



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

SONG, STAGE AND SCREEN II

Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Musical Stage

23-25 March 2007

School of Performance and Cultural Industries
University of Leeds



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Designed by Leigh Marklew, Media Services, University of Leeds

WELCOME

It is with real pleasure that we welcome you to **Song Stage and Screen II** Conference. The event is the sequel to a most successful weekend at the University of Portsmouth in April 2006, and with a splendid range of contributions on offer from a genuinely international gathering of scholars and practitioners, we can look forward to a challenging and stimulating exchange of ideas and experiences. We hope you will enjoy one of the last opportunities to explore the Bretton Hall Campus, soon to close after 60 years as a leading centre for the arts and education. During the conference you will also be able to visit the main campus of the University of Leeds where the School of Performance and Cultural Industries will transfer later this year.

For **Song, Stage and Screen II** we have included a selection of thought-provoking papers, lecture demonstrations and Music-Theatre performances, to ensure that this weekend will be exciting, energising and inspiring. We will not be surprised if, in the near future, papers find their way to journals (such as *Intellect's Studies in Musical Theatre*) and academic books dealing with the nature of music and the stage. It is time that more academic focus is given to the study of that special relationship of music and theatre, but not only from

a musicological point of view, but also from a theatrical and performative one.

Watching the body perform, and the implications of that action (whether they are political, social, personal or collective), will always be a fascinating activity in any theatrical context. Add music, dancing and illumination and we can create a spectacle which re-interprets and re-defines the principles of the original form of total theatre - the Greek Tragedy.

Enjoy...

Dr George Rodosthenous
Arthur Pritchard
Conference Organisers



FRIDAY 23 MARCH 2007

12.30	Conference Registration	Refectory
12.30	Lunch	Refectory
13.45	Opening Plenary Dr George Rodosthenous, University of Leeds	Mansion Music Room
14.00	Keynote Speaker Dr Nicholas Till, University of Sussex	Mansion Music Room
14.45	Refreshments	Pillar Hall
15.00	Session Chair - Dr George Rodosthenous The Musical We Hate to Love: Responding to Racism, Sexism and Homophobia in the Golden Age Musical - Dr Jennifer Cavanaugh Cabaret: The Musical and The Dialectical Pleasures of Escapism - Professor Robert Gordon Embodiment, Distortion, Disassembly: The Boundaries of Eroticism in Weimar Cabaret - Jennifer Williams	Mansion Conference Room
15.00	Session Chair - Dr Kara McKechnie Representation of Women in Taneyev's <i>Oresteia</i> - Anastasia Belina Between Opera and Film: Staging Encounters of Media and Genre - Tereza Havelkova Vocal Masks: The Rhetorical Singing Tradition in Italian Opera - Magnus Schneider	Wesley Patterson
16.45	Performance <i>Clastoclysm</i> - Directed by Demetris Zavros	Performance Centre Studio
17.45	Drinks Reception	Pillar Hall
18.00	Conference Dinner	Wentworth
19.30	Dominic Gray (Projects Director - Opera North)	Mansion Music Room
20.30	Social Gathering	Allendale
22.00	Return to Devonshire Hall	Stable Block

friday

SATURDAY 24 MARCH 2007

08.00	Breakfast	Devonshire Hall
09.00	Coach to Bretton Hall Campus	Devonshire Hall
09.45	Session Chair - Fiona Mathers Opera Within a Postdramatic Context - A presentation based on the staging of a new work <i>Elisabeth; or to be a Mann</i> - Mario Frendo Pure Gold or Twilight of the Directors? A 'Postdramatic' Ring Model - Dr Kara McKechnie Modern Musicals as Successors of the 19th Century Operas - Dr Ildiko Sirato	Oval Room
09.45	Session Chair - Dr Dominic Symonds 'Megamusicals' and Contemporary British Musical Theatre - Dr Miranda Lundskaer-Nielsen 'The Bastard Art': Responding to Music in 'Serious' British Drama - Dr Irene Morra Theatres of War: Pastiche and Contested Space In Peter Nichols' <i>Privates On Parade</i> - Alec Patton	Wesley Patterson
09.45	Session Chair - Dr David Roesner <i>Samuel S!</i> - Dr Jack Carroll The Politics of Indigeneity and the Limits of Opera as Activism: The Case of Black River and the Royal Commission into Australian Aboriginal Deaths in Custody - Dr Pamela Karantonis Towards a Multi-Lingual Popular Music Theatre for 21st Century Britain: Bhelua Shundori or <i>The Beautiful Violin</i> - Adam Strickson	Mansion Conference Room
11.15	Refreshments	Pillar Hall
11.45	Lecture Demonstration – Can I Call It Contemporary Operetta? - Jim Holmes (Head of Music - Opera North)	Performance Centre Studio
12.30	Lunch	Wentworth

Saturday

saturday

13.30	Guest Performance - <i>Beg, Borrow and Steal</i> Steven Sparling, Richard Link, Heather Weir	Performance Centre Studio
14.30	Session Chair - Dr Paul Barker A Brief History of the Singing Tragic Chorus: The Word-Tone Relationship - Dr Zachary Dunbar Songs Sung By Actors - Richard Harris and the Rhetorical Expression of Music - Dr Kari Kallioniemi Singing Actors and Dancing Singers - Dr David Roesner	Oval Room
14.30	Session Chair - Arthur Pritchard Songs About Entertainment: Ode and Parody in the American Musical - Dr Michael Garber Rhetoric, Metatheatre and Intertextuality in <i>Kiss Me, Kate</i> - Kate Napier Illusions of Realism in the Musical - Dr Millie Taylor	Wesley Patterson
14.30	Session Chair - Professor Jonathan Pitches 'All of the Parts and Sum of the Whole': Disunity and Integration in Broadway's 'Book' Musical - Ben Macpherson To See a Voice, To Hear a Body - Mikael Stromberg The Story Of Oh: The Aesthetics and Rhetorics of a Common Vowel Sound - Dr Dominic Symonds	Mansion Conference Room
16.00	Refreshments served and an opportunity to visit the Yorkshire Sculture Park	Pillar Hall
17.00	Performance <i>The Symposium</i> Director: Dr George Rodosthenous	Performance Centre Studio
18.15	Coach to Leeds Campus	Stable Block
19.00	Drinks Reception	University House, Leeds Campus
19.30	Dinner	Leeds City Centre
21.00	Free Evening	Leeds City Centre
23.00	Coach to Devonshire House	Parkinson Steps



SUNDAY 25 MARCH 2007

08.00	Breakfast	Devonshire Hall
09.15	Coach to Bretton Hall Campus	Devonshire Hall
10.00	Lecture Demonstration Adapting and Applying the Michael Chekov Technique to Operating and Music Theatre/Crossover Performance Leslie Bennett, Assistant Professor	Performance Centre Studio
10.45	Refreshments	Pillar Hall
11.00	Session Chair - Dr Nicholas Till The Interpretations of Language and Meaning in Music(al) Theatre - Dr Paul Barker Parade Takes an Alternate Route: Experimentation within the Traditional American Musical - Julie Haverkate Post-modern Songwriting in Commercial Musical Theatre: Everyone Else Except Sondheim - Charlie Mehler	Oval Room
11.00	Session Chair - Kate Napier That Frock, That Song, That Balcony: Enduring <i>Evita</i> - Dr Ros Merkin The Persona Musical: The Challenges of the Narrative as Narcissus Jim Mirrione The Heavside Layer: The Transformative Liminal Ritual of the 'Megamusical' - Dr Doug Reside	Wesley Patterson
11.00	Session Chair - Dr Millie Taylor Globalisation and the Consumption of the Hollywood Musical in Germany and Austria - Dr Olaf Jubin Growing Up a Stage? Visions and Dynamics in Peter Gabriel's 2002-03 Concert Tour - Kimi Karki We're in the Money: <i>Annie</i> and <i>42nd Street</i> as Celebrations of 1980s Capitalism - Laura MacDonald	Mansion Conference Room
12.30	Closing Plenary	Mansion Music Room
13.00	Lunch	Refectory
14.00	Departure	Coach from Stable Block

Sunday



Keynote Speaker

Dr Nicholas Till
University of Sussex

'Musicals are the Opera of Today'?: Some Arguments Against, and More Arguments for, Cultural Distinction

At a final panel session of last year's 'Song, Stage and Screen' conference a student made an impassioned statement in support of the idea that 'musicals are the opera of today'. She was in exalted company: the current director of the National Theatre has been proclaiming this for many years.

In this talk I will suggest that there may be some bad reasons for wanting to maintain the distinction between opera and musicals, but that there are rather more good reasons for doing so.

Guest Speaker

Dominic Gray
Projects Director, Opera North

Dominic Gray (Projects Director for Opera North) will give a presentation about his role within the company. Opera is the ultimate collaboration of all art forms, and Projects is an integral part of Opera North. Its range of performances and events, such as new commissions, art exhibitions, literature, music and film, take place alongside their more traditional opera productions.

Lecture Demonstrations

Can I Call It Contemporary Operetta?

Jim Holmes
Head of Music, Opera North

With reference to some recent productions, an examination of the way British opera houses have in recent years mounted productions of American musical theatre works: a consideration of the way in which such productions might contribute to our understanding and enjoyment of the genre: by looking at questions of vocal

approach and performing style an attempt to define the limitations imposed by this repertoire when opera singers attempt it - and on the other hand how they might actively contribute to and enrich it. Should we be attempting to break down the barriers between the various lyric theatre disciplines still further - or do they need to be shored up?

Adapting and Applying the Michael Chekhov Technique to Operating and Music Theatre/ Crossover Performance

Leslie Bennett

Assistant Professor, University of Kansas

The session will consist of a small-scale mini-concert of a variety of music theatre styles, including opera, with a lecture-demonstration-discussion detailing the transformative, freeing power and simplicity of the Chekhov work.

Many unique challenges face the classically-trained singing actor. These include the increasingly high level of both technical and artistic accomplishment that is expected by contemporary audiences and the need for dramatic truth without sacrifice of vocal integrity. The beauty and logic of using The Michael Chekhov Technique for acting/singing is its emphasis on movement and its root in the physical. In Chekhov's *Words (Lessons for the Professional Actor)*: "All the points of the method can be understood from the point of view of transforming the outer thing into the inner life, and changing the inner life into the outer event." The lecture-demonstration-discussion will highlight the specific application of Chekhovian acting principles, such as Imagination, Radiation, Psychological Gesture, Centers, The Four Brothers and Atmospheres in rehearsal and performance to achieve focus, characterization, expressivity and freedom.

speakers



Demetris Zavros
Clastoclysm

The performance brings together fragments from over twenty myths. The fragments are composed through the use of musical strategies, which result in a multilayered (re)presentation of these segments/narrative impulses'. The ultimate goal is to create a piece of 'music in space' wherein visual and aural motifs gradually gain more importance as structural elements rather than signifiers. This postdramatic theatre performance will form part of my practice-based PhD submission of 'music-theatre as music.'

Director/Composer	Demetris Zavros
Assistant Producer	Anastasia Belina
Lighting	Neil MacPhail

CAST

Anastasia Ampatzoglou	Miles Brett
Joanna Clements	Thomas Colley
Rebecca Devitt	Mark Esaias
Dan Gibson	Stephanie Greer
Nathaniel Hall	Michael Harrison
Holly Kavanagh	Richard Kiess
Claire Lancaster	Daniel Lawrence
Jordan Loughran	Edit Petersen
Nektarios Rodosthenous	Rebecca Rogers

Steven Sparling
Beg, Borrow and Steal

Rich Rogue Arts presents *Beg, Borrow and Steal* – a kaleidoscopic, theatrical exploration of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* as interpreted throughout the centuries by Austin, Britten, Bonyngue, Weill, Ellington and Link. "Be the Author who he will, we push his Play as far as it will go." Featuring Heather Weir, Richard Link and Steven Sparling.

Dr George Rodosthenous
The Symposium

adapted by Dr Duska Radosavljevic and Dr George Rodosthenous

"Love is just the name we give to the desire for and pursuit of wholeness" - Plato, *Symposium*

Four sporty lads on a stag night out - a night of drunken revels, secret revelations and midnight ablutions. Can one dance the concept of 'love'? Can one articulate in movement what it means to be 'in lust'? And is it possible to reconcile the difference and move on? This dance theatre piece with live songs and music is inspired by the timeless ideas of love from Plato's *Symposium*, the story of Salome and Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

"I am athirst for thy beauty. I am hungry for thy body; and neither wine nor apples can appease my desire" - Oscar Wilde, *Salome*

The piece is a result of a research project focusing on refining musical and theatrical improvisational techniques into performance.

Director	George Rodosthenous
Dramaturg	Duska Radosavljevic
Movement Director	Riccardo Meneghini
Lighting	Neil MacPhail
Music	George Rodosthenous Nektarios Rodosthenous

CAST

Patrick Bannon	Thomas Colley
Christopher Cook	Muir Hewitt
Jonathan Hudson	Andrew Leishman
Nektarios Rodosthenous	Leo Town
Shaheen Yousuf	Demetris Zavros



Dr Paul Barker
The Interpretations of Language and Meaning in Music(al) Theatre

This is arguably the single most important aspect of 20th century creativity. Names closely associated include Magritte, Matisse, Chomsky, J L Austin, J Butler, J Joyce, S Beckett, H Pinter, I Calvino, L Berio and J Cage; they represent a transcultural obsession with the subject, the ramifications of which are still unfurling. Together and apart, theatre and music explored new horizons exposed by such thinkers. Operas by Lachenman, Stockhausen and Berio inherit this perspective, as do music theatre works by Kagel, Kurtag and Wishart from a different one. But musical theatre, despite an apparently fecund and diverse parallel trajectory, has remained conservatively traditional in its attitude to words, their function and meaning, and their relationship with music. The reasons for this may be financial, aesthetic, political or cultural, but this paper seeks to document some of those excursions encountered through music, theatre and music theatre.

Miss Anastasia Belina
Representation of Women in Taneyev's *Oresteia*

S I Taneyev (1856-1915) was a giant of Russian music, a composer, pianist, theoretic, and a pedagogue of national importance. Taneyev was a pupil of Tchaikovsky, and a teacher of Rachmaninov and Scriabin. His controversial opera *Oresteia* was premiered in St. Petersburg in 1895 and was misunderstood by most critics, who blamed Wagner's influences, a strange subject, academic and dry writing on the opera's lack of success.

Taneyev based *Oresteia* on the eponymous ancient Greek trilogy by Aeschylus. It is a story of retribution and repentance, and its idea can be compared to that of Parsifal; indeed, it was conceived in 1882, when Wagner's last opera was premiered.

I will address the portrayal of women in the opera, discuss how Taneyev represented Clytemnestra, Cassandra, and Electra, and demonstrate how their portrayal differs from and is similar to that in Aeschylus.

Dr Jack Carroll
SAMUEL S!

This paper will present the developmental process of an idea into a full-fledged musical play whose central character was a real Englishman. *SAMUEL S!* is a musical play based on the life of Samuel Slater of Belper, Derbyshire from the ages of 14 to 21.

To historians, Slater is known as the "Father of the American Industrial Revolution." To this writer, Slater is a remarkably inventive young man in a scenario about self-determination and persistence in spite of family pressure, romance, and the threat of being caught "escaping" to America with secret information about Britain's textile industry in the late 1700's.

Issues to be discussed include the value of mixing historic and fictional characters as a form of artistic license; the compromises incurred when writing a "period piece" for contemporary audiences; the use of song and dance as integral parts of the scenario and allowing a musical to find its appropriate length and proper audience.

abstracts

Dr Jennifer Cavanaugh
The Musicals We Hate to Love: Responding to Racism, Sexism and Homophobia in the Golden Age Musical

What does a contemporary director do with racist, sexist and homophobic language or action that is embedded in some of the world's best loved musicals of the Golden Age? Many of these plays are receiving Broadway revivals and a subsequent revitalization in Regional and Educational Theater and many theater practitioners are faced with the dilemma of staging scripts that can delight audiences and yet offend them at the same time.

This paper will examine the strategies that directors and choreographers can utilize when staging popular musicals that contain highly problematic moments that cannot be cut without drastically altering the musical's character development, plot or libretto. Intervention strategies ranging from framing devices to production strategies will be discussed. The paper will address a broad range of musicals, particular attention will be paid to *Carousel* and *Annie Get Your Gun*.

Dr Zachary Dunbar
A Brief History of the Singing Tragic Chorus: The Word-Tone Relationship

The relationship of the tragic choral text and of music highlights, from the birth of tragedy in fifth-century Athens to modern theatre productions, significant shifts in the intellectual history of science, music and theatre space. This paper offers a brief overview of the correlation of these fields of knowledge, using milestone performances where the singing tragic chorus featured in a theatre production of a Greek tragedy, and where the ideas of leading artists of the day converged in those productions – Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* (c. 429 BCE), Vicenza *Oedipus* (1585), Potsdam *Antigone* (1842), Paris *Oedipus Rex* (1927). The chronological arrangement does not imply a

historical narrative. The multivariable nature of the singing tragic chorus demands a multidisciplinary framework that, in each era, discloses far-reaching intellectual tensions in the word-tone relationship.

Mr Mario Frendo
Opera Within a Postdramatic Context
A presentation based on the staging of a new work *Elisabeth; or to be a Mann*

The presentation will discuss opera within a postmodern reality which, amongst other, goes beyond the Aristotelic concept of plot, dramatic time and space. Following its genesis in the renaissance as a major theatrical event, and the gradual distancing from its theatrical sources to a more music-based genre, the need in the nineteenth century to return to the roots will frame a discussion on the conditions of possibility for opera within the postmodern contexts announced by the twenty-first century.

Postmodernity arguably shifted the weight towards the theatricality of opera by way of a paradigm move that stresses the “performative” rather than the “dramatic” aspect of the theatrical event. The paper will seek to provide a base for an investigation into the conditions of possibility of opera within a postmodern context by problematizing, amongst other, the performer, collaborative, and processual aspects of contemporary staging practices.

Dr Michael G Garber
Songs About Entertainment: Ode and Parody in The American Musical

Most writers on the American musical state or imply that songs about entertainment; such as “That’s Entertainment” or “Comedy Tonight” are straightforward celebrations. In this paper, I argue that this is not an accurate picture of such songs, for the majority have elements of self-satire.

Such songs undercut the valorization of entertainment, and thus illuminate an aspect of the genre that is under-analyzed and under-theorized: it reverses its own conventions. In presenting this view, I draw from my survey of 2,400 songs, of which 45% are reflexive in the sense that the lyrics mention music, dance, song, and entertainment.

I will discuss individual songs, examining how words and music interact to create ambiguities. I support my argument with a handout that presents quantified data. I theorize that such self-satire creates a sense of community among artists and audience, thus paradoxically contributing to the utopian sensibility of the American musical.

Professor Robert Gordon
Cabaret: The Musical and The Dialectical Pleasures of Escapism

Cabaret (1966) employs a mode of conscious stylisation reminiscent of Meyerhold to effect a radical deconstruction of the integrated musical dominant on Broadway since the mid-forties. What makes Kander and Ebb’s *Cabaret* radical is its brilliant use of the cabaret locale as both emblem and framing device transforming the flat naturalism of its source into a work whose self-reflexivity creates a dialectical discourse of conflicting realities and competing points of view, through its songs and staging. Prince and his collaborators turn the focus of their historical representation of libertarian behaviour towards

their Broadway audience, interrogating the relationship between musical theatre and the life it portrays, between entertainment and history, between spectacle as escapism and the brutal reality of human degradation as spectacle to provide a critique of the pleasures of specularity. What responsibility do we have as spectators – as witnesses? From what spectacles do we avert our gaze? At what jokes do we desist from laughing?

Tereza Havelkova
Between Opera and Film: Staging Encounters of Media and Genre

Thanks to the ubiquitous use of media technology, contemporary music theatre has been a site of multiple media encounters, “providing the staging space for intermediality,” as Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt put it (*Intermediality in Theatre and Performance*, 2006). Even though I generally accept their contention that this is a space “where the boundaries soften and we are in-between and within a mixing of space, media and realities,” I am interested in exactly those instances where boundaries are highlighted rather than softened within media encounters.

Drawing on Jerrold Levinson’s historicizing concept of medium, as well as on the notion of genre as a ‘mastercode’ triggering a specific mode of reading (Mieke Bal), I want to explore the ways in which common media and genre delineations — and the pertaining audience expectations — are exploited within an intermedial space of contemporary music theatre. I will concentrate in particular on the encounter of opera and film on the operatic stage.

Ms Julie Haverkate
***Parade* Takes an Alternate Route:
Experimentation within the Traditional American
Musical**

Parade, a rich vision of musical pastiche and topical subjects, premiered on Broadway on December 1998, and then abruptly closed just two months later. In a season that consisted mainly of movie-turned-stage-musicals and revivals, how is it that *Parade* failed to gain an audience? *Parade's* popular and financial failure provides fruitful ground for an exploration of audience expectations of musical theatre.

Parade, an ambitiously complex musicalization of the 1913 Leo Frank case in which the white population of Atlanta ultimately lynched the innocent Jew for the rape and murder of a young girl, received decidedly mixed reviews. The curious reaction to this musical may stem from its lack of elements commonly expected by fans of the genre.

This paper explores the reasons behind *Parade's* "failure" and offers an alternate reading of this challenging yet accessible musical, a musical that demands an audience willing to embrace the diversity and flexibility of the form.

Dr Olaf Jubin
**Globalisation and the Consumption of the
Hollywood Musical in Germany and Austria**

The media world today is dominated by media corporations that operate on a world-wide scale, most of them with headquarters in the USA. How does this influence the overseas reception of the film musical, one of the most American of movie genres?

This question will be approached by looking at the way Hollywood musicals have been and still are offered for consumption in the German-speaking film market, a market that originally had almost

no acquaintance with the aesthetics and stars of the dream factory's "All Talking! All Singing! All Dancing!" movies.

My paper will describe and analyse ways in which film distributors have tried to raise their profile and increase their share of a market that today includes nearly 100 million people. These include the dubbing and subtitling of movies, and the implications of the advent of the DVD.

Dr Kari Kallioniemi
**Songs Sung By Actors - Richard Harris and The
Rhetorical Expression of Music**

This paper deals with the idea how Irish-born actor Richard Harris performed his music during his short pop-star career in the end of the 1960s and how the peculiar theatrical musical genre created by him and his composer Jimmy Webb was part of the phenomena when "serious" actors (for example, D Bogarde, R Chamberlain, D Hemmings and W Shatner) recorded rhetorical versions of contemporary songs.

I will look at this from the concept of metarock. I define metarock as a genre in which both the so-called progressive and regressive elements of the late sixties atmospheric popular music (experimental rock and various forms of easy listening, musicals and soundtracks) converge.

This kind of musical hybrid is to be heard in its full bloom in songs of Webb. Those songs were in the early stage "interpreted" by Harris, whose well-known version of Webb's MacArthur Park reached the USA TOP 2 1968.

Dr Pamela Karantonis
The Politics of Indigeneity and the Limits of Opera as Activism: The Case of *Black River* and the Royal Commission into Australian Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

This paper looks at the limits of opera as activism, in the context of its past and projected future, at the specific site of the politics of indigeneity. The opera *Black River* by Andrew Schultz premiered as a staged work by the Sydney Metropolitan Opera in 1989. By 1993, it was on film and had won the Grand Prize at the Internationales Musikzentrum Wien (IMZ) for Opera on Screen “for its depth of creativity, visual power and courage” (IMZ Opera Screen Jury, Paris, 1993).

Ultimately, this paper will suggest how the resource-rich medium of opera has enabled a shift in identity politics, from representation of indigeneity to performative claims for artists who need to express the human rights abuses within their communities.

Mr Kimi Karki
Growing Up a Stage? Visions and Dynamics in Peter Gabriel's 2002-03 Concert Tour

“A Flower?” he asked so many years ago, after 1972 Foxtrot album, and indeed dressed as one. Peter Gabriel has always been interested in rock music performance as a form of theatre. His stage performances have been remembered for their theatrical innovations and experiments. Already during his days in Genesis in 1960s and especially in 1970s he took weird roles, stories and costumes to the centre of the performances.

Peter Gabriel's two latest tours, *Secret World* (1993), and *Growing Up* (2002-2003) are good examples on the usage of different cultural narratives and theatrical concepts in audiovisual rock performance. Two horizontal stages, angular masculine and round feminine, were connected by a pathway. This idea of connected horizontality

was turned vertical in *Growing Up* tour stage, which had ‘sky’ and ‘earth’ parts.

My intention is to analyze the *Growing Up* stage performance as a form of technological and audiovisual theatre.

Dr Miranda Lundskaer-Nielsen
‘Megamusicals’ and Contemporary British Musical Theatre

This paper will use the rise in commercial British musicals of the 1980s and 90s as a starting point for an examination of the current prospects for new British musical theatre.

The paper will explore the idea of the British musical, examining some of the differences in British and American postwar musicals and addressing the idea that this is inherently an American art form. By examining the recent phenomenon of the ‘megamusical’ from an artistic rather than a commercial standpoint, I will explore the way in which they provide stepping stones for creating authentic, original British musicals. Finally, I will look at the current prospects for original British musicals.

Overall, I will argue that rather than writing off all the ‘megamusicals’ as spectacles, they offer clues as to how we might move beyond the compilation shows and revivals currently filling the West End in order to create a new era of original British musical theatre.

Miss Laura MacDonald

We're in the Money: *Annie* and *42nd Street* as Celebrations of 1980s Capitalism

From the late 1970s to the end of the 1980s, two long running Broadway musicals transported audiences back to 1933 New York City and the Depression. *Annie* (1977) and *42nd Street* (1980) told rags to riches stories of transformation, where young girls enter a glamorous new world of wealth and success, escaping their natural state of poverty.

This paper will consider the success of these singing and dancing heroines within the context of New York City's resurgence in the 1980s, through to the stock market crash of 1987, as it transformed from a notoriously crime-ridden city to a thriving business centre. It will argue that with nostalgic representations of penniless Annie and Peggy Sawyer's perseverance and ultimate success in a depressed economy, the musicals offered a validation of 1980s capitalist dreams and success.

Mr Ben Macpherson

'All of the Parts and Sum of the Whole': Disunity and Integration in Broadway's 'Book' Musical

The principle requisites of 'the integrated musical', propounded and explored on Broadway notably by Rodgers and Hammerstein, are that the dialogue and lyrics, music and dance all fuse seamlessly to create a dramatic whole; a realism in a heightened environment.

Is this really the case? Can even the most successful 'integrated' constructions, with underscoring, reprisals and techniques of broaching the dialogue/melodic divide, truly ever be said to completely fuse these elements? By examining a case study and with reference to writers' such as Wagner, and proponents of the 'integrated form', I wish to explore the idea that disunity is in fact what facilitates an 'integrated'

form of expression wherein the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In short, the definition of 'integration' is perhaps not what it should be.

Dr Kara McKechnie

Pure Gold or Twilight of the Directors? A Postdramatic *Ring* Model

The *Ring* cycle produced by Stuttgart State Opera (1999/2000; Intendant: Klaus Zehelein) attracted a lot of attention before rehearsals even started: it was produced by four separate production teams: Joachim Schloemer and Jens Kilian (*Rheingold*), Christof Nel and Karl Kneidl (*Walkure*), Jossi Wieler/ Sergio Morabito and Ana Viebrok (*Siegfried*) and Peter Konwitschny and Bert Neumann (*Goetterdaemmerung*). Lothar Zagrosek conducted all four productions. The concepts of the 4 directors, scenographers and dramaturgs were not aimed to be linked in their stylistic approaches, but were conceptualised as four discrete dramatic entities. Did this experiment serve to juxtapose styles and conventions without harming narrative and musical continuities? Or did the de-unification of the *Ring* do structural damage?

The paper will include visual material from the Stuttgart cycle.

Mr Charlie Mehler

Post-modern Songwriting in Commercial Musical Theatre: Everyone Else Except Sondheim

Certainly, in musical plays such as *Company*, *Follies*, *Assassins*, *Pacific Overtures*, the songwriting talents of Stephen Sondheim display not only virtuosity, but a keen sense of the post-modern, which we define as the rejection of the positivist “march of history” paradigm that prevailed between the Age of Reason in the 18th century and World War I. However, even in the most extreme of commercial venues, post-modernism has encroached on turf once the exclusive property of modernists like Irving Berlin and the Gershwins. This paper explores the music theatre songwriting of artists other than Stephen Sondheim, whose works fairly reek of post-modernism. These include Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty, Stephen Schwartz, and David Yazbak.

Dr Ros Merkin

That frock, that song, that balcony: Enduring *Evita*

We seem to have a love/hate relationship with *Evita*. On one hand, we can't quite get enough of it, from its 1978 opening, through Alan Parker's film version and onto the version currently tangoing across the West End via every continent in the world, *Evita* lives on.

On the other hand it makes us uneasy. A hymn to Thatcher and the Peronistas that provided Bernard Levin with “one of the most disagreeable evenings I have ever spent in my life, either in or out of the theatre.” and which for John Simons was nothing but “stench” glorifying “a base opportunist and Fascist”.

This paper will focus on the dichotomy presented by this musical (which serves as examples of a wider debate about our love/hate relationship with musicals) and in particular will use that moment,

that song, that frock and that balcony to explore how we can be seduced.

Jim Mirrione

The Persona Musical: The Challenges of The Narrative as Narcissus

What are the dramatic elements that constitute a viable retelling of one individual's persona and life experiences through the medium of musical theatre? In addition, what complications exist in this endeavor when the biographical subject matter is of an iconic stature and is; thus, open to various interpretations, mythologies, ideologies and hagiographies? These were the central creative interrogatives that went into the creation of the musical play *Ambassador Satch: The Life and Times of Louis Armstrong*.

Because the musical has had some recent productions (see attached materials) and is slated for new venues, a contrast and comparison as to audience responses over the years and the challenges that were encountered in performing the show both nationally in the United States and in the UK will also be discussed. An accompanying DVD of a 2003 production of the work will be utilized in the presentation of this paper.

Dr Irene Morra
**‘The Bastard Art’: Responding to Music in
‘Serious’ British Drama**

Musical theatre has often been celebrated in relation to an idea of a high culture assumedly dissociated from the ‘modern’ and the ‘people’. Nonetheless, much musical theatre seems to express this relationship by engaging with that high culture, particularly ‘literature’. Many musicals use literary works as their sources, and others are the product of collaboration with known literary figures. We now see musicals actively inviting a critical evaluation of their artistic depth or integrity (the literary and musical ‘standard’ of Sondheim is a notable example).

What interests me in this paper are the implications to spoken drama of this apparent theatrical divide between high (or literary) dramatic art and musical theatre. My paper will focus on key British dramas that engage directly with music and musical tradition. How does their aesthetic respond to the potential encroachment of the popular dramatic tradition of Andrew Lloyd Webber (and his American forebears) upon the province of ‘serious drama’?

Ms Kate Napier
**Rhetoric, Metatheatre and Intertextuality in
*Kiss Me, Kate***

Sam and Bella Spewick, and Cole Porter took a work which elaborately sets up, but never quite resolves, a play-within-a-play source, and expanded both the mise en abyme and self-referential modes to create a ‘romp’ of a piece of musical theatre.

I propose an exploration of levels within the musical which will engage principally with the complex discourse which the show sets up between stage, backstage and audience, and examine the connections and dis-connections between plots and schemes, characters and actors, performance and audience.

Mr Alec Paton
**Theatres of War: Pastiche and Contested Space
in Peter Nichols’ *Privates on Parade***

In 1976, playwright Peter Nichols and director Michael Blakemore defected from the National Theatre to the Royal Shakespeare Company to produce Nichols’ ‘play with songs’, *Privates on Parade*. The production reunited Nichols and Blakemore, whose careers had been launched simultaneously by *A Day In The Death of Joe Egg* in 1967, but who had not collaborated since Blakemore directed Nichols’ *Forget-Me-Not Lane* in 1971.

Privates on Parade is a play about the so-called ‘Malayan Emergency’, a decade-long war between British soldiers and Chinese communist guerrillas between 1948 and 1958.

This paper will examine the content of the play’s songs as well as the circumstances surrounding its original production in order to site it within the ideological and cultural landscape of 1970s subsidised theatre as well as 1970s ‘political’ theatre.

Dr Doug Reside
The Heavside Layer: The Transformative Liminal Ritual of the 'Megamusical'

In his *From Ritual to Theatre*, Victor Turner, drawing on the work of sociologist Arnold van Gennep, defines liminoid rites as communal experiences in which a person is translated from one sphere of existence to another by “the detachment of the ritual subjects [...] from their previous social statuses” and the temporary inversion of the social order.

In this paper I will argue that the megamusical might best be classified and studied as a liminoid rite. The producers of *Cats* created a liminal space that allowed the audiences of the former to come and experience what takes place in the latter. The producers of the 19th century megamusical, *The Black Crook*, achieved the same effect a century earlier by staging what was essentially an erotic spectacle in a “legitimate” space. Both earned the condemnation of the cultural guardians of their day.

Dr David Roesner
Singing Actors and Dancing Singers

By looking at two recent and outstanding productions of Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* – choreographer Sasha Waltz' (Staatsoper Unter den Linden, Berlin, Germany, 2005) and theatre-director Sebastian Nübling's (Theater Basel, Switzerland, 2006) renditions – I would like to discuss three main aspects:

Genre: both directors renegotiate conventions of the operatic genre – coming from a Tanztheater (Waltz) and a Sprechtheater (Nübling) background – and thus consciously evade clear allocations in pursuit of a new and challenging experience for both the performers and their audience;

Physicality: both productions 're-map' the singing, dancing, acting body by questioning conventions

and expectations commonly found in the production and reception process;

Adaptation: both productions involve a strong element of adaptation, they allow themselves a freedom that is still uncommon in the opera domain, where notions of “Werktreue” (fidelity to the original work or score) still reigns. I will look at the conceptual, musical and theatrical implications that both adaptations have for the actual performances.

Mr Magnus Schneider
Vocal Masks: The Rhetorical Singing Tradition in Italian Opera

This paper suggests that Italian opera, all the way up to Verdi and Puccini, relied on a rhetorical conception of singing, although rhetoric fell into disrepute north of the Alps in the 18th century. In line with classical rhetoric, Italian singers and composers understood singing as the extension of speech, and the strong sense of “speech in song” led to the ideals of clear enunciation and affecting timbre and phrasing. It also led to some more overlooked conventions concerning song as a theatrical language, however, such as the character's “vocal mask”. With this term I refer to singing neither as the medium of psychological subtext, nor as the display of the singer's personal voice, but as the site of character portrayal, implying that the singer would change the colour of his/her voice according to the character represented, just as the classical actor would put on a visual and vocal “mask” rather than identify psychologically with the role.

Dr Ildikó Sirató
Modern Musicals as Successors of the 19th Century Operas

A paper about role of musicals, rock-operas in construction of national and/or generation identities in 20th century Hungary.

Modern musical was born in Hungary in 1961 (*Three Nights of a Love*) and in 1982 was the first-night of the rock-opera *Stephan, the King*. In the last decades Hungarian musical plays took part not only in the theatre and music life, but also in construction and reconstruction of cultural identity. Paper follows historical and social process of this function. Both of libretto and music expressed from time to time central questions considering Hungarian theatre-makers and audiences as well.

Themes like characters of canonical national cultural and historical heroes; national history and its possible alternatives; masterpieces of national literature on musical stage were and are popular. Seems that Hungarian musicals act as successors of operas from the era of national romanticism both thematically and in popularity of them.

Mr Adam Strickson
Towards a Multi-Lingual Popular Music Theatre For 21st Century Britain: Bhelua Shundori or *The Beautiful Violin*.

I will look at the process of writing Bhelua Shundori or *The Beautiful Violin*, a full length music-theatre piece commissioned from myself by Oldham Coliseum and Peshkar Productions in 2000. In particular, I will look at the ways of writing the piece and arriving at a new form through combining different languages and dialects: Bengali, Urdu/Hindi, Punjabi, English and an imaginative version of the Colne Valley Yorkshire dialect.

I will also talk briefly about how a traditional folk tale from Bangladesh relates to inner city life in England and about how we fused traditional music and composed pieces. Short excerpts from the piece will be shown on DVD and I will read an excerpt from the piece. In conclusion, I will talk about current work and how this has been influenced by work on *The Beautiful Violin*.

Mr Mikael Stromberg
To See a Voice, To Hear a Body

The body lost its voice to the mind during the 17th century and has had a lower status ever since. Visiting and experiencing an opera performance requires, however, the body's full attention. It involves the whole body through interactions with the singers and with the other members of the audience. Several, if not all, sensory organs are working, even though the eye and the ear obviously are the dominant ones.

Working theoretically with issues concerning the body, and working with the listener and the body in practice, I am seeking for a deeper and broader explanation of the processes involved in listening to opera.

Jacques Derrida constructed a powerful theory of corporeality during his career and I use Derrida to question the traditional hierarchy of mind and body. Illustrating the body as a necessary prerequisite for the listener. What happens, for example, when the audio/visual input from a performance is exchanged for an audio input from an I-pod?

Dr Dominic Symonds

The Story of Oh: The Aesthetics and Rhetorics of a Common Vowel Sound

We are familiar with the ubiquity of the word 'Oh' in all styles of song, yet it is possibly one of the most banal inclusions to any lyric line. Nevertheless, despite its apparent redundancy, the word becomes loaded with meaning in its performance, and thus becomes perhaps more laden with significance than other more apparently meaningful words. This paper will investigate the use of the word and sounds 'Oh' in a variety of different songs from the musical stage. We will see that in its simplicity its contribution to the musico-dramatic dynamic of musical theatre is in fact tremendously important. Perhaps it is even the semantic hollowness of the word itself (and 'words' like it) that enables, informs and establishes musical theatre as dramatic medium. In culmination we will recognise the performative importance of this and other non-semantic acoustic and verbalised signifiers.

Dr Millie Taylor

Illusions of Realism in The Musical

Many musicals rely on a construction of realism that ignores the theatrical frameworks within which it is created. Suspension of disbelief allows that audiences 'don't see' the orchestra in the pit, the scenery being changed and pretends that it doesn't know the performer has rehearsed and repeated the performance. The identification of performer with role is assumed to be complete and attempts are made within the performance to maintain that illusion. That is problematic enough in a play, but as soon as characters sing or music begins a disruption appears in the construction of realism. Where does the music come from? How has the pace of action altered? How can two or more people singing together both harmonise and have a dramatic interaction?

Ignoring for now the problems of the orchestra and the theatrical space, this paper focuses on two of the disruptions that are features of musical theatre's convention of realism: the change of pace and mode of representation required by aria/soliloquy; the simultaneity or consonance in duet, trio or group numbers. The paper explores what opportunities are afforded by this disruption of the mode of representation.

Ms Jennifer Williams

Embodiment, Distortion, Disassembly: The Boundaries of Eroticism in Weimar Cabaret

Considering the tingeltangel of Josef von Sternberg's *The Blue Angel* (1930) as the cabaret stage of the Weimar imagination, this paper explores the multifaceted relationship between the body of the female cabaret performer and the audience. The audience in question is both on screen and in the cinema. The performer is Lola Lola (Marlene Dietrich). Through costume, gesture and voice, this cabaret singer performs a pastiche of iconic and erotic female images. Lola Lola is not merely the object of to-be-looked-at-ness (Laura Mulvey); she also responds to the masochistic/narcissistic female gaze (Mary Ann Doane) and refracts conventional conceptions of the female image through parodic gender-bending.

What is of particular interest to this paper is how Lola Lola transforms the iconography of feminine allure through spectacle and parody – essential tenets of cabaret performance – and, as a result, disarticulates the semiotics of eroticism and patriarchal system of spectatorship she at first appears to uphold.



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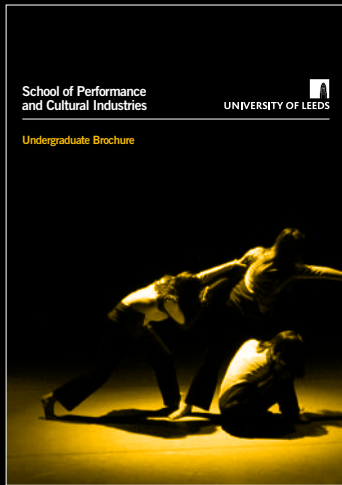
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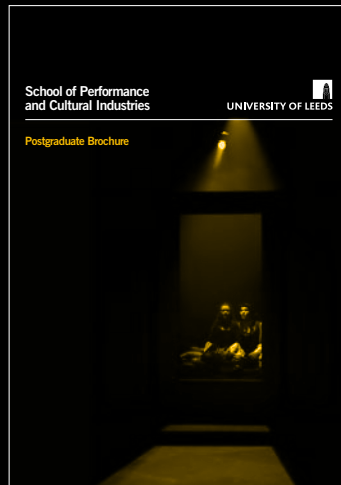
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