

(Music theatre, I call it 'Opera'. Theatre is not through-composed, opera is.)

My first experience with 'opera' was as a topless 'extra' (figurant) in the Don Giovanni, Holland Festival, somewhere in the 70s. I was 16. This was a world, an orgy on stage, and as far as most choir members were concerned, an orgy outside of the stage as well (Lots of metoo). And when Il commendatore started singing, we – all the topless ladies – stood in our bathrobes together with the boys from the fire brigade and all the other staff on the side stage listening with goose pimples.

A total world, on stage, side-stage, in the audience, so beautiful, so intense.

But then, 'Opera singing' is of course pretty weird. When you are blown away for the first time in your life by a Bianca Castafiore who starts singing as loud as possible like a Walküre, you don't know what is happening. It's so aggressive, it's like 'grensoverschrijdend gedrag', transgressive behaviour (?).

Whereas singing, is very natural. Because everyone sings, small children, demented elderly, monkeys, before humanity could even speak people were already singing.

So, I started experimenting with the phenomenon of 'opera'.

I wrote an *Apera*, about singing monkeys.

And also the *Pornopera*: before the vocal cords really start to vibrate properly, there is always some moaning and groaning of course, so that became my *Pornopera*.

You can also sing everything which is spoken: in *The Naked Shit Songs* they sang a complete television interview.

I also experimented with lots of technology, like loudspeakers, such as my opera for loudspeakers *Lautsprecher Arnolt*, etc.

In short, it doesn't all have to be according to a certain classical technique from the time when someone had to sing as loudly as possible with extreme vibrato to reach the other side of the hall...

Yes, you could say: classical opera singing is indeed very 'weird', it is not really how people normally produce vocal sounds and sing. But opera in itself is such a wonderful medium to achieve an overwhelming 'gesamtkunst': an orgy on stage, and then we continue in the foyer, and afterwards we just keep on partying. Because by working together you can create something amazing. And the collaboration itself is already partytime.

It is so good and important that we still have place in the Netherlands - and consciously create places for (especially young) makers to experiment out of the box, to be allowed to fail, to question and change the genre, and to join forces.

A world in turmoil, fearful conservatism is rising everywhere, the great danger now lies in fragmentation, in isolating all those loners.

Crowds and Power! I even think that everything online only further promotes the great fragmentation and isolation. And once isolated: then you are prey, and you can be cut in subsidies!

'Opera' (stupid word, you always associate it with Wagner, but internationally it does work)  
'opera' is still my thing. To be able to experiment and have the opportunity to collaborate.

I would like to end with Pierre Audi:

"Nearly all great art was born in opposition with tradition, nearly always rebellious and almost always politically incorrect."

HdG 9-12-'24