

Summary

Aesthetics and experience

Studies and essays on opera and related arts

The aim of the book *Aesthetics and experience. Studies and essays on opera and related arts*, which brings together analytical and interpretational discussions on opera, drama and film, is, among other aims, to answer the question of how these art forms produce a particular paradox of enabling the mimetic process to become a tangible form of experiencing reality, which in turn determines the quality and value of this process. The particular studies and essays contained here vary highly in terms of their topic and the issues raised, but at the same time, common ground is provided by several themes and leading motifs focused on the mystery of the aesthetic experience and questions on the meaning and role of art, the latter being analysed from the historical, social and cultural perspective and with reference to the surrounding reality. The main assumptions are discussed in the Introduction, entitled *The paradox of aesthetisation and artificiality as a form of familiarising with reality*. The chapters that follow deal with an analysis of various aesthetisation processes of the genuine experiences within the realm of art.

In order to arrive at the broadest conceptual and formal context for a discussion on the relationships between art and reality, it was deemed useful and most convenient from the composition point of view to go back to the very beginning, to the “primary source” of all discussions on aesthetics, i.e. to the concept of *mimesis* from antiquity. What is seen here as an essential point of reference for the issue of the emergence of modern culture and identity is Aristotle’s reflection on referential art, also juxtaposed with his discussion on the rule determining the establishment of the community and its main assumptions stemming from the ancient Greek polis. This particular issue is the focus of the first part of the book, entitled *Myth Creation* and including three studies, i.e. *Aristotle: politics and opera*;

Aristotelian sources of the opera lieto fine or on the modern polis community; Myth creation: European culture in Zbigniew Herbert's essays. All of them present the issue as seen from the perspective of several examples representative of the aesthetic and formal specificity of opera and essay.

Part Two, i.e. *Bogusławski and the opera* is devoted to the opera works and activity of Wojciech Bogusławski, the founding father of the Polish theatre, and is only seemingly drifts away from the processes of aesthetisation manifested in art and its relationship with reality. This part contains four studies, i.e. *Wojciech Bogusławski and opera theatre; European background of the national theatre concept: Wojciech Bogusławski's arcadic contraband; Bogusławski's Translation Strategies in Italian opera librettos with the examples of the Polish adaptation of "L'italiana in Londra" by Domenico Cimarosa and Giuseppe Petrosellini* and finally, *Ironic Liberation: Bogusławski's "Axur. Król Ormus" by Antonio Salieri.* Bogusławski's method is based on the aesthetisation of experience coupled with the universal message, as well as his ability to take up topical issues, plots and particular opera pieces, which were then adapted and anchored in the local context. His approach provides an opportunity to shed light on yet another equally interesting and distinct perspective on those particular features of the opera representation of various forms of aesthetic experience, which comprise the universal message addressed to theatre audiences not only of the turn of the 18th and 19th century but also of later periods.

Part Three, *Experience, aesthetisation, opera*, refers as a whole to issues of opera dramaturgy. The studies and essays here present various works and musical-drama forms that can be constituted thanks to the co-existence of different arts. Using selected examples of operatic works from the end of the 18th century through to the 20th century, such as Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, Johann Simon Mayr's *Demetrio*, Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* and Britten's *The Burning Fiery Furnace*, themes related to different aesthetisation processes are taken up, which seem inextricably linked with the sphere of existential and spiritual experience whose cultural and historical roots lie in universal axiological perspectives and clear cultural codes and themes, such as relations of duty and sacrifice, love and responsibility, crossing boundaries and atoning for guilt, or ultimately, immersing into the rituals and aesthetisation of the *sacrum* sphere.

The fourth and final part, entitled *Related arts*, contains solutions and reflections on the dramatic arts and film, for which the central and most significant motif concerns metaphysical and existential issues. Using selected examples, an attempt is made to show the relations between different kinds of artistic endeavours and subjects related to the border zone between the physical and metaphysical worlds. The focus is on stage productions of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th parts of Adam

Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve*, directed by Paweł Passini, and performed at the Opole Theatre of Puppets and Actors, as well as Carlos Saura's attempt to adapt Bizet's operatic and literary work *Carmen*, which involved transporting the narrative structure to flamenco dance theatre, and finally, in the closing study, the key lies in the intricacies of the English-language tradition of spiritual experience presented in Wim Wenders' film *Wings of Desire*.

The work ends with a short conclusion (*In praise of mimesis*), in which the value and legitimacy of this analytical and interpretative work is emphasised with regard to the dramaturgical nuances of audiovisual works, which reveal the sphere of ideological and mental connections between aesthetics and experience in a unique way.

Translated by Rob Pagett