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The Evolution and Influence of the Main Character of Classical Opera Production: A Case Study of Three Interpretations of the Finale of Act II in Parsifal

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Abstract: *Parsifal* is Wagner's final opera and remains one of the classic operas frequently performed on stage today, beloved by audiences. The finale of Act II is one of the climaxes of the entire work, where Parsifal achieves his apotheosis and defeats Klingsor, the symbol of evil. Taking this scene as an example, this paper analyzes the characterization of Parsifal and Klingsor, stage set design, and the integrated stage design of "casting the Holy Spear" in three different productions of *Parsifal*. It aims to reveal the evolution of the two production concepts, "Werktreue" (fundamentalist opera) and "Regieoper" (director's opera), and their impact on opera interpretation.

Keywords: Wagner; Parsifal; Opera Production; Regieoper; Werktreue

1. Introduction

The opera *Parsifal* is Wagner's adaptation based on Eschenbach's epic *Parzival*[1]. Some consider it "Wagner's trump card"[2]. Wagner said, "I divided this drama into three acts, and immediately sketched out the draft of this drama with a few strokes in haste."[3] This opera tells the story of Parsifal saving the Holy Grail kingdom and becoming the new king. Among this, the moment in the finale of Act II where Parsifal catches the Holy Spear thrown by Klingsor and thereby defeats Klingsor is the turning point and climax of the entire opera. It also symbolizes Parsifal passing the most important trial and the "completion of Parsifal's sublimation."[4]

Today, *Parsifal* is already a classic repertoire frequently performed on the opera stage, with a rich variety of productions. The author has selected three of the most representative versions: the 1992 Metropolitan Opera production, the 2016 Teatro Real Madrid production, and the 2013 Salzburg Festival production. These three productions were directed by Otto Schenk, Claus Guth, and Michael Schulz, respectively. The three productions each have their own distinctive features in terms of production and stage presentation: the Otto Schenk version is highly faithful to Wagner's opera; Claus Guth's version is extremely symbolic; while Michael Schulz's version tells a different story through a unique conception. The analysis aims to reveal the evolution of the two production concepts, "Werktreue" (fundamentalist opera) and "Regieoper" (director's opera), and their impact on opera interpretation.

2. A Brief Analysis of the Translation and Etymology of “Regieoper” and “Werktreue”

2.1 Literal Translation of Regieoper (Director's Opera)

The German term "Regieoper" is a compound word formed by combining the abbreviation of "Regisseur" (director) and "Oper" (opera). Literally, it translates to "director opera." Furthermore, the Duden German dictionary defines "Regieoper" as "opera in which the director carries significant weight in terms of interpreting the drama." [5] From this perspective, "Regieoper" can be understood as a general term for opera productions where the director plays a dominant role. It can be simplified to "director-dominated opera" or "director's opera." This paper adopts the translation "director's opera".

2.2 Regieoper (Director's Opera) and Regietheater (Director's Theatre)

Etymologically, "Regieoper" did not emerge entirely new; it derives from the German term "Regietheater" (director's theatre). The formation of "Regietheater" is almost identical to "Regieoper," combining the German abbreviation for director, "Regie," with "Theater" (theatre). It is now commonly used to

refer to the "director-centered approach to staging" that emerged in Germany between the 1960s and 1970s. [6] It is evident from this that "Regieoper" represents the manifestation of this historical trend in German theatre on the opera stage.

2.3 Potential Controversy Surrounding the Term Regieoper (Director's Opera)

In David Barnett's article "*Offending the Playwright: Director's Theatre and the 'Werktreue' Debate*", he points out that the use of the term "Regietheater" is controversial, arguing that "Regisseurstheater" is a more accurate term. This issue may similarly apply to "Regieoper."

German morphology clearly shows the difference between the two terms. "Regisseurstheater" can be divided into three parts: "Regisseur" (director), the genitive case marker "s," and "theater" (theatre). This construction emphasizes the concrete profession of the director dominating the theatre.

"Regietheater", on the other hand, lacks the genitive "s" and abbreviates "Regisseur" to "Regie." If we consider "Regie" as an adjective, the term signifies a director's conceptual or spiritual control over the theatre.

It is clear that the former term ("Regisseurstheater") views the director as a profession, leaning towards an institutionalized phenomenon, while the latter ("Regietheater") focuses more on the individual director, emphasizing the director's personal impact on the presentation of the work. This distinction is reflected in David Barnett's English translations: he renders the former as "Directorial theater" and the latter as "Director's theater." The English terms suggest that "Directorial theater" emphasizes the director as a profession, whereas "Director's theater" views the director as an individual.

Since "Regisseursoper" is not currently in use, this paper will continue to employ the term "Regieoper" and its established translation, "director's opera" .

2.4 Regieoper (Director's Opera) and "Werktreue" (Fundamentalist Opera)

The concept corresponding to "Regieoper" is "Werktreue," which lacks a precise translation. According to Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe [7], the term first appeared in 1935 in the Nazi newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* to describe Wilhelm Furtwängler's conducting of Beethoven. The Duden German dictionary defines it as "faithful interpretation and reproduction, especially of a musical work." [8] Morphologically, it consists of two parts: "Werk" (work) and "Treue" (fidelity, loyalty). Combining them yields the translation "faithfulness to the original work." For the sake of convenience in this discussion, the paper translates its meaning in the context of opera as "fundamentalist opera" . As the name suggests, this approach emphasizes presenting the opera strictly according to the composer's or librettist's original settings and intended meaning, thereby diminishing the director's role in such productions and positioning the director as an organizer and interpreter.

3. Comparative Analysis of Character Portrayals in the Finale of Act II

In the finale of Act II, Parsifal completes his ultimate sublimation, which is also one of the climaxes of the entire opera. Parsifal successfully resists Kundry's temptation through universal love, compassion, and empathy. Kundry then summons Klingsor, attempting to crush Parsifal through Klingsor's magic and force. At this moment, Parsifal merely uses a cross to defeat Klingsor, who holds the Holy Spear. Because each version's director has their own understanding of the opera *Parsifal*, the portrayals of Klingsor and Parsifal here also differ.

3.1 Comparative Analysis of Parsifal's Character Portrayal

In the 1992 production, Parsifal, played by Siegfried Jerusalem, is undoubtedly the closest to Parsifal in Wagner's original libretto. His outstanding demeanor gives the audience an image of Parsifal that is mature yet with a touch of simplicity, even possessing a certain divinity. In this scene, Parsifal should exhibit a divine quality, simultaneously appearing very calm in the face of Klingsor's threat, even carrying a hint of pity. Jerusalem excellently portrays this characteristic. After catching the Holy Spear, he raises it high above his head and finally draws a huge cross in the center of the stage. This calm and somewhat pitying demeanor fully aligns with the image of the sublimated Parsifal in Wagner's libretto.

In the 2016 version, Parsifal, played by Klaus Florian Vogt, embodies more of the character's simplicity and calmness. Simultaneously, he

seems somewhat curious about the Holy Spear. After Kundry summons Klingsor, Parsifal does not wait for Klingsor to throw the spear but walks towards Klingsor. Facing Klingsor's threat, "The holy fool shall meet his master's spear", he still calmly approaches Klingsor. Finally, when he sings "With this blest sign I banish all your magic", he calmly spreads his hands, forming the shape of a cross, simultaneously seeming to express his utter composure to Klingsor.

Compared to the previous two Parsifals who are close to Wagner's original libretto, Parsifal in the 2013 version, played by Johan Botha, seems to subvert the divine Parsifal in Wagner's libretto. He exhibits a sense of dominance and authority that Parsifal should not possess at this moment; his divine aspect seems replaced by a form of oppressive power. Simultaneously, differing from the previous two, he does not exhibit the simplicity and composure Parsifal should have at this moment, akin to enlightenment; instead, he displays a satisfaction after gaining power.

Looking at the three versions of Parsifal overall, the first two are much closer to the sublimated divinity and composure Parsifal should possess according to Wagner's original libretto. However, the third version of Parsifal exhibits a state completely different from, even opposite to, the original libretto. Although both the first and second versions' Parsifals adhere to the original libretto, their emphases are entirely different. The first version's Parsifal emphasizes more his divinity within the "holy fool", while the second version emphasizes the simplicity of the "fool" within the "holy fool."

3.2 Comparative Analysis of Klingsor's Character Portrayal

The character Klingsor is a somewhat controversial figure created by Wagner. His image is considered by some to carry metaphors opposing Jewish thought. The makeup in the 1992 version completely restores this image (hooked nose and exaggerated gestures), thus criticized by some for perpetuating 19th-century stereotypes. However, others stated it was merely restoring Wagner's original. Aside from this, the Klingsor played by Bernd Weikl also fully conforms to the positioning of the villain in Wagner's original libretto. Holding the spear in his right hand, pointing at Parsifal with his left, he sings "The holy fool shall meet his master's spear" His expression is also fiercely staring at Parsifal at the front of the stage, followed by "hurls the lance". When Parsifal catches the spear and sings "With this blest sign I banish all your magic", Klingsor falls to the ground in pain.

The Klingsor in the 2016 version behaves completely differently from the 1992 version in this scene. When he enters, he stands on stairs, looking down on Parsifal from a height, exuding an air of arrogance. He raises the Holy Spear but does not throw it, seeming merely to warn Parsifal. When Parsifal sings "With this blest sign I banish all your magic. As the spear that wounded shall be used for healing so let this destruction fall on illusory pomp", Klingsor's expression is pained. However, unlike the defeated pain of the 1992 version, this Klingsor's pain seems more internal. When Parsifal takes the spear from his hand, Klingsor does not fall and disappear like in the 1992 version; instead, he seems deeply anguished by remorse for his own actions.

Klingsor in the 2013 version differs from the previous two in stage presentation right from the start, being portrayed by two actors: a tall actor and a dwarf actor. The tall actor fulfills the singing function, while the dwarf actor carries out the stage acting function. This design reflects the characteristic of Klingsor being outwardly strong but inwardly weak. In this scene, although the lines are sung by the tall actor, the stage actions are still performed by the dwarf actor. When singing "The holy fool shall meet his master's spear", the dwarf actor looks at Parsifal with extreme anger. When Parsifal sings "With this blest sign I banish all your magic.", the dwarf actor is smothered by Kundry, and the tall actor then falls to the ground accordingly.

Looking at the three versions overall, they portray three different images of Klingsor. The 1992 version's Klingsor is closest to Klingsor in Wagner's original libretto. The 2016 version's Klingsor, through performance, seems to incorporate some internal conflict and pain. The 2013 version's Klingsor visually reflects the characteristic of Klingsor being outwardly strong but inwardly weak through stage presentation.

4. Comparative Analysis of Stage Set Design in the Finale of Act II

Before Wagner, the position of opera director did not exist; stage set arrangements were adapted according to different performances. But Wagner's emergence marked the birth of the modern opera director[8], even hailed as the

"first opera director"[9]. Opera directors began to take on the task of stage set design, which also became one of the standards affecting the success of an opera production. Different director-set designers, due to their varying life experiences, create different sets. The stage design for *Parsifal* is also like this; different stage designs give the audience different viewing experiences.

4.1 Stage Set of the 1992 Metropolitan Opera Version-Restoration of the Libretto

Wagner describes the stage for Act II in the libretto as follows: "A magic garden appears, with tropical vegetation and luxurious flowers. In the background is the battlemented castle, in elaborate Arbic style." This setting continues until the end of this act.

In the 1992 version's set, bunches of fresh flowers are placed on stage, fully conforming to Wagner's garden setting. The background, however, does not adopt an Arabian-style backdrop; instead, it uses light and shadow to form an abstract painting. Although not fully restoring Wagner's libretto, it better suits modern audience aesthetics. As the story of Act II progresses, the background lighting in this set grows increasingly darker. The only two beams of light illuminate Kundry and Parsifal respectively. By the finale of Act II, the background turns completely black until Klingsor makes his entrance, when a beam of light illuminates him, while Parsifal remains unlit. Only after the Holy Spear is cast does Klingsor's light transfer to Parsifal. This lighting transition visually illustrates the process of Parsifal defeating Klingsor. Simultaneously, the design of the background gradually darkening makes it easier for the audience to focus on the actors on stage and also serves to enhance the atmosphere.

4.2 Stage Set of the 2016 Madrid Version-Intervention of Politics and Symbolism

In the 2016 version, the director uses the same rotating stage throughout the entire opera, making only detailed adjustments. The garden described by Wagner in this version more closely resembles a nightclub from the prosperous period of Germany's Weimar Republic. In the finale, two beams of light similarly illuminate Parsifal and Kundry, while the remaining stage lighting simulates moonlight. Unlike 1992, when Klingsor enters, he is not given a spotlight; instead, the lights on him and Parsifal disappear at this moment. Only after Parsifal goes to take the Holy Spear does the light follow Parsifal again. This design is similar in effect to the 1992 version, both visually showing Parsifal overcoming Klingsor. The director's design for this set gives the mythical drama Parsifal, set in an indeterminate era, a more specific time period, reflecting the director's own interpretation of this opera.

4.3 The 2013 Salzburg Version-Philosophical Reflection and Expressionist Stage Design

Compared to the previous two versions' more restorative designs based on Wagner's libretto, the 2013 version takes a completely different path. The Arabian-style garden in Wagner's libretto is transformed into a warehouse filled with various statues. Simultaneously, each statue has another counterpart suspended above the stage, creating an unreal, mirror-like or water-surface-like effect on stage, thus echoing the "magic castle" concept. The most important element in this expressionist stage design is a statue of a Bodhisattva from Buddhism. This reflects the view held by some that Wagner expressed Buddhist philosophy in this opera. Kang Xiao proposed in his work: "Some scholarly research has found that Parsifal's experience is also like that of a Bodhisattva in Buddhism."[10] This design reflects the director incorporating academic research into their set design.

4.4 Stage Set and the Opera Director

The differences in set design reflect the directors' differing interpretations of the opera. The interpretation of the 1992 version's director leans more towards presenting Wagner's original meaning. The distinctly period-specific set of the 2016 version reflects the director's interpretation of potential political implications within the opera. Simultaneously, the director counterpoints it to German history, thus imbuing the set with a special meaning. The director of the 2013 version completely abandoned Wagner's design. This stage with obvious expressionist colors not only represents the director's interpretation of the different ideas Wagner conveyed in the opera, but Tao Xin, in his article *The Story of Schulz's Parsifal*, believes: "Here is a factory warehouse, with many semi-finished products placed on the ground. We can see prototypes like Venus, the

Winged Victory of Samothrace, and Buddha. Many painted products are also suspended upside down from the ceiling, looking even more lifelike. The numerous models placed upright on the ground and inverted and suspended from the ceiling resemble the jagged teeth in a gaping mouth, or the split between yin and yang, good and evil, right and wrong, beauty and ugliness." From Tao Xin's analysis, it can be seen that the director seems to be telling a story different from the original Parsifal.

5. Comparative Analysis of Actor Performance in "Casting the Holy Spear"

Besides the arrangement of stage design, the design of actor performance is also a crucial aspect reflecting the director's interpretation of the script, especially for the climactic scene where Parsifal defeats Klingsor. Wagner's original libretto also provides a brief description of this scene: "He (Klingsor) hurls the lance, but it stops in the air over Parsifal's head. Parsifal seizes it and hold it over his head..... He (Parsifal) makes the sign of the cross. The castle is swallowed up, the garden becomes a wilderness". Wagner's libretto does not explicitly state Klingsor's fate, but Liu Yujie proposes in his thesis "Perhaps in Wagner's view, his fate is unimportant. What matters is that the evil magic upon him is lifted, and this evil magic is the core of the entire evil force. The lifting of the magic signifies the complete negation and collapse of Klingsor's value system".[9] Therefore, each version's handling of this scene precisely reflects the director's interpretation of the script.

5.1 1992 Metropolitan Opera Version-The Influence of Modern Technology on the Traditional Libretto

In the 1992 Metropolitan Opera version, the actors, through sound, lighting, and camera angles, realized the process of Klingsor casting the Holy Spear and Parsifal catching it. Klingsor's fate was then simplified to the castle collapsing, with the actor exiting accordingly. It can be seen that in this version's design, the director is very faithful to Wagner's original libretto. Klingsor's fate is also handled ambiguously, as in Wagner. However, the technique of sound, lighting, and camera angles gave the audience a certain shock. This technique made the originally difficult stunt easy to achieve and simultaneously captivated the audience.

5.2 2016 Madrid Version-The Influence of Director's Interpretation on the Original Libretto

In the 2016 version, Klingsor does not cast the Holy Spear. When Parsifal says, "With this blest sign I banish all your magic", Klingsor hesitates. Ultimately, Parsifal takes the Holy Spear from Klingsor's hand. The reason for this design in this production is related to the director's concept. In this version, the protagonist Parsifal can be interpreted as a new generation of German youth born after World War I, while Klingsor represents the decadence of Germany's Weimar Republic period. The director's design can be interpreted as Parsifal breaking the people's amnesia towards history and complacency with the status quo during that period, driven by his love for the nation and yearning for freedom.

5.3 2013 Salzburg Version-The Director's New Interpretation of the Original Libretto

The 2013 version makes the most significant changes to this scene. At the end, when Klingsor tries to kill Parsifal, the dwarf actor hands the Holy Spear to Kundry, hoping she will kill Parsifal. Parsifal, however, takes the spear. Then, when he sings "With this blest sign I banish all your magic", he seems to command Kundry to kill Klingsor. Finally, Kundry smothers the dwarf actor with her clothes, and the singer (tall actor portraying Klingsor) falls directly onto the stage. Xiao Long, in *How is the Coexistence of Good and Evil Possible? A New Stage Interpretation of Parsifal*, interprets this as: "Thus, Klingsor attempts to kill Parsifal through Kundry's hand (shoving the spear into Kundry's hand), but Parsifal seizes the spear and forces Kundry to kill Klingsor instead (Kundry strangles the dwarf). The power represented by the Holy Spear transfers from the willingly self-castrated Klingsor to the hands of Parsifal, who renounces kinship and love, is full of lies, and is determined to replace Amfortas." From this, it can be seen that in this production, the director not only tells a completely different story but also completely subverts the character of Parsifal.

5.4 Actor Performance and the Opera Director

The rearrangement and addition of actors' performances reflect the director's re-creation of the opera. The 1992 version, although employing

modern technology, overall remains a restoration of the original opera libretto. The rearrangement of Klingsor's actions in the 2016 version has two reasons. Firstly, Director Guth stated in an interview that he divided this version of Parsifal into three narrative threads: Parsifal's growth; the Grail Knights' search for leadership; and the brotherhood and family conflicts between Klingsor and Amfertas. The first two exist in Wagner's original libretto, while the third thread was added by the director based on materials he had seen. Because this thread continues to develop in Act III, Klingsor cannot be omitted as in the original libretto. Secondly, the choreography of this character's actions also reflects the political core the director wants to express. The director of the 2013 production completely detached from Wagner's original libretto. To tell a completely different story, he designed entirely new actions and added performances beyond the original libretto.

6. Analysis of Differences Between Director's Opera and Fundamentalist Opera Based on Case Studies

The preceding sections provided a brief analysis of the three *Parsifal* productions regarding characterization, stage design, and performance/expression. Comparing them reveals several key differences. Firstly, comparing the 1992 Metropolitan version with the later two, it is evident that the former director staged the drama strictly according to Wagner's libretto, while the latter two directors staged it according to their own expressive needs. Secondly, comparing the 2013 Salzburg and 2016 Madrid versions, although both prioritize the director's expression, the theatrical methods they employ differ significantly. Finally, comparing the same two versions (2013 and 2016), the themes the directors aimed to express also differ. The following sections briefly analyze these three points.

6.1 The Changing Role of the Director

Comparing the 1992 Metropolitan version with the later two reveals a significant shift in the director's function. In the 1992 version, the director's blocking of sets and performances closely followed Wagner's stage directions. Although there were minor cuts and adjustments, the final narrative and expression presented remained primarily Wagner's. This does not mean the director merely organized the performance; the modifications made indicate an effort to better "explain" Wagner's story and its meaning to the audience.

In the 2016 Madrid version, while the story of *Parsifal* is still performed and told on stage, the director alters its meaning through symbolism. An audience member ignoring all added symbolism could still perceive it as the original *Parsifal*. However, the director incorporates so much symbolism, integral to the stage presentation, that it becomes impossible to overlook. Here, the director is no longer just an interpreter of Wagner's *Parsifal*, as in 1992, but uses Wagner's libretto as a basis for their own interpretation. The director, as "interpreter", dominates the entire opera.

The 2013 Salzburg version goes a step further. It moves beyond symbolizing the original opera to actively adding to it, deconstructing and reassembling the entire story. It becomes difficult for the audience to perceive Wagner's original narrative and expression through the staging; instead, they are drawn into the director's newly devised performance to experience a completely different story. Like the 2016 Madrid version, the director here also acts as an "interpreter," using Wagner's libretto as raw material. Through deconstruction, recombination, and addition of elements, the director constructs their own self-expression.

6.2 Changes in Directorial Methods Employed

Comparing the three productions reveals three distinct directorial approaches. The 1992 version's fidelity to the libretto corresponds to a "naturalist" directorial method. The 2016 version corresponds to a "symbolist" method. The 2013 version corresponds to an "expressionist" method. The differences in these methods, combined with the previously discussed shift in the director's role, lead to the following conclusion: even when directors share the role of "interpreter," their methods of staging the opera can differ significantly.

This difference relates closely to the effect the director aims to achieve and the means to achieve it. Although both the 2016 and 2013 versions use Wagner's libretto as a basis for the director's self-expression, they differ in approach. The 2016 director needed to keep the *Parsifal* story intact while overlaying it with symbolism to imbue it with an additional layer of meaning, ultimately subverting the original meaning to convey their own expression. This director

effectively employed Brechtian "Verfremdungseffekt" (alienation effect). The *Parsifal* myth itself serves as one means to create this distancing effect in the audience. The mythical story combined with the de-historicized (or re-historicized to Weimar) set ensures the audience does not become immersed in the narrative, making them more likely to think critically and grasp the director's intended message.

The 2013 director, however, needed to tell a completely new story for self-expression. This director discarded the original *Parsifal* narrative entirely, using its elements as raw material to construct a new story, thereby completely dissolving the original opera's meaning. To draw the audience into this new story, the director relied on captivating performances designed to elicit reactions. Given the constraints of the operatic medium - the inability to change lyrics or music - the director was compelled towards a more "extroverted" or physically expressive style of staging. This explains the fully postmodern stage design and the stage filled with heightened physical "action."

7. The Core Differences Between Director's Opera and Fundamentalist Opera

In the latter half of the 20th century, particularly after World War II, the opera stage underwent a transformation distinct from its previous state. To this day, in terms of stage practice, opera production has bifurcated into two distinct trends: "Regieoper" (director's opera) and "Werktreue" (fundamentalist opera production). Both developments are present on contemporary stages.

Although both coexist on the modern stage, it is generally accepted that "Regieoper" emerged later than "Werktreue" .

"Regieoper" is generally considered to have emerged in the 1950s-60s, closely tied to the German "Regietheater" (director's theatre) movement. In a sense, "Regieoper" is the manifestation of the "Regietheater" movement within opera. Therefore, it is necessary to briefly understand the "Regietheater" movement. The German "Regietheater" movement refers to the theatrical trend that emerged in Germany in the 1960s-70s, where the director, rather than the playwright, became the primary creative force. This movement was deeply influenced by Bertolt Brecht's theories. Its emergence was predicated on Germany's tradition of closely linking theatre, or "drama," with social ideology. However, even before Brecht, Max Reinhardt had proposed that the director should act as the author of the drama, translating "the already dead play into a living stage language." Brecht advanced this further, stating: "The revolutionary worldview and world plan require a non-Aristotelian dramaturgy... 1. Each realized scene should be presented within its socio-political context. ... 2. Didactic theatre requires commentary to indicate direction. 3. People need a theatre that transcends the individual, an objective, scientific theatre."

This trend quickly influenced opera production through two channels: first, many spoken theatre directors began directing opera; second, some opera directors themselves began to assert greater creative control. Thus, "Regieoper" was born. Its most defining characteristic, also influenced by Brecht's theories, is that the director's primary task shifted from interpreting the opera text through staging to “reshaping” the text. Brecht proposed that the illusion of reality in bourgeois theatre could be effectively dismantled by disrupting the so-called organic unity of the work. Contemporary opera directors exploit the disjunction between text and music, and the separation between stage performance and the opera text, to open up broader possibilities for opera.

In contrast, "fundamentalist" opera follows Stanislavski's principles for opera, demanding fidelity to the text and actors deeply committed to their roles. "Fidelity to the text" remains the manifesto of directors who adhere to humanist and Leavisite critical traditions, continuing to be active on today's opera stages. However, the individual characteristics of different directors still influence these productions to varying degrees, as seen in Visconti's neo-romantic, picturesque opulence, continued by his student Franco Zeffirelli, and exemplified at La Scala and the Metropolitan Opera.

Together, these two approaches constitute the primary directorial methods on the contemporary opera stage. Neither is inherently superior, but the fundamental difference in production philosophy between "Regieoper" and "Werktreue" is clear. As stated in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*:"In a post-modern age uncertain of its cultural identity,iconoclasm and traditionalism seem destined to coexist,giving rise to a multiplicity of stylistic approaches for some time to come."

8. Conclusion

In summary, as stated in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, the uncertainty of cultural identity in the postmodern era necessitates the coexistence of "fundamentalist opera" (Werktreue) and "director's opera" (Regieoper) on the modern stage. For the art of opera, the existence of "fundamentalist opera" is undoubtedly crucial: it meticulously preserves opera's original form and offers audiences an authentic experience. However, it also faces the problem of failing to resonate with contemporary audiences. While "director's opera" effectively addresses this issue, the inherent constraints of the operatic genre—specifically the fixed nature of music and libretto—compel it to employ relatively abstract modes of expression. Consequently, its comprehension demands significantly exceed those of "fundamentalist opera". Nevertheless, the most critical aspect of opera production remains the integration of music and drama. Only through this fusion can a work truly be called opera. The three different productions of Parsifal clearly stand from three different creative perspectives. The director of the 1992 version clearly intended to present a restoration of the original work on stage. The director based their secondary creation on Wagner's opera libretto, striving to restore the stage effects described by Wagner. Although the 2016 version's director ostensibly also tells the story of Wagner's original libretto, they made creative additions in details, thus newly endowing the original opera with a political core. The 2013 version's director boldly used the Parsifal original libretto as material, creating anew the "performance text" based on it, adding multiple performances to tell a completely different story.

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