



L'opéra dans le cyberspace : Médias, technologie et histoire /

Opera in the Web Age: Media, Technology and History

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A Night at the Opera (at the Cinema)

Now into its second decade, the opera cinecast has in some ways been normalized as a media phenomenon. Few opera devotees have not at least

sampled a night at the opera in their local cinema, and the available statistics suggest a sustained appeal. Yet the cinecasts retain a peripheral quality. Certainly, these relays of live opera cut an odd figure among the blockbusters that are the staples of any multiplex. There are other reminders of the strange hybridity of the opera cinecast; my paper focuses on three.

First, an interception: a thread on a popular online television forum regularly communicates the frequencies of the satellite frequencies of the transmissions. The signal, after all, is nothing more than a standard HD television feed, something the opera companies gloss over as they trumpet the 'cinematic' experience of their relays. Second, an intervention: a Tweet from an enthusiastic viewer of the Royal Opera House Live Cinema series is screened during the broadcast intermission. The viewer then photographs her Tweet on screen and tweets the image. This sign of the liveness of the transmission equally foregrounds a 'hypermediacy' that threatens to compromise the impression of presence and immediacy so emphasised in the rhetoric of cinecasts. Third, an interruption: a vibration from the sub-woofer in an adjacent cinema signals an on-screen explosion or the approach of some



immense spaceship. It is a reminder that the audiences around us are immersed in sensory and narrative experiences that belong, in more ways than one, to other worlds.

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