

The development an operatic character: the musical and psychological factors influencing the interpretation of the Governess in Britten's opera *The Turn of the Screw*.

Performing an operatic role goes well beyond the technical prowess to address the high demands on the singing voice and stage acting; it also requires a deep engagement with the psychology of a character. This paper proposes an analytical exploration of character development for the figure of the 'Governess' in Benjamin Britten's opera *The Turn of The Screw* by drawing upon a network of intertextual relations (from textual and musical sources). It is argued that a cross-relational approach to the psychology of the character provides a flexible analytical framework for an informed performance.

In order to construct the Governess' character, the paper draws on the psychology theory of personality by Raymond Cattell (1950) to negotiate the cumulative layers originating from the novel by Henry James (1898) and its libretto adaptation by Myfawny Piper's (1954), and examines how instances of Britten's musical setting also shape character formation according to the Governess behaviors and attitudes in different situations throughout the opera.

In addition, the paper presents detailed qualitative interviews regarding character preparation with notable opera singers (Catherin Wilson, Valerie Masterson and Janis Kelly), who performed the role of the Governess in full-scale professional productions. The interviews suggest that the singers' awareness of their engagement with textual sources, acting techniques, and character construction sustain their differing interpretations. In turn, the interviews also enable a comparative discussion regarding interpretative and analytical choices, acting techniques (Stanislavski, 1979) in light of a psychological theory of personality and general principles of operatic characterization.

The paper concludes by filtering emergent themes and issues and proposing an 'idealized' characterization of the Governess, suggesting that such analytical approach is useful (one might even say "necessary") for performing singers when preparing an operatic role.

Keywords: Benjamin Britten; Turn of the Screw; Governess; Intertextuality; Musical Analysis; Psychological Analysis.

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