



CALL FOR PAPERS: NEW MEDIA AND OPERA FUTURE TENSE

Since its origins over 400 years, western opera has depended on the beautiful tension between music and dramatic narrative. While arguably the most “spectacular” genre in the classical-music tradition—stimulating the eye and ear—opera has historically limited audience engagement to passive listening and somewhat formalized response (applause, laughter, jeers). However, the mushrooming of “new media” over the past 30 years challenges the art form to stretch and adapt in ways that were unimaginable even a decade ago. The scope of today’s new media—digitized soundscapes and music, holograms, immersive environments, streaming performances to personal and mobile devices, to name a few examples—potentially reframes what it means to “go to the opera.” Surely the traditional artist-audience relationship and power dynamic must shift as audience members increasingly have the power to determine a performance’s space and time, let alone music and story-line.

We invite papers that centrally address the conference’s theme, considered broadly. We encourage papers that advance discussions of diversity, inclusivity, intersectionality across the range of practices and theory that inform opera production and performance, including but not limited to the following questions:

- Confronted with new media and audience expectations, how does opera survive and thrive?
- What are the implications of media-mediated experiences for live opera performances? What are the connections and divergences? Will access to one or another create a new “elitism” within the art form?
- In an art form that regularly strains or abandons “real-life” verisimilitude to extend time and emotion through music, might media integrate with or shape our understanding of operatic “coherence” and make it less abstract?
- When we take an immersive sonic-walk, or a hologram of Maria Callas delivers a stellar performance in our living rooms, do we lose the communal experience? What is lost, and what is gained in terms of audience engagement?
- How do opera artists best train and prepare for a media-infused future? How do we bring our audiences along or do they bring us?

LA Opera is working with an organizing committee of LA-based scholars to investigate these questions at a two-day conference as part of the county-wide *Eurydice Found* Festival. The conference will focus on local scholars (no travel or housing stipends offered). Sessions will take place on Thursday afternoon 2/13/20 and Friday all day 2/14/20 at LA Opera; conference participants will also be invited to attend the 2/14/20 performance of *Eurydice* as guests of LA Opera. Following the 2/14/20 performance, a post-opera conference conversation will take place in Stern Grand Hall and be open to that evening’s opera patrons. All sessions will be recorded for possible podcast by LA Opera and papers may be published as “open access” on the LA Opera website. The organizers of this conference aim not only to provide an occasion to study and discuss the place of opera in the New Media ecosystem, but also to establish the grounding for a broadly-based, inclusive framework—a local consortium, in effect—within which scholars and artists concerned with opera and its place in Southern California can begin to collaborate intellectually and artistically across disciplines and institutions.

We invite submissions from LA-based scholars, graduate and undergraduate students. Abstracts of no more than 200 words (pdf files, with your name and affiliation) should be sent by **October 31, 2019** to sbrightman@laopera.org. We expect to notify prospective participants by the end of November.