Stefan Zweig to Alfred Roller, Gustav Meyrink to the Cardinal Dr. Innitzer.[9] Though his puppet shows always

[7] Max Hayek, "Professor Richard Teschners Figurentheater," *Moderne Welt*, Jahrgang 14, Heft 2, 1932, 21 ("ein kleines Museum seltsamer und zauberischer Kunstwerke.") On the 1919 exhibition of Teschner's figures, see A. F. Seligmann, "Richard Teschner," *Moderne Welt*, Jahrgang 2, Heft 3, 1920, 7-10.

[8] Bela Balázs, "Der Haus der Geheimnisse," *Der Tag*, April 5, 1925.

[9] Richard Teschner, "Das Schauspielerensemble der Marionetten. Mein Figurentheater," *Neue Freie Presse*, January 1, 1931; Francis, "Kardinal besucht Teschner Weihnachtsspiel," *Neues Wiener Journal*, December 21, 1933; Stefan Zweig is identified as a visitor to Teschner's studio in 1935 by Kurt Ifkovits in "Versuch einer Biografie Richard Teschners" in *"Mit diesen meinem zwei Händen…" Die Bühnen des Richard Teschner*, ed. Kurt Ifkovits (Österreichisches Theatermusum, 2013), 339.

seemed to attract these sorts of elite visitors, financial pressures incurred by the war eventually forced Teschner to share his creations with the wider public.[10]

This evening, at the Theater Museum, the audience conforms to Teschner's stipulations on numbers—a maximum of 65 people seated and 5 standing—but the demographic is mixed, with several children amongst our ranks.[11] Unvetted by Teschner, of course, but hardly uninformed, our audience is a self-selected group, and so spectators likely more than ready to appreciate what was about to unfold—provided that we, as Teschner himself would have put it, did not expect the kind of fun on offer in the shows of the Wurstelprater, but had come prepared, and were in possession of a "sense of beauty."[12]

When Teschner hosted these soirees, he would have dressed the part: with his "drawn Dürer face radiating rural, unmystical health" and dressed in black priestly robes, the host and principal

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[10] Matthew Isaac Cohen, *Performing Otherness: Java and Bali on International Stages, 1905–1952* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2010), 44–45. In a short piece entitled "Der Figurenspiegel," Teschner relates his financial frustrations. In response to his petitions and requests to the relevant authorities, Teschner received rejections on the ground of the "bad 'world' economic situation." He suspected prejudice against his "Sudetendeutsch" ethnicity. See Richard Teschner, "Der Figurenspiegel" Wien, 1938, Österreichisches Theatermuseum, HS_AM56698Te. Reprinted in *"Mit diesen meinem zwei Händen…" Die Bühnen des Richard Teschner*, ed. Kurt Ifkovits (Österreichisches Theatermusum, 2013), 218–219. The first real season of performances at Teschner's atelier opened on November 26th 1925 with 28 performances, closing on January 10th 1926. See Ifkovits, "Versuch einer Biografie Richard Teschners," 333.

[11] See "Die magische Welt des Professors Teschner: Seit Sonntag spielt 'Der Figurenspiegel' wieder," *Weltpresse*, December 4, 1945. According to Elg, also writing for *Weltpresse*, Teschner's plays are only intended for adults, as children would not understand the allegorical or symbolic nature of the figurines: "Der Figurenspiegel ist kein Marionettentheater im landläufigen Sinn, er wendet sich nur an die Erwachsenen; Kinder würden nicht viel davon haben, sie würden nicht verstehen, daß diese Puppen personifizierte Tugenden und Laster darstellen, Bewohner der verschiedensten Sphären, dämonische Gestalten, humorvolle Kobolde, Fabeltiere und Charaktergestalten. Die Puppen hängen auch nicht an Drähten, sie werden von unten her an fast unsichtbaren Stäben bewegt." Elg., "Märchen für Erwachsene: Professor Teschners "Figurenspiegel" bringt "Das Weihnachtspiel," *Weltpresse*, Dezember 23, 1948.

[12] Richard Teschner, "Der Figurenspiegel."

performer would circulate amongst his visitors before the show.[13] Tonight's host is Angela Sixt, a conservationist and one of the puppets' restorers. Local puppeteers Thomas Ettl and Markus Siebert, as well as artist Hanna Hollmann, perform alongside Sixt, who is responsible for organizing the annual winter performances of plays in the *Figurenspiegel* (Figure Mirror), the name now synonymous with Teschner's entire enterprise. In 1958, the museum, at that time still the National Library, acquired their holdings of the Teschner estate, but the project to revive Teschner's plays commenced more than 30 years later. In 1986, Klaus Behrendt and Jarmila Weißenböck started work under the guidance of one of Teschner's former assistants, Lucia Jirgal, to reconstruct the scenes of tonight's show, *Weihnachtsspiel*: that is, a Nativity play.[14]

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[13] The Hungarian film critic Bela Balázs describes his visit to Teschner's. Gersthof apartment in 1925 thus: "Mrs. Teschner welcomed us with a natural and gracious courtesy, like a proper Viennese housewife. Even Teschner himself, despite his black priestly robe, did not put his metaphysical sensibility on display. His hard, clearly drawn Dürer face radiates a rural, unmystical health. Closed but not veiled, as it were, with an unapproachable openness, it is like the face of a staid German artisan from the 15th century. And the rooms were as bright and colorful and friendly as beautiful, rich children's rooms" ("Frau Teschner empfing uns mit natürlich-liebenswürdiger Jovialität, wie eine rechte Wiener Hausfrau. Auch Meister Teschner hat, trotz seines schwarzen Priestergewandes, das Metaphysische nicht ausgesteckt. Sein hartes, klar gezeichnetes Dürer-Gesicht strahlt eine bäuerliche, unmystische Gesundheit. Verschlossen, aber nicht verschleiert, gleichsam von einer unnahbaren Offenheit, ist es wie das Gesicht eine biederen deutschen Handwerkerkünstlers aus dem 15. Jahrhundert, und die Räume, so hell und bunt und freundlich, wie schöne, reiche Kinderzimmer." Balázs, "Der Haus der Geheimnisse." Translation aided by Christopher McNulty. Max Hayek provides another description of the experience inside the studio: "A visit to Teschner's Viennese atelier, which is a small museum of strange and magical works of art, gives the guest lasting impressions—and last but not least, the artist himself, in his black, gown-like work coat and in the noble friendliness of his nature, will remain unforgettable" ("Ein Besuch in Teschners Wiener Atelier, das ein kleines Museum seltsamer und zauberischer Kunstwerke darstellt, schenkt dem Gast dauernde Eindrücke—und nicht zuletzt wird ihm der Künstler selbst, in seinem schwarzen, talarhaften Arbeitsmantel und in der edlen Freundlichkeit seines Wesens unvergeßlich bleiben.") Hayek, "Professor Richard Teschner's Figurentheater."

[14] Jarmila Weißenböck, "Weihnachtsspiel," in *Weihnachtsspiel; Figurenpantomime von Richard Teschner*, Program Book, (Wien: Österreichisches Theatermuseum, [1992?]), section entitled "Ein neuer Anfang für das unvergängliche Museumsstück." In a conversation with the author on August 22, 2018, Kurt Ifkovits explained that Teschner's estate is not held exclusively by the museum, but that various private collections also hold items relating to Teschner and his work.

Teschner's version of the nativity is upheld by many commentators as the pinnacle of his entire oeuvre. Paul Wertheimer, for example, suggests that "the miracle of Teschner's theater art can only be grasped entirely through the Christmas legend play;"[15] when Cardinal Dr. Innitzer attended a performance in 1933, he was told in advance about "Teschner's famous Christmas play, a scenic mystery of poignant loveliness, which occupies a special place in the artist's repertoire consisting of magical tails and extravaganzas;"[16] and according to Roessler, *Weihnachtsspiel* is "the most intimate, purest, most poetic and most German folkloristic of the puppet plays that Master Teschner realised and designed."[17] Tonight's performance comes towards the end of the museum's annual winter season, which also featured two of Teschner's *sui generis* creations: *Die Lebensuhr*, a fateful story centered around Prague's Astronomical Clock, and an imaginative rendering of the Viennese legend *Der Basilisk*.

A Christmas Play

The room turns to darkness and the sound of something gong-like breaks the silence. My attention is drawn to a golden circle on the wall opposite. Velour curtains hang on either side, giving the impression of a stage setting or proscenium. More accurately, the gold ring, about one and a half

[15] Paul Wertheimer, "Premiere im Figurentheater Richard Teschners: 'Weihnachtsspiel,' 'Der Drachentöter,'" *Neue Freie Presse,* Samstag, January 3, 1931. ("Das Wunder der Teschnerschen Theaterkunst erfaßt man aber erst ganz durch das Weihnachtslegendenspiel.")

[16] Francis, "Kardinal besucht Teschner Weihnachtsspiel." ("Man hatte dem Kirchenfürsten von Teschners schon berühmt gewordenen Weihnachtsspiel erzählt, einem szenischen Mysterium von ergreifender Lieblichkeit, das in dem aus magischen Schwänken und Zauberpossen bestehenden Repertoire des Künstlers einen besonderen Platz einnimmt.")

[17] Arthur Roessler, "Meister Richard Teschner: Zum fünfzigsten Geburtstag des Künstlers," *Der getreue Eckart*, Monatsschrift für das deutsche Haus, 1928–1929, No.2, 868 ("und schließlich werden sie auch von der "Weihnachtslegende" erzählen, dem innigsten, lautersten, dichterischsten und deutsch volkstümlichsten der Figurenspiele, die Meister Teschner erkannt und gestaltete").



Figure 5.1 The *Figurenspiegel.*

meters in diameter, frames something like a portal, given it is set *into* the wall rather than hanging on it (see Fig. 5.1). Surrounded by the signs of the zodiac, the frame holds a sheet of curved glass, and at certain angles, the surface glimmers with the presence of the audience while protecting the dark void within.[18] As the reverberations dissipate and silence descends, the darkness behind the screen turns to a soft glow and a figure, Mary, enters the scene. Her gait is unhurried and smooth. She stretches out her arms and brings them back into her body, as though beckoning someone to her. She gestures towards the sky and kneels down center stage, ready to pray. Whilst emphatic and indisputable in their meaning, Mary's gestures are also introverted. Her movements exhibit a

[18] Ludwig Krafft, "Der Figurenspiegel Richard Teschners und das Puppenspiel seiner Zeit" in *Richard Teschner (1879-1948) Puppenspieler—Sezessionistischer Künstler,* ed. Dr. Josef Mayerhöfer (Wien: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 1970), 13. The curved surface protrudes out into auditorium, making it convex from the perspective of the audience and concave from that of the puppeteers.

subtlety, a certain delicacy and uncanny fluidity, that seems antithetical to the gestural excesses one might associate with puppetry. The Annunciation, too, is similarly modest, the temptation to exaggerate maturely resisted. Gabriel's appearance is carefully managed, fading gradually into view from out of the darkness. For his wordless pronouncement, he opens and raises his arms as a beam of light is cast diagonally across the scene. Mary is reduced to tears, her body gently shaking as emotion overwhelms her. The scene fades to black, and a long pause follows.

This tone of understated refinement is reinforced by the character's muteness. Neither of the figures speak; neither even sighs. There is no music and there are no sound effects. The only sounds are those of the puppeteers backstage as they make their preparations for the first act. These seem to take quite some time, but the silence of the audience is not once broken. My gaze is trained on the goings-on in the muted world in front of me. The circular proscenium has that effect: it focuses your attention on the unfolding drama. It acts as a portal between two worlds, the real world and the story world, that of the audience and that of the performance, ensuring their separation but inviting a reciprocal relationship of mutual meaning construction. In this sense, that world is not a miniature version of the one that I inhabit, but a world unto itself, with its own physical laws and accepted modes of expression.

As the curtains open to reveal a new scene, the silence is filled with sound—with music. I find it difficult to describe exactly what I hear. It's not a piece I recognize; I can hardly even determine the style. There is little to hang onto—no melody or regular beat, no textural or timbral variation, no discernible form, it seems to me at the time. Whether these musical sounds are the product of a solo instrument or an ensemble is unclear. There are multiple lines certainly, a distinctly polyphonic texture, but metrically irregular. Indeed, the notes seem almost to trip over one another. Taken alongside the unified timbre of these seeming "parts," a jangly metallic sound, two images come to mind: a gamelan and a music box. My enculturated ears lead me to reductive labels for this

music—"foreign," "Eastern"; and the image of a music box isn't so far removed as discourses around "the Other" are infused the ideas of the mechanical. There certainly isn't a gamelan backstage and it doesn't sound much like a recording of one either. If it is a music box, though, it seems unlikely to be the kind for children or those sold as touristic souvenirs, in which musical emblems of national or popular culture are encoded in their tines. The presentation here is as background music, but likely not the kinds of entertainment music heard in Viennese cafes or indeed, in any other European establishment.

With this new soundscape comes a landscape. Where the Annunciation scene unfolded in a black abyss, reflecting, perhaps, the timelessness of the event, the setting for this scene is almost naturalistic. What appears before us is a silhouetted woodland backdrop that pans across slowly as snow falls softly, silently. I have no idea how this is achieved, but it has the aura of film, of real images captured in real-time and mechanically recreated at a later date. And I am not the first person to be spellbound by the scene. According to the reviewer of a 1945 performance,

> perhaps the most artistic thing is the 'walk to Bethlehem.' Mary and Joseph walk for a long time through a lunar landscape of dreamlike beauty, snow trickles down and lies on the branches of the old trees, the fence, the bushes, along which the path leads them. Actually, the figures stay in one place and the background moves, but that only comes to mind afterwards, the perspective problem is solved so completely. The closer to the viewer a little faster than the second. The harmony of the picture is never disturbed, the soft collapse of the figures indicates the illusion of a strenuous journey in the cold night."[19]

[19] See F, "Professor Teschners Künstlermarionettentheater ist wiedereröffnet," *Österreich Zeitung*, Sonntag, 9. Dezember 1945 ("Das Kunstvollste daran ist vielleicht der "Gang nach Bethlehem." Lange wandern Maria und Josef durch eine Mondlandschaft von traumhafter Schönheit, Schnee rieselt herab und liegt auf den Zweigen der alten Bäume, dem Zaun, dem Gesträuch, an denen sie der Weg vorbeiführt. Eigentlich bleiben ja die Figuren an einer Stelle und der Hintergrund bewegt sich, doch das kommt einem erst nachträglich zu Bewußt sein, so vollkommen ist das perspektivische Problem gelöst. Zwei bemalte Schleier bewegen sich an den scheinbar Wandernden vorbei. Der dem Zuschauer nähere etwas rascher als der zweite. Nie ist die Harmonie des Bildes gestört, das leise Zusammensinken der Figuren deutet die Illusion eines anstrengenden Weges in kalter Nacht.")

With the landscape moving for them, Mary and Joseph need make only the faintest of motions towards walking as they find their way to Bethlehem.

The Teschner Textbook

What I conjure here is an imaginative amalgamation of experience and description. Anchored in a real performance for which I was an audience member, I have also been inspired by Roessler's evocation of an evening *chez* Teschner, interweaving my own perceptions with those of contemporary eyewitnesses, and drawing together filmed footage, live performances, and interviews.[20] For scholars of puppetry, negotiating the historical divide between past and present practices in this way is normal: studying puppetry necessarily entails a mixture of historical, analytic, and ethnographic methodologies. Accessing historical instantiations of puppetry necessarily requires analysis of contemporary performances, not least because practices of puppetry typically endure through a robust oral tradition. Puppeteers train as apprentices, and often share practices between troupes and theaters; and the stories puppets tell are often mythic or allegorical, resonating with societal issues and cultural heritage. The folk and popular settings of puppet performance are not conducive to the preservation of theatrical records or performing objects, and even if they were, every performance is different, not only live, but highly collaborative and often with elements of improvisation.

With Richard Teschner, however, the situation is rather different. Teschner was not a practitioner of an established tradition. Rather, he manipulated existing models of puppet design and modes of puppet-theatrical expression to create his own distinctive style of puppetry, one that is, in

[20] See Roessler, *Richard Teschner*. For a recreation of *Weihnachtsspiel*, see also Francis, "Kardinal besucht Teschner Weihnachtsspiel."

all sorts of ways, profoundly singular. There is just one *Figurenspiegel* (and just one *Goldener Schrein*, the *Figurenspiegel*'s predecessor). While he employed a handful of assistants (on which more shortly) Teschner's puppetry ultimately revolved around him, a single (and singular) figure—and, of course, his puppets. As we have seen with respect to the marionette theater, puppets are always bespoke, made to order to perform just one role, or even an extract of a role; in just one show; and often for just one specific theater. But marionettes—*all* marionettes, across times and places—possess certain identifiable attributes, which ensure their traditional status. There are, within national traditions, shows that are particularly susceptible to puppet representation and so appear time and again on performance schedules. Teschner, by contrast, invented his own puppet mechanism, unique amongst puppet traditions, and designed puppets for shows which are largely exclusive to Teschner's *oeuvre*.

The apparent uniqueness of Teschner's puppetry proffers, therefore, a useful counterpoint to the tradition of puppetry considered in the previous chapter, Marionettentheater, and a very different realization of the performance network. The paradigm of the performance network, let us recall, accounts for the various performers, performative modes, and material realities of puppet performance, charting the dispersion of creative agency and the generation of characteristic aesthetics. With marionette opera, there is something of a network archetype, which is molded to and by the specifications of each performance event, practitioner, theater, and style. In other words, whilst the emergent network of a specific performance can never be entirely and exactly replicated, the essential model underlines every instantiation. By contrast, the performance network of Teschner's puppet theater is truly one of a kind, and, as such, it remains *the* record of his puppet practice and tradition. Certainly, Teschner's network shares certain elements with that of the marionette theatre, as indeed, with all networks of puppet performance. The tripartite model that defines the art form—an inanimate object, an operator or performer, and an audience—is central to

every network. But these generic terms are given concrete specification in Teschner's practice. For example, Teschner had a number of assistants from 1912 until his death, who would operate the puppets alongside him: Bartholomäus Stefferl, Sybille Blei, Dr. Helene Schreiner, Hermy Ottawa, and later Professor Lucia Jirgal. Far from anonymous, some of these assistants have been instrumental in maintaining Teschner's vision and continuing his work. The audience is also less than anonymous: not only are there records of those who attended Teschner's shows, but they include prominent artistic figures, some of whom left vivid reflections on his work.

Beyond these immutable components of the puppet performance network, Teschner's specific network includes at least three further elements, or more accurately, categories of performance objects, immutable in a different sense, as these are one-off, fixed, permanent. First, Teschner was highly inventive in his approach to visual effects, experimenting with various technologies and apparatus for projections and lighting effects. Second, and in the sonic sphere, Teschner's primary musical source was the German-made Polyphon, a kind of hybrid musical machine, somewhere between a music box and a gramophone. Additional and alternative instruments, including a kind of double monochord and a dulcitone (or tuning-fork piano), resonate in different ways with the mechanical, metallic character of the Polyphon. Finally, the effects of these performance technologies were blended together within Teschner's unique theaters, his first theater, the Golden Shrine, and the *Figurenspiegel* itself. All of these things reside in the Viennese Theatermuseum.[21] These museum pieces require sensitive environments for display and storage; some, even, are working theatrical objects, used annually for performances. Access, therefore, is

[21] Formerly the theater collection of the Austrian National Library, the museum became part of the Kunsthistorisches Museum at the beginning of 2001.

somewhat limited. These objects are supplemented by various forms of documentation, including directions for performance (known as *Spielpläne*) and annual sketchbooks.[22]

In this chapter, I will focus on two aesthetically and technologically dominant nodes within Teschner's network: the puppets, their material construction and gestural capacities, and the Polyphon, a musical performance object and technology, the central sonic apparatus of the shows. A focused analysis of these two objects exposes their interdependence within the overarching aesthetics of Teschner's specific performance network. Examples will be drawn primarily from *Weihnachtsspiel*, a play whose gestation, technical and aesthetic attributes, and performance history spans many aspects of Teschner's practice and career. Indeed, the topic was first proposed as a film project with director Max Reinhardt and Hugo von Hofmannsthal in 1916. Although the film never materialized, Teschner then began working on the puppets for his *Weihnachtsspiel* in 1917. For puppeteer and puppet scholar Klaus Behrendt, the puppets in this play have "achieved a certain degree of perfection."[23] When he witnessed the opening sequence of gestures performed by the figure of Mary, Reinhardt is said to have remarked: "No actress will play like that for me!"[24] The Christmas show was on the program of the 1925 press night for Teschner's *Goldener Schrein*, his first puppet theater, quite conventional in style, and was reconceived for the circular *Figurenspiegel* in 1933. For the first version of the play, Teschner engaged composer Maria Hofer to write an original score

[22] The Theatermuseum is the steward of a number of Teschner's *Arbeitsbücher* (workbooks or sketch books), but some are housed in private collections. Personal communication with Dr. Kurt Ifkovits. I accessed the workbooks for the years: 1916, 1918, 1921, 1924, 1929, 1934, 1936, 1938, 1939, and 1940.

[23] "Klaus Behrendt, "Alles was lange währt ist leise" in *Weihnactsspiel; Figurenpantomime von Richard Teschner*, Program Book, (Wien: Österreichisches Theatermuseum, [1992?]) ("Seine Figuren haben einen gewissen Grad der Vollkommenheit erreicht.")

[24] Ibid.

for dulcitone, special treatment that none of his other plays were given. Subsequently—and for most performances today, for that matter—Polyphon discs are used to accompany the show.

Teschner transformed the familiar habits of puppetry into a singular realization of the art form, an artistic approach that is uniquely "theoretical," and that in turn can generate theory. We might approach Teschner's *Figurenspiegel* as something of a textbook for a musicological understanding of puppetry. Teschner's approach to sound and music determines his overall aesthetic, for his stringent insistence on the puppet's muteness gave rise to a compensating efflorescence in visual effects and music. Teschner's choice of musical material and its deployment within his shows, and across the *Figurenspiegel,* engages with critical themes that are important to us today: the status of liveness versus the role of recorded or mechanical music, issues of cultural appropriation and hybridity, the relationship between voice and gesture, and music-image interactions more broadly. By treating the puppet *not* as a stand-in for the human, but as performing object in its own right, Teschner expanded the technological and aesthetic parameters of puppetry, which, in turn, illuminates the inherent musicality of the puppet.

Throughout this chapter I will be drawing on press coverage of Teschner's work, which provides important context for his performance network as well as illumination of the objects and their effects and contemporary response.[25] The very existence of press discourse of this nature reinforces certain facets of Teschner, the man and his work, as well as certain important issues that inform—and challenge—scholarly engagement with puppetry. At the same time, this historical discourse around Teschner's work is comparatively difficult to unearth, which is, of course, coterminous with the nature of his work, its singularity and indebtedness to cinema, for example. A

[25] For some insight into the extent of the record, see the chronological bibliography, which includes newspaper articles, in *"Mit diesen meinem zwei Händen…" Die Bühnen des Richard Teschner*, ed. Kurt Ifkovits (Österreichisches Theatermuseum, 2013), 356-365.

museum houses the objects of Teschner's work and his own performances have been captured on film for posterity; conversely, performances from the 1930s at the Salzburger Marionettentheater are largely lost to history, but crucially, it is possible to attend a performance in their theater this week, which will feature puppets made by and puppeteers trained in the practices of the theater's founder, Anton Aicher. Both forms endure, but in very different ways. And the historical discourse around Teschner's work fortifies the bifurcation of artistic endeavors, which accounts, in many ways, for the general scholarly neglect of puppetry: high and low, elite and folkish, fine and applied, aesthetic and technical.

I.

The Puppets

The Hague, August 1911. Richard Teschner is part-way through a four-month honeymoon trip with his new wife, Emma Bacher-Paulick (1868–1953). Teschner and Bacher-Paulick had met in Vienna in 1909, shortly after his move to the Austrian capital. It wasn't Bacher-Paulick's first marriage: she had been widowed four years previously when her then-husband Paul Bacher died. A goldsmith and a jeweller, Bacher's wealth supported Gustav Klimt and the circle of artists known as the "Klimt Gruppe" when they broke away from the Secessionist movement.[26] Klimt and his associates were concerned about the relative neglect of homegrown artists brought about by the educational agenda of the Secession and their emphasis on "freedom from commercial constraints."[27] So when the

[26] For a brief elaboration of the rift between the Klimt Group, the so-called *Stilisten,* and the *Nur-Stilisten* or *Naturalisten*, a group who formed around Joseph Englehart, see Henry-Louis de la Grande, *Gustav Mahler: Volume 3. Vienna: Triumph and Disillusion (1904–1907)* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 188–190.

[27] de la Grande, *Gustav Mahler*, 190.

private Galerie Miethke became available for purchase in 1894, Klimt saw an opportunity to promote Austrian art, including works by Jugendstil artists and the Wiener Werkstätte, and entreated his friend Bacher to put up the funds. The Paulick's summer residence, a turreted villa on the shores of Lake Attersee built by Emma's father Friedrich Paulick, was a popular destination for the elite of Viennese society during the summer months, including Klimt and his muse, the designer and entrepreneur Emilie Flöge.[28] When Teschner married Bacher-Paulick not only did he gain access to this rich artistic world, but to a kind of financial security that would enable him to immerse himself fully in his work—even while honeymooning.

The newly-weds travelled from Vienna via Trieste, Venice, Torbole, Innsbruck, Lake Constance, and Frankfurt am Main on their way to Holland, "one of the art treasures of Europe."[29] From Amsterdam in early June, the Teschners visited various Dutch towns before arriving in The Hague a couple of months later. The artistic delights on offer there were by no means exclusively Dutch, for the Dutch empire extended far beyond the borders of the Netherlands. One of its most valuable colonies was the Dutch East Indies, now the Republic of Indonesia. With Java as a prominent colonial outpost and Amsterdam one of the largest ports in the world, Dutch museums and shops were overflowing with all kinds of Javanese cultural exports, including various styles of *Wayang* puppets.[30] Teschner had been sizing up the tradition of *Wayang* since at least 1905, but it was

[28] Friedrich Paulick (1824–1904) was the court-appointed master carpenter and built Villa Paulick in 1877.

[29] Franz Hadamowsky, "Leben und Wirken" in *Der Figurenspiegel Richard Teschner*, ed. Klaus Behrendt (Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1991), 15 ("eine der Kunstschatzkammern Europas.") For the full list of places the couple visited on their trip, see Ifkovits, "Versuch einer biografie Richard Teschners," 325.

[30] A note on terminology: *Wayang* is the general term for puppet theater. *Wayang golek* refers to three-dimensional rod puppets. *Wayang kulit* denotes two-dimensional shadow puppets.

a face-to-face encounter with the Indonesian art form during this nuptial trip that has been enshrined as the origin myth for Teschner's vision of the puppet.[31]

The fateful sighting occurred on August 17, 1911.[32] As theater historian Franz Hadamowsky describes it, the couple were "between museum visits and a stroll on the beach," when the discovery was made. Bacher-Paulick jots in her travel journal the words, "Hague, from Bocotan finally Wayang!"[33] Her excitement is palpable and the use of the foreign word *Wayang* seems to reflect her sense that this was an authentic meeting, like a seal of legitimacy. Not content with a mere sighting, Bacher-Paulick logs five purchases made by Teschner in the Heustraat 19: "4 Wayang (koelit [sic], leather) Kr 25, and 1 Wayang (golek, wood) Kr10."[34] In Amsterdam, Teschner also acquired a book of Javanese myths and legends translated by T. J. Bezemer, which would form the basis of some of his earliest puppet shows.[35]

The artist's own description of the encounter goes far beyond the quotidian task of record-keeping. Not only do these migrant figures reignite Teschner's long-held enthusiasm for puppetry, but, in the ferment of his imagination, they propose new domains of cultural hybridity, technological

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[31] Elke Krafka has cited a handwritten note with the headings "wayang puraw" and "golek," in Teschner's 1905 workbook as evidence that he had prior knowledge of the artform. See footnote 12 in Elke Krafka, "'Alles neu insceniert!' Richard Teschners Figurentheater" in *"Mit diesen meinem zwei Händen…" Die Bühnen des Richard Teschner*, ed. Kurt Ifkovits (Österreichisches Theatermuseum, 2013), 194.

[32] Hadamowsky, "Leben und Wirken," 15.

[33] Ibid., 15. "zwischen Museumsbesuchen und Strandbummel: 'Haag…bei Bocotan endlich Wajang!'" Bocotan may refer to Bocoran in Indonesia. Or: the craft store founded in 1903 "Boeatan" in The Hague (see Cohen, *Performing Otherness*, 36).

[34] Quoted in Hadamowsky, "Leben und Wirken," 15. It is not entirely clear if this comment is the continuation of Bacher-Paulick's travel journal or taken from an alternative source.

[35] Quoted in Hans Effenberger, "Richard Teschners Indisches Theater," *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, 32, April 1, 1913, 222.

innovation, and stylistic potential. In just a few words, Teschner lays out the essential traits of his future puppets, and in so doing, details in microcosm his whole artistic project: a compelling, complex fusion of European and East Asian resources, dramatic, aesthetic, and material. In the note cited by Roessler, Teschner writes:

Discovery of the Dutch Indies. Acquaintance with wayang [sic.] figures. Reawaken the old love of puppets in another form. Synthesis: Occidental romance—Oriental style—rod technology.[36]

The idea of synthesis ripples through Teschner's project and the discourse it generates. By his own admission, Teschner sought the ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*—the coordination of multiple media in a single theatrical form—and "synthesis" can be a convenient synonym for any and all such quasi-Wagnerian projects.[37] "Synthesis" was also a watchword for various artists and movements of the early twentieth century from Wassily Kandinsky to the Wiener Werkstätte.[38] Through the lens of synthesis, puppetry is a paradigmatic art form, as it draws together dance, mime, acting, sculpture, graphic design, costume design, painting and poetry, not to mention music. Fundamental to the art form is the emergence of the puppet through the performative synthesis of its three vital terms: an inanimate object, a human animator, and an audience. Puppetry is materially synthetic too. Many

[36] An autobiographical note by Richard Teschner. Quoted in Cohen, *Performing Otherness*, 42.

[37] Teschner, "Der Figurenspiegel." Teschner describes how he turned his hand to all sorts of artistic enterprises in the "living theater" in pursuit of a "total work of art"—but on this stage, his goals were not realized. However, the "unity of style" he sought could be achieved on the puppet stage.

[38] Wassily Kandinsky's theories of intermediality and aesthetic translation are motivated by a quest for synthesis. See, for example, Kandinsky's album of poetry and woodcuts *Klänge*. The Museum of Modern Art in New York holds a copy in its collection, published by Piper Verlag in Munich in 1912 or. 1913. The artistic collective, the Wiener Werkstätte, was driven by the *Gesamtkunstwerk* imperative as they sought an aesthetic where the arts and everyday life became one. The following quotation is attributed to the painter Koloman Moser, one of the founders of the Wiener Werkstätte: "Simplicity lies not in omission, but in synthesis." Cited by Peter Clericuzio, "The Wiener Werkstätte," *The Art Story*, first published May 16, 2017, accessed January 19, 2022, https://www.theartstory.org/movement/wiener-werkstatte/.

varieties of puppet object are comprised of different kinds of materials to make singular creatures, whose seeming organic veneer goes some way towards glossing their Frankensteinian construction. As I described at the outset of this dissertation, certain joints of the marionette, for instance, are made from both organic and manmade materials, wood and leather, rope and panel pins. Zooming out from the substance of a material to its broader cultural context, such alloys can weave a further layer of critical synthesis.[39]

The material and performative synthesis proposed by Teschner is embedded within another kind of synthesis, a cultural one, a fusion of "Occidental romance" and "Oriental style." This provocative pair is a product of a Euro-centric worldview, where the term "oriental" refers to people and goods from a shifting geographical region, the limits of which are determined by the east-ward ventures (both real and imagined) of "the Occident."[40] Today, "oriental" is a pejorative term that elides the diversity of traditions and cultures of the many countries and populations encompassed within the entirely hegemonic limits of the concept. In 1911, such terms were common parlance. Teschner's notion of "Occidental romance" bespeaks his own orientalist perspective rather than any specific or tangible form of influence on his puppet vision, invoking the sedimented fascination of the West with a homogeneous, undifferentiated East, within which *Wayang* puppets are subsumed alongside the Japanese artistry that so inspired the members of the Viennese Secession.[41] Indeed, upon their importation to the West, *Wayang* puppets shed their

[39] Gavin Williams' work on shellac, a material essential to the gramophone industry, exemplies this kind of analytic approach. See Gavin Williams, "Shellac as Musical Plastic," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 72, 3 (Fall 2021): 463-500.

[40] Edward W. Said conceived the term "orientalism" to describe Western modes of representing and consuming the East. See *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

[41] On the relationships between the arts and crafts movement and East Asian art, see Seligmann, "Richard Teschner."

identities, and with them, the veneration they inspired. In the words of puppetry scholar Matthew Isaac Cohen, whilst "custom and taboo" have curtailed radical experimentation with *Wayang* in Java until recent decades, "no such restrictions impinged on European modernists," who deemed the tradition "an iconographic alternative to naturalism."[42] It is generally acknowledged that Teschner treated *Wayang* in this way. The actor and writer Hans Effenberger, for example, in an article from 1913, remarks that Teschner "freely translated the Javanese silhouette into plastic and placed it on a small stage, which is provided with all the effects of modern theater direction."[43]

While "Oriental style" may refer generally to the shape and coloring, form and costuming of *Wayang* puppets, Teschner singles out another of their attributes, namely their control mechanism: their "rod technology." Effenberger elaborates:

> It was not the exotic that captivated him as a stimulus for a lame imagination, he was seized by the intimacy of the figures, which cannot be surpassed in such primitive material, their wonderful, almost three-dimensional ornamentation attracted him, the mobility through chopsticks from below interested him as a technical problem and the beautiful, puppet-like line of gestures seduced him.[44]

So what was so appealing to Teschner about this kind of rod-based puppet mechanism? The answer to this question goes to the very heart of Teschner's entire puppet enterprise.

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[42] Cohen, *Performing Otherness*, 38.

[43] Effenberger, "Richard Teschners Indisches Theater," 221 ("Er hat die javanische Silhouette frei ins Plastische übersetzt und in eine kleine Bühne gestellt, die mit allen Effekten moderner Theaterregie versehen ist.")

[44] Ibid., 221. ("Nicht das Exotische als Anregung einer lahmen Phantasie fesselte ihn, ihn ergriff die nicht zu überbietende, in so primitives Material gebannte Innerlichkeit der Gestalten, ihre wundervolle, fast plastisch wirkende Ornamentik zog ihn an, die Beweglichkeit durch Stäbchen von unten interessierte ihn als technisches Problem und die schöne, marionettenhaft nie erreichte Linie der Gesten verführte ihn.")

Hands and Strings

The red thread of puppetry through the early years of Teschner's creative career connects various prominent artists and cultural institutions, rough sketches in his workbooks and projects in their embryonic stages. One of his best-known puppet figures, Zipzip, graces the pages of the 1903 sketchbook, for example, while designs for his first puppet theater structure, the *Goldener Schrein*, appear in their nascent stages the following year.[45] In the 1905 workbook, there are even references to a collection of *Wayang* figures housed at the Natural History Museum in Vienna, as well as designs for characters in Maurice Maeterlink's *Der Tod des Tintagiles* and Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Der Tor und der Tod*. References in 1904 and 1905 refer to a collaboration for a travelling marionette theater with the novelist Gustav Meyrink, with possible involvement from the Wiener Werkstätte, but the plans were never realized.[46] In the 1906 workbook, sketches of a second prototype for his original puppet stage appear. In that same year, theater director Emil Geyer approached Teschner as a partner for a puppet theater in Prague and the earliest exhibitions of Teschner's sculptures and figurines were held in Karlovy Vary, Prague, and Reichenburg.[47] It was also during this year, 1906, in

[45] For more on Zipzip, see Renate Vergeiner, "Im Spiegel: Richard Teschners Figurinen und Sein Figurenspiegel" in *Inselräume: Teschner, Klimt & Folge am Attersee*, ed. Alfred Weidinger (Seewalchen: Vereinigung Secession LXXXVIII, 1989), 95.

[46] Teschner is immortalised as the character Zwakh in Meyrink's novel, *The Golem*. Founded in 1903 by the painter and graphic designer Koloman Moser and the architect Josef Hoffmann, the Wiener Werkstätte was dedicated to the applied arts, exploring the possibilities for contemporary design with functionality. Although Teschner was involved with the association for several years on and off, he was ultimately unsuited to the shared work environment, especially the machine noise. See Alfred Weidinger, "Richard H. Teschner. Eine Kurzbiographie. Leben und Werk," *Inselräume: Teschner, Klimt, & Flöge am Attersee* (Seewalchen: Vereinigung Secession LXXXVIII, 1989), 100.

[47] "Reichenberg" is the German name for the Czech town of Liberec, though there are also two German towns of the same name in Bavaria and Rhineland-Palatinate. On the exhibitions, see Weidinger, "Richard H. Teschner," 100.

Prague that Teschner realized the figures he had designed for Hoffmansthal's play in his first major puppet production for which he used string puppets (i.e. marionettes).[48]

Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, there were traditionally two species of the Austro-German puppet: string and hand. In his 1951 article *Das ABC des Handpuppenspiels*, puppet historian Hans Purschke asserts the importance of distinguishing between Handpuppenspiel und Marionettentheater.[49] Hand puppets involve a direct connection between the puppet and the puppeteer, to such an extent that the puppet is part of the puppeteer and the puppeteer is the very substance of the puppet. As such, they share a soul. The hand puppet is taken over by the puppeteer and is "active" in the sense that the puppeteer is coterminous with the puppet; and so her actions, the very fabric of the performance, are also those of the object. The marionette, by contrast, is controlled from above, at a distance. Purschke describes the marionette's strings as "nerve-strands" (*Nervenstränge*) that transmit energy "both physically and mentally."[50] As such, the strings not only draw specific gestures from the marionette but also imbue it with a more holistic sensibility or disposition. Where the hand puppet is described by Purschke as "active," the marionette, Purschke observes, is "passive and incapable of active movements."[51] This does not mean, however, that the marionette has no will of its own. Quite the contrary, in fact. The marionette is impenetrable. Purschke writes that the marionette is "absolutely self-contained."[52]

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[48] See Cohen, "Contemporary Wayang in Global Contexts," *Asian Theatre Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (2007), 345.

[49] Hans R. Purschke, "Das ABC des Handpuppenspiels" in Purschke, *Über das Puppenspiel und seine Geschichte* (Frankfurt/M.: Puppen und Masken, 1983), 13.

[50] Ibid., 13.

[51] Ibid., 13.

[52] "Sie ist etwas absolut Selbständiges." Ibid., 13.

Unlike the hand puppet, whose movements are directly those of the puppeteer's, the puppeteer of a marionette cannot impose its gestures, but rather can only draw out what is already latent in the puppet's body. According to Purschke, the puppeteer may manipulate the marionette, but only as the puppet wishes; it dictates the mode of interaction and determines its own "artistic laws" (künstlerischen Gesetze).[53] Purschke concludes that the hand puppet show is "a show of the player through the puppet," while the marionette theater presents "a show of the puppet."[54] We might conclude that the hand puppet show opens up a hybrid, fantastical world where the human performer is reconfigured in its meeting with an inanimate object, whereas the marionette, as a law unto itself, constructs a closed and coherent world that can realize its own version of conventional theatrical production. Thus, Purschke concludes, marionette theater can be understood as an analogue for human theater.

Beyond Compare

Yet a small version of the human stage is exactly what Teschner *wasn't* looking to achieve with his own puppet theater. Teschner was entirely committed to the idea that his puppet theater should be an art form unto itself. This imperative enveloped the *mise-en-scène* and other aspects of theatrical presentation, the material and technological attributes of his puppets and their mode(s) of expression, and the very experience of attending one of Teschner's shows. Whilst diverse influences and affinities might be observed, comparisons miss the point, imitations are irrelevant. Indeed, Teschner considered comparison between the conventional stage and the puppet stage ultimately

[53] Ibid., 13.

[54] "Das Handpuppenspiel ist ein Spiel des Spielers *durch* die Puppe….Marionettentheater ist ein Spiel *der* Puppe." Ibid., 13.

detrimental to the latter, and even reflected that his own experience of the impenetrability of the Viennese theatrical scene might have had a silver lining. In an autobiographical account of his career published in 1938, and focused especially on his relationship (or lack thereof) with state funding, Teschner ponders the idea that perhaps never having been engaged to design for Vienna's "'big' stage" was "a good thing; because in this way I was able to achieve a stylistic entity 'on a small scale' with my puppet stage."[55] Self-preservation and bravado no doubt play a part here, but it also makes sense that Teschner's exclusion from the mainstream theaters would focus his creative energies on the possibilities of the miniature stage and motivate him further to develop an independent theatrical form.

In the words of the critic Karl Marilaun in 1919, six years before the first real season of Teschner's Golden Shrine,

> What distinguishes Teschner's 'Marionetten' from similar dolls…is that no attempt was made to imitate real "theater" and that the little more than hand-high figures were by no means intended to be the most deceptive imitation of real, living comedians, which is absurd.[56]

Such absurdity, however, is realized time and again in other puppet theaters, where the ambitions and results of human theater are sought on the small-scale. According to Teschner, whom Marilaun quotes later in the same piece, it is the "cardinal error" of the puppet theater to imitate—and so defer to—the life-size theater, as such an agenda limits the aesthetic scope of puppetry to the comic, the playful and toy-like. Teschner's own observations are quoted by Marilaun:

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[55] Teschner, "Der Figurenspiegel" ("Arbeiten für die 'große' Bühne blieben mir in Wien versagt—aber vielleicht war es gut so; denn so konnte ich 'im kleinen' mit meiner Marionettenbühne zu einer Stileinheit gelangen, die schon Alfred Roller lobend hervorhob.")

[56] Karl Marilaun, 'Die Figuren Richard Teschners.' *Neues Wiener Journal*. Mittagsblatt, December 13, 1919 ("Was Teschners "Marionetten" von ähnlichen Puppen aber allem unterscheidet, ist, daß hier keineswegs eine Nachahmung wirklichen "Theaters" versucht wurde, und daß die nicht viel mehr als handhohen Figuren auf keinen Fall als möglichst täuschende Nachahmung wirklicher, lebender Komödianten—was nämlich ein Unding ist—gedacht wurden.")

[T]he director of a marionette stage believed that he had reach the ultimate perfection by having the revolving stage built into his puppet theater on a smaller scale. So the audience, even if they come to the theater with the best of intentions, must get the impression of a diminutive, of something dwarf-like, a kind of children's dollhouse, and it is made difficult for them from the start to take the matter seriously.[57]

"To take the matter seriously" was high on Teschner's aesthetic agenda. His were not shows for children, but rather high-minded fare for often carefully selected elites. And as we have already seen, there is one seminal commentary on the puppet theater that very much espouses Teschner's position: Heinrich von Kleist's "Über das Marionettentheater" of 1810. In a 1920 article on Teschner for *Moderne Welt*, the painter and art critic Adalbert Seligmann observes in Teschner's puppets the gracefulness attributed by Kleist to the gravity-obeying limbs of the puppet. According to Seligmann, though, there are limits: puppets cannot execute "certain simple movements, such as that of natural stepping," or other finer motor skills.[58] As Seligmann puts it, "either they float or they bounce."[59] Such limitations do not preclude enjoyment, but they are antithetical to the notion that Teschner's work marks "the beginning of a new stage art."[60] Rather, Seligmann concludes that Teschner's theater does not propose a new kind of theatrical art, but an all-inclusive form of visual art. At the end of this article, Seligmann writes:

The spectator stimulated to the highest expectations prepares himself for a worldview and finds [in Teschner's work] an arts and crafts exhibition. Not as if I wanted to belittle Teschner's

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[57] Marilaun, 'Die Figuren Richard Teschners" ("So glaubte zum Beispiel der Direktor einer Marionettenbühne, die letzte Vollendung erreicht zu haben, indem er sich vom Erfinden der Drehbühne eine solche in verkleinertem Maßstab in sein Puppentheater einbauen ließ. So muß also das Publikum, auch wenn es mit den besten Absichten in das Theater kommt, den Eindruck von einem Diminutiv, von etwas Zwerghaftem einer Art Puppenstube der Kinder, bekommen und es wird ihm von vornherein schwer gemacht, die Sache ernst zu nehmen.")

[58] See Seligmann, "Richard Teschner."

[59] "Entweder sie schweben oder sie hüpfen." Ibid., 9.

[60] "den Beginn einer neuen Bühnenkunst." Ibid., 9.

achievements. On the contrary! Rather, they [Teschner's shows] can only really be judged according to their merit if one looks at them for what they really are: as artisan creations in which everything that falls into the realm of art, i.e. the depiction of figures, landscapes, etc., not only appears to be perfectly and virtuosically mastered from a technical point of view, but also from an intellectual point of view, so that on the one hand these works meet all the requirements that can be placed on an object of craftsmanship, but can also still be considered 'works of art' in the higher sense, as works of art in which a versatile, profoundly playful and poetic artistic nature expresses itself in a highly unique way, modern with taste, ingenious in conception and virtuosically-secure in technique.[61]

For Seligmann—and countless others—Teschner's plays must be understood entirely on their own terms. Recourse to any other art form risked diminishing—or missing entirely—the aesthetic experience on offer in Teschner's shows.

Seligmann's assessment of Teschner's puppetry as visual art echoes a position Teschner himself elaborated in a 1906 letter to Paul Brann, the founder of the Marionettentheater Münchner Künstler. With the prospect of a collaboration with Brann on the cards, Teschner made sure to lay out his frustrations with European puppet traditions, in particular their submissive relationship to the actor's theater and conveys his enthusiasm for an artistically motivated puppet theater. Quoting himself (in a previous letter to an undisclosed recipient), Teschner writes:

An artist puppet theater would be something like a theater for poetry, wouldn't it? Everything would be art! The figures are symbols, artistic sculptures with golden hair, enamel eyes and with strictly restrained movements. No real person you know is actually called Löwe or Mayer. Then the scenes! Backdrops that don't want to represent anything other than just backdrops, with beautifully stylized

[61] "Der zu den höchsten Erwartungen angeregte Beschauer macht sich auf eine Weltanschauung gefaßt und findet eine Kunstgewerbeausstellung. Nicht als ob ich dadurch die Leistungen Teschners herabsetzen wollte. Ganz im Gegenteil! Sie können vielmehr erst recht nach Verdienst gewertet werden, wenn man sie als das ansieht, was sie wirklich sind: als kunstgewerbliche Schöpfungen, an denen alles, was ins Gebiet der eigentlichen Kunst schlägt, also die Darstellung von Figuren, Landschaften use., nicht nur in technischer Hinsicht vollkommen und meisterlich beherrscht erscheint, sondern auch in geistiger, so daß diese Werke einerseits allen Anforderungen entsprechen, die man an einen kunstgewerblichen Gegenstand stellen kann, außerdem aber noch als "Kunstwerke" im höheren Sinne gelten können, als Kunstwerke, in denen ein vielseitiges, tiefsinnig-spielerisches und poetisches Künstlernaturell sich höchst eigenartig äußert, und zwar modern mit Geschmack, geistvoll in der Konzeption und virtuos-gediegen in der Technik." Ibid., 10.

trees and backgrounds, calm and in proportion like tapestries, and in addition the solemn speech of a poet and, as an undertone, perhaps the tones of a guitar or harp??[62]

Teschner sought a theater without recourse to the human stage, but rather an enlivened manifestation of the fine arts, something like a *tableau vivant*, a painted world of beguiling beauty, populated by enchanting figurines of fairytale and fantastical species, many of whom have "been living a two-dimensional life in one or another of [his] pictures."[63] The scene is set with the angelic sound of light strumming, and the drama may be underpinned with verse. Importantly, any "solemn speech" would not be attached to the sculpted bodies on stage but articulated by an extradiegetic narrator in the manner of melodrama. Ultimately, a joint venture with Brann was never realized. Perhaps, as with other failed collaborations, Teschner and Brann had conflicting ideas about the ideal means of puppet expression, especially the question of voice.

Silent Gestures

Teschner had no interest in giving voice, in the literal sense, to his puppets. And his rationale was quite straightforward. Simply put, puppets *are* mute; as silent objects, they can't be anything but mute. Their wooden bodies do not produce a voice, so why would they need one from elsewhere?

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[62] Letter from Richard Teschner to Paul Brann, undated [between May and July 1906]. München, Archiv der Sammlung Puppentheater/Schaustellerei des Münchner Stadtmuseums, Akte Paul Brann 469. Reprinted and transcribed *in "Mit diesen meinem zwei Händen…" Die Bühnen des Richard Teschner*, ed. Kurt Ifkovits (Österreichisches Theatermusum, 2013), 62–65 ("Ein künstler. Marionettentheater wäre, so was wie [d.] Theater für Lyrik, nicht? Alles wäre Kunst! Die Figuren Symbole, künstlerische Bildwerke mit goldenen Haaren, Emailaugen und mit streng verhaltenen Bewegungen. Keine wirklichen Menschen von denen man weiß, dass sie eigentlich Löwe oder Mayer heißen. Dann die Szenen! Coulissen die nichts anderes vorstellen wollen, als eben nur Coulissen, mit schön stilisierten Bäumen und Hintergründe, ruhig und groß wirkend wie Gobelins, und dazu die getragene Rede eines Dichters und als Unterton vielleicht die Töne einer Gitarre oder Harfe??")

[63] Teschner, "Das Schauspielerensemble der Marionetten. Mein Figurentheater." ("So führten die meisten meiner "Personen" schon längst ein zweidimensionale Leben auf dem einen oder anderen meiner Bilder.")

"[H]ow should they be able to talk," Teschner wrote in *Die Pause*, "since they are made of wood and no-one has yet come up with the absurd idea of incorporating vinyl records or loudspeakers into them."[64]

For Teschner, the habit of attaching human voices to puppets was not only an evasion of the puppet's natural mode of expression: more than this, the human voice and the puppet are mis-matched on both scalic and material levels: one is of the flesh, while the other is wooden; one is life-sized, while the other is miniature.[65] Teschner would describe the inadequacy and ultimate futility in vocalized branches of puppetry as follows:

In the endeavor to copy the great theater only very accurately, real, life-sized human voices are put in the mouths of decimeter-sized figures and a chapel consisting of numerous people makes their music. The viewer unconsciously feels a disproportion. The small figures and the life-sized human voices, the overly loud music somehow doesn't go together in format and it looks monstrous. The poor dolls, however flexible and virtuosic they are, struggle to assert themselves so they look funny, even embarrassingly inadequate, to imitate reality.[66]

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[64] Richard Teschner, "Teschner über sich selbst" ["Teschner about/on himself] in *Die Pause*, Wien. 6 H. 4, 1941. Reprinted in Klaus Behrendt et al. *Der Figurenspiegel Richard Teschner* [Richard Teschner – Figure Mirror] (Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1991), 6-9, here 8. ("[W]ie sollten sie auch reden können, da sie doch aus Holz sind und noch niemand auf den abwegigen Einfall gekommen ist, ihnen Schallplatten oder Lautsprecher einzbauen.")

[65] See Teschner, "Teschner über sich selbst." Teschner describes the incompatibility between the life-size human voice and the wooden puppet in terms of format and style, which I read as material and scale. He makes a similar assertion in an earlier publication, "Der Figurenspiegel": "I have turned off the human language for artistic reasons. I have always had the feeling that the natural and 'life-size' voice of the speakers behind it fits neither in style nor in format to the under life-sized puppet" ("Ich hatte von jeher die Empfindung, daß die natürliche und 'lebens-große' Stimme der dahinterstehenden Sprecher weder im Stil noch im Format zu den unterlebensgroßen Marionette paßt.")

[66] Teschner quoted in Marilaun, 'Die Figuren Richard Teschners." ("Dazu kommt noch dieses in dem Bestreben, das große Theater nur recht genau zu kopieren, werden den dezimetergroßen Figuren richtige, lebensgroße Menschenstimmen in den Mund gelegt und eine aus zahlreichen Menschen bestehende Kapelle macht ihre Musik dazu. Unbewußt fühlt da der Zuschauer ein Mißverhältnis. Die kleinen Figuren und die lebensgroßen Menschenstimmen dazu die überlaute Musik, das geht im Format irgendwie nicht zusammen und wirkt monströs. Die armen Puppen mögen noch so gelenkig sein und sich noch so virtuos abstrampeln—sie haben Mühe, sich zu behaupten, sie wirken als komisch, ja peinlich unzulängliche Nachahmung einer Wirklichkeit.")

As we know, Teschner was not concerned with imitating reality—in fact, he was decidedly against that particular goal. What Teschner perceived as aesthetic incongruity, however, others found satisfyingly entertaining.

Indeed, Teschner's position on voice was not without controversy. For example, Arnold Höllriegel, the pseudonym of Richard Arnold Bermann (1883–1939), author of *Charles Chaplin at Home* and Max Goldschmidt's documentary *Die Filmstadt Hollywood*, took exception to what he perceived as a lack of poetry in Teschner's art form. Höllriegel and Teschner had a brief exchange via Höllriegel's column "Wiener Notizbuch" in *Die Stunde* and less than a handful of letters, regarding the role of voice and language in the *Figurenspiegel* plays.[67] Höllriegel uses rather uncompromising language to express his distaste for the silence of Teschner's figures: "Whenever I've seen one of his performances, I've been blown away by the beauty and originality of his characters—and, gentlemen, repelled by the deadness, which he left them to speak."[68] For Höllriegel, a lack of voice was tantamount to a lack of life—a sentiment not incongruous with the thesis of this dissertation. Enamored by their appearance, but horrified by their expression, Höllriegel further declared he would only be able to enjoy Teschner's art if he learned that "a real poet is working with the master."[69]

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[67] There are two entries in Höllriegel's column, the first dated November 6, 1937, and the second November 14, 1937, related to issues of puppetry. The November 6 column refers to the dolls of the Viennese sculpture Hanna Gärtner and their resonance with actors in Hollywood—dubbed "Dollywood" by Charlie Chaplin, according to Höllriegel—and the medium of cinema more broadly. The November 14 entry addresses the plays of Teschner directly.

[68] Arnold Höllriegel, "Wiener Notizbuch," *Die Stunde*, November 11, 1937. ("So oft ich eine seiner Aufführungen gesehen habe, war ich hingerissen von der Schönheit und Originalität seiner Figürchen—und, misters, abgestoßen von den Toten, die er sie sprechen ließ.")

[69] Ibid. ("…mit dem Meister ein wirklicher Dichter zusammenarbeitet.")

Teschner's side of the exchange is more robust than Höllriegel's brief remarks, presumably motivated by a desire to defend his work. In his first letter to Höllriegel, Teschner states quite simply that he has never been convinced by the compatibility of the "life-sized natural human voice" and the puppet, the "small moving fictional character."[70] He declared that no words should be uttered by wooden mouths—not even Goethe's. In his second letter to Höllriegel, Teschner elaborates on the nature of poetry. Whilst Höllriegel is "a man of words…I am an eye-person," Teschner writes.[71] For Teschner, poetry is of "colours and lights" (*die Poesie der Farben und des Lichtes*). When puppets talk, words dominate and movement fades:

You will not believe how easy it is to play with talking puppets, they just need to wiggle their heads or raise their hands—and the listener will believe everything they say—the spoken word will do anything. You can convince yourself of this. If you close your ears in a normal puppet show, you will see how little movement is left in the figures.[72]

Far from being a lack, for Teschner muteness is a presence that stimulates new modes of expression, that could give rise to "an international theater that everyone understands" (*ein internationales Theater, das jeder versteht*).

In a later article, Teschner describes the vocality of his own puppets as follows:

…as a professional painter and sculptor and a pronounced visual person, I always had the feeling that the style and format of the "life-size" natural human voices that were foisted on the small

[70] "die lebensgroße natürliche Menschenstimme im Format nicht zur kleinen bewegten *Kunst*figur paßt." Letter from Teschner to Höllreigel, 17. November 1937.

[71] "Sie sind ein Mann des Wortes, und ich bin ein Augenmensch." Letter from Teschner to Höllreigel, 20. November 1937.

[72] Ibid. "Sie werden nicht glauben, wie *leicht* es ist, mit sprechenden Marionetten zu spielen, dieselben brauchen nur ein wenig mit dem Kopf zu wackeln oder eine Hand zu heben—und der Zuhörer glaubt ihr alles was sie sagt—das dazu gesprochene Wort besorgt alles. Sie können sich davon selbst überzeugen. Wenn Sie sich bei einer normalen Marionettenvorführung die Ohren zuhalten., werden Sie sehen, wie wenig dann an Bewegungsausdruck bei den Figuren übrig bleibt. Bezeichnenderweise legen die Durchschnittsmarionettenspieler ihr Hauptaugenmark auf das Gehen der Figuren und sind stolz darauf, wenn ihre Helden schön und ganz "natürlich"—eins-zwei—auf-und-abmarschieren."

artificial figures of marionette theater [sic.] were not quite appropriate. That's how I got around to staging my mostly self-written plays as pure pantomimes, only with a soft background music. I'm well aware that I'm making the task considerably more difficult for myself and my two employees because we are forced by the absence of speech and counter-speech to really express the entire action with our mute characters through movement and gestures alone. We also need to assume a significant level of co-creative imagination in our viewers.[73]

Here Teschner can be understood to lay out the tripartite performance model from which the life of the puppet emerges: the object itself, the puppeteer, and the audience—with, quite crucially, their imagination playing an active role. Yet Teschner observes that he has subtracted a component common across manifestations of this model from his own realization of the puppet paradigm, namely the voice. Whilst his rejection of voice eschews the vocal propensities of puppets across European traditions, from the marionette theatre to the Kasperltheater, it also flies in the face of the exotic art form Teschner encountered on his honeymoon, Javanese *Wayang*. In *Wayang*, the *dalang* (master puppeteer) is a virtuoso vocalist, endowing each of their puppets with its own accent and improvising fast, witty dialogue with apparent effortlessness. Yet even as Teschner dismissed one aspect of *Wayang*, he fully embraced the art form in other ways—and in particular, the control mechanism of the *Wayang* tradition that enabled Teschner to communicate so effectively through gesture and movement alone. As Teschner acknowledges, his stipulation of silence presents an additional challenge for the puppeteer, but with the help of *Wayang*, this is efficiently remedied.

[73] "Als zünftiger Maler und Bildhauer und ausgesprochener Augenmensch hatte ich aber immer das Gefühl, daß den kleinen Kunstfiguren des Maronettentheaters [sic.] die ihnen unterschobenen 'lebensgroßen' natürlichen Menschenstimmen in Stil und Format nicht ganz angemessen sind. So kam ich dazu, meine durchwegs selbstverfaßen Theaterstücke in absichtlicher Beschränkung als reine Pantomimen, lediglich mit einer leisen Musikuntermalung aufzuführen. Ich bin mir wohl bewußt, daß ich damit mir und meinen beiden Mitarbeiterinnen die Aufgabe ganz erheblich erschwere, denn wir sind durch den Wegfall von Rede und Gegenrede gezwungen, mit unseren stummen Figuren nun wirklich die ganze Handlung allein durch Bewegung und Gesten auszudrücken. Auch müssen wir bei unseren Zuschauern ein bedeutendes Maß an mitschaffender Phantasie voraussetzen." Teschner, "Teschner über sich selbst."

Rods of Expression

In that encounter in The Hague, it was not only the aesthetic appeal of the *Wayang* puppets that so inspired Teschner; indeed, the "Occidental romance" and "Oriental style" were seemingly cemented in a concrete element, the "rod technology." Teschner's puppets, slim-limbed figures of usually fourteen to eighteen inches in height, are controlled by thin black rods attached to the hands (see Fig. 5.2).[74] A third rod controls the head, neck, and trunk. From the perspective of the audience, the rods are visible to different degrees depending on scene, its lighting and theatrical effects, though Teschner made no explicit attempt to conceal them.[75] These rods enable a precision of movement that the marionette, so much more familiar to European audiences at the time (and possibly today), does not and cannot possess. As the ethologist Otto Koenig describes it, the model of manipulation of *Wayang golek* presented Teschner with the opportunity to move away from the "nervous agitation" and "dangling motion" of the marionette and towards a more articulated and soulful "*grand geste*."[76]

[74] Measurements in Bil Baird, *The Art of the Puppet* (New York : Macmillan Co., 1965), 162. The anonymous author of an article for *Die Bühne* states that the figures are up to half a meter in height but appear much larger "within the mirror circle" (innerhalb des Spiegelrundes). "Professor Richard Teschners Figurenspiegel," *Die Bühne*, Heft 473, Erstes Juniheft, 1938.

[75] Cohen observes that the puppeteers Nina Simonovich-Efimova and Ivan Efimov, Russian contemporaries of Teschner's, were also inspired by *Wayang golek*, potentially by Teschner's own creations. Where Teschner left the rods visible, however, the Efimovs "did not believe that rods attached to the arms should be visible, so they attached them at the elbows and hid them in the folds of garments—thus sacrificing some of the scope of Javanese rod puppet arm movement for a greater degree of illusionism. They also continued to insert a finger into the puppet heads in the manner of Petrushka carnival puppetry, rather than articulating the head with a central rod." Cohen, Contemporary *Wayang* in Global Contexts, 350.

[76] Otto Koenig, quoted in "Richard Teschner's Figure Theater," *Theater Arts* Monthly, Vol. XII, No. 7, July 1928.



Figure 5.2 Teschner's Mary puppet and her rods

Yet Teschner did not shun the technology of the marionette altogether: rather, he moved the strings inside. The strings are the component of the control mechanism that are concealed. Of his figures, Teschner writes:

The Teschner figures cannot be counted either as rod or stick puppets or as string puppets. Their principle of movement is a union of the rod and thread principles. The figure as a whole and the arms and hands are guided on thin black bars from below; head, neck, the trunk and the legs are moved by threads running inside the figure.[77]

While the puppet's body and each arm are manipulated by thin black rods, cat gut strings run down through the figure and to the end of the rods, where they are attached to small glass beads, which

[77] Richard Teschner, "Notiz," Österreichisches Theatermuseum HS_VM930Te. Quoted in Krafka, "'Alles neu insceniert!'," 184. ("Die Teschner-Figuren kann man weder zu den Stab- oder Stock-Puppen noch zu den Schnürchen-Marionetten zählen. Ihr Bewegungsprincip ist eine Vereinigung der Stäbchen und des Faden-Princips. Die Figur als Ganzes und die Arme samt den Händen werden an dünnen schwarzen Stäben von unten geführt, Kopf, Hals, der Rumpf und die Beine warden durch Fäden, die im Innern der Figur laufen, bewegt.")

control the finer movements of the head, neck, trunk, and legs (see Fig. 5.3).[78] The result: an accurately nuanced gestural language born of a material synthesis of European and Javanese puppet technologies, one that both creates the conditions for and attenuates the challenges of the puppets' silence.[79]

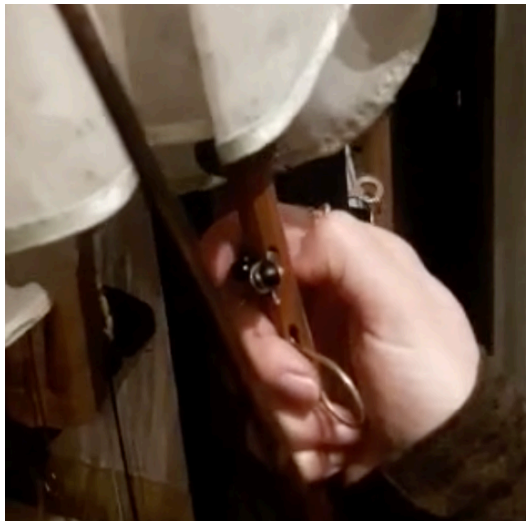


Figure 5.3 Teschner's mechanism of rods and concealed strings

Indeed, the muteness and movements of Teschner's puppets are far from mutually exclusive. Teschner's choice of communicative medium for his puppets is entirely bound up with

[78] American puppeteer Bil Baird was able to get close enough to Teschner's theater to observe the mechanism directly, which he describes thus: "Each head was mounted on a double pivot inside and could be inclined sideways or nodded up and down by sutures which entered the tube at the neck and left it below the flanges, each one belayed by a clove hitch through a small bead. The thumb and forefinger could thus handle all head motion." Baird, *The Art of the* Puppet, 162.

[79] Across the literature, both scholarly and journalistic, there is much commentary on the appearance of Teschner's puppets, including their physiognomy (especially his insistence on the presence of genitalia) and their clothing. Alys X. George traces the development of the puppet's construction from the relatively simple *Wayang golek* model to the more complex joint and limb arrangements of Teschner's later dancing figures. See Alys X George, "Körpersprache, Maskenspiel. Richard Teschners Figurentheater und die Wiener Tanzkultur der Zwischenkriegszeit" in Kurt Ifkovits (ed.), *"Mit diesen meinem zwei Händen…" Die Bühnen des Richard Teschner* (Österreichisches Theatermusum, 2013), 158-167. For an English-language analysis of the Princess puppet from *The Princess and the Water-Elf*, for example, see Nathan Timpano, *Constructing the Viennese Modern Body: Art, Hysteria, and the Puppet* (London: Routledge, 2017), 139-141.

his choice of control mechanism for them. These characteristics of Teschner's puppets are interdependent—the mechanism the solution for the muteness; the muteness the potentiality of the mechanism—and together, they account for much of the perceived uniqueness of Teschner's puppets, the critical distance Teschner secures from the conventional theater.

In what he himself described as an "interpretation" of Teschner's life and work, Roessler invokes Kleist's essay to justify these defining, interrelated characteristics of Teschner's puppets—their muteness and their movement. Roessler writes that Kleist was likely "the first to state the remarkable fact that the—unfortunately, all too often misunderstood—art of puppet theater has nothing to do with the psychological drama tired to the word, but that it is essentially an almost perfect art of rhythmic movement and the possible expression of thoughts and feelings through movement."[80] Roessler continues:

The same knowledge gained from deliberate experience and the extremely fine sense of style for the peculiarity of the expression given to the puppet prompted Richard Teschner to completely dispense with the spoken word in his figure plays. He does not speak for his multifaceted figures, but rather lets them speak for themselves and only through this infinitely gestural movement, which, pantomimically, is able to express almost everything that fills the human brain and heart. This alone distinguishes fundamentally and practically Teschner's otherwise incomparable and highly artistic puppet show from the conventional puppet show performed by German, Flemish, French and Italian puppeteers.[81]

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[80] Roessler, *Richard Teschner*, 27. ("Der, als Genie ebenso große wie als Mensch unglückliche Dichter Heinrich von Kleist, der in seinem geistvollen Aufsatz "Über das Marionettentheater" wohl das Tiefste, was das deutsche Schrifttum über das Puppenspiel enthält, geschrieben hat, stellte als erster die bemerkenswerte Tatsache fest, daß die—leider allzu oft mißverstandene—Kunst des Marionettentheater smit der an das Wort gebundenen psychologishen Dramatik nichts zu tun hat, sondern daß sie ihrem Wesen nach eine fast vollkommene Kunst der rhythmischen Bewegung und des durch Bewegung möglichen Ausdrucks von Gedanken und Gefühlen ist.")

[81] Ibid., 27–28. ("Die aus überlegender Erfahrung gewonnene gleiche Erkenntnis und das überaus feine Stilgefühl für die Eigenart des Ausdrucks, die der Marionette gegeben ist, veranlaßte Richard Teschner zum gänzlichen Verzicht auf das gesprochene Wort in seinen Figurenspielen. Er spricht nicht für seine vielgestaltigen Figuren, er läßt sie vielmehr allein für sich sprechen und zwar nur durch ihre unendlich gebärdenreiche Bewegtheit, die pantomimisch schier alles auszudrücken vermag, was des Menschen Hirn und Herz erfüllt. Schon dadurch allein unterscheidet sich grundsätzlich und praktisch Teschners, auch sonst unvergleichliches und hochkünsterlisches

The muteness of Teschner's puppets, the wordlessness of his plays: this is the key characteristic that really sets Teschner's puppetry apart and ensures a radical distance from not only the conventional theater but other forms of puppetry too.

For example, in a letter to Teschner from June 1918, the artist Mileva Roller, wife of Alfred Roller, reflects on some of the differences between a marionette performance of Mozart's youthful opera *Bastien und Bastienne* and Teschner's own theater:

> Just chamber music with wriggling puppets that drag themselves through the measure and you really get the feeling that they are starting to sweat from embarrassment, what else should they do!...Your dolls are not small humans, they are creatures of their own—the thousand threads to our sensations—one believes to see something thoughtful, dreamed in a rich mirror![82]

Whilst for Seligmann, all puppets, including Teschners, only bounce or float, for Roller, this is the preserve of marionettes. In this performance of Mozart's opera, the puppets Roller encounters can do little more than wriggle. These puppets appear to be at the mercy of the music, behind the music—hardly creative of it, in the ways I discussed in Chapter Four. Given that Teschner himself is her correspondent, Roller does not take time to describe her experience of his own puppetry beyond general assertions of awe and wonder, but she leaves us in no doubt that Teschner's puppets defy comparison not only with human actors, but withbwhat she perceives as such sloppy, unarticulated puppets.

Figurenspiel vom herkömmlichen Marionettenspiel, das von deutschen, flämischen, französischen und italienischen Puppenspielern vorgeführt wird.")

[82] Mileva Roller an Richard Tescher, undat. [1918] Wien, Österreichisches Theatermuseum, HS_AM38503Te. Reprinted in *"Mit diesen meinem zwei Händen…" Die Bühnen des Richard Teschner*, ed. Kurt Ifkovits (Österreichisches Theatermusum, 2013), 224-225. ("Eben nur Kammermusik mit zappelnden Puppen, die sich im Takte abrackern, u. man bekommt wirklich das Gefühl, dass sie zu schwitzen anfangen vor Verlegenheit, was sie noch verrenken sollen!... Ihre Puppen sind keine kleinen Menschen, sie sind Geschöpfe für sich—die tausend Fäden zu unsern Empfindungen haben—man glaubt etwas Gedachtes, Geträumtes in einem reichen Spiegel zu sehen!")

Roessler is in Roller's camp, and argues, with the foil of Kleist, for the intense clarity of the movements of Teschner's puppets. In setting up the essential mechanical differences between the marionette and Teschner's puppets, Roessler observes that the marionette's strings are not straightforwardly limiting. Rather, the field and precision of movement is considerably dependent on the manipulation of the operator. Provided the operator possesses adequate skill, the marionette may be endowed with the illusion of life, albeit somewhat exaggerated or even grotesque.[83] That said, the difference in control technologies between the marionette and a puppet of Teschner's results in what Roessler describes as a "contradiction in the expression of all movements."[84] Where marionettes are controlled from above by strings, Teschner's puppets are manipulated from below by rods. As a result, the puppets' relationship with gravity—the determining factor in Kleist's analysis—is radically different to that of the marionette. Roessler describes the situation thus:

> Teschner's figures…guided by bars from below, are only temporarily freed from the gravity of the earth; as soon as pressure, impact or tension subside, they sink into gravity; but that is precisely what gives them an excellent gestural and rhythmic advantage, in so far as their movements are lifted above the imitation of the natural gestures of the body and appear monumentally stylized, which immensely increases and enhances the expressiveness artistically.[85]

In the marionette theater, the illusion of life is something for which the puppeteer strives; indeed, satisfaction is derived from attainment of such an aesthetic. In Teschner's theater, however, the dramatic aim goes beyond realism to stylization, a dramatic language unique to his puppets.

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[83] Roessler, *Richard Teschner*, 28.

[84] Ibid. ("auch eine Gegensätzlichkeit im Ausdruck aller Bewegungen").

[85] Ibid. ("Teschners Figuren hingegen, an Stäben von unten her geführt, werden nur zeitweise von der Gravität der Erde befreit, denn sobald Druck, Stoß oder Zug nachlassen, sinken sie ins Gravitätische; aber just das gereicht ihnen gestisch und rhythmisch in hervorragender Weise zum Vorteil, insoferne ihre Bewegungen dadurch über die Nachahmung der natürlichen Gebärdung des Körperlichen hinausgehoben und gleichsam monumental stilisiert erscheinen, was die Ausdruckskraft künstlerisch ungemein vermehrt und steigert.")

A further observation of Roessler's, however, appears to contradict this assertion: the rods, he argues, engender a further advantage as they allow the puppeteers to replicate their own emotions and expressions directly in their puppets. Roessler writes:

In addition, the technique used by Teschner enables the puppeteer to transfer his personal seeing and feeling, all his experience and desire for representation almost completely to the figures and obediently carry them out into the world of the astonished spectators and to let them affect them with gestures that are as measured as they are magically compelling.[86]

It would seem, then, that Teschner's puppets are especially well-disposed to imitate real life as the "rod technology" offers a parsimonious route from puppeteer to puppet, one that allows direct infusion of the object with the emotion and intent of the operator. Indeed, *so* well-disposed are these puppets that their performance is magical, beyond realistic.

Wayang as Resource, Puppetry as Music

Roessler's observation regarding the hyper-mimetic achievements of Teschner's puppets has a provocative resonance with an earlier article published in *Die Bühne* in 1941, in which the author (a certain Dr Kraißl) seems to propose the influence of *Wayang* as a means of potentially unmooring from reality. By way of introduction to his depiction of Teschner's theater, Kraißl writes the following:

Anyone who wants to assess Richard Teschner's puppet plays correctly must first avoid any comparison with the human or film stage. This is a form of art that has been freed from reality and is unique, as is a matter of course for the peoples of the Far East because they need it for salvation from the world of everyday life, chance and oppressive uncertainty. However, the European man

[86] Roessler, *Richard Teschner*, 28. ("Dazu kommt noch, daß die von Teschner angewendete Führungstechnik es dem Puppenspieler ermöglicht, sein persönliches Schauen und Fühlen, all sein Erlebnis und Darstellungsverlangen nahezu restlos auf die Figuren zu übertragen und von ihnen folgsam in die Welt der staunenden Zuschauer hinaustragen und auf sie mit ebenso maßvoller wie zauberisch zwingender Gebärde einwirken zu lassen.")

who is more strongly entangled in reality, does not easily find his way to a stylistic art in which, as in Teschner's overall oeuvre, the unifying law dominates.[87]

He begins with the by now familiar call to exceptionalism for Teschner's theater. This is straight-forward enough; but what follows is a rather strange statement, where the aesthetic freedom from "reality" enjoyed and realized by Teschner is compared to a perceived need for "salvation from the world of everyday life" experienced by peoples of the Far East. In many ways, Kraißl's logic falls neatly in line with exoticist ideas of the Other as simplistic, as attending to their needs in an instinctive and unthinking way: their oppressed existence makes them more susceptible to entertainment and escapism. It seems doubtful that the author understands the "oppressive uncertainty" endured by these peoples to be dealt by a colonial hand, however. More likely, he perceives the colonial enterprise as the salvation of the nominal Other, colonists as crusaders against what they assume to be the cruel realities of life, a different life to what they lead and so, by default, a bad one. The reality in which the "European man is more strongly entangled" is constructed by the "European man" himself and into which he casts himself as savior. So compelling is his reality that he struggles to disengage and absorb himself fully in a newly constructed, imagined world.

It is worth highlighting the fact that at this point in his analysis, Kraißl is yet to explicitly acknowledge the influence of East Asian puppetry on Teschner's own art; this comes later in the form of the usual descriptions of the puppets' handling "from below" and the visibility of their rods being akin to the "puppet guides" in *Bunraku*, who are dressed as "samurai." These nods are all quite

[87] Dr Friedrich Kraißl, "Die Geschöpfe des Magiers: Professor Richard Teschners Figurenspiegel," *Die Bühne*, Heft 22, 1941. ("Wer Richard Teschners Marionettenspiele richtig einschätzen will, muß zunächst jeden Vergleich mit der Personen- oder Filmbühne vermeiden. Es handelt sich hier um eine stark wirklichkeitsentbundene, eigenförmige Kunst, wie sie den Völkern des fernen Ostens darum selbstverständlich ist, weil sie ihrer zur Erlösung aus der Welt des Alltags, des Zufalls und der bedrückenden Ungewißheit bedürfen. Indes, der im Realen stärker berankende europäische Mensch dinget nicht so leicht den Weg zu einer Stilkunst, bei der, wie in Teschners Gesamtschaffen, das vereinheitlichende Gesetz dominiert.")

familiar and, in essence, factual. More unusual is the invocation of the Far Eastern experience of "reality," which, in its position at the outset of the article, sets up a frame through which to view Teschner's work. Both Teschner's puppetry and, apparently, Far Eastern art in general, are freed from reality. For Teschner, a European artist, this is an achievement; for Asian art, it is the default. As the influence of *Wayang* on Teschner is illuminated over the course of the article, there is an implied benefit: that *Wayang* helps secure for Teschner's art not only freedom from standard theatrical circles, but from reality itself. In short, *Wayang* is useful to Teschner. The existential scenario initially laid out by Kriaßl seems to fall by the wayside.

We have already seen this assessment of Teschner's attitude towards *Wayang* as what we might call "aesthetic-utilitarian" espoused by a contemporary of the puppeteer, Hans Effenberger, and briefly by the modern scholar Matthew Isaac Cohen. Teschner, the Efimovs, and the director and theorist of theater Edward Gordon Craig, all, according to Cohen, approach *Wayang* as a technology.[88] To make his point, Cohen cites an oft-quoted remark of Teschner's in which he invokes music-making as an appropriate standard for puppetry:

For a good and artistic puppet must be an easily playable instrument, but not a complicated machine, not a soulless automaton, so that the puppet leader can easily steer in a few easy steps. He must be able to wash away with her *as intimately as a musician with his violin*. Not even the breaking of a string can upset him, he only plays three.[89] [Emphasis added]

[88] Cohen, *Performing Otherness,* 36-47.

[89] Teschner, "Teschner über sich selbst." "Es wurde eine höchstmögliche Beweglichkeit angestrebt, aber immer mit dem Bedacht, eine Übermechanisierung zu vermeiden. Denn eine gute und künstlerische Marionette muß ein leicht spielbares Instrument sein, aber keine komplizierte Maschine, kein seelenloser Automat, so daß die der Puppenführer mit wenigen Handgriffen leight lenken kann. Er muß so innig zu einer Einheit mit ihr verwaschen können, wie etwa der Musiker mit seiner Geige. Diesen kann sogar das Reißen einer Saite nicht aus der Fassung bringen, er spielt eben dann nur auf dreien."

In his reading of this quotation within the broader context of Teschner's *oeuvre*, Cohen suggests that the kind of identification between operator and object proposed by Teschner fails to "intromit the Javanese cultural provenance of the puppets—and the decades of spiritual and artistic discipline traditionally required to bring wayang to idiomatic life."[90] In other words, Teschner's relationship with the puppet is one of ergonomic efficiency and aesthetic appeal, rather than cultural and symbolic resonance.[91]

Cohen, unsurprisingly, is not concerned with the musical nature of Teschner's analogy—but for our purposes here, this invocation of specifically musical practice as an analogy for puppetry is worthy of reflection. Not only does it hint at his own interest in music (Teschner was a builder of lutes), but Teschner's analogy echoes the remarks of Marionettenspieler on the affinity between puppetry and playing an instrument, discussed in the previous chapter.[92] Here there is a subtle escalation in the intimacy of the relationship. Marionettenspieler talk of certain material resonances—the strings of the puppet and the strings of an instrument—and the importance of a musical disposition in manipulating a puppet, in terms of rhythm and synchronization. Teschner's remark brushes over the specific affordances, material or otherwise, that might unite a puppet and a musical instrument in categorical terms but alludes to something more akin to a shared sensibility,

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[90] Cohen, *Performing Otherness,* 47.

[91] In contrast, Timpano asserts that Teschner's "hybridized puppet theater…cannot be interpreted as divorcing the polyvalence of its signs from either of its cultural contexts. First, his European-Javanese puppets are not Indonesian. Second, his Viennese marionette company cannot suppress its role in Austro-Hungarian culture as historically bound to its transcendental signified. The realization on the part of the (Viennese) viewer is what would have made Teschner's puppets so strongly metaphorical." Timpano, *Constructing the Viennese Modern Body: Art, Hysteria, and the Puppet,* 141.

[92] For a brief discussion of Teschner's lute building, see Rudolf Hopfner, "Richard Teschners, Gitarre mit zusätzlichen Basssaiten (1902)" in *"Mit diesen meinem zwei Händen…" Die Bühnen des Richard Teschner*, ed. Kurt Ifkovits (Wien: Österreichisches Theatermuseum, 2013), 72-75.

one where the object is coterminous with the operator, the physical and conceptual distance between them is erased and they become one. This is what Cohen describes as "identification."

In this sense, then, Teschner's analogy is less one between the puppet and the musical instrument, and more accurately, one between the practices of puppetry and music-making. In another sense, though, it is precisely the parallel to a musical instrument that helps ensure that the challenge presented by the puppet's muteness is overcome. To ensure maximum expression, the puppet must have the capacity for maximum mobility, and therefore, the mechanism of the puppet must be "easily playable," like an instrument. Zooming out from the material resonances between these two objects, Teschner's remark, I believe, has implications for the broader role music plays within his conception of puppetry. Music is the remedy—or better, counterpoint—for muteness.

II.

The Polyphon

London. Spring 1934. In Dorland Hall on Lower Regent Street, just south of Piccadilly Circus, fifty-two exhibitors of Austrian art, industry, travel, and sport have taken up residence for a month or so. It is the first Austrian National Exhibition to take place in London since 1906.

Amongst the exhibits stood an artefact never before seen outside of Austria, except perhaps in photographs. The artefact in question was Richard Teschner's *Figurenspiegel.* According to one reporter, Teschner's theater, and his daily performances, was one of the star exhibits:

> One of the most popular attractions of the Exhibition is Professor Teschner's marionette theatre where a special performance was given this morning. This puppet theatre of Vienna embodies a new interpretation of an ancient art. The pantomime of the dolls, which are moved from below, after the manner of Chinese and Javanese shadow figures, is traditional, but unusual lighting devices and bizarre optical effects producing fantastic patterns of shape and colour in a mirrored background have an unfamiliar quality of illusion.[93]

[93] From Private Correspondence, "London News: Austrian Exhibition," *The Scotsman*, Wednesday, May 2, 1934.

This pithy description manages to highlight many of the key features of Teschner's style, evoking the spectacular fusion of media and techniques. And praise for Teschner's work was not restricted to the press; indeed, the royal family was quite taken with the show. In May, the Queen was in attendance alongside side her daughter Anne, the Princess Royal, and Princess Alice, the mother of the Duke of Edinburgh. A write-up in *The Scotsman* reported that "the royal party saw a marionette show, "The Dragon Slayer," in the little theatre, and appeared thoroughly to enjoy the puppets. The Queen was so amused that she asked for another play, "Love's Magic," to be shown."[94] In the previous month, the Prince of Wales had ventured behind-the-scenes of Teschner's theatre. He even had a go manipulating one of the puppets. As a report from 1945 in the *Weltpresse* recalled, the Prince tried his hand for only a short time before declaring "I have to give it up because I see that this is only a business for an experienced person!"[95]

An Invisible Instrument

As much as these royal accolades might amuse, they are not the point of this story. Rather, Teschner's overseas sojourn provides the *point d'appui* for our exploration of the musical elements in his shows. Reporting on the exhibition in *The Stage*, Kathleen Hurst wrote:

> Professor Teschner considers human speech to be unsuited to marionettes by reason of their size and make-up, and he depends for his effects upon the measured and impressive gesture of the figures, which are accompanied by the strangely slow monotonous tinkle of a musical-box.[96]

[94] "Austrian Exhibition: Visited by the Queen, Princess Royal, and Princess Alice," *The Scotsman*, Tuesday, May 8, 1934.

[95] "Die magische Welt des Professors Teschner: Seit Sonntag spielt 'Der Figurenspiegel' wieder," *Weltpresse*, Dienstag, Dezember 4, 1945.

[96] Kathleen D. Hurst, "Marionettes: Teschner Puppets in London," *The Stage*, May 10, 1934.

Strange, slow, monotonous; an attempt to conjure the sound of something crystalline, metallic, or glass (here: 'tinkle'); and some sense that the music is machine-made rather than human in origin: descriptions of this nature crop up time and again in accounts of the musical component in the *Figurenspiegel*. For *Moderne Welt* in 1932, Max Hayek described it as "a soft, glassy sounding music, brought out by a mysterious, invisible instrument that sounds magical."[97] Hurst's notion that the music is mechanical is absent here, although the invisibility of the instrument, the unknown or unseen source of the music, resonates with the idea of autonomous music and instruments that play themselves. Similarly, the report quoted above of Cardinal Dr. Innitzer's Christmas visit to Teschner's theater builds on this trope, comparing the "mysteriously monotonous music" accompanying the show to that of a carillon or wind harp.

In contrast, in his 1941 article on Teschner's theater in *Die Bühne,* Dr Friedrich Kraißl gives a broader range of musical examples than most commentators:

> The play of the characters is silent because the 'life-size' human voice would significantly weaken the illusion. Neither should overly differentiated acoustic impressions distract from the optical-dynamic. For example, in the 'Artist Legend' a just mentioned, the rug of the flower girl is only delicately indicated by three flute tones. But this is already an exceptional case. Usually the master is satisfied with a music box-like background music, which gives the pantomime a beautiful flow. The parody of the 'color piano' naturally requires a pianist behind the scene; but luckily he plays on a celesta.[98]

Kriaßl's description picks out "three flute tones" and the celeste—but once again, these are held to resound against the background of something akin to a music-box. It is unclear whether Kraißl's invocation of the celeste is an attempt to describe the specific timbre of the music box—there is no pianist backstage, but the metallic sound of the music box serves to function as a keyboard proxy—

[97] Max Hayek, "Professor Richard Teschner Figurentheater," *Moderne Welt*, Jahrgang 145, Heft 2, 1932. "Eine zarte, gläsern klingende Musik, von einem geheimnisvollen, unsichtbaren Instrument hervorgebracht, tönt zauberisch…"

[98] Kraißl, "Die Geschöpfe des Magiers: Professor Richard Teschner Figurenspielgel."

or if he is identifying the presence of the actual instrument. Either way, Kraißl's description not only evokes the same essential musical features as other commentators—the slowness, the quietness, the metallic timbre of the music and its mechanical nature—but also acknowledges the deliberate dynamic between the aural and the visual in Teschner's theater. It is this rhetorical admixture that interests me, these various attempts to describe the unseen and the unknown, for such discourses resonate in compelling ways not only with music but with the nature of puppetry writ large, whilst speaking also to the idiosyncrasies of Teschner's peculiar project.

Before investigating the actual sonic objects that inhabit Teschner's realm, a comment on these sources and their provenance. Many of the contemporaneous accounts I have read pertaining to Teschner's shows appear not to relate, necessarily, to a single, specific performance. Rather, as with my own evocation with which this chapter opens this, many commentaries appear to be a generalization or amalgamation of various experiences. This is, in large part, a question of access. Access to performances, performers, and their performing objects have forced a more holistic view of the event and practice in the process of researching this dissertation, for instance—and this seems to me especially important when analyzing of the musical components of Teschner's shows. We are not dealing here with a marionette realization of a Mozartian or Wagnerian opera; rather we are grappling with the mechanical experiments of an amateur musician. Neither are we uncovering the oral practices of a centuries-old folk tradition. Indeed, the clandestine nature of those early performances lives on today, no doubt out of necessity. And as we shall see, this accumulated rhetoric will take on a rather more uncomfortable critical valance when we consider the actual source of the music.

So what do we know about the music in Teschner's shows based on the accounts of these contemporary earwitnesses? The music is repeatedly said to sound soft; most often glassy or metallic; repetitive in style and structure; mysterious in its material origin and traditional affiliation;

simultaneously old and new. Although there seem to be moments of audio-visual alignment, the music functions primarily as background accompaniment. For this purpose, many commentators identify a music box, and they would be right in a sense. But as we shall see, this is not the typical music box that might first come to mind, a fungible amusement that makes music miniature, ownable and transportable; rather, this is a machine for one purpose only.

Teschner's Music Box

The principal source of music for Teschner's shows is a German-made Polyphon (see Fig. 5.4). Somewhere between a music box and a record player, the Polyphon plays metal discs, manufactured and marketed by the Polyphone company. First invented in 1870 by Gustav Adolf Brachhausen and Ernst Paul Riessner, full-scale production of Polyphons began around 1897 and continued into the early 20th century. The records are made by punching holes, their position determined by pitch, into a metal disc. The excess metal that fills each hole is not cut completely but bent back so that it is perpendicular to the disc creating a plectrum on the underside. As the disc revolves, these plectra flick against a ratchet that in turn plucks the tines that sound a predetermined tone.

What music was captured on these discs? At the turn of the twentieth century, Polyphon held the sole rights to the Indian and Chinese markets, and so a substantial portion of their catalogue comprised music native to those countries. Many of the original pieces employed by Teschner in his shows were classified by Polyphon as "Indian marches, though other Polyphon records featured compositions by Johann Strauss and Carl Maria von Weber (See Appendix 4).[99] At

[99] Thanks to Angela Sixt for providing the visible details of Teschner's discs, and to David Corkrum, whose company Polyphon Musikwerke, based in Oakland, California, manufactures new discs according to the specification of the original Polyphon company. I emailed Corkrum in May 2018 to enlist his help in determining the original material captured on the discs.



Figure 5.4 Teschner's Polyphon

first glance, Teschner's choice of musical material might seem to provide something like an "authentic" soundscape for his culturally and technologically-hybrid puppets, at least through the filter of European ears. As we have seen, contemporary commentators were somewhat flummoxed by what they heard; they were unable to determine its provenance in more ways than one. Both Angela Sixt and the puppeteer Klaus Behrendt, for instance, suggest that the music resembles that of the gamelan. As Behrendt describes it:

> [The music was] much too loud and noisy. And Teschner simply filed away most of the audio grooves on the discs. What remained was a tinkling. Where the bass used to be, one note up high, one down low. Minimalist music. On one occasion we played it for Philip Glass; he said it would have been written by him.[100]

[100] Transcribed subtitles from "Interview with Klaus Behrendt" on the double-DVD *"Mit diesen*

Such descriptions default to familiar reductivism. Much as contemporary listeners heard music boxes, here the Polyphon's music is rendered by Behrendt as "tinkling," invoking simultaneously the exoticist tropes of the ornamental, superficial, the miniature, and the magical. The derogatory potential of "tinkling" is reinforced by the simplistic description of "one note up high, one down low." I am not certain what Behrendt means precisely; his comment about the absence of a bass seems to betray a harmony-led mode of listening that is unsatisfied by the Polyphon's music; and the lack of detail suggests that no other compositional priority has been considered. Sealed with the approval by Philip Glass, Teschner's music is embraced into the conflicting world of minimalist logic and cultural appropriation.

But this is to significantly underplay Teschner's artistic conception of the Polyphon. Rather than treat the device as a self-contained means of mechanical musical reproduction, Teschner transformed the music box into a quasi-compositional device. The table in Appendix 4 includes a column to indicate—in simple binary terms provided by Sixt—whether or not each disc had been modified, which is to say whether or not Teschner had tampered with the sounds it encodes. To do this, Teschner would arbitrarily scratch or file down the plectra created when the holes were originally punched into the disc to inscribe the music (see Figs. 5.5 and 5.6 detailling Teschner's experimentation with the process). Teschner's aim was to "thin out" the texture, according to Behrendt, an attempt to find an appropriate volume and weight for the music, fitting of the puppets. (Teschner's concerns about the overbearing weight of the human voice upon the miniature puppets certainly suggests that he would be punctilious about the parameters of any acoustic elements in his shows.) More specifically, Sixt describes the task as "eras[ing] the melody line."[101] She showed me

meinem zwei Händen…" Die Bühnen des Richard Teschner. Eine Filmische Dokumentation. Österreichisches Theatermuseum, 2013.

[101] Angela Sixt, Interview, December 21, 2017.

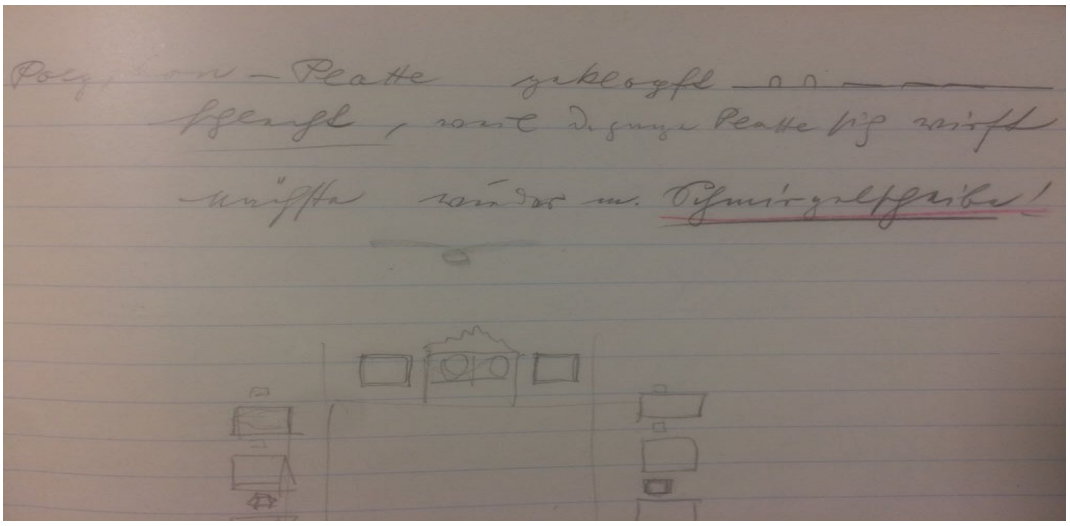


Figure 5.5 Arbeitsbuch 1918
Teschner's reflection on the best method for filing the plectra[102]

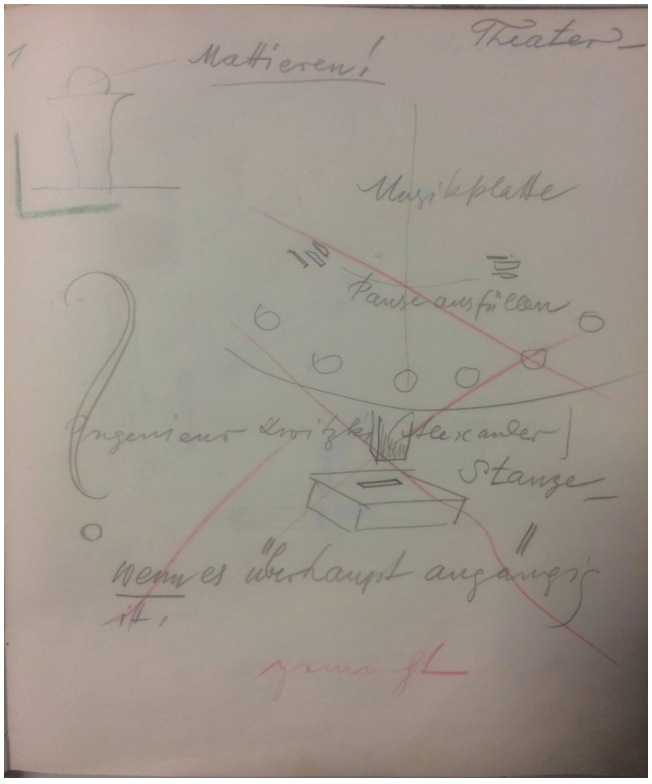


Figure 5.6 Arbeitsbuch 1924
Teschner's sketches detailing the method for modifying the Polyphon disc

[102] Teschner observes that hammering on the disc made it react too strongly, so he decides that an emery wheel would be better suited to the job.

the evidence on one of the records, a band of wavy smudges around the outside of the disc (see Fig. 5.7). Teschner only took away; he didn't make any new perforations. The resulting music is simply the material remaining after the elimination of certain notes—as Sixt suggests, the melody. Although this is technically possible due to the discreet conveyance of musical information—each tone is translated into an individual plectrum—the resulting "compositions" do not sound like accompaniments without melodies. To my ear, the sparse texture and a formal disposition that lies somewhere between indeterminacy and repetition—or, an aesthetic that balances randomness and predictability—signals a musical sensibility where the very notion of "melodic line" might be quite fraught in the first place, and almost certainly quite difficult to determine practically.



Figure 5.7 Top side and reverse of one of the Polyphon discs for *Orchidee*

Teschner left some of the discs untouched. Most notably, the intact discs are those used for the plays with Indonesian source material, namely *Kosumo's Opfertod* and *Nawang Wulan*. This decision seems to reinforce the notion that Teschner was striving to reflect the foreign influence on his puppets through the provision of music. But of course, the music on these records was always already partial, and certainly not anything like "authentic". These "Indian marches" were captured on Polyphon discs, labelled by the Polyphon manufacturers and sold through Polyphon channels, made available to Teschner through colonial transactions of commerce, authority, and spectacle. Here, we might say, are the musical or sonic equivalents to the *Wayang* figures Teschner encountered in Amsterdam. And in a sense, like the puppets and their unique mechanism, Teschner treated the discs not as records of distant sonic events and practices, but as raw material of a kind. While some served as an artefact that evoked foreign lands, others were adapted to fit their new context, to the plays of Viennese and other European or Teschner-imaginary subject matter. And as such, those discs of "Indian marches" subject to Teschner's tampering underwent an additional layer of colonial refraction, the metallic musical rendering not only imported but distorted through transcription, manufacture, and the ego of the artistic elite.

Contemporary audiences would likely have been in the dark either way. As we have seen already, the general consensus amongst commentators was that the music was well-suited to the puppets, in both style, mood, and timbre. One representative example can be found in the description of the *Figurenspiegel* for an radio lecture advertisement with Arthur Roessler from 1934, which describes a "strange musical mechanism" that produces "delicate, mesmerizing sounds."[103] If not identified as a music box, reporters hazard various guesses about the "invisible instrument"—a

[103] "Richard Teschner und sein Figurentheater," *Radio Wien* Heft Nr.18, Jänner 26 1934.

carillon, a wind harp, a kind of glass piano—but most seem to agree that whatever their source, these sounds are soft, monotonous, and enchanting.[104] And so, perfectly matched to the puppets.

The homogenous sonic palette conjured in the ears of audiences by these discs, whether modified or not, is entirely in line with contemporary essentialist discourses around non-European musics. Such terms—soft, repetitive, delicate—are encapsulated by the idea of superficiality, where deep-harmonic structures are lacking, and ornamental trifles prevail. Whilst the lexicon developed by commentators of the *Figurenspiegel* is, in simple terms, a straightforward attempt to describe what they heard, these authors brought with them to Teschner's performances cultural knowledge and experience that valorised large-scale structural coherence and harmonically determined melodic writing. An article from 1913 in the *Leipziger Illustrierte Zeitung* sums up the musical-cultural clime thus:

To the ears of those Europeans used to the melodies of Mozart, Wagner, Chopin or Gounod, the weepy, passionate, but always also endlessly monotonous sounds of the Javanese Gamelan (=theater orchestra) soon gets on one's nerves.[105]

The absence of a composer for the Polyphon's music deepens the essentialist nature of Teschner's musical provision. The music Teschner chose to accompany his shows exists only in the form of mechanical production, as encoded discs, more sounding notation than recording, and in this form, he was able to take a file to it, to intervene as an author through an entirely non-musical practice and medium. Teschner's use of the Polyphon recalls the presence of the hurdy-gurdy and accordion in travelling puppet shows. But again, as with his puppets, he makes the technology his own. By haphazardly distorting the material imprint of the encoded music, Teschner creates music

[104] See, for example, Max Hayek, "Professor Richard Teschners Figurentheater;" Francis, "Kardinal besucht Teschner Weihnachtsspiel;" F., "Professor Teschners Künstlermarionettentheater ist wiedereröffnet."
[105] Hans Effenberger, "Richard Teschner Indisches Theater," *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, Vol. 32, April 1 1913, 217.

that is neither original nor recorded, neither composed nor improvised, neither wholly mechanical nor wholly human.

Composer or Machine?

There is one documented instance, however, of original, live music in Teschner's *Figurenspiegel*. A letter from Ernst von Schilppenbach to Teschner, dated March 16, 1916, proposed a charity event for blind war veterans, specifically a performance of the nativity with puppets. He had come to learn about Teschner's work through Margarethe Schreiber and had already engaged the Austrian theater and film director Max Reinhardt to direct the show. Teschner was forced to decline for financial reasons, but the idea of a Christmas Play had taken hold. Teschner began work on the figures for *Weihnachtsspiel* the following year and in 1918, he engaged the composer and organist Maria Hofer to write the music for the show.

Born in Lower Austria in 1894, Maria Hofer was brought up in Vienna, where her musical education thrived. By the time she was eight years old, Hofer was already giving small-scale concerts at home; two years later, she would play the organ for church services. In 1912, Hofer entered the k.k. Academy for Music and Performing Arts and completed her studies within just one year, rather than the usual two, to qualify as a private piano teacher, work that she pursued in Vienna and Budapest during the war. In 1917, Hofer returned to her studies, this time focussed on her organ playing, having been shown "the secrets of free improvisation" by the organist at St. Stephan's Cathedral, Victor Boschetti.[106] It seems to be around this time that Hofer started taking composition

[106] Milena Meller, "Die Organistin und Komponistin Maria Hofer," June 2007, accessed February 11, 2022, https://www.uibk.ac.at/brenner-archiv/projekte/tirolermusikn/hofer/links/nl_mh_biografie.doc

lessons with Arnold Schönberg.[107] It was around this time too that Hofer was engaged to write the music for *Weihnachtsspiel*. Two manuscript scores are housed at the Handschriftensammlung, Österreichische Nationalbibilothek, one in a hardcover, which appears to contain various corrections and updates, and a seemingly final version in a soft cover.[108] The reproduction cover of the latter boasts four medallions featuring sketched portraits of Viennese musical icons: Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, and Schubert—but the music contained within the notebook's pages comes from a rather different musical world.

First, the music has a distinct timbre: that of the dulcitone. In February of 1925, the premiere year of *Weihnachtsspiel*, Teschner acquired the instrument from Glasgow, presumably from the manufacturing firm Thomas Machell and Sons, who invented the instrument in the 1860s.[109] A dulcitone, or tuning-fork piano, possesses the same sort of metallic timbre as the Polyphon. Like a music box or gramophone, the dulcitone is lightweight and portable, and the tuning forks themselves, unlike the strings of a piano, will not go out of tune. The volume of the instrument, as one might imagine, is very limited, and so, in lieu of a dulcitone, a glockenspiel might be called upon to play the part. This is an instrument with which Hofer is said to have an affinity: she wrote numerous pieces for the glockenspiel to the extent that she acquired the nickname "Glockenmoid,"

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[107] There is limited information available about Maria Hofer. For this brief overview of her early years and education, I rely, in addition to the article cited above, on an article by Thomas Nußbaumer, "Glockenmoid mit Papgenkopf," Quart Heft für Kultur Tirol Nr 10/07, accessed February 11, 2022, https://www.quart.at/bibliothek/alle_ausgaben/nr_10_07/glockenmoid_mit_pagenkopf. The only scholar to have worked extensively on Hofer is Corrina Oesch: see Oesch, *Die Komponistin Maria Hofer (1894-1977): Frauenzuammenhänge und Musik* (Strasshof—Wien: Vier-Viertel-Verlag, 2010). There is just one brief mention of Hofer's collaboration with Teschner, which simply records the basic details and cites one commentary in the *Neue Freie Presse* (cited below).
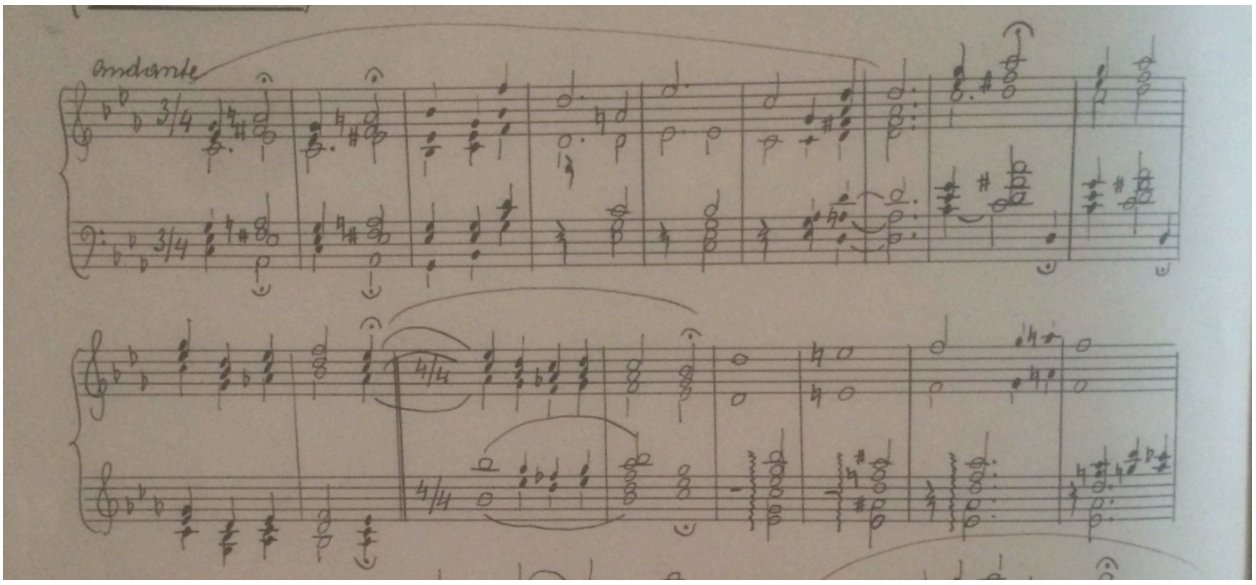
[108] Die Noten von Maria Hofer, HS_VM978Te, Handschriftensammlung, Österreichisches Nationalbibilothek.

[109] Jarmila Weißenböck, "Weihnachtsspiel," section entitled "Die Mitspielerinnen."

which apparently pleased her greatly, seemingly oblivious to its potentially derogatory connotations.[110] Indeed, despite her classical roots, Hofer appears to have been drawn increasingly throughout her life to folk and mechanical instruments. In the late 1940s, Hofer relocated from Vienna to the provincial town of Kitzbühel, where she got involved with the construction of a carillon intended as a war memorial; she collected old or unusual instruments, including old Alpine instruments; and she even experimented with electronic music. These interests might have only been in the works when she undertook Teschner's commission, but it is nonetheless noteworthy that such sound worlds coterminous with the Polyphon's metallic timbre and folk-exotic idiom would occupy her time later in life, too.

The five cues comprising the score—"Mariä Verkündigung: Vorspiel"; "Der Gang nach Bethlehem"; "Zwischenspiel (Nach dem Gang nach Bethlehem)"; "Anbetung der Hirten;" and "Huldigung der Könige;" the last of these has various internal cues, indicating the arrival of each of the kings, for example—are dominated by homophonic textures, in part, no doubt, to overcome the quiet dynamic of the dulcitone. The musical language across the cues evokes two primary stylistic areas, as nebulous as these might be. First, a distinctly impressionistic style, conjured through parallel chordal movement and whirling flourishes, safely tonal but scattered with added and slightly extended chords (see Ex. 5.1). The exotic flavor associated with much impressionism is evident here too in the pentatonic melodies and whole-tone infusion. More dominant throughout, however, is another musical idiom, which breaks away from the homorhythmic passages through perpetual movement in one part and sustained chords in the other. But also here, voices tend to be doubled in octaves to make for a richer texture, which connects to the shifting harmonic planes of the first type.

[110] Nußbaumer, "Glockenmoid mit Pagenkopf." Another of Hofer's nicknames was apparently "Glockenhoferin," which was evocative of the legend "The Robbers of Glockenhof."



Example 5.1 Score by Maria Hofer, opening of "Vorspiel"

With these musical influences on the surface, Hofer's score could likely have evoked descriptors similar to those that proliferate across the discourse surrounding Teschner's Polyphon—and perhaps they did. For the invisibility of the source of the music in Teschner's shows is more than a rhetorical conundrum—what is this disembodied music, this immaterial sound, whose lack of discernible aesthetic origin makes it both spiritually uplifting and mechanically weighty? Rather, the exclusive nature of Teschner's performances, the strict division between the auditorium and the backstage, and the secrecy surrounding his artistic enterprise ensure that the sounding instrument is quite literally concealed from view. The timbral kinship between the possible instruments makes any definite identification even more challenging. And so, discursive slippage between the Polyphon and Hofer's dulcitone—and indeed the various other instruments occasionally invoked—is surely inevitable.[111]

[111] There is a subtle example of this Elke Krafka's overview of Teschner's *Figurenspiegel* in the Theater Museum's exhibition catalogue. In her description of Teschner's musical provision, Krafka writes: "The sounds came, for example, from a tuning fork piano, which had already been used in the Christmas game and for which Maria Hofer created compositions, or from a polyphon or from a

Take, for example, this review by Paul Wertheimer. In an article in the January 3, 1931 edition of the *Neue Freie Presse,* Wertheimer describes Golden Shrine performances of *Der Drachentöter* and *Weihnachtsspiel*. This paragraph concerning music supposedly pertains to the former, but this is unlikely to be accurate, for several reasons.[112]

Now in the expectant silence the deep, reverberating sound of a gong. The room darkens gradually, only the golden splendor, which divides it in two, lights up with its Javanese ornamentation. The gullwing doors are pushed back by an invisible hand; a tiny stage becomes visible. The background — Teschner pictures — colors of intimacy, landscapes that seem like a fairy tale. An infinitely tender, soul-like music sounds—one thinks of Cimarosa. Maria Hofer, the organist, composed it, Dr. Ankwicz-Kleehoven plays it.[113]

Whatever the instrument and whatever the music, Wertheimer draws on a familiar lexicon: what he hears is soft, timeless, spiritual. He makes a surprising contribution too, proposing a possible composer for the music, the classical Italian composer Domenico Cimarosa, most famous for his operas. Alongside the "Indian marches" catalogued in the table in Appendix 4, there are details of

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metal plate that turns and gives off individual sounds" ("Die Töne dazu kamen beispielsweise von einem Stimmgabelklavier, das bereits im *Weihnachtsspiel* eingesetzt worden war und für das Maria Hofer Kompositionen schuf, oder von einem Polyphon oder von einer Metallplate, die sich dreht und dabei einzelne Klänge von sich gibt"). This sense that either option is possible bespeaks the timbral similarity of the instruments as well as the historical uncertainty surrounding Teschner's musical choices. Krafka, "'Alles neu inscenieret!' Richard Teschners Figurentheater," 193.

[112] According to Wertheimer, the music is that of Hofer, performed by the art historian Dr. Ankwicz-Kleehoven; but the play about to be presented on stage is *Der Drachentöter*, not *Weihnachtsspiel*; and when Wertheimer turns his attention to the nativity play, he makes no further mention of the music. In my research to date, I have come across no other explicit mention of Hofer providing music for any other of Teschner's plays than *Weihnachtsspiel*.

[113] "Jetzt in der erwartungsvollen Stille der tiefe, nachhallende Klang eines Gong. Der Raum verdunkelt sich mählicht, nur der goldene Prunkschein, der ihn zweiteilt, mit seiner javanischen Ornamentik leuchtet auf. Die Flügeltüren werden von unsichtbarer Hand zurückgeschoben; eine winzige Bühne wird sichtbar. Die Hintergründe—Teschner-Bilder—Farben von Innigkeit, Landschaften, die wie ein Märchen wirken. Eine unendlich zarte, seelenhafte Musik erklingt—man denkt an Cimarosa. Maria Hofer, die Organistin, hat sie komponiert, Dr. Ankwicz-Kleehoven führt sie vor." Wertheimer, "Premiere im Figurentheater Richard Teschners: 'Weihnachtsspiel,' 'Der Drachentöter.'"

some European compositions, by Johann Strauss (apt for Vienna) and Carl Maria von Weber, and some operetta-style songs by the composers Leslie Stuart and Johannes Richardy. None of these are mentioned in relation to *Der Drachentöter*, which is absent from the table, but one presumes that "Drachen" functions as a shorthand to which an "Indian march" is assigned each time.[114] What exactly Wertheimer heard that conjured the music of Cimarosa in his acoustic imagination is lost to posterity then, although the reference in itself might be taken as not only indicative of the artistic proclivities of the audiences drawn to Teschner's shows, but also suggestive of a similar quality of timelessness conjured by other commentators. (In this latter sense, classical-period music is posited as music *sui generis* or heaven-sent; in short: free of earthly interference.)

All this historical uncertainty might be understood as analogous to the challenges associated with recovering an oral tradition and its vicissitudes. Teschner may have been part of elite artistic circles, his work may have attracted specialist audiences and critical commentary, but his chosen art form is one whose roots were and are embedded within close-knit networks of collaboration, experimentation, and cross-generational teaching. And in his own way, Teschner subscribed to these principles. "What happened when?" then, potentially misses the point; rather, "what ideas live on today?" and "what impact did, and do they make?" are perhaps more meaningful questions. If we do not know for certain when the Polyphon was adopted by Teschner, which discs were used for which shows, exactly how (and why) Teschner went about modifying the discs, or whether Maria Hofer wrote music for shows other than *Weihnachtsspiel*, what we *do* know encourages us to return to the objects themselves, the materials that endure, the puppets and the Polyphon.

[114] On the double DVD produced by the Österreichisches Theatermuseum, there are two versions of the story: *Der Drachtentöter* as a live puppetry reconstruction of Teschner's play, which uses Polyphon discs as the musical accompaniment, and a (silent) film that Teschner worked on with Max Goldschmidt entitled *Der Drachenprinz*.

Musicology on Teschner

Let us embark on one last reflection on Teschner's music. Among the collections of the Musiksammlung of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek are the papers of Leopold Nowak, an Austrian musicologist, probably best known for editing works by Bruckner. A seeming acquaintance of the Teschners, Nowak's materials include various items relating to the *Figurenspiegel*: program booklets, press clippings from *Illustrated London News* and *The American Weekly* amongst others, a poster for *Der Drachentöter* and *Das Weihnachtsspiel* including the phrase "Nur für Erwachsene" (For adults only), and two article drafts.[115] The first of these is a manuscript entitled "Musik und Gebärde" (Music and Gesture); the second a typescript with the title "Figuren-Spiegel der Einheit von Musik und Gebärde" (Figure-Mirror of Unity between Music and Gesture).[116] The latter matches closely a published piece in *Die Bastei Österreichische Kulturzeitschrift* in the 1946/47 edition: "Figuren: Spiegel der Einheit von Musik und Gebärde / Zu Richard Teschners 'Figurenspiegel,'" or, "Figures: Mirror of the Unity of Music and Gesture/On Richard Teschner's *Figurenspiegel*."

Together these articles express views rather surprising for a musicologist working in the post-war German tradition, known for his precise editorial skills. We might expect Nowak to adopt a certain objectivity, a "scientific" methodology or analytic style. Instead, what we get are poetic reflections on artistic synthesis, the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and intermediality. In the piece for *Die Bastei,* Nowak even couches his discussion within the realm of feeling: recalling an adage of Goethe's ("If you don't feel it, you're not going to hunt it."), Nowak asks "How can one understand that gesture, movement can be music if one does not have the feeling for it? How can one understand that

[115] F110 Nowak, L. Folders 222/2-222/7, Musiksammlung, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek. Amongst his materials are an invitation to Richard Teschner's funeral and two handwritten letters from Emma Teschner.

[116] F110 Nowak, L. 222/4 "Musik und Gebärde," dated 30.05.1942 and 222/6 "Figuren-Spiegel der Einheit von Musik und Gebärde," undated.

movements of figures without having any music with them can still be perceived as music?"[117] The circularity of the argument seems to elude Nowak, perhaps a symptom of the overblown exceptionalism that characterizes his subsequent assessment of Teschner's work. And yet, what Nowak has to say about music and gesture in Teschner's puppetry is highly resonant with the ideas expressed throughout this dissertation.

Succinctly put, Nowak argues that gesture *is* music in the puppet plays of Teschner. Nowak highlights the historical precedent of chironomy, the gestural language used to conduct Gregorian chant, and the role played by dance in the "expression of an encounter between gesture and music;" but essentially he is working with the familiar conceit that music may be understood as gesture.[118] Reminding his reader that such an act of transduction will only occur for those predisposed to experience it, those who "feel" it, Nowak describes the phenomenon as it unfolds in Teschner's theater thus:

Masterfully carved, the figures come alive in such a way that the movements are so excellent that their vision awakens melodic sensations only in those who can. Hand movements, bows, striding and wandering back and forth, the expressions of joy, sadness, amazement and what is still possible on the scale of fairy tale life, everything happens in such a way that the impression of the gesture does not stop alone—it becomes music.[119]

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[117] Leopold Nowak, "Figuren: Spiegel der Einheit von Musik und Gebärde / Zu Richard Teschners 'Figurenspiegel,'" *Die Bastei Österrecihische Kulturzeitschrift*, Erster. Jahrgang, 8. Heft, 1946/47. (""Wie soll man es begreiflich machen, daß Gebärde, Bewegung Musik sein kann, wenn jemand nicht die Empfindung dafür mitbringt? Wie soll einer begreifen, daß Bewegungen von Figuren, ohne irgendwelche Musik dabei zu haben, dennoch als Musik empfunden werden können?")

[118] Nowak, "Figuren: Spiegel der Einheit von Musik und Gebärde / Zu Richard Teschners 'Figurenspiegel.'" ("…der Tanz ist seit jeher der sinnfällige Ausdruck von Begegnung zwischen Gebärde und Musik.")

[119] Ibid. ("Meisterhaft geschnitzt, verlebendigen sich die Figuren auf die Weise, die so ausgezeichnete Bewegungen ergibt, daß ihr Sehen allein in dem, der es vermag, melodische Empfindungen weckt. Handbeweungen, Verneigungen, das Schreiten und Hin- und Wider-wandern, die Ausdrücke von Freude, Trauer, Verwunderung und was da noch auf der Skala des Märchenlebens möglich ist, alles geschieht auf solche Weise, daß der Eindruck bei der Gebärde allein nicht stehen bliebt—er wird zur Musik.")

This statement alone is difficult to parse without the backdrop of synthesis, synesthesia even. In the context of Teschner's *Gesamkunstwerk* aesthetic, the fluidity of exchange between movement, gesture, expression, and music is that much more conceivable. And according to Nowak, Teschner's specific choice of musical accompaniment for his shows makes space for the musical realization of gesture.

Nowak suggests that the music one might expect to accompany the figures is missing. Crucially, the music that is present—that of the Polyphon, "music box" in Nowak's parlance—is without a melodic line and so provides movement without temporality. In "Musik und Gebärde," Nowak observes the affinity between rhythm and movement, and their coordination in the creation of melody: melody is marked by its temporality and its figuration, its beat and its undulations, its chronology and its contours. Crucially, the music of the Polyphon seems to offer no melody. As Nowak describes it, "The tones of the music box rise delicate, mysterious, and create with their pentatonic tonal fabric an acoustic carpet in which stage and action are embedded….[and] because it is melodically motionless, the movements of the figures stand out all the more."[120] In *Die Bastei,* Nowak asserts that it is against the "'weaving' calm" ('webende' Ruhe) of the Polyphon that the gestures of the figures are free to articulate the absent melody through gesture.

That Teschner's puppets are unhampered by language is another seemingly critical factor in their capacity for gestural music. This important feature of Teschner's puppets is glossed over in *Die Bastei*, but in "Musik und Gebärde," Nowak is more attentive to the puppets' unusual attribute. The puppets' muteness, Nowak observes, ensures that "their movements are all the more intense, louder

[120] Ibid. ("Zart, geheimnisvoll erheben sich Spieluhrtöne und schaffen mit ihrem pentatonischen Tongewebe einen akustischen Teppich, in dem Bühne und Handlung eingebettet liegen… weil es melodisch bewegungslos ist, heben sich die Bewegungen der Figuren umso stärker hervor.")

and more insistent in what they should be talking about than if they were really saying it in words."[121] Not only does their silence bolster their gestures, but the puppets also benefit from Teschner's intricate carving: for Nowak, their strong expressions help ensure that the meaning of their gestures is easily recognizable.[122] A final factor in ensuring successful communication to the audience is stillness. Nowak suggests that focus or concentration is enhanced by moments of motionless, when the tension of movement is released and new possibilities are opened up.[123]

Nowak discusses the music of *Weihnachtsspiel* specifically in both "Musik und Gebärde" and *Die Bastei* article. In what is presumably the earlier version of his argument, Nowak asserts that the specially composed music of *Weihnachtsspiel* makes the "connection between movement and music more visible"; but ultimately, he considers the music of the Polyphon to be more effective in showcasing the figures and creating a satisfying artistic whole. Nowak writes:

As attractive as the task would be to write Professor Teschner's own music for the characters, which would make the above-mentioned connection between movement and music more visible, such as in the Christmas legend, it is so obvious that the purely chordal music box-like accompaniment is more attractive. Their stillness supports the movement of the figures, allows all attention to be focused on them even more, making them haunting and, moreover, creates that sphere of the

[121] Nowak, "Musik und Gebärde."

[122] Interestingly, Nowak draws an analogy between the practice of wood-carving and music-making: "Carving and making music have become an indivisible unit in Teschner" ("Schnitzen, darstellen und musizieren sind in Teschner unlösbare Einheit geworden"); see Ibid. Such equivalence between the acts of carving and music-making enables an equivalence on the side of perception, between expression and melody. This notion resonates also with the practices of Marionettenspieler, who will undertake all sorts of roles in the creation of a marionette performance.

[123] Ibid. ("Zwang zur Konzentration im Schauen ist die Folge, die noch erhöht wird durch Pausen, wenn Figuren eine zeitlang bewegungslos verharren. Die Spannung über den weiteren Bewegungsablauf ist sehr groß und manche der Überraschungsmomente im Ablauf der Handlungen beruhen auf solchen Augenblicken.") I have made a similar observation of marionette opera: especially for performances of slower arias, the expressive potential of the marionette seems to increase in inverse relation to its choreography and gesture. In other words, the less the puppeteer interferes, the more the puppet says.

fairytale-like mystical which is the only right environment for these figures, who speak in and through their muteness.[124]

With this, Nowak disregards the valorization of liveness and originality and the potential for music and gesture to align—a particular affordance of specially composed, live music—instead promoting an integrated aesthetic whole, where every component has a specific role to play. From a contemporary perspective, this is a surprising stance. Marionettenspieler today would generally prefer to perform with live musicians, but commerical constraints require that they use recordings. It may be that Nowak heard something novel in the music box, more unusual than original music, especially in the context of elite artistic enterprise. In the context of puppet performance, however, as we know, mechanical instruments have long been a familiar feature of the soundscape. There is another important characteristic afforded by mechanical or recorded music that may have attracted Nowak, especially as it functioned within the broader aesthetic of Teschner's *Figurenspiegel*: that of repetition. The repetitive nature of the music feeds into the technologized—proto-cinematic even—aesthetic of Teschner's *Figurenspiegel*, where puppets are imbued with a realistic autonomy that defies notions of subservience

In the later article for *Die Bastei*, Nowak builds on his earlier ideas to draw a distinction between music-gesture *equivalence*, where gesture can be substituted for melody, and music-gesture *unity*. The latter relies more heavily on the musicality and dexterity of the puppeteer; the former seems to require a kind of non-music. Nowak writes:

If Teschner himself says of his art of leading figures that a puppeteer with his small actors must be able to "grow into a unity with them as intimately as a musician with his violin," then by

[124] "So sehr reizvoll die Aufgabe wäre den Figuren Professor Teschners eigene Musiken zu schreiben, wodurch der obenerwähnte Zusammenhang zwischen Bewegung und Musik stärker sichtbar würde, wie etwa bei der Weihnachtslegende, so sehr einleuchtend ist es, daß die rein akkordliche spieluhrmäßige Untermalung das reizvollere ist. Ihre Ruhe trägt die Bewegung der Figuren, läßt alle Aufmerksamkei noch gesammelter auf sie hinrichten, macht sie dadurch eindringlich und schafft überdies jene Sphäre des Märchenhaft-Mystischen due für diese in und durch ihre Stummheit redenden Figuren die einzig richtige Umgebung ist." Ibid.

comparison, Teschner's musical attitude to his performance is attested. The 'Christmas Legend,' with its own music by Maria Hofer, is full proof of this musical talent of the master figure. The movements of the Virgin Mary, the angel and all other figures follow the music in such a way that an artistic unity is completely achieved. But now the other way round: where the music is missing and only the music box sound is present—what happens there? So you ask me, joy, and I have only one answer already indicated: here the gesture becomes music. It is melodies that are given to the viewer here.[125]

The music is "missing" when the music box sounds. Like many of the commentators and critics cited above, Nowak betrays his Euro-centric analytic scope, where Music is comprised of melody and harmony. This "pentatonic tonal fabric" can serve only as background sound, providing rhythm and space for the realization of melody—in the form of gesture.[126] In short, the sounds of the music box alone are not music; they require completion to make them music. They require completion by puppets. We seem to have come full circle, yet have ended in a different place to where we started: puppets are music; music is silence.

[125] Nowak, "Figuren: Spiegel der Einheit von Musik und Gebärde / Zu Richard Teschners 'Figurenspiegel.'" ("Sagt Teschner selbst von seiner Kunst der Figurenführung, daß ein Puppenspieler mit seinen kleinen Darstellern so „innig zu einer Einheit mit ihnen verwachsen können muß, wie etwa ein Musiker mit seiner Geige," so ist durch den Vergleich im übertragenen Sinn Teschners musikalische Einstellung zu seiner Leistung bezeugt. Die „Weihnachtslegende," mit eigener Musik von Maria Hofer ausgestattet, ist für diese musikalische Begabung des Figurenmeisters vollgültiger Beweis. Die Bewegungen der Jungfrau Maria, des Engels und aller übrigen Figuren gehen so der Musik nach, daß dabei restlos eine künstlerische Einheit erzielt wird. Aber nun umgekehrt: dort, wo die Musik fehlt und nur der Spieldosenklang vorhanden ist—was geschieht da? So fragt ihr mich, Freude, und ich habe nur eine schon angedeutete Antwort: hier wird die Gebärde Musik. Melodien sind's, die hier dem Schauenden zuteil werden.")

[126] Ibid. ("Sie [the gesturing characters] wirken eben weil keine Musik, sondern nur der Klanghintergrund vorhanden ist, selbst wie Musik, sind stark wie Töne, die Rhythmus und Raum zu melodischem Bau aufgetürmt haben.")

III.

Conclusions

The focus of this chapter has been one dyad within Teschner's multi-nodal performance network: the puppets and the Polyphon. To be sure, this dyad is simplified: we have considered no one puppet on its own terms, and, just as with all puppetry, each of Teschner's puppets are bespoke, designed and built to serve a specific purpose. Neither have we covered the extent of an entire play, nor considered in detail the use of other instruments in the soundscape, the monochord (often mistaken for a gong), for example, or the flute, or the lute. The puppet and the Polyphon are examined here as they were broadly conceived by Teschner, as they were understood by his audiences, and as they exist today in the Theatermuseum, as exhibits and performing objects. Before I draw some conclusions about this dynamic pair, however, let us take a step back briefly to reconsider the tripartite kernel at the heart of every puppet performance network and the aesthetic valence of this particular dyad in the context of the *Figurenspiegel* itself.

In the *Figurenspiegel*

Teschner's first theatre, the Golden Shrine, is essentially a conventional stage: rectangular proscenium, an apron, side wings, and so on. Teschner's 1904 sketchbook includes designs for this original theatre, but by 1905, he was already contemplating a future model, with a glass screen in front of the stage.[127] Only much later, in 1932, was the Golden Shrine firmly replaced by Teschner's definitive puppet theatre construction, the *Figurenspiegel*.[128] Light-diffusing engineering techniques

[127] Hadamowsky, "Leben und Wirken," 14.

[128] Jarmila Weißenböck, "Weihnachtsspiel," section entitled "Der Figurenspiegel." ("In den Monaten Mai bis Oktober des Jahres 1931 baut Teschner seine neue endgültige Bühne, den *Figurenspiegel* mit kreisrunden Bühnenausschnitt von 112cm und einem zum Publikum him leicht gewölbten Glas davor." "In the months of May to October 1931 Teschner built his new definitive stage, the figure

engraved upon the glass screen and a "film of the finest wide-meshed voile" result in a halo effect, where the goings-on behind the screen take on the appearance of the otherworldly.[129]

Other visual effects technologies assist in the creation of this world. Teschner employed a comprehensive lighting rig, boasting spotlights and banks of colored lights, a *camera obscura*-like projection device, and a color organ. The effect of these technologies in combination is striking. Describing the *Figurenspiegel* in action in an article for the *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*, Wilhelm Nhil writes of palm groves growing out of wisps of smoke and ice crystals mutating into fantastical shapes.[130] Many of the innovations that enable these artistic devices were (and still are) kept secret, according to Behrendt, but he does reveal the mystery behind the forest walk in *Weihnachtsspiel*:

> [T]wo long, painted and engraved slides are pulled through the projection corridor at varying speeds…[to] create the appearance of depth…. By then tilting the projection lamp, [Teschner] created a polarization effect….[Over the top, a] black strip of paper with thousands of tiny needle holes is rotated through the projection corridor from bottom to top. So, when it is rotated, a silent snowfall appears in the projection.[131]

In cultivating a world for the puppets to inhabit, these visual effects also obscure the appearance of any puppet mechanisms. Nhil suggests that these puppets possess something of a human physiology:

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mirror with a circular stage opening of 112cm and a glass slightly arched towards the audience in front of it.")

[129] Krafft, "Der Figurenspiegel Richard Teschners und das Puppenspiel seiner Zeit," 13. ("Dieses Auge war abgeschlossen durch eine konkave Linse, die im Schliff wellenförmige Irritationen zeigte und auf ihrer Innenseite einen Belag aus feinstem weitmaschigen Schleierstoff trug.")

[130] See Wilhelm Nhil, quoted in "Richard Teschner's Figure Theater," *Theater Arts Montly*, Vol. XII, No. 7, July 1928.

[131] Transcribed subtitles from "Interview with Klaus Behrendt" on the double-DVD *"Mit diesen meinem zwei Händen…" Die Bühnen des Richard Teschner. Eine Filmische Dokumentation*. Österreichisches Theatermuseum, 2013.

A plastic panorama moves across the stage, marking the path of the travellers. In this play, which is built upon atmosphere, the human naturalness of the figures is particularly expressive. The motions of Mary and Joseph as they bend over the fire in the twilight glimmer are exactly like those of human beings. When the servants of the three kings from the Orient prostrate themselves on the ground, you can almost see the muscles move underneath the skin of their naked backs.[132]

Viewed through the circular proscenium, Teschner's puppets appear small, their movements understated, a stark contrast to the exaggerated expressive modes of the Marionettentheater and Kasperltheater. So delicate are the gestures of Teschner's puppets that they appear to act for themselves—or, at most, the conceptual camera, the theatre's glass screen, its lens. The puppets need not do too much, because the lens will do it for them. The lens focuses the attention of the audience, while maintaining their separation from the world behind the screen. And the lens erases the puppeteer. The glass screen also erases the audience. Its reflective surface allows the puppeteers to view their puppets from the perspective of the audience, albeit in reverse, thereby expanding the interactive dynamics between puppeteer and puppet, which often involve awkward visual angles and so rely more on touch and feel.[133] If Teschner's glass screen allows the puppeteers to perform to themselves, so to speak, the requirement of an audience demanded by most definitions of the puppet is rendered moot.

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[132] Nhil, "Richard Teschner's Figure Theater."

[133] "I call my theater the "figurative mirror," because my scenes are not, as in the normal puppet theaters—which always, intentionally or unconsciously, imitate the stage— bordered by a rectangular drapery-adorned architectural frame, but because with me the scenery becomes visible to the viewer in a circular concave mirror; but also the players see, albeit reversed, the whole scene and can thus accurately judge the course of the action, while the thread-puppeteer sees his figures only from above and the hand-puppeteer only from below." "Ich nenne mein Theater den 'Figurenspiegel,' weil meine Szenen nicht wie in den normalen Marionettentheatern—die immer, absichtlich oder unbewußt, die Menschenbühne nachahmen—von einem rechteckigen vorhangdrapierten Architekturrahmen eingefaßt sind, sondern weil bei mir die Bühnenbilder in einem kreisrunden Hohlspiegel dem Zuschauer sichtbar werden; aber auch die Spieler sehen, wenn auch seitenverkehrt, die ganze Szene und können so den Gang der Handlung genau beurteilen, während der Faden-Puppenspieler seine Figuren nur von oben und der Hand-Puppenspieler dieselbe nur von unten sieht." Teschner, "Teschner über sich selbst."

In Teschner's *Figurenspiegel*, then, puppets don't have to be caught between the animation of the puppeteer and the imagination of the audience to come to life. The theatre itself constructs different models of puppet performance involving just two terms: puppet and puppeteer; or, puppet and audience. Both of these models imbue the puppet with an increased sense of autonomy. They can exist without perception by the audience, and they can act of their own accord.

Towards Cinema

Just a year before the debut of his *Figurenspiegel*, Teschner described his vision in a newspaper article, in which he discussed the relationship between the puppet theater and other dramatic forms explicitly:

> From the knowledge that the puppet stage has its very special style and mood characteristics, not in imitative competition with the human stage and the cinema, but in lively, but very peaceful opposition to them—I will continue to try to achieve artistically full and serious effects on a small audience receptive to these things.[134]

Teschner's puppet theater isn't merely distinct from the theatrical stage and the movie theater, but he positions his puppetry in provocative and ingenious ways against these established art forms.

Throughout the 1920s, Teschner was involved in a variety of film projects: in the early days, his shows were filmed for newsreels and other publicity materials; then came a swath of requests by filmmakers for Teschner's puppets (and other theatrical objects, such as masks and scenery) to fulfil certain dramatic roles, in order to solve various technological and aesthetic problems; and finally, there were a handful of puppet films in collaboration with the director Max Goldschmidt, in which

[134] "Aus der Erkenntnis heraus, daß die Figurenbühne denn doch ihre ganz besonderen Stil- und Stimmungseigentümlichkeiten hat, nicht im nachahmenden Wettbewerb mit der Menschenbühne und dem Kino, sondern in bewegten, aber ganz friedlichen Gegensatz zu ihnen—werde ich weiterhin versuchen, mit Gliederpuppen künstlerisch vollwertige und ernsthafte Wirkungen auf ein kleines, für diese Dinge aufnahmefähiges Publikum zu erzielen." Teschner, "Das Schauspielerensemble der Marionetten. Mein Figurentheater."

his puppets played the starring roles. Teschner's earlier cinematic endeavors reflect the long-shared history of puppetry and film, where, most commonly, puppetry comes to the rescue of filmmakers. The projects with Goldschmidt, however, reveal the limits of this dynamic, and in so doing, seem to spur Teschner's pursuit of the question: what can film do for puppetry? The R*osenkavalier*-inspired *Traum im Karneval*, for example, failed to garner much box office enthusiasm, something film historian Armin Loacker attributes to the difficulty of promoting a completely silent film in 1930.[135] There were plans to dub it, but when the takings were low, they were quickly abandoned. When Teschner reworked the show for the puppet theater, the Polyphon music "so missed…in the film," as Weißenböck puts it, "now delivers 'life'" back into the puppets.[136] And so too does the lens of the *Figurenspiegel*. Where the camera lens had enabled stop-motion trickery and decorative overlays in *Traum im Karneval*, it had also brought the puppets too close to the audience for comfort. The lens of the *Figurenspiegel*, on the other hand, offers a window onto a performance in real time, taking place in a separate, but coherent world. Indeed, the circular, glazed proscenium even evokes a film camera, which casts the audience a quasi-cinematographer of the real-time drama unfolding on the other side of the lens. In this way, the *Figurenspiegel* foregrounds the task of image creation and capture, sharing it amongst all participants.

The pragmatic reciprocity between puppetry and film bespeaks their common aesthetic and phenomenological motivation: that of animation. Where puppetry brings the inanimate to life in the

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[135] Armin Loacker, "Unbefriedigende Verhältnisse. Richard Teschners Scheitern im Medium Film" in Kurt Ifkovits (ed.),*"Mit diesen meinem zwei Händen…" Die Bühnen des Richard Teschner* (Österreichisches Theatermusum, 2013), 266.

[136] "Die beim Film sosehr vermißte Musikbegleitung liefern jetzt "life" das Polyphon und eine Spieldose." Jarmila Weißenböck, "Traum im Karneval/Karneval," *Karneval; Figurenpantomime von Richard Teschner*, Program Book, (Wien: Österreichisches Theatermuseum, [1992?]), section entitled "Vom Traum zum Karneval."

moment, film turns what is already alive into a state of inanimation, only to breathe new life into it time and time again. In this sense, they occupy different points on a variety of spectra, of liveness, of scale, of interactivity, of technologization. In his *Figurenspiegel*, Teschner explores the aesthetic space in between these points. His puppets, his Polyphon, and the glass screen of the *Figurenspiegel* all play with the boundaries between mechanical and live performance. And for me, as an audience member, watching a Teschner show is something like watching a film in the making. The aperture of the *Figurenspiegel* turns me into a filmmaker, watching the live action unfold, capturing it for subsequent manipulation.

Critically, Teschner's stringent insistence on the muteness of the puppet gave rise to a compensating efflorescence in visual effects and music. Teschner's choice of musical material and its deployment within his shows, and across the *Figurenspiegel*, engaged with critical themes that are important here and now, in the twenty-first century: the status of liveness versus the role of recorded or mechanical music, issues of cultural appropriation and hybridity, the relationship between voice a*nd* gesture, and music-image interactions more broadly. By treating the puppet not as a stand-in for the human, but as performing object in its own right, Teschner expanded the technological and aesthetic parameters of puppetry, creating a puppet whose performance is born of technological mediation. Teschner's *Figurenspiegel*, then, resides somewhere between the puppet theater and the film studio, between autonomy and automation.

Polyphonic Puppets

Teschner approached every component of the performance network through an idiosyncratic lens, shaping them to fit into his holistic vision for a new puppet theatre. It is as though in conceiving of his own style of puppetry, Teschner took the ideological and pragmatic kernels of puppetry—animation and the appearance of life; the hidden puppeteer; the puppet's voice; the use of folk music

and mechanical instruments; the puppet's fundamentally material existence—and followed their logical unfolding to entirely original ends. And this conceptual logic is imprinted in and between the objects comprising his particular performance network. The dyad of performance objects at the center of this chapter, the puppet and the Polyphon, articulates certain characteristic oppositions: silent vs. sounding; real-time vs. recorded; live vs. automated. In other respects, these objects share key attributes, not least their South and Southeast Asian legacies, which situate both within discourses of colonialism, exoticism, and appropriation. This contrapuntal dynamic between the objects, which traverses material, ideological, aesthetic, and technological domains, may be encapsulated by each element's specific sonic characteristic: the *muteness* of the puppets and the *mutilation* of the Polyphon.

EPILOGUE

The Poetics of Synchronization: Beyond Puppetry

Papageno in Profile

As we draw together the threads of this dissertation, we return to where we started: *Die Zauberflöte*. Our uncovering of *Die Zauberflöte's* rich entanglement with puppets, both rhetorical and material, highlighted Papageno—a descendant of the folkish figure of Hans Wurst and a would-be staple of the *Kasperltheater*—as a particularly provocative figure. Within the opera, Papageno is both the prince's companion and the princess' rescuer, assigned to these tasks by superior beings. As a bird-catcher, Papageno exerts control over creatures of non-human capacity, but he does so to serve his queenly mistress. Indeed, Papageno is a *Naturmensch*: he navigates the natural world with ease, whilst being enslaved to his bodily needs. In musical terms, Papageno's wandering agency and ultimate subservience is realized through his relationships with two instruments: the panpipes and the bells. Papageno himself plays the panpipes, an acoustic extension of his natural disposition, and he has power of a kind over the magical bells; in some settings he commands them to play, while in others he plays them himself. Yet in the encounter between puppetry and music explored in this final chapter, Papageno takes on an altogether different role: that of the romantic hero.

This Papageno inhabits a monochromatic world of black and white. His story is a short one, barely ten minutes long, and consists of just a handful of musical numbers. We begin with his introductory aria, "Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja." Papageno enters stage right, in profile, entirely black, his net over his shoulder and a cage strapped to his back. Against a hazy background of tree trunks, palm leaves, and other exotic looking foliage, Papageno skips lightly across the grassy terrain. A high kick punctuates the highest note in the opening couplet, and gentle bounces coincide subtly with his characteristic "hopsasa." By the end of the second couplet, Papageno has captured one of his avian

targets—itself an entirely black creature, as are all the figures in this story— and makes a deft transfer to the birdcage in between his vocal lines. He discards his net and progresses with birdcage in hand, followed all the while by other feathery companions. As he reaches a tree whose branches are adorned with other caged birds, Papageno brings the panpipes hanging around his neck to his lips. With his unmistakable five-note flourish, various other birds flock to the bird-catcher. Three birds, who resemble vultures, sit on individual rungs of a ladder that is propped against the tree, and as they ascend into the branches and the song comes to an end, Papageno prepares to follow them.

A hiatus in the music permits a shift in vantage point, a zooming out that reveals more of the tree, which turns out to be Papageno's home. The trio of vulture-ish birds—counterparts to the Three Boys—fetch him food and drink to the accompaniment of the pizzicato violins of the Act I Quintet, where the Three Ladies introduce the Three Boys. This wordless scene segues directly into a rendition of "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen." The introduction is played by the vultures on a set of bells strung between the branches of the tree while Papageno, singing from a tree-top swing, attracts yet more avian comrades, who all transform, in his reverie, into miniature female figures, adorned with the same feathery headdress as their conjurer. With the bells' final interlude, the scene pans to Papagena herself, who enters on the back of an ostrich. Papagena is also in profile, just like all the inhabitants of this world. She wears a headdress like Papageno and a feathery skirt. She moves like Papageno, with a lightness of touch and a propensity for tiptoeing.

The rest of the action sees a serpent attack Papageno and his mate—and in this story, Papageno repudiates the lie he tells in the opera, successfully (albeit with the help of the vulture trio) slaying the creature to the strains of "Zu Hilfe! Zu Hilfe!" Despite his triumph, he is momentarily forlorn, as Papagena has disappeared. Papageno threatens suicide, but the vultures swoop down in the nick of time (just as in the opera) and now Papageno plays the bells himself. A procession of birds brings Papagena back to him, and the pair bring the action to a close as they sing together of their future progeny, who

are hatched from eggs on the forest floor by the beaks of storks. We are left with the image of Papageno and Papagena kissing above the heads of a miniature replica of the romantic pair (see Fig. 6.1).



Figure 6.1 Papageno, Papagena, and their progeny

This short story unfolds on the "stage" of a Silhouetten-Opernhaus (Silhouette-Opera House), and in turn, this "stage" is conjured on the screen of the movie theater. For the story I have just recounted is that of the 1935 animated short *Papageno,* directed by the pioneering German filmmaker and animator Lotte Reiniger (1899–1981). Born in Berlin, Reiniger came of age amongst the male auteurs of Germany's early cinematic avant-garde. When she started to create her own films, Reiniger turned the homespun craft of papercutting into a pioneering form of animation, telling operatic stories and fairytales through stop-motion, special effects, and music. The performers in *Papageno* are thus descendants of shadow puppets, often colorful two-dimensional figures who sit atop spindly rods and

come to life as shadows on a white screen. But these figures do not express themselves through the manipulation of rods; rather, they come to life through the mechanism of a camera and the various other components of a very particular performance network unique to Reiniger's oeuvre (on which more shortly). In this way, the performance network involved in bringing her stories to life shares characteristics with both those of the tradition of Marionettentheater and of Richard Teschner's *Figurenspiegel* in that it is a singular configuration that helped a stimulate an entire artistic movement, even an industry. This duality is embedded within the object at the heart of Reiniger's painstaking operation: the *Tricktisch*, a forerunner of the multiplane camera, invented by Reiniger to facilitate the close synchronization of music and image.

Indeed, in the last few pages of this dissertation on puppetry and music, we must enter the movie theater, or rather, the film studio. This is no great leap. Puppets have long been a staple of the filmmaker's toolkit, bringing to life fantastical creatures that actors simply cannot inhabit convincingly; and if puppets can be so helpful to cinematic endeavors, it is worth exploring what cinema can do for puppetry. If puppetry is best understood as a live medium, what happens to puppets when they appear through—or are assisted by—the movie camera? What performative and aesthetic effects do cinematic modes of working have on the puppets thus created? In asking these questions, of course, I am far from the first to discern an affinity between puppetry and cinema: as I discussed in Chapter Two, in Barrie Kosky and British theater group 1927's re-imagining of *Die Zauberflöte*, the opera house is transformed into a cinema and the opera into a sounding-silent film. Projections provide the scenery, sets, some of the extras, and even certain body parts, while the singers are fitted into the stage picture, made into puppets. Similarly, in Reiniger's silhouette animations, an entire world is conjured out of construction paper and light, including the figures who are supposed to be singing. No human performer appears on screen, although, as we shall see, the voices of the singers and the hand of the creators are felt in the resulting film through the smooth—yet painstaking—negotiation of a

sophisticated performance network. One final time, let us map its components and reflect on its characteristic aesthetic effects.

"Scissors Make Film," *Tricktisch* Makes Animation[1]

If it weren't for her skill with scissors, Lotte Reiniger may never have become an animator. For her early experiments in puppetry were in the mold of shadow puppetry: the design and construction of black-and-white silhouettes, for which, in her own words, she had "an uncanny ability."[2] Such silhouettes were made with a humble pair of scissors. The art of *Scherenschnitte*, translated literally as "scissor-cuts" but known in English as "papercuts" or "papercutting," came to Germany and Switzerland during the sixteenth century, but as Reiniger was herself aware, *Scherenschnitte* originated in China.[3] While the German creations were black, other traditions had a rather more colorful disposition. As Reiniger put it,

> The earliest European examples were mostly cut out of white paper and pasted on a black background. The Polish peasant women cut out decorations for their homes from coloured paper; and in China, where most of the shadow activities originate, coloured scissor-cuts are executed by almost everyone.[4]

Crucially, Reiniger was not content with the motionless profiles she produced but wanted to bring them to life with movement: that is, what remained a long-established folk art tradition among German women was, for Reiniger, a springboard into the world of puppetry and ultimately, film. To

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[1] Lotte Reiniger, "Scissors Make Film," *Sight and Sound* (Spring 1936): 13–15. Available at https://www2.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/archives/lotte-reiniger-scissors-make-films-cut-out-animation-process-description-1936

[2] Quoted in Whitney Grace, *Lotte Reiniger: Pioneer of Film Animation* (E-Book: McFarland, 2017), 17. Available at https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=_4kwDwAAQBAJ&pg=GBS.PT15&hl=en

[3] Lotte Reiniger, *Shadow Theatres and Shadow Films* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1970), 14.

[4] Ibid.

realize her vision, Reiniger built a theater; and from here, she stumbled upon the art of shadow puppetry.[5]

Like *Kasperltheather* and other forms of hand puppetry discussed in Chapters One and Four, shadow puppetry is a folk art whose origins lie in the far distant past.[6] Shadow puppetry finds roots in the Western world, as mentioned in the Introduction, in Plato's allegory of the cave, where a scene of shadowy objects cast by the light of a fire is believed by those with no alternative perspective to be real.[7] The earliest forms of shadow puppetry as an art form, however, emerged in China and India.[8] In the Introduction and Chapter Five we had a brief encounters with one form of shadow puppetry, the Indonesian *Wayang kulit*, in which puppets are envoiced by the *dalang* (master puppeteer) and their actions underscored and punctuated by a gamelan. In these shows as with many shadow puppet traditions, two versions of the story unfold simultaneously on either side of the screen. On one side, often highly colorful figures tell their story in full view of the performers: the *dalang*, their assistants, and the musicians. On the other, the audience is witness to a monochrome landscape populated by intricately shadowy figures. In some performances, the audience may, in fact, experience both manifestations of the puppet's life as they wander around the performance space on both sides of the screen.

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[5] Grace, *Lotte Reiniger*, 17–18.

[6] See Introduction, fn 31.

[7] See Plato, *The Republic*, Book VII.

[8] For overviews of the art form, see Fan Pen Chen, "Shadow Theaters of the World," *Asian Folklore Studies* 62, no.1 (2003): 25–64; Inge C. Orr, "Puppet Theater in Asia," *Asian Folklore Studies* 33, no.1 (1974): 69–84.

While the puppet forebears of Reiniger's animation are certainly those of shadow traditions, Reiniger herself draws an important distinction between the shadow and the silhouette: a shadow is the supplement of a third party, whereas a silhouette is no appendage; it is a whole unto itself:

> The essential difference between a shadow and a silhouette is that the latter cannot be distorted. A silhouette can cast a shadow. When you see trees or figures against an evening sky, you would say, not that they are shadowed against the sky, but silhouetted against it. The silhouette exists in its own right.[9]

As we start to map the performance network of Reiniger's animations, the silhouette figure's independence marks an important divergence from the shadow puppet.

In the creation of her silhouettes, Reiniger is said to have demonstrated impressive facility with her scissors, a talent which, in the words of film scholar William Moritz, may have helped her capture the attention of the captains of the German film industry:

> The great actor-director Paul Wegener noticed not only the quality of the silhouettes she made, but also her incredible dexterity in cutting: holding the scissors nearly still in her right hand and moving the paper deftly in swift gestures that uncannily formulated a complex profile.[10]

This image of Reiniger bringing forth her silhouettes from a sheet of paper with her virtuosic handling of a simple pair of scissors brings to mind my own experience of planing and carving hunks of wood, watching as my marionette emerged from the inside out. Again, there is an important difference here between the creation of one of the marionettes at Vienna or Salzburg, let's say, and one of Reinger's silhouettes, both in the length of their gestation and the number of makers involved in their creation. The uniqueness of Reiniger's figures is more akin to those of Richard Teschner: not only were they created by her hands alone, but they are also products of a meeting of two styles. Neither motionless silhouettes nor shadow puppets atop rods, Reiniger's figures are something in-between: stop-motion figurines.

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[9] Reiniger, *Shadow Theatres and Shadow Films*, 13.

[10] William Moritz, "Some Critical Perspectives on Lotte Reiniger" (1996) in *Animation: Art and Industry*, ed. Maureen Furniss (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 13.

Following the completion of her first animated short *The Ornament of the Heart in Love* in 1919, Reiniger was flooded with commissions. She produced animated sequences for feature films by the likes of Fritz Lang and Jean Renoir—for example, *Die Nibelungen* (1924) and *La Marseillaise* (1937) respectively—but also for more commercial ventures, including advertisements for Nivea skin cream.[11] Such projects were put on hold, however, from 1923 to 1926 when Reiniger concentrated her efforts on a project that would become her best known work, and which remains the oldest surviving feature-length animated film: *Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed*, or The Adventures of Prince Achmed.

Reiniger's film weaves together characters and episodes from *Thousand and One Nights*. With the fairytale source material featuring magic lamps and flying horses, we are in familiar territory, for as we know by now, puppets are ideally suited to the representation of fantastical beings and enchanted things. We are also confronted again with Western modes of representation of the Other. As we saw with Monostatos and his cronies in Part I of this dissertation and the figure of Carmen in Chapter Four, the meeting of marginalized bodies and puppet physiology makes palpable in radical ways the subjugation of the Other that results from the Western imaginary.[12] In the case of *Prince Achmed*, the majority of the figures are caricatures, straight-forward products of Orientalist fantasy.[13]

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[11] Christiane Schönfeld, "Lotte Reiniger and the Art of Animation," in her *Practicing Modernity: Female Creativity in the Weimar Republic* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2006), 174.

[12] For more on the topic of puppetry and Western modes of representation, see Hayley Fenn, "Puppets that sing or scenery that breathes: Phelim McDermott's *Satyagraha*," in *Experiencing Music and Visual Cultures: Threshold, Intermediality, Synchresis*, eds. Antonio Cascelli and Denis Condon (New York: Routledge, 2021), 64–78.

[13] An example of recent work on questions of representation in Reiniger's film is Peter Horan, "From Lotte Reiniger to Nguyễn Trinh Thi: Examining the Evolution of Non-Western Representation in Artists' Film and Video," *Film Matters*, 12, no.1 (2021): 17–28.

Much more could be said about the representation of these characters. Yet it would be too easy to dismiss them out of hand, reductive cardboard cutouts in a stereotyped adventure story for an audience of undiscerning children. Indeed, Moritz notes that critics have often discounted Reiniger's work as being only for children—and Reiniger herself for being politically disengaged—but suggests that neither conclusion is accurate.[14] Rather, he argues that Reiniger "thought consciously of a socialist responsibility to infuse [her] films (which would be seen by young, impressionable minds) with constructive and thought-provoking ideas."[15] The shadow puppets in Renoir's *La Marseillaise*, for instance, "do not appear as the "ombres chinoises" of the idle aristocracy, but rather as a political theater of the revolutionaries."[16] For Moritz, the conclusion of *Papageno* described above evokes "the advanced socialist tolerance for birth control and abortion rights (suppressed by the Nazis) in the satirical literalness of the mad proliferation of little Papagenos and Papagenas."[17] With respect to *Prince Achmed*, concerns around gender and sexuality—in particular equal rights for women and the homosexual community—were part of Reiniger's attraction to the stories of *Arabian Nights*. Almost inevitably, the main narrative thrust of her film revolves around the ownership of a woman, but there is also an encounter between two people of the same sex, and according to Reiniger, she "wanted it to happen quite calmly in the middle of *Prince Achmed* so children—some who would be homosexual and some who would not—could see it as a natural occurrence, and not be shocked or ashamed."[18]

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[14] Quoted in Moritz, "Some Critical Perspectives on Lotte Reiniger," 17.

[15] Ibid., 17.

[16] Ibid., 17.

[17] Ibid., 18.

[18] Ibid., 18.

Caricatures though they may be, Reiniger's silhouette figures betray a striking resemblance to the shadow puppets of *Wayang kulit*. In the Javanese tradition, the stories of the Hindu epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are told through the voices and actions of a cast of stock characters. Indeed, *Wayang kulit* is a tradition where the bespoke nature of the puppet is somewhat ambiguous. In one sense, the puppet can play only its stock; on the other, a stock character is fungible. While Reiniger's characters are not fluid in this way, as silhouettes, they possess a greater sense of independence—without, crucially, being too real. As the film theorist Rudolf Arnheim has observed, the silhouette maintains a critical distance between life and art. In a 1928 essay, Arnheim writes of Reiniger's films:

> The silhouette is not as close to reality as the three-dimensional thing, no matter how imaginatively it may be thought out…The moveable silhouette charmingly maintains the right balance between the product of art and life; we believe it enough to be enthralled, and we do not believe it enough to get the goose bumps we get when experiencing the supernatural.[19]

Indeed, one of the facets of paper cuts is their capacity for metamorphosis. In Reiniger's films, not only the characters, but entire worlds are conjured through black paper on white backgrounds, the figures and the scenery. With their material consistency, they can become one another, and they can also transform into decorative intertitles and ornamental interludes. Such metamorphosis relies not only on material equivalence, but on the affordances of film itself, specifically stop-motion animation techniques. In stop-motion, a figure is positioned, photographed, re-positioned and photographed, again and again, so that when the photographs are presented consecutively and at speed, the figure appears to be moving, to be alive. As I discussed in Chapter Two, Steve Tillis calls puppets whose life relies on technological mediation "media figures."[20] Stop-

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[19] Rudolf Arnheim, *Film Essays and Criticism*, trans. Brenda Benthien (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 141.

[20] Steve Tillis, "The Art of Puppetry in the Age of Media Production" in John Bell (ed), *Puppets, Masks, and Performing Objects* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001), 172.

motion figurines, however, are in a category of their own, according to Tillis, due to their particular relationship with time and tangibility, both key parameters in the designation of puppets. For stop-motion animation involves tangible objects moved intangibly—in other words, in the time and space between shots—and the life of the puppet emerges at a temporal remove from these actions. Moreover, these gaps between the shots are, in various ways, both indeterminate and numerous. For the creation of *Prince Achmed*, for instance, Reiniger and her team shot 250,000 individual frames, whilst only 96,000 made the final cut of the hour-long film. In the potentiality of the in-between, discrete data can be transformed into a virtuosic continuity, whose most compelling realization lies not so much in the actions of the characters, but rather in the metamorphoses of the scenery.

Nonetheless, the stars of Reiniger's films are, of course, her puppets—and although *Prince Achmed* looms large in Reiniger's filmography, for our purposes *Papageno* (one of several opera-inspired films Reineger made) will provide our examples. Papageno, Papagena and the avian companions we met at the outset of this chapter are constructed out of black card or thin lead, and every limb is hinged with fine wire (see Figs. 6.2 and 6.3). Much like the marionettes discussed in Chapters Three and Four, the number of joints is dependent upon the dramatic and emotional character of the puppet, and how this will manifest physically in their movements and gestures. So precise are these material inscriptions of potential movement that, for example, one leg of a puppet might be jointed at the knee, while the other, belonging to the same character, might not; or a new joint might be created that doesn't actually exist in the puppet's real-life counterpart, but that allows for a particular style of movement, especially fluid perhaps, or particularly jerky. The material and kinetic attributes of the puppets, therefore, are necessarily conceived simultaneously, for as I have argued in the preceding chapters, puppets are always designed and made to order. Many, in fact, are single-use. They play their assigned part and no other. Their character as it translates into a physical

disposition, gait, or gestural vocabulary, can be, quite literally, built—or cut—right into them, as the case may be.



Figure 6.2 Reiniger's Papageno, without legs



Figure 6.3 Two of Papageno's vulture-ish comrades

We have also seen how puppetry, far from being a mute art, resounds with music and sound effects. What this means that a puppet's relationship to synchronization—its potential for

synchronicity—is also, in a sense, hard-wired. And indeed, puppets come to life through what we might call an incipient act of synchronization. The phenomenological contract of puppetry is predicated on a standard conceptual model: an inanimate object, a puppeteer, and an audience. The puppeteer activates the object through gesture, striving to create the illusion of autonomous life; simultaneously, the audience engages the object in their imagination, suspending disbelief to entertain that autonomous life. Yet as I have argued, this is a simplification of a far more complex reality: in truth, puppets routinely mediate an entire network of performing bodies and material objects. I have dubbed this expansion of the basic phenomenological contract the "performance network" in order to theorize the characteristic aesthetic effects generated by various different styles of puppetry. The distinct properties of each unique network, meanwhile, call forth what I term the "poetics of synchronization" of puppet performance: A poetics of audio-visual relations takes account of the multiple agencies and perspectives involved in puppet performance, as the enactment and the perception of synchronization traverse a performance network in different ways and at different times.

What, then, were the components of Reiniger's performance network, and what are the poetics of the synchronization that result from it? Reiniger herself outlined the process of creating silhouette animations in a characteristically understated tone. "All you need," Reiniger writes, "is scissors (or a knife), black cardboard, tracing paper, some wire, some lead, a camera, 5 lightbulbs, and a pane of glass and wood to make a shooting table."[21] But of course, this account leaves a great deal out, not least her extensive production team. For *Prince Achmed*, Reiniger headed up a team of six prominent figures in Berlin's film scene, including Carl Koch, her husband, behind the camera.

[21] Quoted in Evamarie Blattner, "'We awake from rupture': On the Making of *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*" in *Animation and Avant Garde: Lotte Reiniger and Absolute Film* (Tübingen: Stadttmuseum Tübingen and Filmmuseum Düsseldorf, 2015), 173.

Music—a crucial source of inspiration for Reiniger, though she neglects it here—was provided by Wolfgang Zeller, with whom Reiniger worked closely, permitting a shared conception of music and image, where diegetic music could be developed in tandem with the action and integrated into the specially composed symphonic score. For other films, including *Papageno*, Reiniger engaged Peter Gellhorn to arrange her chosen musical numbers. (This is not to mention the numerous other musicians and engineers involved in recordings.) As we learned in our consideration of marionette opera in Chapter Four, the performance networks constructed by puppetry can encompass any number of "nodes," which can reside at any depth or time in relation to the unfolding performance: from the materials of the puppet to a particular construction or manipulation technique, from the prior experience of an audience member to the dimensions of the performance space, from unique technological solutions to specific problems of realization. In this respect, what Reiniger's description conceals is a crucial fact, which is that at the very heart of the elaborate choreography of her silhouette films lay a device of her own invention: the *Tricktisch*.

The *Tricktisch*—literally a "trick table" but best rendered as an "animation table"—was the predecessor of the multiplane camera. It consists of a flat worktop, a lighting device, and a camera hanging vertically overhead to capture every frame required by stop-motion animation (see Fig. 6.4). Reiniger described the process of using it thus:

> Figures and backgrounds are laid out on a glass table. A strong light from underneath makes the wire hinges, etc., disappear and throws up the black figures in relief, while the background appears as a more or less fantastic landscape in keeping with the story. The camera hangs above this table, looking down at the picture arranged below. By means of a wire contrivance the film in the camera can be moved one frame at a time. After the first photograph, the figures are moved into their next position, and the whole photographed again. And so on…The important thing at this stage is to know how much to move the figures so that a lifelike effect may be obtained when the film is run through.[22]

[22] Reiniger, "Scissors Make Films," 14.

And indeed, a particular design feature of the table helps facilitate this precision: a music stand in the form of a Perspex panel, which can hold one sheet of music at a time. Reiniger's *Tricktisch* is, in my analysis, an all-encompassing material instantiation of the performance network, a product of the puppets and determinant of the puppetry. As such, we might consider Reiniger's *Tricktisch* a cousin of Teschner's *Figurenspiegel*, a similar gestalt-type object through and around which relationships are constructed and stories are realized. In contrast to the realistic, proto-filmic aesthetic engendered by the *Figurenspiegel,* however, Reiniger's *Tricktisch* tempers the gloss of film with the grit and grain of the puppetry itself, and so is invested in what we might describe as a heightened sense of synchronization.

As the archival documents surrounding the creation of *Papageno* attest, Reiniger went to great lengths to ensure the close-knit matching of movement and music.[23] From storyboards capturing the general sense of a measure or two of music to graphs charting the movements of the figures beat-by-beat and frame-by-frame, by all accounts, Reiniger wanted to ensure the closest possible synchronization of sight and sound. As Reiniger herself describes it:

> The synchronization between sight and sound is secured by carefully measuring the sound track, and preparing a very exactly worked out scenario, in which the number of shots are calculated according to the musical value. These calculations are the basis for the picture, which is then painstakingly photographed.[24]

Reiniger's ideal, in other words, seems to have been the much-derided aesthetic of "mickey-mousing."[25] What was frequently seen as too much in other contexts—the scoring of dramatic films, for instance—was just right here. And I would argue that this desirability is derived from the

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[23] These documents are preserved in the Stadtmuseum Tübingen, keeper of Reiniger's estate.

[24] Reiniger, "Scissors Make Films," 14–15.

[25] See "Introduction", fn. 32.



Figure 6.4 Reiniger's *Tricktisch* on display as part of Düsseldorf Filmmuseum's permanent exhibition

negotiation of the *Tricktisch*, which imbues, in the final product, the handcrafted, live, even "realistic" veneer of puppetry. It is the material specifications of the silhouette puppets that determine the design of the *Tricktisch*: its layered transparent worktop aids the smooth movement of the figures against backgrounds of varying detail and its architecture fixes the roles and interactions of the production team. Yet these activities do not unfold continuously, in "real time." Each of the 24 frames required for every second of film is isolated from the next, capturing a static image, the product of multiple layers of representation and mediation. The performance is slow, an important characteristic of puppetry as we know, as it emerges from the coalescence and exchange of multiple

performers and performance technologies: Reiniger's own hands, her collaborators, her figures and the embodied knowledge that is embedded within them, the score, and her table. It is only in the rolling of the film that the synchronization of music and image comes into being.

In this sense, stop-motion animation straddles the boundary between live and recorded modes of performance. Synchronization has come to connote alignment, precision, right and wrong; but poetics evokes notions of multiplicity, fluidity, and potential. This juxtaposition of openness and fixity reflects the tension between the inherent liveness of puppetry and its material limits. And given that puppetry and film share a fundamental motivation—the impulse to animate—this sense of audio-visual possibility can be productively read back onto film. The two art forms might be said to occupy different points on a variety of spectra: of liveness, of temporality, of scale, of interactivity, of mediation. Reiniger's stop-motion silhouette animation, in particular, overlays the audio-visual parameters of puppetry with those of film, and in so doing, I suggest, proposes new ways of parsing the phenomenon of synchronization that attend to performing bodies, material contingency, and aesthetic experience in all their specificity and nuance. And this suggests, ultimately, that thinking critically about puppetry has significant potential to illuminate the aesthetics of a wide variety of artistic media, from film, to opera, to music itself.

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As both a model and methodology, the performance network transcends history, bringing into the present acquired knowledge and lived experience at the same time as it captures the negotiations of live performance, the moment-to-moment precarity and sense of possibility. The performance network encourages us to look behind the curtain, whilst reveling in the pleasure and pain of the surface. It is a flexible concept that encourages us to think capaciously, inclusively, attentively, and subjectively. And while the network grew out of the essentially disaggregated nature of the puppet,

let alone puppet performance, it is applicable by extension to any number of situations where a complex choreography is brought to bear on a constructed, performed reality.

One site of exploration in this regard, for instance, is the world of multiplayer online games, where people from either side of the globe meet in a virtual reality to perform all sorts of actions, from the collaborative to the violent. The components of such a network would be in a constant state of flux, as the players' engagement with the game is subject to the whim of mundane calls on their time as much as dramatic events online. Agency is diffuse and perspectives are numerous, and the objects of performance involved in executing the play are ergonomic, super-fast, black boxes. Indeed, the digital world writ large could be seen as a performance network, albeit an especially complex one. The Covid-19 pandemic has revealed to many of us a level of interconnectivity previously unknown as we learned how to work from home: from the most comfortable chair and the smoothest mouse to the dangers of using backgrounds or filters on our preferred virtual meeting application. How do such objects and technologies structure our working relationships and what kinds of performances emerge when separated by a screen, by headphones, by the mute button? Social media apps such as TikTok enable multiple performances across space and time that coalesce into one expressive entity. A performance network of a single TikTok video would be constantly evolving, each new version adding a new node and potentially a whole new history of tradition and technique.

In other words, the concept of the performance network that I have introduced and theorized in the preceding chapters arguably affords insights into other, real-world spaces of play and protest—a far cry from ossified metaphors of politicians as puppets and the like. What would it look like, for instance, to analyze a set piece in basketball through the lens of the performance network, boos and cheers echoing through the stands, a pre-selected pop song blaring on the sound system? In the slower world of baseball, the diamond and the mound already propose a kind of

network, as do the wicket and the boundaries of the cricket ground, the net and the lines of the tennis court, even the barriers of the ice rink. Festivals and political rallies are similar sites of choreography amongst often anonymous agents, where ritual and societal norms structure expressive interactions. What kinds of relationships would the model of the performance network illuminate in these competitive and creative arenas?

Similarly, in the geographically expansive networks of the digital realm, what does it mean to synchronize? How do players experience simultaneous action—as serendipity, a coincidence, as uncanny? What unspoken practices are involved in such coordination, what kind of noisy instructions? The poetics of synchronization was born of the clash between my perception of an improvised quality in puppet performance and the rhetorical entrenchment of control and determinism associated with puppetry. Playful encounters share a similar profile, a surface appearance of in-the-moment improvisation with deep roots of mutual understanding and convention. The idea of synchronization itself is predicated on audio-visual dynamics. But what kinds of synchronization effects are experienced by a person with a differently configured sensorium, be it temporary or permanent, with ears that can't hear or eyes that can't see? A poetics of synchronization has the potential to accommodate all kinds of agencies and attempts to give voice to wide-ranging experiences, human and non-human, embodied and perceptual, fleeting and forever. Puppets, in other words, have much to tell us: about breath, gravity, giants, and death; but above all, about music. We just have to know how to listen to them.

Postscript

My marionette has strings now and it turns out that she *can* dance. She dances much better than expected. She seems to have a natural rhythm even; or is that me, sending shivers down her strings and enlivening the cord of her hips? She certainly dances much better than my novice handling of

the controller. It's a rather crude arrangement: a right-angled wooden handle, with the joint directly above her head, and lengths of wire hanger rotating in counter-sunk holes. An additional strip of wood crosses the upright bar from which ribbons of waxy string reach down to her lower thighs. A thoughtfully placed pinprick of a hole in each of her delicate hands is connected similarly to loops at the end of the wire arms. Each piece of the controller is robust, oversized even, each manipulatable bit spaced far apart. Even with my big hands and pianistic fingers, it's difficult to manipulate. It'll certainly take practice. My marionette is currently tangled up in her strings on the floor.



Figure 6.5 My marionette, posing without her strings

APPENDIX 1

Marionette Operas by Joseph Haydn

Work	**Generic name**	**Place and date**	**Sources**
Philemon und Baucis	Marionettenoperette	Esterház 1773	Griesinger (p.23), Dies (pp.70, 217); Carpani (p.296); Elssler *Verzeichnis*; Entwurf-Katalog (in Haydn's hand); MS. Offered for sale in Traeg Catalogue 1799; Gerber 1812.
Hexenschabbas	Marionettenfest	Esterház 1773	Dies (pp.70, 217); Carpani (p.296).
Genovevens Vierter Theil	Marionettenoperette	Esterház Sommer 1777	Griesinger (p.23), Dies (pp.70, 217); Carpani (p.296); Elssler *Verzeichnis*.
Didone abbandonata (Dido)	pariodierte Marionettenoperette	Esterház 1778	Dies (pp.70, 217); Carpani (p.296); Griesinger (p.23); Carpani (p.133 as "La Didone"); Elssler *Verzeichnis*; Entwurf-Katalog (in Haydn's hand).
Die bestrafte Rachgier oder Das abgebrannte Haus; in *Entwurf-Katalog* (Haydn's hand) *"Vom abgebrannten Haus"*	-	-	Griesinger (p.23); Elssler *Verzeichnis*; for Entwurf-Katalog see comment left.
Die Apoteche [sic]	-	-	Carpani (p.134)
Der Rauchfangkehrer	-	-	Carpani (p.134)
Il Congresso delle Lamie	-	-	Carpani (p.134)
Die Feuersbrunst	*Oper in 2 Akten*	-	Traeg Catalogue 1799; Gerber 1812
Der Götterrath	-	-	Traeg Catalogue 1799; Gerber 1812

Reproduced from H. C. Robbins Landon, "Haydn's Marionette Operas and the Repertoire of the Marionette Theater at the Esterház Castle," *Haydn Yearbook* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1962), 137-138. There is no extant score of the original 1773 version of *Philemon und Baucis*. What has been designated the second version (likely from 1776) was sold, along with a score of *Die Feuerbrunst*, by an antiquarian bookseller, Arthur Rau, to the Parisian Bibliothèque de Conservatoire in or around 1935 (Robbins Landon, "Haydn's Marionette Operas," 147). See also Minniear, *Marionette Opera,* 191–194.

APPENDIX 2

Marionette Theaters

This table provides an overview of the key information for the marionette theaters I visited during my research.

Theater	Location details	Year founded	Founder	Principal Marionettenspieler /Artistic Director	Ensemble	Auditorium	Performances attended
Schloß Schönbrunn Marionettentheater	Hofratskat, Schloß Schönbrunn, Vienna	1994	Christine Hierzer-Riedler and Werner Hierzer	Christine Hierzer-Riedler and Werner Hierzer	15 Puppenspieler	88 seats	14
Salzburger Marionettentheater	Hotel Mirabel, Schwarzstraße , Salzburg	1913; 1971	Anton Aicher	Philippe Brunner	11–12 Puppenspieler	350 seats	11
Lindauer Marionettenoper	Fischergasse, Lindau im Bodensee	2000	Bernhard Leismüller	Bernhard Leismüller	13 Puppenspieler	98 seats	4
Bamberger Marionettentheater	Untere Sandstraße, Bamberg	1986	Klaus Loose	Maria Sebald	6 Puppenspieler	32 seats	4
Preußsches Marionettentheater	Sophienstraße, Berlin	1982	Harald Preuß	Harald Preuß	3–4 Puppenspieler	c.28 seats	4
Münchner Marionettentheater	Blumenstraße, Munich	1858; 1900	Josef Leonard Schmidt a.k.a. Papa Schmid	Siegfried Böhmke	11 Puppenspieler	189 seats	3

APPENDIX 3

Puppet Shows and Shows with Puppets (including *Die Zauberflöte* performances)

This table provides an overview of the shows I attended during the course of my research that involve puppetry or puppet-related/adjacent practices e.g. object manipulation, ventriloquism, video projections.

	Date	**Venue/Company**	**Work**	**Style**	**Additional Information**
1	2.21.2016	Bread and Puppet Theater, Mass Art Boston	*The Seditious Conspiracy Theater Presents: A Monument to the Political Prisoner Oscar Lopez Rivera*	Giant puppets; object manipulation	
2	4.13.2016	Shadow puppet show, Boston University	-	Balinese shadow puppetry	Puppeteer Putu Rekayasa joined by theatre artist Sam Gold and Boston University's Gamelankemana ensemble
3	6.17.2016	Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn	*Die Zauberflöte*	Marionette opera	
4	6.18.2016	Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn	*Kinderzauberflöte*	Marionette opera	
5	6.20.2016	Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn	*Kinderzauberflöte*	Marionette opera	From backstage
6	6.20.2016	Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn	Rehearsal for *Die blaue Danube*	Marionette ballet	
7	6.22.2016	Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn	Rehearsal for *Die blaue Danube*	Marionette ballet	From backstage
8	6.22.2016	Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn	*Die Zauberflöte*	Marionette opera	
9	6.23.2016	Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn	*Eine kleine Nachtmusik*	Marionette ballet	From backstage

10	6.25.2016	Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn	*Kinderzauberflöte*	Marionette opera	
11	6.30.2016	Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn	*Eine kleine Nachtmusik*	Marionette ballet	From backstage
12	7.1.2016	Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn	*Die Zauberflöte*	Marionette opera	From backstage
13	7.2.2016	Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn	*Kinderzauberflöte*	Marionette opera	For children
14	7.5.2016	Salzburger Marionettentheater	*The Sound of Music*	Marionette musical	
15	7.6.2016	Salzburger Marionettentheater	*Die Zauberflöte*	Marionette opera	
16	7.7.2016	Salzburger Marionettentheater	*Il Barbiere di Sivilgia*	Marionette opera	
17	8.6.2016	Münchner Marionettentheater	*Die Mondlanterne*	Marionette theater	
18	8.6.2016	Münchner Marionettentheater	*Die Zauberflöte*	Marionette opera	
19	8.7.2016	Marionettentheater Bille (Munich)	*Hänsel und Gretel*	Marionette theater	School hall
20	8.9.2016	Schaubude Berlin	*Wo die wilder Kerle wohnen*	Objekttheater; children's puppet theater	
21	8.10.2016	Preußsches Marionettentheater (Berlin)	*Die Zauberflöte*	Marionette opera	
22	10.29.2016	LaMaMa, Ellen Stewart Theatre	*Phantasmagoria; or let us seek death!*	Giant puppet on pulleys; self-playing piano; shadow. Puppetry; sound distortion	Randolph Curtis Rand (director); Benjamin Stuber (puppetry)
23	11.16.2016	Handspring Puppet Company, directed by William Kentridge Part of the White Light Festival	*Il ritorno d'Ulisse*	Bunraku-style ¾ life-size puppets; video installation as backdrop	

		White Light Festival, Gerald W. Lynch Theater at John Jay College, NYC				
24	1.4.2017	Sam Wanamaker Playhouse	*The Little Match Girl*		Bunraku-style puppets, designed by Sarah Wright of the Little Angel Theater	
25	1.6.2017	Little Angel Theater	*Me*		Children's theater; toy theater	
26	4.13.2017	Mark Blashford, Puppet Showplace Theater	*Jack and Jill*		Table-top puppetry; musical instruments	Incubator Preview Event
27	4.30.2017	Harvard, collaboration between Jody Diamond, Gamelan Si Betty and Hayley Fenn	*The Magic Flute meets Javanese Gamelan*		Shadow puppetry	I performed as a musician in this performance
28	5.20.2017	Puppet Showplace Theater	Puppet Slam		Ventriloquism; crankies; glove and table-top puppetry; music	
	7.18.2017–7.22.2017	National Puppetry Festival 2017 Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota USA	**Company**	**Show**		
29			Torry Bend	*If My Feet Have Lost The Ground*	Table-top puppetry; video design	
30			Katherine Fahey	*Crankie Storytelling*	Crankies	
31			Rough House	*Ubu King*	Table-top puppetry	
32			In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theater	*The Story of Crow Boy*	Table-top puppetry; bunraku-style puppetry; masks; shadow puppetry.	
33			Teatro de las Estaciones	*The Ugly Duckling*	2-dimensional puppets	
34			Mesner Puppet Theater	*The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*	Rod puppets	

35			Yael Rasooly	*Paper Cut*	Papercuts; object manipulation	
36			Shoshana Bass	*When I Put On Your Glove*	Table-top puppetry; object manipulation; projections	
37			Bonnie Duncan and the Gottabees	*Lollipops for Breakfast*	Hand puppets; children's theater	
38			Margaret Blush	*Unfolding*	Bunraku-style puppetry; shadow puppetry	
39	7.31.2017	Swan Theater, Royal Shakespeare Company	*Venus and Adonis*		Table-top puppets; marionettes, rod and shadow puppets, a	
40	8.8.2017	Preußsches Marionettentheater (Berlin)	*Die Zauberflöte*		Marionette opera	
41	8.9.2017	Preußsches Marionettentheater (Berlin)	*Die Zauberflöte*		Marionette opera	
42	9.15.2017	Bamberger Marionettentheater	*Der fliegende Holländer*		Marionette opera	
43	9.16.2017	Lindauer Marionettenoper	*La Traviata*		Marionette opera	
44	9.17.2017	Lindauer Marionettenoper	*Die Zauberflöte*		Marionette opera	
45	9.29.2017	Bamberger Marionettentheater	*Die Zauberflöte*		Marionette opera	
46	9.30.2017	Bamberger Marionettentheater	*Der Freischütz*		Marionette opera	
47	10.1.2017	Lindauer Marionettenoper	*Die Entfuuhrung aus dem Serail*		Marionette opera	
48	10.2.2017	Lindauer Marionettenoper	*Carmen*		Marionette opera	
49	10.3.2017	Salzburger Marionettentheater	*The Sound of Music*		Marionette opera	
50	10.4.2017	Salzburger Marionettentheater	*Die Zauberflöte*		Marionette opera	
51	10.5.2017	Salzburger Marionettentheater	*Il Barbiere di Sivilgia*		Marionette opera	

52	10.6.2017	Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn	*Die Zauberflöte*	Marionette opera	
53	10.7.2017	Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn	*Aladdin*	Marionette theater	
54	10.8.2017	Marionettentheater Schloss Schönbrunn	*Die Zauberflöte*	Marionette opera	
55	12.13.2017	National Theatre	*Pinocchio*	Giant puppets, often controlled by rods	Directed by John Tiffany; puppets designed by Toby Olié and Bob Crowley
56	12.20.2017	Kabinetttheater	*Krippenspiel*	Objekttheater; handmade puppets; toys	
57	12.21.2017	TheaterMuseum	Richard Teschner's *Weihnachtsspiel*	Rod puppets	
58	12.22.2017	TheaterMuseum	Richard Teschner's *Weihnachtsspiel*	Rod puppets	
59	2.27.2018	English National Opera	*Satyagraha*	Giant puppets; costumes and masks; projections; object manipulation	Directed by Phelim McDermott
60	4.17.2018	Trafalgar Studios	*The Grinning Man*	Bunraku-style puppets	Directed by Tom Morris; puppets designed by Finn Caldwell and Toby Olié (Gyre and Gimble)
61	6.9.2018	Bamberger Marionettentheater	*Der fliegende Holländer*	Marionette opera	
62	6.11.2018	Theater Mirakulum	*Peter and the Wolf*	Shadow puppetry	
63	7.12.2018	Multum in Parvo Opernhaus	*Carmen*	Paper theatre	
64	7.14.2018	Münchner Marionettentheater	*Don Giovanni*	Marionette opera	
65	7.15.2018	Puppentheater Museum	*Orpheus ed Eurydike*	Marionette opera	
66	8.15.2018	Boxtalesoup	*The Turn of the Screw*	Drama; physical theatre; puppetry	

		Part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival			
67	8.15.2018	Blind Summit Part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival	*Henry*	Object manipulation; handmade puppet; metapuppetry	Performed by Mark Down
68	8.23.2018	Salzburger Marionettentheater	*Ein Sommernachtstraum*	Marionette theater	
69	10.12.2018	Goldfield Ensemble, Goldfield Productions Milton Court, Barbican	*Hansel and Gretel: A Nightmare in Eight Scenes*	Table-top puppetry; shadow puppetry; video design	Music composed by Matt Kaner; puppetry and animations by Clive Hicks-Jenkins; puppets by Jan Zalud
70	3.3.2019	Linbury Studio, Royal Opera House	*The Monstrous Child*	Costumes and masks; large-scale puppets	
71	3.12.2019	Staatsoper Unter den Linden	*Die Zauberflöte*	Conventional opera Singers on heavy-duty ropes; marionette; shadows	Directed by Yuval Sharon
72	3.13.2019	Preußsches Marionettentheater (Berlin)	*Orpheus in der Unterwelt*	Marionette opera	Visiting company: Puppentheater Felicio
73	4.9.2017	English National Opera, London Coliseum	*Die Zauberflöte*	Conventional opera Video projection; Foley sound art; object manipulation	Directed by Simon McBurney
74	6.6.2019	Salzburger Marionettentheater	*The Sound of Music*	Marionette musical	
75	6.7.2019	Salzburger Marionettentheater	*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*	Marionette opera	
76	6.8.2019	Salzburger Marionettentheater	*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*	Marionette opera	

77	11.6.2019	Isango Ensemble at Arts Emerson	*Impempe Yomlingo/The Magic Flute*	Conventional opera Uses multiple South African languages; fusion of Mozart's music, South African music and dance	Directed by Mark Dornford-May
78	11.8.2019	Isango Ensemble at Arts Emerson	*Impempe Yomlingo/The Magic Flute*	Conventional opera	Directed by Mark Dornford-May
79	11.15.2019	Metropolitan Opera	*Akhnaten*	Conventional opera Object manipulation	Directed by Phelim McDermott
80	11.16.2019	Metropolitan Opera	*Madame Butterfly*	Conventional opera Bunraku puppets to represent Sorrow and servant characters; object manipulation	Directed by Anthony Minghella
81	11.17.2019	Washington National Opera	*Die Zauberflöte*	Conventional opera Designs by Maurice Sendak	Directed by Christopher Mattaliano
82	12.5.2019	Berlin Staatsoper	*Die Zauberflöte*	Conventional opera	Directed by Yuval Sharon
83	1.9.2020	Komische Oper Berlin	*Die Zauberflöte*	Conventional opera Video projections	Directed by Barrie Kosky
84	1.11.2020	Komische Oper Berlin	*Die Zauberflöte*	Conventional opera	Directed by Barrie Kosky
85	1.31.2020	Salzburger Marionettentheater Part of Mozartwoche 2020	*Pùnkitititi!*	Objekttheater; marionette theater	

APPENDIX 4

Richard Teschner's Polyphon Disc Collection

This table provides of Richard Teschner's collection of Polyphon discs housed at the Theater Museum, Vienna. It is uncertain whether the discs kept in the museum comprise the whole of Teschner's collection. In fact, it is likely that some discs are missing as not all of Teschner's plays are represented here. The information in this table was collated with the assistance of Angela Sixt and David Corkrum.

Play	**Disc number**	**Modified**	**Music**	**Notes**
N/A (Part of collection)	5034	No	Johann Strauss, An der schönen blauen Donau (The Blue Danube)	
N/A (Part of collection)	x	No	Carl M. von Weber, Aufforderung zum Tanz	
Drachen 36/ Porträtist	5(?)0412	No	Chin Peh Plad Lhaa	Inconsistent with discs 50411 and 50561 for Drachen, which have been modified
Dressuract	5(?)0406	No	Ihep Pha Nimit	
Harlequin/Nachtstück	50404	Yes	Ak Son Sam ang	
Kosumo's Opfertod I	50415	No	Saochad hwen	Written on disc/in Sixt's records: Sao Chod Hwen Indisch-March
Kosumo's Opfertod II	50563	No	Diksathers	Written on disc/in Sixt's records: Diksalhers Keerl(?)uhay Indisch
Kosumo's Opfertod III	50560	No	Senkaraburnam	
Kosumo's Opfertod	50562	No	Bis Tyagis Keertunay	

Künstler-Legende I II III./ Die Lebens-Uhr/ Schab den Rüssel I.	..?041	Yes	Possible options: 50416 "Ach! Hedwig, Hedwig, Hedwig" by Johannes Richardy 50417 From *The Silver Slipper*, "Come Little Girl" by Leslie Stuart 50418 From *The Silver Slipper*, "Two Eyes of Blue" by Leslie Stuart 50419 From *The Silver Slipper*, "Dance Parisienne: by Leslie Stuart	Partial serial number
Liebeszauber/ Schab den Rüssel III./ Wassermann I./ Märchen I.	50403	Yes	Ma Le Hwan	
Sonnen-Tanz 1940/D. Märchen IIII./ Nachtstück II. & III. Act	x	Yes	?	Unknown disc number
Nawang Wulan I.	50410	No	Phirom surang	Written on disc/in Sixt's records: Phirom Surang Indish-March
Nawang Wulan II.	50407	No	Sehn Snoh	Written on disc/in Sixt's records: Sehnsnoh Indish-March
Nawang Wulan III.	50564	No	Bis Kirthunay in Kambothi	Written on disc/in Sixt's records: Bis Kirthunay in Kambethi Indisch
Wassermann III./ Märchen III./ Orchidee I.II.III.	.0414 (?)	Yes	50414 Hwen pra dap khoi	
Wassermann I./ Porträtist	50565	No	Vunam in Kambothi	Subject of the plays is not Indonesian and yet the disc is not modified

NA (Part of collection)	50408	No	Pra phart pha cra	Written on disc/in Sixt's records: Pra Phart Pha Cra Indisch-March
Schachspiel/ (Drachen III.)	50411	Yes	Chom Suen Swan	
Drachen I.	50561	Yes	Swara Luti Senkaraburnam	Written on disc/in Sixt's records: Swara Luli Senkaraburnam Indisch
Tropenzauber/ Orchidee Vorspiel/ Karneval I. II. III. / Wassermann II.	50402	Yes	Bulan Loijah	

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