

Ivana Seletković (auth.). Društvena fenomenologija opera. (Social Phenomenology of Opera). Academia Analytica, Sarajevo, 2021, p./str.254.

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1.

There are many reasons for the opera to be seen not only in historical facts and currents, in continuity of its main trajectories and metamorphoses, but also in its *artistic essence*, in the complexity of the *background* of its phenomenological horizon, whose *constitution* includes numerous variables that cannot be quantified except, perhaps, to be modeled by operators of modal or possible or even counterfactual worlds. These dispositional variables need to be placed in the function of the constitution of the unity of experience of such a horizon of an artistic phenomenon for whose socio-cultural existence and logical structure there is some option of ideally valid artistic evidences / axiomatically truthfulness. In addition, opera can always be found immersed in society like a fly in honey, caught up in themes that are either socially engaged or are a *figurative mimesis* of individual experience and destiny that engages society and provokes collective identity reactions. Taken in one way or another, opera always re-presents and sets up a world, mythological or naturalistic, that takes place on stage and produces a spectrum of off-stage experiences, in the interpersonal and interactive semantic field of social actors who "consume that world. " (it is more correct to say: "actors ... who participate in that world from a very short distance! ").

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It was Ivana Seletković, the author of the book " Social Phenomenology of Opera ", who bravely entered this complex phenomenon in a *connectionist way* with the awareness that everything that happens *here* and *now* happens *at the same time*, that everything is connected with each other, that life processes which produce *stimulus meanings* for the possibility of *figurative mimesis* occur in parallel, that these meanings are mutually conditioned, to produce and reproduce an image of the world for the *Other* or only *Different* who becomes aware of them, whether he accepts it or rejects it. It is precisely this *simultaneity* and *parallelism* of events and experiences of that event that causes uncertainty and imprecision, divergence, contradictions due to opposites and oppositions that oppose and conflict, which seek their resolution through a *drama of events* that is interesting for art if it is poetic, whether sacral or secular, not banal and vulgar. That is why opera as a *poetic drama* is complex and needs to be clarified and explained from different angles, from different and divergent vectors that naturally emerge in the analysis of opera and which need to be "mastered" and brought into harmony by some *diacritical approach*. This is exactly the approach chosen by Ivana Seletković, the author of the book, drawing this primarily artistic and musical phenomenon into the categories and provisions of phenomenology and hermeneutics, into sociological and philosophical *prisms of meaning* and significance, which gave it a certain advantage over historical and pedagogical, i.e. *didactical approaches*.

2.

It should first be said that the book is composed of an Introduction, four chapters, and a concluding remarks. In the Introduction, the author gave (1) several brilliant characterizations of opera, (2) her own research analytical hypothesis or one hypothetical framework, and (3) a methodological principle of research. I will list only one of several important characterizations

"Opera through music or through drama in musical form introduces into this fluid context sounds, tones and movements, socially constituted deontic values, social norms and their dramatic degradation through plot, through characters and their interaction, and confronts them in the perception of musical / dramatic recipients messages with his own course of life and thus reconstructs these values in a drastic way in the perception or in the cognition or in the experience of truth through one instance of destiny, individual or collective. " (Seletković, 2021, ...)

When it comes to the analytical hypotheses that the author introduces in the research of opera, then her next words should be stated

"What the hypothesis of this research seeks to suggest is that it is possible to define opera as a single musical "technology" that enables the transfer of perceptual, cognitive, emotional content, which can be real or imaginary, historical or mythical, absurd or meaningful, and which in space and over time they directly constitute an artistic experience and populate social consciousness with ethical and aesthetic facts, states of affairs, projective or regressive beliefs. " (Seletković, 2021, ...)

What does it actually mean to explore something by applying the methods of social phenomenology? The first thing to say is about the principles of social phenomenology, about how Alfred Schutz actually merged Husserl and Max Weber, Husserl's phenomenological analysis, and Weber's interpretive sociology. Every phenomenological act is an insight into the meaning and significance of the experience that the phenomenon leaves on us, and this insight should provide us with a record of the truth mediated by the ideal meanings of words. Both the logical record and the logical experience of statements and phenomenological intentional acts are part of our identity reactions.

The social phenomenology which investigates the structure of a phenomenon here, in this case opera, should give us an *insight into the social character of that phenomenon*, i.e. a phenomenological insight into the structural and semantic properties of opera as a work of art that has its socio-cultural *background* with a background network of concepts. And identity reactions!

Ivana Seletković approached the understanding of the essence of opera as a work of art in a new way, using a *consortium of methodologies* and an *interdisciplinary approach* to what a complex artistic structure such as opera certainly requires. She spoke about opera through the various vocabularies that were available to her in its socio-cultural background and educational horizon ... and there are not a small number of them! She first avoided dealing with opera in a linear way, that is, writing history of opera, even though facts and exact data at the information level are present constantly.

Instead, the author embarked on an *understanding of the essence of opera from the essence of art* through the scientific, sociological and philosophical description of

opera as an *artistic event* that produces a *spiritual experience* in listeners and viewers who come with their own structured mental states, moral and aesthetic history, their own experiences and life experiences ...

3.

Of course, phenomenological analysis of the state of things and insights into intentional essence should be distinguished from object analysis: here these divergent meanings mediated by acts of perception and acts of understanding should be conducted / distilled through *matrices of convergent phenomenology* and thus reach the *unity of experience* through unity of meaning !!

The fact that opera is a *collaborative endeavor*, that it is a *hybrid communication of many different arts*, that it relies on archetypal characters, that it is a kind of unusual *amalgamation of different systems of artistic expression*, that its reception is always different and new, that it depends on consumers and their interpretive abilities or *hermeneutic horizons*, all of which actually ask a new question about the way in which the convergence of these communications is achieved and about the way in which the unity of the artistic experience produced by the opera is achieved.

Theodor Adorno – a famous German philosopher, sociologist, composer – warned us (*Music, Language and Composition*, 1993) that music is similar to language, but that it is not language; then that music is similar to logic because of the coherence and continuum of sound, but that it is not logic because it does not deal with concepts. In opera you have everything that music is and everything that music is not: you have music, you have language and you have logic, you have emotion and you have rationalization, you have time, you have space, you have ethical and moral principles and actions, ...

Besides, as Adorno says, music as well as language and logic need *interpretation*, but the interpretation of music is completely different: interpreting language means understanding language, interpreting the logic of utterances means reaching the true value of statements, while interpreting music means making, creating music! Opera itself is a phenomenologically constructed structure of *connected meanings* and *connected experiences* that is simultaneously oriented towards the creation and discovery of the intentional essence of connected acts that are both perceptual, and linguistic, and logical, and cognitive. That is why phenomenology itself is analyzed in the phenomenological analysis of opera, which is interesting in itself.

Synthesis of multiple art forms in one performative "All-in-One" composition, synthesis of perception of all these forms on the consumer's side, synthesis of

experience from subjective reactions of consciousness that forms differentiated qualia – particular interpretations of experience that become a priori triggers of later aesthetic judgments, the synthesis of collective representations and collective identifications in cultural and political compresses of social groups, ethnicities, nations ... can actually be explained only by *parallel convergent phenomenology* that can analyze this dialectical mechanism of abolishing differences and elevating / constituting experiences to the level of the whole. It is opera that proves to be the form in which the *concrete-general* phenomenology of the spiritual / artistic world functions, which transcends all its particular moments / elements / experiences.

Opera can therefore be explored as a performative dialectical mechanism, a *dialectical technology* that brings together, transitions, harmonizes and annuls at a higher level the divergence of its elements, and in fact from the point of view of mereology for opera one can rightly say: " The whole is greater than its parts " (*Totum est maius sua partes*)!

Through such and such a divergence of elements of an opera performance, a *unity of artistic experience* should be created, which is transmitted from the author of the opera through the performer to the receiver, to the audience that has already built its own moral, ethical, aesthetic, political attitudes and interprets and reinterprets. An original artistic experience that originated with the author. Besides, as Hans Georg Gadamer says, a work of art, such as music, lives only in its performance, through interpretation, through the hermeneutics of experience ... and it all actually complicates and shows opera as one complicated *musical technology* that is easy to enjoy, but is difficult to describe and explain as such.

Of course here the term *technology* seems foreign when put into the vocabulary of art ... but as soon as you have a *structure of elements* that requires knowledge and instruments to compose it you immediately have *techne* (in the original sense of the word) as the art or skill of creating that structure as an expert system. Opera requires a great deal of knowledge and a number of types of instruments (I don't just mean musical instruments) to compose and realize. Therefore, it is important, as the philosopher of technology Don Ihde testifies in recent times, to apply *hermeneutics* and *phenomenology* to the field of technology, and in this case to the field of *music technology*, musical skills and abilities that are realized in a solid form.

The author followed that path. She applied phenomenology and hermeneutics, philosophy, sociology and cognitive science, and art to the understanding of opera as

a musical phenomenon directly related to social practices ... because the question is What gave birth to opera: social practices that have placed themselves in a specific artistic framework to be represented, or musical art that has placed social practices in its focus, or social practices and musical art have taken to place the individual destinies of people, real or imagined, in characters on stage and thus confronting society with the moral, ethical and aesthetic challenges of their time and space.

4.

How is the unity of artistic experience constituted? - What kind of record of it truthfulness? - Is it just an interpretation of the experience of the artist - a composer interpreted by the performer on stage, and then a constellation of interpretations that are formed in a society on the occasion of a physical, moral, historical, aesthetic act which the opera presents ... and then the individual experience as an interpretation of the immediate consumer ... These are questions or better to say *aporia (difficulties)* posed by Ivana Seletković as topics through which she then had to conduct her research of the opera. And all these paths could not pass without using *analytical hypotheses* and *different vocabularies*, one hermeneutic mediation of semantics given in one dimension that opera has and its translation into semantics of another dimension of opera, third, fourth, fifth ...

Opera is a *multi-dimensional work of art*, a drama set to music, music dramatized by this work, ethically and aesthetically differentiated through the characters, vocally and instrumentally intertwined in numerous melodic sequences that often, like the opera itself, clash, confront in height and depth ...

Opera is therefore *multi-conclusive* work. You can't go home from the theater after watching and listening to opera with only one conclusion, because there are only one or two premises in play, you always have more conclusions about life, nature or human characters, society and social relations, about status functions, about rich and poor, about ...

Opera does not always follow a dichotomous or monotonous logic that consistently avoids paradoxes. On the contrary, dramatic action very often rests on paradoxical plots, on para-consistent logic that enables that explosiveness of sequences that often surprises us in opera.

The author of the book, Ivana Seletković, has brilliantly broken the concept of phenomenology as a transcendental logic based on the fundamental experience of truth into a *network of convergent phenomenologies* that are necessary for synchronizing perceptual, semantic, structural, temporal, spatial, deontic, aesthetic

sequences. and which has its true values which are either eternal or temporally given...

She showed that in morphological and content sense, opera should be treated as a dialectically constituted phenomenology of achieving convergence of different phenomena which in its performative act (movement of sound, voice, objects, colors, time, and space) includes different degrees of spatio-temporality, quantity, quality, and modality. , substance, intensity, extensiveness, ontological and semantic leaps from the abstraction of sound to the dramatic instance of the plot. What appears in this *hybrid ontological leap*, what becomes real in all this material fiction of a hybrid work of art on the stage, is, in fact, the *metaphysical*, moral and aesthetic horizon of a musical drama that is constantly regenerating, appearing and disappearing in the life attitude of an individual and the cultural trauma of the collective consciousness of society as a possible destiny, or as a fate that has become a fact in the performative act.

The phenomenological research of opera was initiated in this research by Ivana Seletković with the *thesis* that it is possible to define opera as a "musical technology that enables the transfer of perceptual, cognitive, emotional content, which can be real or imaginative, historical or mythical, absurd or meaningful and time directly constitute an artistic experience and inhabit social consciousness with ethical and aesthetic facts, states of affairs, projective or regressive beliefs. "

Of course, here the term "technology" does not mean anything technological-industrial and instrumental, even in the sense of Adorno's "cultural industry". The phrase "music technology" simply means a set or collection of artistic contents that are "taken from different blocks" and which, at the end of a plan of the constitution of a work of art, must acquire a form that unites them into one phenomenon in which individual the blocks seemingly disappeared.

Without a dialectical understanding of these phenomena, phenomenological research of operas is not possible, it is not possible to answer the central question: *how is produced the unity of artistic experience* constituted by something so multiple that it has an impact on sensuality, perception, consciousness, reaction, self-awareness, reaction, action? It is therefore understandable that it was necessary to show the most important aspects of the "subject-object" relationship in the phenomenology of opera, in its construction and in the constitution of the experience it produces. These aspects concern the morphology and morphogenesis of opera, the structure of perception and the structure of consciousness, the process of perception

and the process of reconciliation, the process of reactions of the individual self and the collective (social) status of art in general and opera / music in particular.

It is very important that the research of operas undertaken in this book entered the analysis of perception, recognition, redescription, sociological interpretation and philosophical hermeneutics of this art form through the *idea of convergent phenomenology* that show the synergy of different elements: drama (action, plot, scene, characters, space, time), instrumental sound (musical elements, melodies, polyphony,...), singing (...), ethical identities (...), aesthetic representations (...), mental states expressed by action (...), mental and social background (...) , folk-psychological states (...). Each of these elements is a subject of scientific interest and each is a separate phenomenon that can be investigated by different methods, exact-quantitative or phenomenological-qualitative.

5.

Hermeneutics of qualia (pl.*quale*) combines two important aspects of the production and reproduction of such a work of art as opera is: the phenomenal nature of the constructive parts and the *intentionality* of the constitutive layers of meaning. Opera certainly has its own space-time and artistic standards / norms that ensure its *construction*; what ensures the *constitution* of experience on the part of the consumer is no longer anything material or phenomenal. It is basically the *transfer of the metaphysical being of a work of art*, the transfer of the expression of mental states and their characterizations from the *creator* to the *performer* and from the performer to the *consumer* of the opera. And these mental states are always intentional, they have their primary reasons in the preferences of deontic values, moral attitudes and aesthetic beliefs.

Despite all comparisons with the "philosophy of life in the mirror of society", opera is not a reflection of any "second-hand philosophy", as it was once considered to be theology (which always wanted to play the role of an expert system for justification and logical foundation of beliefs), since it does not need to directly reflect on itself or be constantly reflected in that mirror of society, it is simply a *performative act* that has the right to benefit everyone because it happens in front of the public, which it often imitates and at the same time transcends, builds and demolishes, or merely shows what a *new ontological leap* into the utopian reality of possible worlds or non-classical social models might be.

No other art, however, uses so many effects of *paraconsistent logic* that keep opera phenomenology in a constant *explosive situation*, in the dramatic possibilities that everything, good and evil, can follow from paradox, and that paradox and absurdity have the driving force for events that can be axiological normal and aesthetically abnormal, and vice versa. Evil, good, truth and falsehood, do not follow each other evenly, but act simultaneously, mental states and beliefs on which the actions of social and theatrical actors are based are distributed in parallel, and what is worse, good and evil can be *simultaneously* both true and false the state of things, which keeps each context always explosive and dramatically tense.