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IMAGE–MUSIC–TEXT: OPERATIC EXPERIMENTS IN THE AGE OF THE AUDIOVISUAL ESSAY

Abstract: Emerging as a new tool and form of criticism and theorizing, the audiovisual essay has stirred many different opinions within the academy, with its many different outcomes. For scholarly purposes, combining it with text, reflection and commentary seems to be the most common and most accepted form of audiovisual essay, easily found all over the internet in well-known video archives such as YouTube and Vimeo. Towards a more poetic end of the spectrum, breaking both the horizontal and vertical dimensions of any work may deepen and reveal new possibilities, often resulting in the creation of new hybrid pieces. This paper aims to demystify these new formats and concepts, focusing on its potentiality as a tool for criticism and its creative possibilities regarding music and, more specifically, opera.

Keywords: Audiovisual, Music, Creation, Opera, Video

Essay/Audiovisual

Strange days have found us. The Covid-19 pandemic whispered a new breath of attention towards audiovisual research and a new emergency towards a not-so-novel discussion regarding audiovisual formats and practices. It has been stated how "[…] digital technology has a great *potential* to reinvigorate film and television criticism" (Lavik 2012a), and the audiovisual essay is, if anything, a favorite contender of said potential. Not only hybrid in its nature, but also very much capable of reaching both academic and popular audiences, the video essay genre can be

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summarized as a creative, digital remix of "[…] found footage collage at one end and the film/media essay at the other […]" (López & Martin 2014).

According to Erlend Lavik, the audiovisual essay isn't simply a way to share new research, promptly and in a more accessible format, as "[…] it may also broaden, or at least reframe, intellectual inquiry" (Lavik 2012b); it exists as a tool for film studies, meant to merge insights and criticism within and through a video.

> "[…] the critical video essay is not only a product of a new technical panorama brought into being by the Internet and digital platforms, it is also, and above all, a product of our desire. Before it was physically possible to create video essays, we imagined them and traced them out in our writing" (López 2012).

The craft of the audiovisual essayist rests primarily in the editing and combination of various media outputs. As Christina Álvarez López argues, the practices and techniques required for the creation of a video essay derive from cinema itself: "[…] split screens […] analytical zoom shots […] superimpositions and associative editing […] montage of attractions, the relationships between text, sound and image […] repetition and accumulation […]"; that is, creating and sharing thoughts and insights about cinema "[…] with the very tools of cinema itself, with its own language" (López 2012).

Exploring different audiovisual essay possibilities, Miklós Kiss recounts a video created by one of his students, reflecting on a scholastic and pragmatic end of the spectrum, describing it as a worthy attempt not only "[…] at transferring text-based academic qualities to an audiovisual container" (Kiss 2014), but also at addressing the rigorous and conservative academic purposes, making use of traditional textual explanations, reflections and commentaries. Kiss and many others believe this to be the most fruitful approach to this format, and it may very well encompass the audiovisual works that Lavik calls for in his discussions, his search and need for video essays "[…] less like an abstract, and more like the audiovisual equivalent of a full-fledged academic article" (Lavik 2012b).

Although this appears to be the most common and accepted audiovisual format, a combination of controlled visuals, audios and texts approaching an academic lecture or a conference presentation, some creators and researchers rather venture towards a more poetic end of the spectrum, within the "[…] already famous continuum between creative/poetic and explanatory/pedagogical" (López & Martin 2015), a symbiosis similarly evoked in what Adrian Martin connotates as *creative criticism*: a sort of experimentation between art and scholarship, between intuitive, less reflexive processes of artistic creation, and restrictive academic methods and protocols.

> "[…] it's our belief that audiovisual essays can take their makers in two directions simultaneously: both deeper into the text that

they discover anew, and beyond it, into the necessary challenge of inventing a new, hybrid work of their own" (López & Martin 2015).

Reflecting on one such work as described above, Cristina Álvarez López explains how the sound "[…] ended up providing the global structure for the piece […]" (López 2014) as she organized the visual aspect of the essay. This particular concept led to a personal reflection on the audiovisual essay format and its relations and possibilities regarding sound and the musical universe.

For any musician, YouTube might stand less for entertainment and more like a tool and archive for active studying and learning. The array of videos available are no longer considered simple products for simple consumption: "the YouTube effect has changed art and the way people consume, create, and share music" (Cayari 2011, 24). Respected as one of the largest and most famous audiovisual repositories, YouTube is brimming with videos that both define and defy the forementioned notions and structures regarding video essay traditions. Although the majority of these videos, as mentioned above, "[…] work more as video lectures presenting voice-overed film stills […] or PowerPoint slides on auto-play" (Kiss 2014), there are increasingly more audiovisual pieces striving for the more poetic and creative end of the spectrum.

One example particularly pertinent for this discussion is a video called *Flipping a beat from Lachenmann's Avant-Garde Music* (David Bruce Composer, 2018) by the composer and content creator David Bruce[2] (1970). After a preliminary dive into Helmut Lachenmann's[3] (1935) solo cello piece *Pression* (1969-70, revised 2010) and demonstrating compositional and technological processes used in the creation of *found-sound-beats*, David Bruce created a hybrid piece from audiovisual fragments, through the application of various concepts borrowed from the visual arts, and created a work faithfully categorized as an audiovisual collage.

Elsewhere described as the unethical anthropologist, be it a visual, sound or word montage, the collage artist works through "[…] an assemblage of fragments and varying points of view, put together often in a non-linear way" (Hopkins 1997, 5), and, by definition, these practices cannot be bound to a sort of popular belief that these practices are exclusive to the visual arts.

> "The collage aesthetic is the sole methodological link between such modernist masterpieces as T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land, Joyce's Ulysses, the music of Igor Stravinsky, and the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright […]" (Hopkins 1997, 5).

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2   David Bruce is a British composer and content creator. He's been sharing creative and pedagogical videos on YouTube since 2017, covering topics such as Music History and Analysis.
3   Helmut Lachenmann is one of the most influential and radical living German composers, whose works deal deeply with extended techniques, musical structure and the concept of sound.

The processes and techniques employed by collage creators provide a reminiscence to the audiovisual artist endeavors, "situated in the space between mash-up, experimental film, and digital film criticism […]" (Misek 2012).

In a video essay on Vimeo, another famous audiovisual archive, one of the comments reads: "[…] you've aroused my interest sufficiently to dig deeper into the referenced literature. Thank You!" (Catherine Grant, 2011). By quoting contrasting images, audios and texts, Catherine Grant's *Touching the Film Object?* has revealed itself as something easily comparable to a beautiful collage, out of many objects and inspirations, dwelling and developing new interconnections, and daringly exposing her theories with and within a creative object.

Opera/Triptych

Bernhard Kuhn advocates for an opera and film connection, as they "[…] have influenced each other since the beginning of cinema and relations between the two media can be observed up to the present day" (Kuhn 2008, 77), and this almost primal relation further sustained the convictions in the possibilities of the audiovisual essay towards a potential and artistic connection with operatic objects. The intention wasn't to create videos whose meanings "[…] can be summarized in writing" (Grant 2016), and that's why the next results strand away from an academic audiovisual essay to wander into a more poetic and experimental route; nevertheless, for the sake of this article, there's a reflective written statement concerning each audiovisual piece.

The composition of this triptych aims to strip the core components intrinsic to an opera and re-combine them with different intertextual objects, in "[…] a network of intertextual references that challenge the unity and self-presence of the viewing subject" (Grant 2016), while maintaining the embryonic thematic of each opera. The results are as follows:

- IMAGE/SALOME: an excerpt of a visual operatic performance with different music and different text.
- MUSIC/ELVIRA: an excerpt of an aria intertwined with a different visual setting and text.
- TEXT/MADDALENA: an excerpt of a libretto combined with a different imagery and different music.

Succinctly, these three audiovisual essays are the apex of the forementioned literature. In practice, the goal is to explore the combination of fragments in relation to each specific opera, while at the same time trying to underline its unique characteristics by merging them into new audiovisual pieces, while treating opera "[…] as a point of departure for a deeply reflective, poetic and creative transformation" (Vassilieva 2016). The videos themselves were created

and edited in iMovie[4]. As for the audio and sound, the author also worked with one of the simplest and most common software available: Audacity[5].

IMAGE/SALOME
IMAGE/SALOME on Vimeo.

The opera chosen as the core of the first audiovisual essay of this triptych is *Salome* (1905) by the German composer Richard Strauss[6] (1864-1949). The libretto of the biblical story portrayed in this opera is based on the homonymous work by Oscar Wilde[7] (1854-1900), premiered in 1891. The play can be outlined by the defiance and rejection of Iokanaan towards Salome, "[…] a rejection that is made at tragic cost to himself and others" (Navarre 2011, 75), but also by the same defiance and rejection of the princess of Judaea, daughter of Herodias, towards her stepfather, the King Herod. The story reaches its climax with the famous dance of the beautiful female, as she has only one thing on her mind: the severed head of the Baptist on a silver platter. And it was a small scene of the renowned dance of the seven veils that was used as the visual operatic root of the video essay. This unique Stravinskian

4   iMovie is a software developed by Apple, used for viewing, editing and exporting movies.
5   Audacity is an open-source audio editor and recorder, available for free for Windows, Mac OS X, and GNU/Linux.
6   Richard Strauss was a German Romantic composer, famous for his operas and symphonic poems in late 19th and early 20th century.
7   Oscar Wilde was an Irish dramatist and poet, who in the late 19th century was one of London's most famous playwrights.

primal dance of passion and vengeance is performed by Maria Ewing (1950) on her famous role as Salome in Los Angeles Opera's 1986 production of Strauss's opera.

The accompanying music invites us inside Salome's dancing mind: the sounds of a macabre metronome, a nearly diegetic application of sound within the scene, is intended to keep her dance regular, but it starts to slowly desynchronize the tempo, as the desire for the head of the Baptist keeps rushing her. Each fragment of voices, lasting around 15 seconds, are meant to mimic her breathing, softly, calmly, a contrast with the chaos and confusion of those same voices inside her head; the never-ending repetition of her wishful cravings for the head of the Baptist. The recurring repetition of the small sentences, intertwined with the various metronomes, makes it so the viewer won't focus much of his attention on the repeated, quasi minimalistic soundtrack, instead focusing on the imagery and momentarily on the text, as it comes phased and arranged along the dance and the dancer's movement.

With respect to the sounds themselves, different voices of different *Salomes* were defragmented and rearranged from various performances of Oscar Wilde's play found on YouTube[8]. The metronome is a combination and manipulation of factory sounds exported from the music notation software Finale[9], combined with various claps by King Herod from the same performances mentioned above.

The solo soprano, recurring and reprising since the second half of the video, was taken from the fourth movement "Spring", a movement that "[…] stands out in the cycle like an aria of joy" (Wilson 2003, 327), of *The Sayings of Péter Bornemisza*, Op. 7, for soprano and piano by the composer György Kurtág[10] (1926). Just like Iokanaan, Péter Bornemisza was a preacher, and the antithetically female voice belongs to Tony Arnold (1966), from a recording released in 2019 by BMC Records (Kurtág 2019). The solo voice accompanying the dance is meant to represent not only Salome's lonely desires, "[…] rough and earthy as well as religious, evoking vile horrors of evil and death as emphatically as the longing for redemption" (Wilson 2003, 315), but also her purity, her independence, and, ultimately, a belief in her own salvation. The phrases are short and the superimposed voices, somewhat melismatic, start relatively late in the video as not to collide with the image and the occasional subtitles.

The text section of this video essay, closed-captioned, was taken from the book *À Rebours* (1884) by the French writer Joris-Karl Huysmans[11] (1848-1907). In chapter 5 of the novel, the main character, des Esseintes, offers a poetically obsessed description of a painting of Salome by Gustave Moreau (1826-1898), revering her as

8   Cest Jackie, 2021; Phoenix Theatre Coniston, 2020; Konstantinos Kavakiotis, 2020; Ken Kahle, 2017; HowlRound Theatre Commons, 2016 & Akhil george, 2013.
9   Finale is a music notation software, released by MakeMusic, and used to create sheet music.
10   György Kurtág is a Hungarian composer, pianist and teacher, and the recipient of the Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition in 2006.
11   Joris-Karl Huysmans was a French Decadent novelist whose major works encapsulate the aesthetic, artistic and intellectual life of late 19th century France.

both *Beauty and Beast*, as she became "[…] the symbolic deity of indestructible lust, the goddess of immortal Hysteria"[12] (Huysmans 2008, 80). The correspondences between Oscar Wilde and Huysmans' decadent novel extend beyond the play, as *À Rebours* also relates to Wilde's 1890 book *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in its thematic juxtapositions, as well as containing an almost direct reference of Huysmans' book, as it allegedly is "[…] the unnamed yellow book which Dorian reads, and which profoundly affects him" (Hewitt-McManus 2006, 4).

Manu Yáñez reflection and connotation of *illustrated song*, a practice which consists of "[…] accompanying the lyrics of a pop/rock song with images from films that allude to the song's text" might fit the practical outcome of this video essay, as both create a bridge between the iconographic dimension of the scene and "[…] the *anachronistic* possibilities of audiovisual *collage*" (Yáñez 2014).

MUSIC/ELVIRA
MUSIC/ELVIRA on Vimeo.

The second opera of this triptych is *Don Giovanni*, which premiered in 1787 and was composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart[13] (1756–1791). In this audiovisual piece, instead of focusing on the main operatic character, a fictional Spanish seducer based on the stories of Don Juan dating back to the 17th century, the light is

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12   English translation by the author of this article.
13   Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was an 18th century Austrian classical composer, arguably one of the most prolific music composers in history.

shined upon Donna Elvira, a soprano playing "[…] a lady from Burgos, abandoned by Don Giovanni" (Naugle n.d., 11-footnote).

The music playing throughout the whole video is a fragment of "Mi tradi quell'alma ingrata", the aria sung by Elvira in act II, scene 2 – performed in this recording by Cecilia Bartoli in 2001 at Zurich, Switzerland – as she reflects and shares her feelings of betrayal and pity towards Don Giovanni while still caring for him, and these conflicting emotions meddle with her desire for vengeance; curiously, this aria was only composed after the premier of the opera, as a personal request to Mozart by an upcoming Elvira performer. The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard[14] (1813–1855) dwells on this opera in his 1843 book *Either/Or* and provides a very striking and fitting description of Elvira:

> "She is mute in her despair. Her sorrow courses through her with a single beat of the pulse, and it flows outwardly, the passion shines through her in a blaze and can be seen in her outward appearance. Hate, despair, vengeance, love, all break forth to make themselves visibly revealed. At this moment she is picturesque" (Kierkegaard 1992, 160).

Indeed, the main character Don Giovanni has seduced and abandoned Donna Elvira, but in this unique and fleeting moment, she becomes the focus of our attention. Kierkegaard's insights regarding Elvira also provide a beautiful connection with the visual quotations used in this video: what the viewer sees is a reckoning frame, a lonely figure dancing and conducting in a solitary room for an empty crowd, reminiscent of her newly found and quickly lost passion, a way of life when she was a little less numb for dreaming; and just like Elvira, the ghost conductor becomes at this instant "[…] visible and can be seen" (Kierkegaard 1992, 160).

Till det som är vackert (*Pure*) is a movie by Lisa Langseth[15] (1975) premiered in 2010. The main character, portrayed by Alicia Vikander (1988), is a young soul who, in the midst of her troubled life, enjoys a recurring solace in the music of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The 20-year-old Katarina finds herself seduced by the Gothenburg Symphony conductor, after bluffing her way into a receptionist job in said symphony offices, only to be left alone and in love following a one-sided temporary fling. Along with Mozart, Kierkegaard is also one of the main references throughout the movie, as the married maestro introduces and offers Katarina a book by the Danish philosopher. Just like Elvira, she has been wronged by an experienced seductor; just like Elvira, "she is young and yet her life's supply is exhausted […]"; just like Elvira, "she cannot stop loving him and yet he deceived her […]" (Kierkegaard 1992, 165).
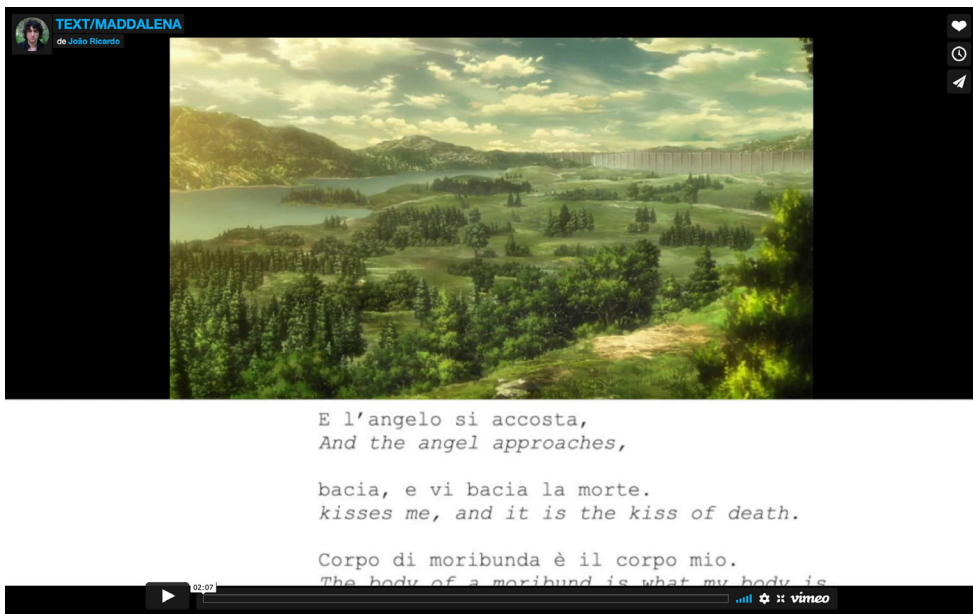
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14   Søren Kierkegaard was a Danish author and a major philosophical influence on 20th century ideology, often regarded as the first existentialist.
15   Lisa Langseth is a Swedish screenwriter and film director, known for her most recent movies *Euphoria*, from 2017, and *Amor e Anarquia*, from 2020.

The main video inspiration for this essay was undoubtedly the work *Felicity Conditions: Seek and Hide* (A. Martin & C. Álvarez López, 2014) by Cristina Álvarez López and Adrian Martin. Although the scenes are much longer and the black screens much shorter, their piece provided the ingenuity and idea to alternate between shorter and longer scenes and black frames, always accompanied by Elvira's lament and occasionally taking a sneak peek at Katarina's sorrow.

Regarding the textual component of the audiovisual essay, it became rather difficult to disconnect the stimulus from Kierkegaard. But instead of choosing another description of Elvira that would suit Katarina perfectly, the same book *Either/Or* offers this beautiful paragraph, as I tried to chase the poetic awakening of the characters: "May new sufferings torment your soul, but your lips be fashioned as before, for the cry would only frighten us, but the music, that is blissful" (Kierkegaard 1992, 37). The text itself is written on screen as if being typed, just like in the first seconds of another video essay, Catherine Grant's *Screen Memories: A Video Essay on Smultronstället / Wild Strawberries* (Catherine Grant, 2018), but in a somewhat random or chaotic apparent structure, not only so the words wouldn't come across as a translation of the singing voice, but also concealing a second layer of inserted text.

When in serious doubt whether to show Kierkegaard's words on the black screens that interrupt the conducting/dancing scene, the uncertainty became a catalyzer thanks to a statement by Adrian Martin regarding audiovisual essays with no apparent textual layers throughout, which he finds "[…] that they quickly run the risk of becoming merely cryptic […]" (Martin 2012). So, the cryptic critique was tackled literally, and a cryptographic numerical series of the same text was created, as one second represents each letter, so that one word determines the duration of the *blackouts*, intertwined with Vikander's scenes. This application follows the footsteps of composers such as Maurice Ravel (1875-1937), Alban Berg (1885-1935) or Arthur Honegger (1892-1955), who employed cryptographic techniques as a way to inscribe meaning on their pieces and "[…] express a private or admitted symbolism […]" (Perle 1985, 18). Ultimately, this somewhat hidden layer worked extremely well with the overall structure and sentiment of the imagery and the music.

TEXT/MADDALENA

TEXT/MADDALENA on Vimeo.

The catalyzer to use this opera on the third audiovisual piece came after a fairly recent re-watch of the movie *Philadelphia* (1993), directed by Jonathan Demme[16] (1944-2017), when Andrew Beckett, the lawyer portrayed by Tom Hanks (1956), introduces, translates and narrates throughout a recording of Maria Callas (1923-1977) singing the famous aria "La Mamma Morta", from Umberto Giordano's[17] (1867-1948) opera *Andrea Chénier* (1896). The character, Maddalena de Coigny, a young and beautiful aristocrat ruined by the Revolution, sings to a public prosecutor about her murdered mother an aria contrasted "[…] between the first part, a tale of death and misery, and the second part, a hymn to love" (Singher 1983, 40).

As the libretto was intended to prevail as the main focus and thematic reasoning of the video essay, the research and inspiration of the use of text in various audiovisual essays reveals itself worth mentioning. The first influence came from double screen audiovisual essays like *Hitchcock & De Palma Split Screen Bloodbath* (Peet Gelderblom, 2016) or *David Lynch's Blue Velvet and The Elephant Man* (Liz Greene, 2015), to name only a few. Maintaining the filmic references for this piece, while wishing to turn away from the recurring vertical split screen practice, new models were found on a different strand of works, the so called *script to screen*, fairly common for the social media movie lover, in videos that combine scenes and

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16   Jonathan Demme was an American filmmaker, producer and screenwriter. He won an Academy Award for Best Director with his 1991 movie *Silence of the Lambs*.

17   Umberto Giordano was an Italian composer, mainly notorious for his operas, who also composed a number of orchestral and chamber works.

scrolling scripts of famous films, like *Pulp Fiction* (MovieMonks, 2017) or *Whiplash* (John August, 2015).

Considering the excessively close relation with the cinematic universe, the imagery used in this piece was not chosen from a movie. Instead, the attentions were focused on *Shingeki no Kyojin* (*Attack on Titan*), following the aria's theme of a murdered paternal figure. The 2013 Japanese manga series created by Hajime Isayama[18] (1986) follows a protagonist out to revenge his deceased mother in a civilization full of man-eating titans, "[…] human-looking creatures that vary in height and size, display little or no intelligence and eat humans for no apparent reason" (Ursini 2017, 21); a famish reminiscence of the mythical creatures from Greek mythology. As the series reaches its climatic ending in the current year of 2021, the concept of loop becomes one of the main plot characteristics. The eternal recurrence concept also influenced the images used in this piece, as the landscapes – found scenes of various episodes from the anime adaptation of Isayama's work – were rearranged to create the notion of a daily cycle.

The music itself is also meant to follow this Nietzschean postulation, through a constant repeated introduction of Jeff Buckley's[19] (1966–1997) cover version of the 1991 Bob Dylan's[20] (1941) song "Mama you've been on my mind". Even though the lyrics don't thematically relate to maternal love and loss, the title alone might be its most recognizable feature, providing an indirect connection to the framework of love and grief that punctuate the video essay ambient. The choice of using the music in this ceaseless fashion might also be traced to cinematic tradition, as is the case of Mark Rappaport's (1942) recently restored short film *Friends*, when in the chapter "Grave Games" (Rappaport 1967, 10:50–13:00) – and in many other chapters throughout the whole movie – the introduction of the song "A White Shade of Pale" (1967) by Procol Harum is played in continuous repetition.

Not only is the title and themes of the song fitting for the maternal tragic love concerning both the image and the text of this audiovisual essay, but the F major chord progression and the *happy* sound recollection of the song creates a great antithesis with the themes of sadness and loss being portrayed. Just like as in many cinematic works when there's a brutal and gruesome murder with an intentional out-of-place soundtrack, the music of this video is meant to arouse the uncomfortableness of the audience, providing a "[…] cheerful nostalgic soundscape as background for violent and disturbing visual images […]" (Dunn 2020, 57).

Choosing a cover instead of Dylan's original version adds an extra layer of intertextuality, as "[…] covers provide an intertextual commentary on another musical

18   Hajime Isayama is a Japanese manga author, who in 2011 won the Kodansha Manga Award for his best-selling series *Attack on Titan*.
19   Jeff Buckley was an American songwriter, singer, guitarist and, despite his short life, one of the most beloved musicians of the late 20th century.
20   Bob Dylan is one of America's most original and influential songwriters, but also the recipient of the 2016 Nobel Prize in Literature.

work or style" (Butler 2003, 1), but also because Buckley's version, with its sentimental solo electric guitar, provided a very interesting connection to the loneliness of the aria and the central thematic of the audiovisual work. This kind of cover version falls under the definition of *interpretive covers*, proposed by Kurt Mosser in his 2008 article, in the section discussing the various details of a *major interpretation of a base song*, which in spite of changes to tempo, melody, instrumentation and/or lyrics, "[…] the base song should still be recognizable at the cover's reference, but the resulting cover, in a fundamental sense, becomes a new song […]" (Mosser 2008, 4).

Final/Remarks

Following the digital demands of the current times, the audiovisual essay has the potential to overtake historical and conventional formats, not only in pieces shared online on video archives like YouTube and Vimeo, but also in increasingly theoretical and scholastic presentations or lectures. Possibly rushed by the pandemic, video presentations at scientific conferences have become, if not more common, at least a viable option for the participants, for their spatial and temporal conveniences but mainly for providing an array of options and alternatives that are scarce when compared with a PowerPoint presentation, thanks to their illustrative and creative possibilities.

Regarding the essays described in this article, the final results are a direct consequence of the mentioned works and authors, trending lightly across Lavik's and Kiss' interest in more pragmatic audiovisual essays, regularly accompanied by a traditional presentation of ideas through text close to a recorded academic lecture, but mainly focusing and deepening into the poetical research and creative criticism works of creators like López and Grant, culminating in audiovisual compositions on their own, without formal explanations and commentaries, while also making use of the same scholastic and critical premises. As the videos were meant to be watched and appreciated setting aside the need of a deep explanatory text, short prologues for the three audiovisual works were created – after the first edits – to provide a slight intertextual clue for the viewer but without quoting all the intertextual references and the artistic and poetic inspirations.

> "Excessive theoretical treatments and their text-bound accompaniments lose merit in an era of greater cultural productivity and more efficient communications, one in which students and scholars are increasingly becoming creative entrepreneurs, building their reputations through new and more publicly visible forms and platforms. The emergence of affordable information technologies, with their capacity for online self-expression and dissemination, allow for, indeed, actively encourage this new

creativity, potentially resulting in more progressive and enduring forms of knowledge production and articulation" (Kiss 2014).

Ultimately, the three audiovisual works described in this article fall under the category of what Manu Yáñez (2014) connotates as *intuitive essayists/essays*, audiovisual creators and/or audiovisual content "[…] unafraid of hermeticism, who prefer *suggestion* to *evidence*, or *intuition* to *certainty* […]", who approach the already mentioned poetic end of the spectrum. The study and analysis of all mentioned essayists, their works, techniques and processes, propelled and inspired the creation of these pieces, through the transposition of their theoretical and practical outcomes to the musical universe, subverting common and usual formats expected in any audiovisual piece regarding music and any essay regarding opera.

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IMAGE–MUSIC–TEXT:
OPERATIC EXPERIMENTS IN THE AGE OF THE AUDIOVISUAL ESSAY
(summary)

In a video essay on Vimeo, an anonymous comment reads "[…] you've aroused my interest sufficiently to dig deeper into the referenced literature. Thank You!". By quoting different images, texts and music, Catherine Grant's *Touching the Film Object?* has created something new, like a beautiful collage, out of many examples and inspirations, thinking and developing new interconnections; and more interestingly, she exposed her theories with and within a creative object. As Grant argues, her video work gravitates towards Adrian Martin's idea of "mad poetry", a kind of intense theorizing in a creative outcome that at first glance might not present an academic rigor, as a craft which is as much an experimental exercise as any form of traditional research practice. And yet, this creative criticism, this creative way of writing about an artistic object, is becoming more and more usual in both academic and non-academic circles.

Accordingly, the goal of this article is not only to analyze and expose the practices of said researchers and creators, the new formats and concepts, but also to transpose their theoretical and practical outcomes to the musical universe, more specifically opera, by creating and presenting original audiovisual essays that aim to arouse the audience's interest and fascination in the referenced, and not only heard, music.

After a brief exposition of the state of the art, a review of essayists, their embryonic works and techniques that served as examples and inspiration for the present transpositions from film theory and criticism to music and opera, the practical outcomes of this article will be analyzed: original audiovisual works created from opera and rearranged with different audiovisual components from different works, aiming to subvert the most common and usual formats expected in any video regarding music and/or opera.

The end goal is to investigate and explore the combination of fragments related to opera, while at the same time trying to underline its unique characteristics by merging them into new audiovisual pieces, treating opera as the point of departure.