



REHEARSING TIME

Lea Luka Sikau

Abstract: This article explores the times and datedness of new opera. When referring to an opera (20**) the bracketed number that follows the composition title usually refers to the date of composition or the first performance. When asked how many times an opera was played, its interpreters tend to refer to the number of performances, not the number of instances of rehearsal and individual practice. These times often remain unmentioned by performers, composers, production teams and institutions. But what do we make invisible when we exclude the main act of collective labour in the production of a new staged work? How do new operas structure their times and, in turn, how do these various times restructure new opera? I call for an inclusion of the rehearsal in the temporal narratives that new opera tells through its dates and times, emerging from collaborative processes in compound temporalities. With ethnographic glimpses into different operatic rehearsal studios, I examine the process that takes up most of new opera's time – rehearsal time – rather than audiences' or performers' lived experiences during the performance. This article maps the times inside rehearsal time – from daily schedules, call times and deep times of props to computational time and the timing of time itself – for better understanding new opera's ontology.

This article¹ explores the times and datedness of new opera. When referring to an opera (20**), the bracketed number that follows the composition title usually refers to the date of composition or the first performance. When asked how many times an opera was played, its interpreters tend to refer to the number of performances, not the number of instances of rehearsal and individual practice. These times often remain unmentioned by performers, composers, production teams and institutions. But what do we make invisible when we exclude the main act of collective labour in the production of a new staged work? This article calls for an inclusion of the rehearsal

¹ I would like to acknowledge the invaluable feedback of numerous artists and scholars on earlier versions of this article, particularly within the Tzllil Meudcan Festival 2023 and the Temporalities in Music Theater Study Group of the International Musicological Society. My thanks to the two anonymous readers, as well as to Laura Möckli, Christopher Fox, Peter McMurray, Colleen Renihan, Mauro Calcagno, Christoph Marshall and all opera production members who have so generously shared their experiences with me.

process in the temporal narratives that new opera tells through its dates and times, because music emerges from collaborative processes in compound temporalities, not from singular numbers or a singular authorial figure.

From dates to timespans, I offer a narrative platform to introduce temporal analysis that does not focus on musical time in scores, performance time and the felt time of listeners. I propose a framework for understanding the complex agential relations in the creation of new opera. Enabling music to be 'new', the rehearsal probes unheard-of sounds in protean times. I conceptualise rehearsals as structuring an in-between phase which produces a looping rhythm, cutting apart new opera's datedness.

When zooming into opera's historical trajectory, 'operatic time, in fact, works against linear sequence'; the afterlife inherent to the operatic voice is one that defines expression of the protean temporalities encapsulated in opera.² In performances, opera is defined by various coalescing and diverging temporal structures, from narrative time and musical time to the performer's lifetime and felt time. Opera never exclusively unfolds in the human present but touches upon multiple more-than-human temporalities in the past, present and future. A listener might describe the modern-romantic notion of felt time becoming suspended, while a performer may perceive a moment of 'drastic' musicking in real time, rendering an immediate analysis of the interpreted music irrelevant in the embodied present.³

What does opera do to time? How does it enmesh diverse times? I want to answer these questions by examining the process that takes up most of opera's time – rehearsal time – rather than the audiences' or performers' lived experiences during the performance. How do new operas structure their times and in turn how do these various times restructure new opera? Even before opera takes time on stage (or within this article), the schedules of opera theatres attest to the genre's embeddedness in time. My analysis puts discussions of felt time in performance aside, to think instead about rehearsal times, new opera's times of materialisation. The rehearsal neither suspends time nor 'gnostic' critique, but rather sutures together the 'drastic' and the 'gnostic' in timely repetition.

With institutionalised acts, new opera defines the time to rehearse and is simultaneously defined by the multiplicities of times encompassed in its process. Between compositional thoughts, mise-en-scène concepts and the performance, the rehearsal structures time through processes of more-than-human interaction. For up to eight weeks the chosen operas rehearse one and a half hours of performance time. These ninety minutes contract the 'doings' of rehearsal into a 'done'

² See Michal Grover Friedlander, *Operatic Afterlives* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), p. 22.

³ 'Against the governing chronological system that structured and managed time in abstract measurable segments, musical time from Beethoven to Boulez by way of Brahms, Wagner, and Schoenberg, seemed, according to this tradition, to also offer an experience of boundlessness and becoming, of developing variation and thematic transformation, of idealized suspension and virtual possibility. Music in the modern-romantic tradition thereby exemplified a temporality that was said to suspend, transform, or otherwise transcend ordinary time.' See Martin Scherzinger, 'Temporalities', in *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Concepts in Music Theory*, eds. Alexander Rehding and Steven Rings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 234–70 (pp. 239–40). For the concept of felt time, see Marc Wittmann and Erik Butler, *Felt Time: The Psychology of How We Perceive Time* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016). For further elaborations on the concepts of 'drastic' and 'gnostic' see Carolyn Abbate's landmark article: 'Music – Drastic or Gnostic', *Critical Inquiry*, 30, no. 3 (Spring 2004), pp. 505–536 (p. 511).

event, ‘thrown forward in time to be used in the “finished performance”’.⁴ Performed realities are hemmed in the rehearsal time, interwoven in a plurality of time configurations which cannot be grasped by audiences but, nevertheless, define the performance. The rehearsal informs the interactions on and behind the stage during the performance. Despite opera’s unfolding in real time, its actor-network always relates back to the rehearsal time, significantly predetermining the more-than-human relationships with scheduling times, assembling times, recording times, material times, recalibrating times, waiting times, measuring times, supervising times, lunch times, coding times, interacting times and many more.

Ethnographic Time

I want to draw on my experiences with times within three new operas: Marina Abramović’s *7 Deaths of Maria Callas* (2020) at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Michel van der Aa’s *Upload* (2021) at the Dutch National Opera, and Sivan Eldar and Cordelia Lynn’s *Like Flesh* (2022) at IRCAM and the Opéra de Lille.⁵ Within these productions, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork as a participant-observer, in each case with distinct roles. I choose these cases because they disrupt codified practices of opera theatres and rethink canonical rehearsal dynamics, their agencies as well as the technological infrastructure. At the same time, they are subject to the institutionalised structures of the opera’s auditorium, a space which contains seemingly invisible temporal processes.

The *7 Deaths of Maria Callas* called upon the performance artist Abramović to participate in a rehearsal for the first time.⁶ As a post-humous homage to the opera icon Callas, this project, developed in an opera house, was the culmination of the performance artist’s perennial engagement with the legacy of the soprano. *Upload* (2021) at the Dutch National Opera showcases how technological infrastructure engrosses a rehearsal process, steered meticulously by composer, librettist and director Van der Aa. A transhuman narrative unfolds in *Upload*, which features virtual bodies changing in real time. Eldar and Lynn’s *Like Flesh* (2022) explores other-than-human times, zooming in on a queer love relationship between a tree’s fungal root network and a woman. Historically, opera has glorified nature imagery through an anthropocentric lens, but *Like Flesh* sheds light on human’s destruction of nature as well as queering opera’s stereotypical portrayals of nature as feminine.

Within these opera productions, interactions on stage carry past rehearsal experiences into the present. Having been discarded in light of the final performance, they still permeate the interactions of the cast through the performers’ memories. Within *7 Deaths* for instance, the soprano Hera Hyesang Park says of her stage experience: ‘I see Marina but feel Maria’.⁷ Park feels Callas’ sonic presence, even if it is not audible on stage, as she repeatedly had to listen to Callas’

⁴ Richard Schechner, ‘Performers and Spectators Transported and Transformed’, *The Kenyon Review*, 3, no. 4 (1981), pp. 83–113 (p. 85).

⁵ While Georgina Born capitalised ‘IRCAM’ in *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant-Garde* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), I use the spelling on Ircam’s website: ‘Recherche’, www.ircam.fr/recherche (accessed 12 February 2024).

⁶ I will abbreviate *7 Deaths of Maria Callas* to *7 Deaths*.

⁷ Unpublished interview by the author with the soprano Hera Hyesang Park, 22 September 2020.

recordings in the rehearsal, before offering her own aria interpretation. The schedule of the rehearsals also plays its part in pre-structuring the performance. In *7 Deaths* there is a clear-cut separation between the first and second act of the opera, a split intensified by the daily schedule in which the first act is rehearsed in the morning and the second in the afternoon. The experiences of past rehearsal times are recalled in the performance present. I argue that the rehearsal time is more formative for new operas (working with timelines introduced by the digital) than the performance time, as the latter is subject to further constriction in a 90-minute time corsage. In this production, the arias are timed to pre-recorded films, while *Upload* and *Like Flesh* make use of click tracks and electroacoustic soundscapes. With regards to timings, the performances themselves remain relatively constant. Their standardised timelines demand pre-defined temporal relationships.

Scheduling Time

In search of an opera's relationship with time, this article focuses on the rehearsal as the site in which operatic time is not only conceived and created but also defined by its relationship to other kinds of time. The institutionalisation of opera organises time through its rehearsal schedule which in turn decides what times come to matter. This article examines the life and times of the immersive technology known as rehearsal, carried along by its calendric schedules and production timelines, and I begin by analysing opera's institutionalised timeframe, before venturing inside the complex posthuman temporalities enfolded in the schedule. While acknowledging that rehearsing has no natural end in itself and could indefinitely unfold in space and time, opera as an institution artificially ends rehearsal time for the performance event.

Several years before the premiere, the rehearsal time is measured according to common practice in the industry at that time, and its estimation of the complexities of production and artists' fees. Starting in the middle with a concept presentation and ending with dress rehearsals, an overall progress narrative of rehearsal phases is standardised and inscribed into every production by the artistic administration office. The temporal regime of the schedule exerts significant power over the artistic process by delimiting its timely capacities,⁸ limitations that are designed to make rehearsals amenable to budget constraints and management, conceptualising rehearsal time as uncluttered and linear.

To facilitate the production apparatus, opera schedules partition intervals according to an anthropocentric order. All the schedules that I have seen make use of the dominant modern concept of time, characterised by adherence to one universal chronology voiced through anthropocentric structures.⁹ Schedules are made according to various human labour agreements (for stagehands, opera houses' craft departments, ensembles, soloists and freelance team members). They

⁸ Melanie Hinz and Jens Roselt (eds.), *Chaos und Konzept. Proben und Probieren im Theater* (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2011), p. 21.

⁹ Philosopher and historian of science Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent claims that 'the champions of the Anthropocene remain deeply attached to the assumption of human exceptionalism, which is embedded in the modern concept of time as a universal chronological timeline'. See Bensaude-Vincent, 'Rethinking Time in Response to the Anthropocene: From Timescales to Timescapes', *The Anthropocene Review*, 9, no. 13 (April 2021), pp. 1–14 (p. 3).

include the names of the creative team members and their assistants, while nonhuman props, sets and technologies are expected to be ready for use, or at least for try-outs, without being listed. Nevertheless, certain names function as stand-ins for the technologies at work. The set design assistant is there to maintain the rehearsal sets, while an avatar designer, for instance, is supposed to keep the avatar projections running. These roles are anticipated to continuously reassemble the tangible and virtual material in the studio. They are hired to service opera's materiality – from experts dealing with the newest technologies to stagehands who build up the entire technological environment – while the material agencies seem mostly invisible in the institutional structuring of time which is the opera's rehearsal schedule.¹⁰

In the transition from the overarching production timetable, filed years in advance to the rehearsal phase itself, it becomes apparent how new opera restructures anthropocentric timelines and introduces posthuman temporalities. The assistants from the house and the contracted staff function as timekeepers, supervising rehearsal time and its spaces. Opera rehearsals are usually scheduled full-time from Monday to Friday and part-time on Saturday. Meanwhile, a majority of the production team members are freelancers, from the cast to the set design and the artistic direction. During the entire rehearsal period the performers are on call, knowing one day ahead of time whether they are expected in the studio and, if so, which scenes to prepare in advance.

With hierarchies of status, the anthropocentric schedule subordinates its people, specifically its soloist cast, to the clock time of the coming day. Opera establishes a new day-to-day in which the performers cannot plan more than one day ahead. Most performers are required to be available for the entire rehearsal period, ready to come to the rehearsal with warmed-up voices and to perform their parts at any point.¹¹ Whereas the timeline construes an overarching progress narrative, the unpredictable 'nature' of the schedule fragments the performers' lives. While having a different systemic relevance, their routines are comparable to other on-call professions (such as healthcare professionals) where the employee situates themselves in an 'environment of change and social interaction', fuelled by a 'pressure to perform' which at times requires intimate 'teamwork'.¹² The inability to plan ahead and foresee the demand combines intensive, high-pressure work with the experience of waiting indefinitely to be called.

Opera institutionalises time and demarcates developmental stages, compressing the times of co-evolution into a two-dimensional schedule. This temporal order affects one's conceptions of the day-to-day as well as the service life of nonhuman material in the space. Protean rehearsal time emerges even within the execution of the schedule. While some attendees of opera performances might say that the

¹⁰ There remains one exception in the European rehearsal landscape: the *Bauprobe*, a rehearsal that exists only in German production processes. Typically, one year before the premiere, a real-size stage mock-up is built for a rehearsal without performers, in which the materiality of the fake sets is rehearsed. Immediately after this one-off session, everything is torn down again.

¹¹ If performers are unavailable, they are temporarily replaced, adding to the questioning of rehearsals as 'safe' spaces. When a singer was quarantining during my fieldwork stays, they were immediately replaced by a cover.

¹² John Person, LeeAnna Spiva and Patricia Hart, 'The Culture of an Emergency Department: An Ethnographic Study', *International Emergency Nursing*, 21, no. 4 (2013), pp. 222–27 (p. 222).

musical event introduces ‘time outside of time’, I argue that the rehearsal introduces various ‘times inside of a timeline’. Encouraged by Tim Ingold’s anthropology of the line, I trace the lines of which opera is made as they unfurl in time¹³ by situating myself within a progress-oriented timeline. In the scheduled rehearsal time the timeline fractures in many directions, spiralling out rhizomatically in both time and space.¹⁴ The rehearsal sheds light on the temporalities inside of time, drawing on the capacity of its participants to experience different kinds of time. Drawing on Georgina Born and Martin Scherzinger, musical processes introduce multiplicities of time beyond dominant modern time structures.¹⁵ As such, the opera rehearsal ‘approximate[s] the temporality of music cultures in institutionalized contexts, folding into an assemblage of multilinear temporal systems digging through anthropomorphic time structures’.¹⁶

Computational Time

Questioning the straightforwardness of timelines in favour of a multi-layered and pluri-directional understanding of lines in time, my post-human inquiry into new opera explores the relationship between lines which expand human time. Following Born, I recognise the non-human times at play and their agency within the institutionalised framing.¹⁷ Opera produces queer temporal interdependencies, a consequence of its material and technological choices. In rehearsal, new opera enmeshes other temporal relationships: from the musical time in the score to the longevity of the material which presents it (on paper or tablet); from a character’s time and the lifetime that the librettist invested in the text to the carbon bodies who interpret it; from the underexplored temporalities of emerging technologies and self-deleting videos and the noumenal half-life of plastics, to the timing of time itself. The nesting of different temporalities produces syncopations that relationally affect each other and compound this posthuman enmeshing.¹⁸

¹³ Tim Ingold advocates for interdisciplinary scholars to pursue the lines in their field (or space): ‘In presenting this brief history of the line my intention is much more modest: merely to give the surface of the terrain a little scratch – to write on it a bit. Thus the book should be read as a prolegomenon whose aim is to open up lines of inquiry that others might be inspired to pursue, in whatever directions their knowledge and experience might take them. I have written it as an open invitation to join in an enterprise that, so far as I know, has no name’. See *Lines: A Brief History* (London & New York: Routledge Classics, 2007), p. 5.

¹⁴ According to Ingold, the etymology of the word line is derived from thread made from flax. See Ingold, *Lines*, p. 63.

¹⁵ ‘Advancing beyond philosophical process theory, yet learning its antiteleological and post-humanist lessons, the article proposes a materialist framework for the analysis of those “multiple, interacting, and partially open temporal systems” – including the distinctive scales, speeds, rhythms, and shapes of change opened up and enacted by cultural objects and events – that through their complex interactions participate in the emergent processes we identify as history.’ See Georgina Born, ‘Making Time: Temporality, History, and the Cultural Object’, *New Literary History*, 46, no. 3 (Summer 2015), pp. 361–86 (p. 381). ‘What was once regarded as a fundamentally human-focused inquiry into temporality has expanded to include the production of time by both human and nonhuman mediators, entities, and actors.’ See Scherzinger, ‘Temporalities’, p. 236.

¹⁶ Scherzinger, ‘Temporalities’, p. 240.

¹⁷ Born, ‘Making Time’, p. 381.

¹⁸ Bruno Latour argues: ‘time enmeshes, at an ever greater level of intimacy and on an ever greater scale, humans and nonhumans with each other [...] The confusion of humans and nonhumans is not only our past *but our future as well*’. See Latour, *Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 200. (Emphasis in the original).

Times manifest through already tried and tested theatrical timelines, projected future schedules, technical objects, their temporal specificity and their material histories.¹⁹ Following Shintaro Miyazaki, the wireless computational environments of the three new operas introduce a specific rhythm, that co-evolves with the temporalities of algorithms.²⁰ In the meantime, rhythms inherent to code are stored on consumer electronics containing lithium, copper or neodymium, whose 'deep time resources of the earth are what makes technology happen' in the first place.²¹ Technologies (and their temporalities) are constantly co-evolving with the ways in which they are used.²² In the rehearsal phase of *Upload*, for instance, the avatar designer Darien Brito describes how his coding practice is affected by the change of environment. He adapts his own mental state within the immersive technology of rehearsal, influenced by the technologies and people waiting for him to troubleshoot and run the code again. His manner of coding enmeshes with the time pressure to solve technical problems fast:

This whole rehearsal process puts you into a state of mind that is very alerting. You have to react to all those stimuli. That never happens when you are programming alone. That is also a very rich experience I feel. It puts you in a different mental state. The solutions you come up with sometimes are even better compared to the ones where you code alone. Because here, you are forced to think quickly and make it easy.²³

As Brito demonstrates, the rehearsal affects the sense of time of the involved through the different temporalities interacting. The temporality of algorithms enmeshes with the pace of Brito's coding in a rehearsal scenario. The avatar designer works on decreasing the delay of the projections so that the motion-captured performer sings and their lips are almost perfectly synched on the giant stage screens. Brito's work on decreasing delays – only milliseconds to begin with – occupies him for the entire rehearsal period. The underexplored temporal demands of the new motion-capture technology emerge to significantly structure the time of rehearsal. Often, the performer is replaced by an intern who stands there for hours to test the fluidity of imagery rendered and adapt the immediacy of transmission. During the running of the code, when the motion-captured imagery is transmitted, Brito cannot intervene. The code has to be readied either before the scene is run or adjusted afterwards. These temporal syncopations of deferred interaction produce the unique temporal structure of *Upload's* rehearsals. As all interactions between performers on stage are technologically mediated, creating a prompt transmission of imagery is vital for the affective immediacy and the credibility of the characters' relationships. Brito constructs the potential for immediate interaction but is factored out during the runs in which the affective encounter occurs.²⁴ Instead he becomes an extra in one of the scenes, dressed in a laboratory coat as he moves the physical screens.

¹⁹ Katherine Hayles, *How We Think: Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 85.

²⁰ Shintaro Miyazaki, 'Algorithmics: Understanding Micro-Temporality in Computational Cultures', *Computational Culture*, 2 (September 2012), 1–17 (p. 14).

²¹ Jussi Parikka, *Anthroscene* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p. 7.

²² Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska, *Life After New Media: Mediation as a Vital Process* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012), p. 21.

²³ Unpublished interview by the author with Brito, 25 February 2021.

²⁴ For more on affective immediacy, see Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

Beyond the example of affective immediacy and real-time delay, the rehearsals work by compounding the material past, the anthropocentric present and possible futures into waste. Whereas *7 Deaths* circulates videos during the rehearsal that automatically delete themselves after the rehearsal period, the eco-themed opera *Like Flesh* produces trees out of plastic resin that will outlive the performers' lives.²⁵ Plastic compresses pasts and futures, carrying the deep time – fossil fuels, synthetic histories – as well as containing indeterminate future lifespans.²⁶ The durability of some objects is artificially restricted to protect circulation beyond the rehearsal, while other artifices are selected for their robustness and non-flammability, a requirement for a touring production. The rehearsal produces noumenal lifespans, which impact the environment beyond the studio. It creates slowly degrading decompositions that exceed the times of the operas and recent scholarly efforts have begun to include the impact of operatic materials within ecological opera research.²⁷

Timed Time

Within the confluence of lifespans with milliseconds there is another temporal phenomenon that characterises rehearsal times: rehearsals have the capacity to render time self-referential. As the performance time of these new operas is more standardised than productions of the operatic canon, some scenes are rehearsed in the studio solely to measure the time they take. In the initial rehearsals of *7 Deaths*, the arias are measured according to their length of interpretation. As the videos were shot and finalised previously, Abramović decides after timing the arias whether to add or remove a recitative or another verse. In Violetta's aria, 'Addio, del Passato', the performance artist chooses to add the second strophe to better match the video length. The films remain fixed in their scenes, while the musical time becomes synchronised. The rehearsals approximate the time Callas took to sing the arias in the recordings and propose it as the new, overarching clock time, displayed not by watch hands but by Abramović's dying body on the projection.

In other rehearsals for *7 Deaths* the singers are slow-motion walking and gazing into each other's eyes for an hour. They re-direct attention to minimal movement in time. Long-duration performance practices like these recalibrate one's perception of time and equip the performers to develop heightened endurance.²⁸ Stretching one stage walk over the maximum duration, co-director Lynsey Peisinger times the exercises for the hour-long duration. Just like the overarching schedule

²⁵ Thermoplastics persist for extended periods of time in the environment, lending our current time the name of the 'plastic age'. For the accumulation of plastic in global environments, see Richard C. Thompson, Shanna H. Swan, Charles J. Moore and Frederick S. vom Saal, 'Our Plastic Age', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, 364 (July 2009), pp. 1973–76.

²⁶ Heather Davies, 'Unrelenting: Pervasive Contamination', Unpublished paper delivered at the 'Contamination, Art and the Environment Symposium' (University of the Arts Helsinki, 9 March 2023).

²⁷ The burgeoning field of environmental opera research was instantiated by the 'Environmental Opera Research Conference' at the University of the Arts Helsinki, 18 March, 2022, with speakers including Joy Calico, Jelena Novak, Kirsten Paige and Nicholas Till. Elsewhere, Gundula Kreuzer and Paige point toward the ecological embeddedness of operatic materials. See Gundula Kreuzer, 'Kittler's Wagner and Beyond', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 70, no. 1 (2017), pp. 229–33 (p. 229); Kirsten Paige, *Richard Wagner's Political Ecology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Forthcoming), p. 3.

²⁸ Unpublished interview by the author with Peisinger, 6 May 2020.

of the opera production, the exercises are scheduled in linear clock time in order to allow for diverging perceptions of time within; 7 *Deaths* structures time to open another temporality within the line.

In contrast, *Upload's* schedule introduces the composer's timeline. Apart from the complex temporalities emerging through computational practices, its musical time essentially revolves around a predetermined tempo, largely configured ahead of rehearsals via a click track. Performers have to adhere to the pulse of the clicks in the rehearsals, which renders the rehearsals subject to metric time. Rather than being centred around any rigid timeline, the click tracks manifest Van der Aa's ideas about tempi.²⁹ The Vitruvian Van der Aa animates temporalities that, ultimately, are not self-referential but instead reflect only the composer's perspective. Emerging as the pivotal point of the entire process, Van der Aa takes over the roles of composer, librettist, and theatrical and film director. He claims that the opera offers a unique view on humanity,³⁰ yet a critical reading of the rehearsal time observes his efforts to streamline the temporalities to follow a stereotype of a humanist ideal, personified by a single auteur-like figure who tries to dictate the tempi mediated by software.

Examining some of the temporal specifics of the three operas has enabled me to provide an insight into the complex interdependencies created by linear timelines, the scheduling mechanisms of opera houses, the propensity of directors to partition time and the demands that technology makes on operatic time. The rehearsal lets temporalities coalesce and speeds up their enmeshing through repetition. Opera rehearses to rehearse again, not only when zooming out to see the overall trajectory of multiple seasons. Every (other) year, the politics of opera's programming introduce recurring rehearsal phases for canonical productions and, similarly, these three touring productions are set out to rehearse again, adjusting to various theatres in different cities. As Clemens Risi has argued, opera, historically, structurally and aesthetically, repeats, to the extent that a performance can be seen as just another rehearsal for a performance to come.³¹ From the compositional structure that reinforces repetition, to the 'preformation' of the audience member who listens to the aria on repeat before hearing it in the auditorium, to the lines of code running again and again,³² new opera moulds time into cyclical temporalities of reoccurring rehearsals and repeated difference.

²⁹ Unpublished interview by the author with Fergus McAlpine, 8 March 2021.

³⁰ Michel van der Aa, *Upload* (2021), www.vanderaa.net/work/upload (accessed 12 February 2024).

³¹ Clemens Risi, 'Encore! Oper wiederholen', in *Chaos und Konzept*, pp. 97–108 (p. 98).

³² Risi, 'Encore! Oper wiederholen', p. 105.