

Summary

Character and music (studies and sketches)

The book *Character and music (studies and sketches)* originated from the conviction that music plays a crucial role in the artistic formation and construction of the human character. This is evident not only in opera, but also in literary texts that suggest a person's formative relationship with the art of sound. The study focuses on operas and literary works created from the 18th to 20th centuries, although it contextually refers to earlier aesthetic concepts and artistic works as well.

The book consists of nine chapters that address various aspects of the issues in the title.

The first chapter is dedicated to analysing statements by theorists and writers on operatic character, which originated during a period characterized by intensive reflection not only on art but also on man, his psyche, motivations, etc. This period can be loosely defined as the time between Johann G. Sulzer and Richard Wagner.

The next section uses several examples to analyse the operatic *homo legens* (the reading human), a figure relatively rare in opera but very interesting, especially in terms of contemporary theories about primary and secondary orality (the chapter *Do operatic characters read?*).

This is followed by an examination of the operatic *homo scribens* (the writing human) and the accompanying reflection on the poet and poetry (the chapter titled *The poet in opera*), using an opera by Umberto Giordano as an example.

Three subsequent chapters are generally devoted to operatic figures subjected to oppression and various forms of enslavement. These include female heroines whose fates are captured in a synthetic summary. After presenting them (*Cruelty in opera*), the focus shifts to a specific historical situation and real-life women (the chapter *Dialogues of the Carmélites*). The analysis of the literary and musical means of expressing meditation, which in Poulenc's opera is the response of those threatened by violence to evil, transitions into an analysis

of various forms of operatic lament and complaint about wrongs suffered (the chapter titled *Lamentations*).

Music, as a form of wordless lament on the world after historical and moral upheaval, also structures the fabric of Sándor Márai's prose, where this lamentation has a distinctly ethical dimension, allied with a radically intellectual stance (the chapter *Lament and judgement over the world*).

Multiple references to music may be placed among the significant sources of Juliusz Słowacki's radically libertarian beliefs, as expressed in his final writings. Musical metaphors suggest the humans' internal transformation and their struggle with their own inertia and the curse of history (the chapter *Music – Tone – Freedom...*).

The book concludes with a chapter dedicated to the Zarzuela, a music-theatre form originating from the Iberian Peninsula. This section analyses how Zarzuela compares with other historically popular forms of musical theatre (*singspiel*, *vaudeville*, and others), and how this influences the creation of its characters.

Translated by Rob Pagett