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## **Media literacy and new entertainment venues: The case of opera in movie theatres**

### *Alfabetización mediática y nuevos lugares de entretenimiento: el caso de la ópera en el cine*

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**ABSTRACT:** Throughout its historical evolution, opera has undergone many structural changes. Lately, the genre has undergone a remarkable change as a form of mass entertainment because of cinema, but also because of the development of social networks, websites, forums, chats and blogs that opera houses and entities that support opera make available to consumers. All of this helps to create a new model of literacy and entertainment that is built from the codes of cinema.

Currently, the projections of films depicting live opera performances in movie theatres around the world contribute to the paradoxes inherent to the digital society: they create a new star system, traditional informational media are questioned and new models of behaviour in front of a communicative and globalised art event, which has been taken away from the live show that opera as artistic synthesis had always been, are created.

**RESUMEN:** *A lo largo de su evolución histórica, la ópera ha sufrido muchos cambios estructurales. Últimamente, el género ha experimentado un cambio notable como una forma de espectáculo de masas para el cine, pero también para el desarrollo de redes sociales, sitios web, foros, chats y blogs que los teatros de ópera y entidades que apoyan al género ponen a disposición de los consumidores. Todo ello contribuye a crear un nuevo modelo de alfabetización y ocio, que se construye a partir de los códigos propios del cine.*

*En la actualidad, las proyecciones de las actuaciones operísticas en directo en los cines de todo el mundo contribuyen a las paradojas inherentes a la sociedad digital: creación de un nuevo “star system”, cuestionamiento de los medios tradicionales de información y nuevos modelos de comportamiento frente a un evento artístico comunicativo y globalizado, que desplaza el espectáculo en vivo que siempre ha sido la ópera como síntesis artística.*

**Keywords:** Entertainment, Cinema, Opera, Media Literacy.

**Palabras clave:** espectáculo, cine, ópera, Media Literacy.

A life without the media? Maybe at a traditional level –now that traditional media have been displaced by the so-called new platforms. But the media still exist. The same goes for art, whose traditional media seem to have transformed the resulting work and the active role of artists, but not their social function.

Art is communication, especially if it is based on media and structures that take into account the audience and the public. Art transforms and reinvents itself to find the right medium for its dissemination and its immediate expression. And this is what it should do in order not to become a relic of the past. But art is not solely responsible for its metamorphosis: as a communication medium it requires the active role of the receptor, that is, the audience, who must also transform their gaze.

### 1. *Hybridisations and new environments*

Following the postmodern tenets about its various deaths, the legitimising narratives of art have been compulsorily questioned: if history had died, according to Fukuyama's thesis, we could also be expected to think that art had passed away. Obviously (and thankfully) it has not. The death of art as announced by Hegel has to be read metaphorically in terms of metamorphosis: painting is not the “heroine of the story”<sup>1</sup>, so today's art can be understood as a set of disciplines, the result of a process of hybridisation, which is acquiring a markedly communicative outlook.

Linked (or even in some cases subject) to new economic and social guidelines, art has been equally involved in the process of the emergence, consolidation and even

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<sup>1</sup> DANTO, Arthur C., *Después del fin del arte*, 1999, Paidós, Barcelona, 1999, p. 136.

hegemonic presence of the so-called cultural industries. Creation, production and distribution are concepts that are also affecting the processes of art, moving it away (for now? forever?) from the notion of *l'art pour l'art*, but also, in contrast, from the social function inherent in the freedom that the avant-garde, for example, had attached to it.

Hasan Bakhsh and David Throsby, authors of the 2010 NESTA report, speak of the need for renewal of cultural institutions, suggesting that new (especially digital) technologies are essential to generate new audiences and even new art forms. It seems clear, however, that new technologies applied to audiovisual dissemination have transformed the artistic dimension, in both the formats used and the expansion of narrative forms, as well as the paradigm shift in their production systems. Consequently, this has created new consumer needs and even the emergence of new user profiles. In a feedback loop, the audiovisual industry is increasingly using art to (re)generate its content and set new multimedia challenges, which seek interaction with viewers. All this is taking place simultaneously with the consolidation of the Internet as a “third environment”, in the words of Javier Echeverría, which allows for the viewer-user interaction with artworks to become “technologically editable digital writing”<sup>2</sup> and therefore subject to change in the very structure of artistic work, not only in relation to viewers-users: “In the case of online networks, works of art can be modified and altered by their readers and viewers, which implies a radical change in our relationship with artworks, made possible by the new online environment”<sup>3</sup>.

When the Spanish philosopher wrote these lines, the Internet was only a one-way information highway without the potential multiplicity it had reached when we set out to write this paper. The emergence and consolidation of virtual realities, such as social networks and online selection of downloads of images and sound for entertainment, have widened the possibilities of the “third environment” to generate a fourth or fifth environment.

To all this, we should add the new products for viewer consumption beyond online content. Since the first satellite broadcasts were launched and digital terrestrial television (DTT) was introduced, the role of passive spectators in front of the television has completely changed, even though television “connotes a way of life –a living room in a middle class home, a frozen TV dinner– that the television set symbolises and facilitates”<sup>4</sup>.

The possibilities of digital technology allow for choosing television channels on demand, but also allow cinema theatres to show broadcasts of live or recorded music or sports events. It is this way, then, that the hybridised and metamorphosed art genre, which does not merely belong to a single technical discipline, tries to reach and interact with an audience that is increasingly better informed and demanding. The question we pose in our research (opera) should help us to consider whether this information and demand are directly proportional to the passivity in consumption or whether, instead, they foster a participatory/active attitude.

The current situation, which profoundly modifies the supply of art and culture, generates and legitimises the need to investigate new realities of art and culture. This allows for analysing the consequences of using new technologies in the arts that, in a

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<sup>2</sup> ECHEVERRÍA, Javier, *Los Señores del aire: Telépolis y el Tercer Entorno*, Destino, Barcelona, 1999, p. 310.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> DANTO, Arthur C., *La Madonna del futuro. Ensayos en un mundo del arte plural*, Paidós, Barcelona, 2003, p. 203.

special way, share narrative and scenic discourses that are characteristic of audiovisual codes, to see if the use of new technologies can lead to new forms of expression.

It is in this context that opera, an art of synthesis given its narrative and representative ability and potential, offers perception experiences that are similar to those of audiovisual products, such as films, television shows or online content. It is no wonder then that, in the last decade, opera has chosen a process of commodification as a multimedia product to try to reach new audiences, inspired by artistic productions, and to reach markets that belong to the cinema or the theatre, in which the emotionally active participation expected from the audience is similar despite the physical passivity.

## *2. Opera: from a performing art genre to a visual communication medium*

We are indeed living in an era of change and transformation and opera is also experiencing these changes. Today, its consumption is not limited to going to the opera houses or listening to audio recordings. On the contrary, it seems as if there was a continuity between the opera house, the movie theatre and the living room, but always under the consensual appreciation that opera will be (audio)visual or else it will not be opera.

Several factors lead us to think that we are in a time of crossroads as a result of technological changes introduced by the audiovisual industry. A little less than thirty years ago, compact discs revolutionised the music industry due to features like portability and random playlists; this portability was expanded shortly after by DVDs. These facilitated the inclusion of interactive bonus material that allows consumers to choose subtitles, watch short documentaries or even, in some cases, watch the production from different angles<sup>5</sup>. The use of computers and the Internet have also contributed to making access to opera much easier, more affordable and customised. And the recent popularisation of social networks (Twitter, Facebook, Skype...) promoted by some opera houses to broadcast productions that can then be seen from any location on the planet with Internet access.

As if opera had assumed MacLuhan's idea whereby the medium was the message, opera is today going through a process by which it becomes communication depending on the medium in which it is developed. Theories on media literacy<sup>6</sup> promote the idea that communications media inform, entertain and teach. When an artistic genre becomes an agent or subject of media literacy, it adopts the prototypical drive that is characteristic of a communications medium. In the case of opera, it can be difficult if we view the genre from a conservative and anachronistic perspective, but, if we accept that all art has evolved in its being and its form, we must recognize that opera has come into the 21<sup>st</sup> century undergoing an evident process of commodification as a multimedia product: opera houses have sophisticated sound and image systems, not only to record DVDs or images distributed by computers or virtual means, but they also have internal systems that, for example, allow viewers who arrive late to follow a performance with

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<sup>5</sup> A very interesting example, which has not had any sequels, is the DVD *D.Q. (Don Quixote in Barcelona)* which includes recordings made at the Gran Teatre del Liceu of José Luis Turina's opera with musical direction by Josep Pons and stage direction by Carlus Padrissa and Àlex Ollé, members of La Fura dels Baus (2000).

<sup>6</sup> POTTER, W. James, *Media Literacy*, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, 2005, p. 18.

high-quality image and sound (and with good production standards too); on the other hand, the operas that appear on the market to be sold for home consumption seem to have abandoned compact discs in favour of DVDs<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, we will discuss the experiences of *Òpera Oberta* (Open Opera) at universities or the screenings of opera performances broadcast from the major opera houses worldwide.

In 2001, the *Òpera Oberta* project was launched in Catalonia. Its main objective was to bring opera productions to new audiences through the broadcast of opera performances from opera houses to venues in schools or universities giving students academic credits for attendance. The broadcast quality and positive reception of the initiative, despite the technical difficulties that it entailed, helped to spread it across much of Spain. The initiative responded to the spirit of an advanced mentality in opera production and programming in the context of European culture. Initiatives from platforms such as the Gran Teatre del Liceu and the Teatro Real in Madrid, where seasons are scheduled not only with the ambition to achieve international levels of competition, but to constantly question the ways that opera productions can reflect the changes taking place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and adapt the consumption of opera to the globalisation of cultures –an underlying reality in all spheres of society. Thus, an era of technological change that emphasises the transformations the performing arts have gone through in their modes of production and consumption has begun. A change in response to the global sociological phenomenon of new global users, who are educated about new information technologies based on speculation about future cultural business realities and new forms of expression that comprise art and technology and bring together diverse tastes. The system is a large screen that the opera is projected on to located in a huge auditorium of a university college. The editing is done at the opera house where the performance is taking place, much like broadcasting a live event to a large screen. Thus, we are not far from watching operas in movie theatres, but in this case, things are beginning to change. The International Workshop on Video and Opera, held at the Polytechnic University of Valencia / Valencian Institute of Music (2010), prioritised, above all, discussion on technical aspects of opera spread through audiovisual means<sup>8</sup>. The mediations between the stage and screen in live broadcasting, the relations of time and space in opera videos, the *making of* documentaries included in DVDs and production criteria for filming opera in digital media were analysed through the prism of new communication strategies. Apart from the presence of academics from Europe and the United States, talks and presentations were given by the heads of audiovisual departments from various opera houses, including María Ferrando Montalva (Palau de les Arts in Valencia) and Pietro D'Agostino (Gran Teatre del Liceu of Barcelona). During the workshop, they addressed such issues as the consequences and social impact of technology in audiovisual opera broadcasts and recordings, the influence of technology diffusion in the dynamics of opera production and, finally, the analysis of new aesthetic conditions imposed by technology. Technical issues, therefore, were placed well above artistic issues, which proves once more that we are giving more attention to form than to content in these times of change.

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<sup>7</sup> In any case, CDs are still the media of choice for bootleg recordings and reissues of classic recordings, or for those that are repertoire rarities, such as baroque opera. Rarely will studio recordings of the great Italian or German operas appear on compact disc any longer.

<sup>8</sup> Held on 22 and 23 March 2010 and headed by Wenceslao García and Héctor J. Pérez (UPV).

We should note that opera has an entertaining dimension and is a genre that belongs to the performing arts<sup>9</sup> despite its implausibility. The objects represented (singers, actors) do not speak, but express themselves through a song that is also artificial and entirely unnatural in its morphology. And yet, its similarities to cinema are evident, to the point that many formal elements of opera, or of opera as a musical genre, respond by analogy to syntactic and morphological approaches to the language of cinema: “Both the composer of an opera and the narrator are given the chance to make a kind of selection, of narrowing the field, even through the use of an isolated timbre”<sup>10</sup>. You could then begin to establish –although this is not the aim of this paper– a direct relationship between, for example, an aria (a monologue) and a close-up shot, so it would be easy to find and reveal the logical relationships between the two forms of entertainment, opera and cinema<sup>11</sup>.

Films are currently another characteristic element of the consumption of opera outside its traditional venues (opera houses). In fact, since the first decades of the twentieth century, opera has been the subject of certain films: From Méliès to Charles Chaplin, from Feyder to De Mille, silent cinema lent its attention to opera. The incorporation of sound allowed the filming of operatic sequences integrated into the dramatic flow of a particular movie and the “creation” of invented titles. And then there is the so-called filmed opera from the 1930s to the present, involving renowned filmmakers such as Ingmar Bergman, Joseph Losey, Francesco Rosi, Hans Jürgen Syberberg or Kenneth Branagh<sup>12</sup>. Some filmmakers have worked as opera directors around the world and many artists have often combined theatre with cinema, such as Luchino Visconti, Franco Zeffirelli and Patrice Chéreau. In recent decades, festivals have scheduled theatre productions of operas written by Wagner, Mozart, Bizet and Puccini signed by film directors such as Werner Herzog, Michael Hanecke, Carlos Saura or even Woody Allen<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> ZOPPELLI, Luca, *L'opera come racconto*, Marsilio, Venezia, 1994, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>11</sup> RADIGALES, Jaume, “La ópera y el cine: afinidades electivas”, in OLARTE MARTÍNEZ, Matilde (ed.), *La música en los medios audiovisuales*, Plaza Universitaria, Salamanca, 2005, pp. 59-84.

<sup>12</sup> The relationship between opera and cinema has been the subject of interesting and abundant literature. The purpose of this paper is not to analyse the role that opera has had throughout the history of cinema, but we do mention the major bibliographical references used in our research on the subject: BOURRE, Jean-Paul, *Opéra et Cinéma*, Artefact, Paris, 1987; CASADIO, Gianfranco, *Opera e Cinema*, Longo Editore, Ravenna, 1995; CITRON, Marcia J., *Opera on Screen*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2000; CITRON, Marcia J., *When Opera meets Film*, Cambridge University Press, 2010; FAWKES, Richard, *Opera on Film*, Duckworth, London, 2000; GROVER-FRIEDLANDER, Michael, *Vocal apparitions. The attraction of Cinema to Opera*, Princeton University Press, 2005; PUELLES LÓPEZ, Juan, *El cine, la ópera y la ópera en el cine*, Universidad de Valladolid, 1997; SCHROEDER, David, *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure*, Continuum, New York & London, 2002; TAMBLING, Jeremy, *Opera, Ideology and Film*, St. Martin Press, New York, 1987; TAMBLING, Jeremy (ed.), *A Night in at the Opera. Media representations of Opera*, The Arts Council of England, London, 1994; WLASCHIN, Ken, *Encyclopedia of Opera on Screen*, Yale University Press, 2004. Interestingly, the literary interest about opera on video and television has been substantially lower (Morris, 2010, 98).

<sup>13</sup> In this regard, artistic directors such as Plácido Domingo (director of the Los Angeles and Washington opera houses) and Gérard Mortier (Director of the Teatro Real in Madrid) have expressed their desire that, respectively, George Lucas and Pedro Almodóvar also assume the direction of operas. Mr Domingo, for example, has thought of Lucas for a staging of *The Ring of the Nibelungen* by Richard Wagner.

The coincidence of the two global art forms, cinema and opera, is not difficult to understand, partly because of a type of mutual nourishment<sup>14</sup>, but also because of the duality that can be established between artifice (opera) and illusion (cinema):

Cinema has worked as a feisty promise, as a cathedral of pleasure for the modern masses, featuring a magic show of images and fictions. That is what makes good observers associate cinema with opera, since both rely on large props, artifice, dramatic effects, eliciting emotions through images, with a view to dreamy and phantasmagorical consumption. This association is undeniably fair<sup>15</sup>.

Of course, there is also the role of spectators who have switched from consumption of analogue media in cinema and television to digital media and the Internet. The physical spaces dedicated to audiovisual entertainment need to be amortised through the attendance of a public who is devoted to cinema, but who is starting to prefer the individual and inexpensive consumption offered by the Internet and is deserting the theatres of cinema. But the supply of opera in cinema theatres has reversed this situation.

In this sense, the music and audiovisual markets are reaching out to new audiences/users who have to be educated or adapted to a changing social context. The initiatives that have been developed in the last decade show a possible convergence of art genres and new markets where they can experiment with the fusion of art genres, but also with the fact that opera can be “discovered” by those new audiences who are thirsty for novelties that can link opera with “big entertainment” that cinema used to be in the past, in which there is an obvious change of scenery: “That which is current invades the past, upgrades it, it makes it immediately perceptible to the eyes and ears of a predominantly young public, who do not need to have a great historical culture”<sup>16</sup>.

### 3. *The commodification of opera*

Currently, the use of digital imaging allows for creating new cultural experiences, such as collective creation shows that stream the performances of several musical or theatrical groups with participants working on the same text in real time via the Internet. Digital imaging technology allows for broadcasting any production from anywhere via the Internet, even recreating any world in real time, so the possibilities for the performing arts are multiplied. Unsurprisingly, the main countries promoting culture like the UK, Germany, the USA and Italy recognise that the fusion of music, image and new technologies is an inexhaustible source of creative possibilities that has just started to be tapped. The future in this area is completely innovative and creative and opera seems to be part of this future. And that's why it is trying to reach out to new audiences. And it does so from multiple platforms; for example, video posts in which singers (many of them amateurs) surprise shoppers in markets, railway stations or shopping malls, playing live music and posting the reactions of passers-by to web pages. Or some opera houses and festivals broadcast a live show to giant screens on a public square,

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<sup>14</sup> RADIGALES, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> LIPOVETSKY, Gilles; SERROY, Jean, *La pantalla global. Cultura mediática y cine en la era hipermoderna*, Anagrama, Barcelona, 2009, p. 41.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibíd.*, p. 168.

park or beach. In this process of social re-education or cultural democratisation, the audiovisual communication market is particularly important.

Cinema is also experimenting with changes in formats, from HD to 3D. To all this, we must add that in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Internet has revolutionised the entire broadcasting system and markets are studying the social applications and potential paths for education through cultural consumption. However, the fascination for housing memories such as in a museum persists, trying to save what without audiovisual support only human memory can preserve. And this is where opera and audiovisual media collide. Audiovisual media turn the resulting product into an ontological object, although what we are forced to see, overriding the free will of the theatre goer, is the gaze of the filmmaker, which imposes a selective choice of the *mise en scène*<sup>17</sup>. The recording, whatever the media, or the TV broadcast and film distribution are means to watch a certain way of watching opera productions, not the productions themselves.

Who knows, in any case, if we are witnessing the emergence of a new art form derived from the use of recorded images (film, video, television) in the staging of opera houses: video artists like Bill Viola work with stage directors like Peter Sellars in productions such as *Tristan und Isolde* staged in Paris in the 2004-2005 season<sup>18</sup>. Often, the editing of images for various forms of promoting opera in the media becomes a third alternative to the original production, partly determined by the challenges of commodification. The editing of the broadcasting of the live production, that over time will become recorded as opposed to live when it comes to the storage and commercial distribution of the product, is not only a testimony of an ephemeral performance that will be lost forever, but, in the words of Philip Auslander quoted by Christopher Morris, "a reaction to mediatized culture, a gesture toward a recovery of what now appears to be lost"<sup>19</sup>. An emerging new format, then, may end up becoming a production and even a post-production, on the basis that some of these products even carry embedded extra content such as *making of* documentaries or even interviews with the artists themselves on stage in some intervals, in the form of self-documentary and which is but "the postmodern emphasis on the production process itself"<sup>20</sup>.

But one thing is the audiovisual product that we consume in a private space and another thing to share filmed opera on a movie theatre, which gives an added exceptionality: "simulcasts to cinemas involve spectatorship within an explicit audience setting"<sup>21</sup>. An increasing number of opera fans are choosing to enjoy opera without going to opera houses. Opera fans might be curious about an opera but, for whatever reason (laziness, social prejudices ...), do not feel like going to the Liceu, the Real, the Metropolitan or La Scala. The chances to watch and listen to opera at affordable prices, without

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<sup>17</sup> MORRIS, Christopher, "Digital Diva: Opera on Video", *The Opera Quarterly*, vol. 26, n° 1, p. 96.

<sup>18</sup> Another such example would be the completion of the production of Rossini's *La Pietra Paragone* recorded at the Châtelet in Paris in 2007 with musical direction by Jean-Christophe Spinosi and stage direction by Giorgio Barberio Corsetti featuring the work of video artist Pierrick Sorin on stage. In this production, singers were filmed with 15 digital cameras on a blue chroma background and then projected in real-time on screens showing different aspects of what was seen on stage. It was released on DVD by Naïve. Because of the parallel way to tell the story, Peter Sellars and Bill Viola's production of *Tristan und Isolde* is not appropriate for TV and subsequent DVD release: it is a weighing production to be seen live, despite incorporating video footage shown simultaneously with the stage action.

<sup>19</sup> MORRIS, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>20</sup> HEYER, Paul, "Live from the Met: Digital Broadcast Cinema, Medium Theory, and Opera for the Masses", *Canadian Journal of Communication*, vol. 33 (2008), p. 596.

<sup>21</sup> MORRIS, *op. cit.*, p. 106.



renouncing to live productions and staying home without having to go to an opera house, an occasion for which some still think that we should dress up, is already a global reality that affects most of the citizens of major western cities who choose the so-called democratisation of the opera. It allows for feeling the thrills of attending a live performance through an act that Cees Hamelink calls “cultural synchronization”<sup>22</sup>. The reasons, as we pointed out, may be diverse, but in addition to economic issues, social prejudices or difficulties for travel, there may also be the will to attend a theatre performance by hyper-mediation and therefore the desire to live the commodification of the opera production itself.

The image projected on a screen, the room in darkness, the image editing and the soundtrack create an audiovisual spectacle out of what would merely be a broadcast. This high technology, resulting from the breakthroughs in digital imaging, allows for going beyond the hitherto established conventions, not only about the relationship between opera and cinema, but even about a particular opera. Because, of course, the question would be how far this perfectly clear image and this perfect sound (which always has to be listened to through speakers) corresponds to the live performance that is every musical performance in general and every opera performance in particular. Especially when opera, a theatrical genre, does not allow for camera framing and sequence editing as cinema does. That is a question we are not addressing in this paper, which in turn raises new questions: could opera be an art that is going to be consumed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century thanks to this process of commodification?

The 30 December 2006 broadcast of *The Magic Flute* from the New York Metropolitan opera house across America in HD format marked a milestone for opera broadcasts<sup>23</sup>. A new way of understanding opera, which took into account issues raised by the challenges of broadcasting opera to cinema theatres emerged, first in the U.S. and then worldwide, in the context of what the Metropolitan itself called DBC (Digital Broadcast Cinema). It set off the *Live from the Met* programme series promoted by the New York opera house and was offered to fifty countries, with revenues of \$ 8 million. The deployment of media was impressive. Thirteen cameras were used for each performance not only for the broadcasts but also for posterior DVD distribution<sup>24</sup>.

Since this milestone broadcasting took place, and in a parallel fashion, more and more cinema theatres around the world are renting their venues to display broadcasts of live opera productions from opera houses like the Metropolitan, but also Milan's La Scala, Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu or London's Covent Garden, among many others.

The programming of opera in movie theatres (not in films) dates from a little less than a decade ago. In Spain, film exhibitor Cinesa regularly schedules broadcasts from Italian, British, Belgian, German or Spanish opera houses, such as Madrid's Real or Barcelona's Liceu, in its movie theatres. Programming criteria can be as artistic as those of the opera houses. José Batlle, the chief operating officer for Continental Europe of Cinesa said that “We do a job that is similar to that of the artistic director of an opera house. We choose the titles we think can work best from the list of titles offered by those companies that resell broadcasting rights. We usually choose the most popular productions”<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> MORRIS, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>23</sup> HEYER, *op. cit.*, p. 592.

<sup>24</sup> BUSQUETS, Marc, “El Met, en directo a todo el mundo”, *Ópera actual*, n° 135, November 2010, pp. 44-45. See also STEICHEN, James, “HD Opera: A Love/Hate Story”, *The Opera Quarterly*, n° 27, 2011, pp. 443-459.

<sup>25</sup> SÁNCHEZ, Sergi, “La ópera en pantalla grande”, *Ópera actual*, n° 116, December 2008, p. 37.

According to the editorial published in the November 2010 issue of the Spanish magazine *Ópera actual*, in Spain that year there were over 100,000 subscribers to operatic seasons while between 20,000 and 26,000 spectators went regularly to movie theatres to watch opera broadcasts. These are data gathered by Cinesa. Batlle himself declared that

The exhibitors have realised we need to provide some alternative content in movie theatres. And advances in technology, such as the gradual introduction of digital broadcasts allows for new possibilities. The cinema exhibition industry is living a revolution with the change of analogue projectors to digital projectors, which opens new possibilities: you can install a satellite dish and relay events that take place outside the theatre in real time, like sports events, concerts, conferences or other activities. Within this alternative content policy, one of the first that was introduced was opera<sup>26</sup>.

In short, this is a commitment to the triple dimension of information, learning and entertainment characteristic of media literacy discussed earlier in the text.

#### 4. *Conclusions*

In later papers we can study and analyse a changing social reality in the sector of musical entertainment that will guide new actions of cultural education. One of the main reasons for the proposal we present here is based on a portrait of reality, which is the commodification of opera so that it becomes an instrument of information, entertainment and education because of the emergence new formats, fostered both by the distributors of audiovisual products (especially DVDs) and by opera houses that broadcast their productions in attractive formats such as DBC (Digital Broadcast Cinema). This reveals new patterns of spectatorship and consumption and, above all, the emergence, consolidation and long-term presence of a new understanding of leisure through entertainment as an instrument of high culture, such as opera, using a format that had not been tapped until a few years ago, as well as a new relationship with media for viewers. New ways of enjoying opera outside opera houses through audiovisual platforms should be studied. These could lead to measures of social education in the convergence of arts that truly benefit the cultural excellence of a particular community.

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibíd.*, p. 36.

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