

Music on the Stage



12. Outside the Box

December 11, 2024

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IN GENERAL, THE ARTS HAVE BEEN MOST COMFORTABLE STICKING TO FAMILIAR GENRES. An opera is an opera, a ballet is a ballet, and the concert hall obeys different conventions from the theater. But increasingly as the 20th century wore on, creative artists began to question these assumptions. Why should an instrumentalist not also be an actor? Must chamber music always be polite; can't it also be the voice of social protest? What happens if you take a Mass setting out of the church (or concert hall) and stage it as opera? Or make a ballet that turns tradition on its head?

Then came the pandemic of 2020/21. For a while, the usual means of public presentation were no longer available. One solution came via a medium that had been growing in the pop world for some decades: adopting the music video for classical purposes. Meanwhile, musicians wishing to keep performing and organizations needing to maintain their audiences began to think more creatively yet—discoveries that may continue to play a part even when COVID has become only a memory. *rb.*

A. The Stage is Yours

Creative artists have begun to think outside the box for many reasons, including stylistic experimentation, social protest, or sheer fun. This hour will contain examples of all three.

Kirsten: *Pirouette on a Moon Sliver* (2011), opening (Emma Resmini)

Bowler: *FFF* (2017), brief excerpt

Walshe: *XXX_LIVE_NUDE_GIRLS!!!* (2003), documentary

Haydn: *Missa in Tempore Belli* (1796), excerpts (Dutch National Opera 2022; Barbora Horáková, *dir*; Johannes Kammler, *bar*)

Ekman: *Play* (2017), excerpts (Paris Opera Ballet, 2017; Mikael Karlsson, *composer*; Callie Day, *singer*)

B. Lockdown

The examples in this hour include two recent classical music videos, an unusually intimate account of orchestral musicians playing from their homes via Zoom, and two bold responses to the COVID epidemic by European opera companies.

Lang: *I want to live where you live* (2005), in 2024 video by Evan Chapman and Kevin Eikenberg with the Trio Medeval

Shaw: *Sing On*, 2024 video with Sō Percussion

Boccherini/Berio: *La ritirata notturna di Madrid*, members of the Basel Symphony playing from their homes (Ivor Bolton, *cond.*)

Kirby: *Dichotomies of Lockdown* (from *20 Shots of Opera*, Irish National Opera 2020; with Aebh Kelly and Andrew Gavin)

Various: *FAUST [working title]* (Dutch National Opera, 2020, conceived by Lisenka Heijboer Castañon and Manoj Kamps) excerpts include:

Boulanger: Helen's aria from *Faust et Hélène* (1913)

Chabrier: Romance from *L'étoile* (1877)

Handel: "Venti, turbini" from *Rinaldo* (1711)

Luciano **Berio** (1925–2003, *Italian composer*), Luigi **Boccherini** (1743–1805, *Italian composer*), Lili **Boulanger** (1893–1918, *French composer*), Laura **Bowler** (1986–, *British composer-performer*), Emmanuel **Chabrier** (1841–94, *French composer*), Alexander **Ekman** (1984–, *Swedish choreographer*), George Frideric **Handel** (1685–1759, *German-English composer*), Franz Joseph **Haydn** (1732–1809, *Austrian composer*), Lisenka **Heijboer Castañon** (*bdnk*, *Peruvian-Dutch director*), Barbora **Horáková** (*bdnk*, *Czech director*), Manoj **Kamps** (1988–, *Sri Lankan Dutch conductor-composer*), Mikael **Karlsson** (1975–, *Swedish composer*), Jenn **Kirby** (*bdnk*, *Irish composer*), Amy Beth **Kirsten** (1972–, *American composer*), David **Lang** (1957–, *American composer*), Caroline **Shaw** (1982–, *American composer*), Jennifer Walshe (1974–, *Irish composer-performer*)

The course website is www.brunyate.com/MusicStage
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