

Hercules, Vampires, and the Opera of Attractions

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Preface

If, as Marshall McLuhan famously claimed, that “the medium is the message,” what then is the message of the increasing number of hybridic music-media events appearing in concert halls across the globe?¹ A revolutionary heterogeneity of mediums characterizes three main types of concerts that have arisen in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries: first, there are the live-to-projection film concerts (what I call cine-concerts) in which orchestras perform a score live with a film screened in its entirety. Video game symphonies performed live with projections of pre-recorded gameplay represent a second example of intermedial performance.

And finally, opera productions with significant amounts of prerecorded visual media represent a third type. Among these three examples, the interaction between visual projections and opera is of course the oldest, dating back to the magic lanterns that dazzled nineteenth-century audiences.² Scholars such as Marcia Citron, Jeremy Tambling, Jeongwon Joe, Rose Theresa, and Michal Grover-Friedlander have thoroughly interrogated the intersection of opera and film.³ I seek to build on their scholarship via an analysis of an opera that encapsulates the friction between the live and the recorded, the popular and the elite, the Apollonian and Dionysian: *Hercules vs. Vampires*.

Introduction

“Action packed, outlandish, and fun for the whole family”-Arizona Opera

“Music, muscles, myth – this show has everything!”- North Carolina Opera

¹ Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message,” in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 2nd edition (New York: Signet, 1964), 23-35.

² For a history of magic lanterns and the interplay of the audiovisual in the history of Western concert music see Deirdre Loughridge, *Haydn's Sunrise, Beethoven's Shadow: Audiovisual Culture and the Emergence of Musical Romanticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Anno Mungen, *'BilderMusik': Panoramen, Tableaux vivants und Lichtbilder als multimediale Darstellungsformen in Theater- und Musikaufführungen vom 19. bis zum frühen 20. Jahrhundert*, Filmstudien, Band 45, 2 vols. (Remscheid: Gardez! Verlag, 2006). Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker point out that the premiere of *Der Freischütz* made astonishing use of magic lanterns during the Wolf's Glen Scene. See Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, *Opera: A History of the Last 400 Years*, 2nd edition (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 186. Thomas Forrest Kelly recounts the special effects used in the 1876 Ring Cycle. See Thomas Forrest Kelly, *First Nights at the Opera* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 241-242.

³ Citron has published numerous articles and essays on the intersection on opera and cinema, but most significant is her monograph. See Marcia Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). See also Jeremy Tambling, ed., *A Night in at the Opera: Media Representations of Opera* (London: John Libby & Co., 1994); Jeongwon Joe, *Opera as Soundtrack* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Jeongwon Joe and Sander L. Gilman, eds., *Wagner and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Jeongwon Joe and Rose Theresa, eds., *Between Opera and Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Michal Grover-Friedlander, *Vocal Apparitions: The Attraction of Cinema to Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker also touch on the relationship between opera and film in their book. See Abbate and Parker, *Opera*, 545-553, 564-567.

“Technicolor opera slays bloodsuckers with song!” - L.A. Opera

These taglines all entice audiences to *Hercules vs. Vampires*, a 2010 opera by American composer Patrick Morganelli. In it in lieu of the film’s soundtrack, a 27-person instrumental ensemble and full vocal cast performs Morganelli’s music in synchronization with a cinematic projection of Mario Bava’s 1961 sword and sandal film *Hercules in the Haunted World*. Clearly, this is not your typical opera, though equally clear are the allusions *Hercules vs. Vampires* makes to the history of opera and cinema. While an opera based on Bava’s peplum film may, on the surface seem hilarious, absurd, or campy, beneath the façade lies a kernel of the serious.

Because Morganelli fused the ostensibly elite art form of opera with Bava’s genre film, piquant postmodern incongruencies emerge in *Hercules vs. Vampires*.⁴ These incongruencies emphasize “hybridity, mobility, and embrace of anarchy” via the dramatic confrontation between high and low culture. This reflects an aesthetic of what Carolyn Abbate calls “ethical frivolity.” In her 2017 article on operetta film, she describes, “ethical frivolity has, rather, to do with summoning heightened attentiveness to observe the ways in which operetta and operetta films encourage us to make peace with impermanence and insouciance.”⁵ Abbate’s definition descends from Siegfried Kracauer’s writings on Offenbach, specifically in regards to light opera’s oscillation between promising paradise and a melancholic nostalgia for a paradise already lost.⁶ In these frivolous works, a pathos tints ephemeral joy.

Because of this, the ethically frivolous asks audiences to enjoy the embodied moment. The work achieves this via an emphasis on a consciousness of the event experience, what I call attentiveness. Attentiveness does not mean disengaged; I use attentiveness to signal a mode of consumption that indicates an engagement with various strata within a given event. This contrasts with the absorptive artwork historically associated with Wagnerian music drama and narrative cinema, which encourages audiences to become disembodied eyes and ears entirely engrossed in the drama unfolding before them.⁷ Abbate’s idea of ethical frivolity, although coined in reference to operetta, equally applies to

⁴ In regards to the phrase “postmodern incongruency” I am drawing on Jeremy Grimshaw’s work on Philip Glass’s symphonic output. I use the phrase to denote works that combine high and low elements and as a result generate aesthetic tension. See Jeremy Grimshaw, “High, ‘Low,’ and Plastic Arts: Philip Glass and the Symphony in the Age of Postproduction,” *The Musical Quarterly* 86, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 481-486. Of course, this understanding of postmodernism derives from Fredric Jameson’s work. See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

⁵ Carolyn Abbate, “Offenbach, Kracauer, and Ethical Frivolity,” *The Opera Quarterly*, 33, Issue 1 (December 2017), 63.

⁶ Kracauer writes, “Offenbach’s music made it a promise of paradise. Halévy too, in the irony he stamped upon it, set his face towards paradise; but it was a paradise lost. Thus the operetta oscillated between a lost and promised paradise; but the latter was a fleeting apparition, a will-o’-the-wisp that vanished is a rude hand tried to seize it.” Siegfried Kracauer, *Orpheus in Paris: Offenbach and the Paris of His Time*, trans. Gwenda David and Eric Mosbacher (New York: Vienna House, 1972), 208.

⁷ The disembodiment of auditor-spectators described here is of course a reference to Theodor Adorno’s famous complaints about Wagner (particularly phantasmagoria) and film music. See Theodor Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, trans. Rodney

postmodern chimera like *Hercules vs. Vampires*. The show encourages an attentive rather than the absorptive mode of consumption we are likely more accustomed to. In the case of *Hercules vs. Vampires*, audiences attend to the film, the live singers and ensemble musicians, as well as extra-musical aspects. This attentive mode evident in *Hercules vs. Vampires* reckons with aesthetics from both opera and cinema's pasts.

Precursor and Critique: Joe on Glass

Hercules vs. Vampires is not the first instance of experiments with opera-film synchronization. In 1994, Philip Glass set Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête* (1946) as an opera intended to accompany the film. Part of his *Orpheus* trilogy, Glass adapted the Cocteau script into a French libretto and replaced the soundtrack including Georges Auric's film score with an operatic one of his own. Per typical Glass, the score maintains an aesthetic of minimalism, though it also includes recurring motifs. A darling of the contemporary music world, Glass attached his music to Cocteau's imaginative fairy-tale film, creating a result both interesting and, in some ways, flawed.

In her 2002 essay "The Cinematic Body in the Operatic Theater: Philip Glass's *La Belle et la Bête*" Jeongwon Joe lays out issues concerning liveness, aura, and aesthetics embedded in Glass's work.⁸ She interrogates the restrictions the film places on opera and is especially troubled by the disembodiment of the live singers who deliver their lines beneath a large, hovering film screen.

She writes, "...Glass's singers refuse to use their bodies as a tool to represent the emotions and psychology of the opera's characters."⁹ The performers, in Joe's estimate, basically serve as ventriloquists for the cinematic bodies. She continues, "This replacement of singers' live bodies with bodies mediated by technology radically transforms performing and viewing conventions of opera. When operatic acting is completely displaced by the cinematic screen, the aura of live performance, the cultic value of 'then and there' is deeply shattered."¹⁰ In other words, despite their physical and aural presence, the live performers go unseen. This legerdemain diminishes the aura of live performance. The fissures between the live and the recorded evident in Glass's *La Belle et la Bête* undermine the power of the voice, a power that is crucial to opera.¹¹

Livingstone (New York: Verso, 2009), 74-85; Theodor Adorno and Hanns Eisler, *Composing for the Films* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 1-12. Kracauer establishes a binary between Wagnerian seriousness and the Offenbachian's frivolity; see Kracauer, *Orpheus in Paris*, 198-201.

⁸ Jeongwon Joe, "The Cinematic Body in the Operatic Theater: Philip Glass's *La Belle et la Bête*," in *Between Opera and Cinema*, eds. Jeongwon Joe and Rose Theresa (New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 64.

In sum, Joe's primary concern with the Glass is that the ocular cinematic distraction erases aurally-present singers. The disembodiment of the voice from the singer is, for Joe, a dehumanizing effect that saps the charm and even the aura of live performance. I want to explore how a decade and a half later, Patrick Morganelli's *Hercules vs. Vampires* returns agency to performers and to audiences. Singer embodiment, audience engagement, and especially the relationship between film and opera all function differently in the Morganelli piece. The Glass work fuses a French abstract art fantasy film with opera; both are participants in what could be deemed high culture. The Morganelli work, however, fuses the highbrow genre of opera with the popular, low-budget Italian sword and sandal film. The combination injects an ethical frivolity into the opera-cinema hybrid, and into contemporary opera more generally. In the rest of this paper, I explain how Morganelli's opera manages this.

A History of *Hercules*

Opera Theater Oregon, a small company based in Portland, is devoted to innovation and promoting alternative ways of reaching new audiences.¹² In 2009, the company concocted the idea of an opera synchronized to a movie. They identified Mario Bava's *Hercules in the Haunted World*, mistakenly thought to be in the public domain, as suitable for operatic treatment.¹³ The movie follows Hercules and his best friend Theseus as they journey through Hades. The oracle Medea has instructed Hercules that the only way to save his ailing lover Dianara is to journey to the underworld, claim the Golden Apple of the Hesperides, and return to Acalia with a magic palliative stone. Little does Hercules know that Dianara is actually under a curse cast by her evil uncle Lycos (Christopher Lee), who plans to rule Acalia under a shadow of evil. In order to secure his eternal reign of darkness, Lycos plans to murder Dianara and drink her blood in a ritual to the God of Evil. Hercules must prevail! The film's chiaroscuro cinematography combined with the melodrama of Greek myth complete with Orphic references provided ideal operatic fodder.¹⁴

A call went out for the commission. The selected composer would write an opera synchronized to a 74-minute edited version of Bava's film, now retitled *Hercules vs. Vampires* set to

¹² "Our Mission," Opera Theater Oregon, accessed March 2, 2018, <https://www.operatheateroregon.com/our-mission/>.

¹³ When preparing for the Los Angeles premiere of the opera, the film was discovered to *not* be in the public domain. Morganelli and his attorney were fortunately able to track down the copyright holder, a lawyer and opera fan who lived in southern California. They secured a very generous contract to secure the rights for the film. Personal interview, February 9, 2018.

¹⁴ Italian cinema has a long history of referencing opera and the operatic and it is no coincidence that Franco Zeffirelli's productions still remain beloved by many opera fans. For more on the role of opera in Italian cinema see Deborah Crisp and Roger Hillman, "Verdi in Postwar Italian Cinema," in *Between Opera and Cinema*, eds. Jeongwon Joe and Rose Theresa (New York: Routledge, 2002), 155-176. Stunning visuals characterize Mario Bava's work as cinematographer, director, and special effects artist. Tim Lucas examines his films and influence at length. See Tim Lucas, *Mario Bava: All the Colors of the Dark* (Cincinnati: Video Watchdog, 2007), 15-33.

premiere at the end of the season.¹⁵ Applicants had to submit a four-minute demo score of a particular scene from the film, complete with orchestration.

Patrick Morganelli, a Los Angeles-based composer who grew up watching sword and sandal films, answered the call, bringing his experience in film and television scoring to bear on this new kind of amalgamous work. In September of 2009 he received the commission, with the premiere set for May of 2010.

Adapting the film's script into a libretto proved an unexpected challenge for Morganelli. As evidenced by centuries' worth of adaptations of plays into operas, what works in spoken dialogue is rarely effective as sung lyrics. So Morganelli simplified the text while maintaining the film's basic plot. The real difficulty was synchronizing the singers' lines with the screen actors' lips. He wanted to avoid 74 minutes of straight recitative; moreover, Morganelli recognized that a tight synchronization would require metrical changes and rhythmical intricacies that would tax singers and inhibit lyricism.¹⁶ Thus, he opted for a looser lip synchronization that would better showcase the voice and, he hoped, would be more pleasurable for performers. When I spoke with Morganelli he related, "The music needs to be appealing to singers, not just a mechanism, but [needs to] give them an opportunity to be musically challenged and excel."¹⁷ Morganelli imparted to me that at times he adjusts vocal parts to better suit a given singer's tessitura. This approach indicates a kind of ethical composership, one that harkens back to opera's past, when composers modified music based on performers' abilities.

The production notes for Morganelli's opera encourage singers to embrace their role, and at a January 2018 production by Nashville Opera, the vocalists emoted in a manner akin to an oratorio performance, to much acclaim.¹⁸ Singers in this instance then, are not disembodied; rather they are doubly bodied, envoicing their acoustically present bodies as well as the onscreen ones. This is all to say, that in *Hercules vs. Vampires*, the cinematic spectacle does not erase the living bodies of onstage performers. The tension between the live and the recorded instead is a productive, symbiotic relationship, with each medium, opera and film, benefitting from the other.

¹⁵ Opera Theater Oregon cut some scenes from the original film, primarily ones that were shot on location as they felt they were less operatic and therefore less suitable. I imagine this has to do with the majority of the film being shot on a soundstage, which is more akin to the enclosed theater. In regards to the title *Hercules vs. Vampires*, the name was decided on by Opera Theater Oregon. While Morganelli was not thrilled by the campy implication of the title, it does have a cinematic source. In some countries, the film was originally distributed under that title instead of the Italian *Ercole al centro della terra* (*Hercules at the Center of the Earth*) or the United States' *Hercules in the Haunted World*, distributed by American International Pictures. For example, in Austria the film was released as *Herkules gegen die Vampire*, in France *Hercule contre les vampires*, in Portugal *Hércules contra o Vampiro*, and in West Germany as *Vampire gegen Herakles*. "Hercules in the Haunted World," IMDB.com, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0054850/releaseinfo?ref=tt_dt_dt#akas, accessed February 24, 2018.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Morganelli balances heterogeneity by tempering his opera's musical connections to cinema. The score eschews film music's common techniques, such as the Leitmotif and Mickey-Mousing (the musical representation of onscreen action). Throughout the score, timbral combinations define the atmosphere and mood of specific *mise-en-scène*. Orchestration effects also help differentiate a given scene from its previous and succeeding ones. Morganelli drew on prominent compositional practices from twentieth-century concert music to juxtapose scenes set in the Greco-Roman land Acalia with those set in the fantastic realm of Hades.

The Garden

The musical language of the French *fin-de-siècle* composers associated with impressionism accompanies the Acalia scenes. This is no coincidence. Morganelli consciously embraced this style. Being familiar with the chamber music of the French composers, he knew that their musical palette would work for the small ensemble that Opera Theater Oregon could provide. Additionally, depictions of an idyllic ancient world in works like Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* and Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* resonated with the film's depiction of Acalia. A scene between Hercules and Dianara early on in the opera sets the tone for later ones. Hercules has just returned to Acalia and discovered that the king has died. However, his beloved Dianara has not claimed her throne; since Dianara is not well, Lycos rules in her stead. Hercules visits her in the garden, hoping to find some explanation for his lover's illness.

The conversation between Hercules and Dianara (mm. 180-213) features elements characteristic of the impressionists, such as ambiguous harmonies and anhemitonic (lacking semitone) melodies. The vocal melody and the nebulous harmony of the added sixth chord at the opening of the scene imbues the music with a airiness mirroring Dianara's dreamy state. The music reaches its apogee on Dianara's line "He cannot hear my heart's reply" (mm. 191-193). The accompaniment crescendos from the G minor added sixth chord to a stable C major triad as the soprano leaps from D ("my") to G ("heart's") in transparent V-I motion. This is the only point in the scene where Dianara's music participates in Hercules's secure world of C major. She may be under a nightmarish curse, but her heart remembers what her mind does not: her love for Hercules.

The Lava Pit

To musically contrast the underworld from Acalia, Morganelli employed sonorism and micropolyphony, techniques associated with Penderecki and Ligeti. Throughout the Hades scenes, timbre, rather than melody and harmony, is the focal point of the music. Morganelli consciously applied music this way, noting that "music is much more like a sound effect in Hades."¹⁹ While this

¹⁹ Ibid.

approach is evident throughout the underworld scenes, the Lava Sequence (mm. 767-812) is distinctive. In this sequence, Hercules and Theseus must cross a pit of boiling lava in order to reach the magic stone needed to cure Dianara.

Semitone noodling saturates the violins' lines. The parts gradually ascend into the upper registers. The half-step motion texture combined with the polyrhythmic mix of sextuplets and quintuplets generates a musical suspense reflecting the danger Hercules and Theseus are in. The score reaches its apex when Theseus falls into the lava (m. 797).

The timpani reverberate at a fortissimo while the horns blast a short melody outlining the interval of an octave and then a diminished fifth between G and Db. The tritone's abrasive dissonance reflects the horrific terror of Theseus being boiled alive; that this gesture is in the horns (an instrument historically associated with the musical topos of heroism) comments on Hercules's failure to rescue his best friend. The strings' parts, ever-increasing in register, culminate in a cacophony of an aleatoric texture (marked in the score as "random skittering") that occurs along with shots of Theseus drowning while Hercules watches helplessly. When the lava completely overwhelms Theseus, Hercules resigns himself to continuing the climb. As the scene ends, Hercules turns back, and sings "Forgive me Theseus" on and around D. It is as if his music is desperate to secure a tonal center and sense of certainty that reflects the muscled hero.

Hercules, Vampires, Voices

In addition to the musical juxtaposition of Acalia and the underworld, the oracle Medea is an exceptional case. Her scenes take place in an ornate temple removed from the human realm; and more significantly, the onscreen actress wears a mask. This covering permitted Morganelli to compose without concern for lip synchronization, and he seizes the opportunity to feature the soprano voice at its fullest.

The second scene between Medea and Hercules (mm. 1092-1124) illustrates the phenomenon. Hercules returns to the Oracle for advice on how to end the plagues and droughts tormenting Acalia. Medea informs him that Theseus offended the god of the underworld; Theseus fell in love with Persephone, who, in this reimagining of the myth, is Hades's favorite daughter.²⁰ After Persephone helped him escape the underworld, Theseus convinced her to join him in Acalia. Hades is displeased.

Medea begins her concluding passage work in this scene on the word "No" on a C#4 while Hercules argues that he cannot force Theseus to abandon his love (mm. 1114-1121). The underlying accompaniment fluxuates between open fifths a semitone apart, from a dyad comprised of F# and Db

²⁰ In the original myth, Persephone is Hades's wife, not daughter. The change is the result of the English-language dub of the film, that renames the Italian character Myosotide "Persephone."

(enharmonically C#) to G and D dyad. The harmonic oscillation adds tension to the rare moment of vocal overlap. Hercules pleads with the oracle, claiming the task is impossible. Medea rebukes him, intoning a high D6 on the second syllable of “Pluto.” The D reverberates as the soprano repeats it on “I,” while the lower-register instruments are momentarily silent.

In terms of opera, Medea gets the last word in. This moment in the music stands out because it hints at a place where the audibility of the text gives way to the singing voice, a quality so prominent in opera. In the Medea scenes, then, *Hercules vs. Vampires* reaches beyond the visual pleasure of cinema. It delves into opera and reveals the event’s true attraction: the voice.

Pasts and Futures: Opera, Cinema, and *Hercules*

Hercules vs. Vampires patently participates in a long operatic lineage of works synthesizing the singing voice, striking visuals, and mythological drama. Yet, the piece also references cinema’s past, in particular the silent era, that lasted roughly from the birth of cinema in the late nineteenth century to the late 1920s. Like many silent film screenings, music in *Hercules* is spatially and temporally co-present with the audience. Even the accompaniment of live voices to moving images has its roots in silent film practices. As Rick Altman has pointed out, several companies provided “human-voice-behind-the-screen” options for movies during the silent era.²¹ Beyond the general allusion to silent film via live musical accompaniment, *Hercules vs. Vampires* also shares with early silent film a particular mode of presentation that complements the aforementioned move towards an “ethics of frivolity.”

I am referring to Tom Gunning’s analysis of the “cinema of attractions,” to which the title of this paper is an homage.²² Gunning applies the term “cinema of attractions” to refer to films like those of the Lumière Brothers and Georges Méliès made prior to 1906; it denotes a cinema that was based in an aesthetic of exhibitionism.²³ These films luxuriated in fleeting spectacle, astonishment, and attentiveness rather than the absorption demanded by narrative-driven cinema.

I believe we can consider *Hercules vs. Vampires* to be an “opera of attractions.” Akin to the cinema of attractions, an opera of attractions builds a different kind of relationship with the audience that is rooted in exhibitionist confrontation (compelling audience to acknowledge their active consumption) rather than diegetic absorption (which promotes passive consumption).²⁴ An opera of

²¹ Rick Altman, “Four and a Half Film Fallacies,” *The Sound Studies Reader*, ed. Jonathan Sterne (New York: Routledge, 2012), 226.

²² Tom Gunning, “Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde,” *Wide Angle* 8, nos. 3-4 (Fall 1986): 63-70.

²³ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

²⁴ Gunning, “Cinema of Attractions,” 66. Here Gunning is referencing Sergei Eisenstein’s term “attraction.” Like Gunning, I identify an element of avant-gardism nestled in this aesthetic.

attractions accepts the ruptures between mediums and by extension, fosters this attentiveness. The estrangement between the audio and visual elements ultimately makes room for another quality evident in the cinema of attractions: participatory spectatorship.²⁵

Productions of *Hercules vs. Vampires* embolden participatory spectatorship. A music director will frequently introduce the opera and encourages the audience to laugh and cheer during the show.²⁶ Several events surrounding the performance invite further audience participation. Among these include Hercules-inspired costume contests, photo booth opportunities, a Hercules-themed cocktail hour, and even a DJ Procrustes dance party.²⁷ These revelries evoke the cheering, chortling, eating, gaming, and other rumored activities that took place at opera houses in days past. The previous centuries' masked balls held during the waning days of carnival (famously depicted in Gaston Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera* and the subsequent Lon Chaney film) are the ancestors to these Hercules-inspired toga parties.²⁸ So while on the surface the opera of attractions appears centered on film and film sound's past, in truth it is equally engaged with opera's history and modes of reception that fell by the wayside in the twentieth century.

Chimerical works like *Hercules vs. Vampires* ask audiences to see and hear in equal measures. And audiences perceive not only the screen, not only the stage, but their fellow audience members as well. The acknowledgement of humans in the interface between the live and the recorded furthers an ethical position that prioritizes humaneness. Humor emerges from the uncomfortable fissures between the mediums of film and opera; laughter is recourse to the self-awareness the mixed medium requires of audiences. The seeming shortcomings of loosely synchronized voices, dated special effects, and theatrical *mise-en-scène* all are in service of something beyond entertainment: they combat the barbarism of perfection. When audiences chuckle at the hero's crude battle with the rock monster they are also laughing in discomfort at the realization that perfection is *not* the goal here. Instead, *Hercules vs. Vampires* cracks open some of the more tortuous bonds the classical music world places on audiences and creates a space for something that many have long forgotten: opera can be fun.²⁹

²⁵ Ibid. Gunning is referring to a bit on variety theaters written by *Manifesto of Futurism* author Filippo Tommaso Marinetti.

²⁶ Personal interview, February 16, 2018. According to Morganelli, cine-concerts, particularly those for the Harry Potter series, inspired this approach to introducing the voice-over opera.

²⁷ The event websites for L.A. Opera and Arizona Opera advertise these surrounding attractions. "Hercules vs. Vampires," L.A. Opera Off Grand, <https://www.laopera.org/season/1415-Season-at-a-Glance/Hercules-vs-Vampires/>; "Hercules vs. Vampires," Arizona Opera, <https://www.azopera.org/performances/hercules-vs-vampires>.

²⁸ For more on modes of opera consumption and the masqued balls, see John Rosselli, "Opera as a Social Occasion" in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera*, ed. Roger Parker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 450-482.

²⁹ Morganelli agrees. Even though he conceived of *Hercules vs. Vampires* as a serious work, he understands that people might laugh at the juxtaposition of operatic voices with charming pre-CGI special effects and narrative non sequiturs. He commented, "If they're laughing at things I didn't find funny, well, I'm OK with that." Personal interview, February 16, 2018.